

NIOD STUDIES ON WAR, HOLOCAUST, AND GENOCIDE



Edited by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott,  
Peter Romijn, and Olivier Wieviorka

# Seeking Peace in the Wake of War

Europe, 1943-1947

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## Seeking Peace in the Wake of War

# NIOD Studies on War, Holocaust, and Genocide

The series encompasses peer-reviewed scholarly work on the impact of war, the Holocaust, and genocide on twentieth-century societies, covering a broad range of historical approaches in a global context, and from diverse disciplinary perspectives.

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# Introduction

Seeking Peace in the Wake of War: Europe, 1943-1947

*Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and  
Olivier Wieviorka*

How do wars end? International law stipulates that a formal transition from a state of war to a state of peace results from the official surrender of a warring party, the conclusion of a peace treaty, or both. During the nineteenth century this straightforward concept of bringing war to an end proved to be difficult to put into practice. The outcome of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 was not defined by the surrender of Emperor Napoleon III alone. Defeated France also underwent a complete political transformation. The deployment of the German army of occupation was decisive for the defeat of the Commune and the belated installation of the Third Republic.<sup>1</sup> As the character of warfare evolved to engage states and societies as a whole, the outcome of international armed conflicts likewise determined the social, economic and political life of warring nations. From this perspective, this volume seeks to analyse the transition from war to peace by European societies in the mid-1940s. Our main historiographical argument is a reinterpretation of the chronology: the period from 1943 (the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, the invasion of North Africa, the fall of Mussolini) to 1947 (the Paris Treaties, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan) is considered here as a single and crucially important transformative moment in European history.

Engaging in 'total war' between 1914 and 1945 was founded upon the complete mobilization and deployment of the productive and military capacities of all nations involved. This is self-evident in the case of the belligerent states that engaged large parts of their populations, male and female, in the war effort and created war economies in support of their armies. Yet total war also had a severe impact on occupied territories and states, as well as on neutral states. In earlier times, occupying armies had lived off the land and plundered resources. Modern occupation relied on planning and consequently transformed the most important spheres of social and political life in conquered territories and vanquished states. A striking early example of economic exploitation is the large-scale introduction of

1 Vincent Duclert, *La République imaginée (1870-1914)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Belin, 2014), pp. 31-137.

forced labour in occupied Belgium during the First World War.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the ‘traditional’ practice of safeguarding the public order in occupied territories escalated into the creation of instruments for repressive control, persecution, ethnic cleansing and, in the most extreme cases, genocide.<sup>3</sup>

The Second World War in Europe was not solely about crushing the military capacity of the enemy states; it was also waged between radically opposed political, ideological and economic systems. As such, the victors imposed their visions of the post-war order on the vanquished, occupied and liberated nations of Europe. At the same time, the defeat of ‘Hitler’s Empire’ and its subsidiaries gave rise to a broad spectrum of ambitions and initiatives from below. All over Europe, resisters, old and new political leaders, and other social actors prepared themselves for shaping the future of their post-war states.<sup>4</sup>

Through a series of interrelated case studies, this volume intends to demonstrate how all these ideas and initiatives, as well as the individual and collective experience of disruptive warfare and genocidal violence, reconfigured the trajectory of European societies and international relations. The authors explore these reconfigurations on different scales and levels – the local and regional, the national and the international – with the purpose of enhancing historical understanding of the many forms of what recent historiography has termed *sorties de guerre*, the ‘ways out of the war’ in Europe.<sup>5</sup> The case studies of the repatriation of Latvian orphans deported to Siberia and the social positioning of the Jews in post-war Poland, for example, help to explain how the end of the war allowed for the ethnic reordering of states and societies. Likewise, the influence of military interim rule on post-war societies is compared and evaluated from the grassroots level in different geographical settings: in the region of Ruthenia, in Italy, France, the Netherlands, and in defeated and occupied Germany. The politics of transition from war to peace in the sphere of economic and social recovery is another topic addressed by the transnationally oriented case studies in this volume, ranging from Greece to Western Europe. Consequently, from a historiographical point of view, this volume’s approach questions the

2 Sophie de Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale* (Berlin/New York: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004).

3 Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka and Anette Warring, eds, *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini. Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2006).

4 Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Allan Lane, 2008), pp. 553–581.

5 On the First World War, see Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeuillée. La sortie de guerre des soldats français (1918–1920)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2014.)

dominant focus on the nation-state as the sole interpretive framework for post-war reconstruction.

As the Second World War came to an end, states, societies, special interest groups and individuals positioned themselves in both the international and domestic spheres in order to shape the post-war order. This volume investigates the extent to which they succeeded, and at what price. It provides both an example of the general topic of reordering societies after war and a particular answer to the implicit question raised by Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Culture of Defeat* (2001): why did the mid-1940s transition from war to peace not produce a similar quest for revanche among the vanquished as the Paris peace settlement of 1918-1919?<sup>6</sup>

Since the 1990s, historians of the First World War have widely discussed the transition from war to peace at the end of the twentieth century's first global conflict. It has become customary to discuss the end of that war through the wider perspective of political cultures. To that end, John Horne and others have utilized the concept of the 'demobilization' of society, of turning a state's war effort into a broad peace effort.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, demobilization is not confined exclusively to the cessation of mass violence and to the return of the soldiers to civilian life. Societies also demobilize by scaling down the culture of war, which had involved celebrating the warrior and demonizing the enemy. Other strategies for demobilization involve repositioning the economy for recovery and meeting the everyday needs of a civilian population instead of the requirements of the armed forces.

Understanding the different 'ways out' of the Second World War is the main purpose of this volume. Historiographical insight into the strategies which governed the ways that European states and societies exited from the First World War offer an inspiration for historians of the Second World War and the post-war moment. The latter have tended to focus more extensively on specific concerns tied up with 1945 as a turning point, including the trials of war criminals and collaborators, the quest for citizenship, political purges and ethnic cleansing, social and economic reconstruction, and the shifts in the international arena due to the beginnings of the Cold War and Decolonization. In its engagement with the Second World War, the

6 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Kultur der Niederlage. Der amerikanische Süden 1865, Frankreich 1870, Deutschland 1918* (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 2001). Published in English as *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, Recovery*, trans. Jefferson Chase (London: Granta, 2004).

7 John Horne, 'War and Conflict in Contemporary Europe, 1914-2004', in *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. 81-95.

historiography has dealt – for good reasons – with the transition from war to peace from the viewpoint of what preceded the end of the war: one of the largest military campaigns and examples of civilian carnage in human history.

In *Germany 1945* (2009), Richard Bessel argues for the credibility of the contemporary understanding of ‘*Stunde Null*’ in Germany – the moment between war and peace, between catastrophic defeat and a new beginning in everyday life. ‘What mattered after the devastation was being able to retrieve fragments of a normal existence, whether that meant having a habitable living room once again or being able to exercise one’s profession as a doctor.’<sup>8</sup> This probably holds true for the experience of the vast majority of Europeans in the wake of war, in both the victorious and vanquished nations. *Life after Death* (2003), edited by Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann addresses the longer-term impact of the post-WWII transition from war to peace in Western and Central Europe and takes as its point of departure a certain surprise among the contributors about the seemingly commonsensical return to social, political and cultural normalcy. This return to normalcy was impossible for most people in Eastern Europe, especially for the Jewish survivors of concentration camps who had lost everything, but surviving the end of war and regaining some stability in life was of paramount importance for individuals here as well.

What, then, were the main trajectories in the Europe-wide transition from war to peace? This volume zooms in on the courses of action chosen when dealing with the urgent problems of the day. Such an approach aims to emphasize the fact that the transition opened up a variety of trajectories, shaped by broad political choices and strategies as well as by individual and collective objectives, all of which contributed to shaping post-war European societies. Options chosen for solving particular problems in local contexts were likely to influence national or international relations. As the war came to an end decisive choices loomed large everywhere. They concerned positioning and planning for the post-war order. New geopolitical conditions created tensions among the Allies and new senses of belonging and citizenship in occupied and embattled states. Improvising on the ground and meeting the pressing needs of everyday life would contribute just as much to the shaping of the post-war order as grand designs projected top-down by the Great Powers.

In their contributions to this volume, the authors explore the impact of war, occupation and oppression in many different fields of political and

8 Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 395.

social life. The experience of the Second World War exacerbated some tensions which pre-dated the war. Two examples addressed in this volume are the ethnic conflicts in the Polish borderlands and the position of ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia. The war reshaped urgent pre-war problems as well, for instance in the field of economics. The prolonged slump of the 1930s and its disastrous impact on social life was widely seen as a crucial condition for the success of right-wing authoritarianism, and for the weakness of many European democracies in confronting it. By relying on pre-war ideas and employing the experiences of organized war economies, planning was also seen as a means of organizing economic recovery. On the other hand, in order to mobilize the populations for war, extended welfare had already been promised in August 1941 by the Atlantic Charter. This promise for more welfare and more social solidarity was also part of the programmes of the various resistance movements at least in the western part of Europe.

Studying individual and collective agency also helps explain what actions, considerations and decisions contributed to the reconfiguration of Europe in a relatively brief period of time. In the cases presented here, the contributors discuss actors on all levels in a variety of European nations: individual stakeholders like resisters, former collaborators, politicians, journalists, as well as collective bodies like armies, governments, political formations and international organizations. The volume also sheds light on those groups which did not have the same kind of agency, especially the millions of European refugees who were on the move in the mid-1940s, including former concentration camp inmates and forced labourers, DPs, and German expellees, among others.

The time frame adopted by this volume begins in 1943, when the turnabout in the Second World War in Europe became evident owing to the defeat of the German armies in Stalingrad, northern Africa and Kursk, the fall of Mussolini in Italy and other developments that forced military planners, political elites and populations to begin to imagine a post-war world and to start planning for it.

The year 1947, taken as the end point of this volume, is a bit more flexible. The post-war moment ended earlier in Western Europe than, for example, in the German lands, Poland or Greece. Indeed, the last two displaced persons camps in Germany were closed at the end of the 1950s.

Meanwhile, by 1947 the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was shut down, the Marshall Plan was launched and Europe was locked into a new conflict between East and West, which shaped societies, as well as the lives and experiences of citizens, in both parts of Europe until at least 1989-1990. Thus, the volume will refrain from addressing topics

which stretch across a much larger time frame, such as the social memory of the war that evolved over the following decades.<sup>9</sup> Instead, it highlights the manifold phenomena involved in a dense but short period of time from war to peace and offers new perspectives on the all-encompassing processes of socio-political reconfiguration on the local, national and international levels, thereby illuminating this transformative moment in twentieth-century European history from different angles.

### **Liberation – From What and for Whom?**

In most European states, the end of the Second World War is remembered as ‘The Liberation’. The term has also been widely used by historians, instead of ‘victory’ (in sharp contrast with the First World War). But the question is: liberation from what? The word ‘liberation’ has proven easy to use, but hard to conceptualize. The use of the concept of liberation in the historiography could be connected in the first place to the restoration of nation-states in the wake of war. Some nation-states claimed to have liberated themselves, while other states had to recognize that they were liberated by the Allies. This draws attention to the political dimension of the idea of liberation: peoples and states were allegedly liberated from Nazi rule, but also from capitalist oppression, feudalism, military dictatorship and ethnic discrimination. On the other hand, successor regimes were prepared, and able, to oppress large categories of people for the purpose of consolidating power and building the nation. Liberations and political or socio-economic transitions in Europe were overlapping phenomena.<sup>10</sup>

With hindsight, we are able to see the complex issues at hand during the years between 1943 and 1947. But how did Europeans experience these events at the time? Who had cause for celebrating the end of oppression, persecution and foreign rule? At an even more basic level, did hardship and mass violence actually come to an end? The photographic imagery of the time displays the losers and winners of war, but with hindsight it is surprisingly difficult to establish who lost and who won. All over Europe vanquished fascists, national socialists and collaborators were quite visible when dragged out of their homes, abused in the streets, summarily shot or confined in internment camps. But not all of them experienced

9 See, for example, Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds, *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

10 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

this treatment. Conversely, irregular fighters who contributed to Nazi Germany's defeat after having enjoyed a brief spell of glory could become persecuted or at least marginalized, as was the case for some Western European resisters, and more prominently for Soviet partisans, the Polish Home Army or left-wing guerrilla fighters in Greece.

Women were especially targeted in this context. The images of shorn women accused of collaboration in general and of intimate relations with German soldiers and occupiers in particular, testify to the social 'carnival' of liberation as a national cleansing ritual in many European societies. In these cases, the individual humiliation of women was understood as a public way of erasing the national humiliation of occupation and collaboration. The superiority of the Allies – as male victors – was in many places underscored by their often violent 'appropriation' of women as the 'spoils of war' in liberated or occupied territories.<sup>11</sup> However, the impact of war and liberation on gender relations should be considered more broadly. Given that the war had been a period of mass mobilization, women were recruited *en masse* all over Europe to join the workforce on either a voluntary or compulsory basis. Were they, however, able to participate to the same degree in post-war reconstruction efforts? The fact that many women were active in the resistance movement, for example, and that they gained universal suffrage in France, Italy or Belgium in 1945, 1946 and 1948, respectively, does not necessarily mean that women were able to maintain, during the period of post-war reconstruction, the degrees of social agency they had gained by coping with mounting repression, hardship and havoc in the final stages of the war and its immediate aftermath. Ultimately, the brutal humiliation of women as alleged collaborators and their removal from the workforce aimed at restoring the symbolic order of pre-war gender relations.

Liberations, occupations and political transitions in Europe were overlapping phenomena, all part of the process of reconfiguring power relations in post-war states and societies. Italy was occupied step-by-step by the Allies in 1943 and, like Austria, reinvented itself as a victim of Nazi aggression, while the German Reich was completely dissolved. In several cases, for instance in Greece, the end of the Second World War did not produce the end of a civil war that had started in the context of Axis occupation. In the West, under

11 Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile'. Des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2000). Published in English as *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France*, trans. John Flower (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 68-140; Monika Diederichs, *Wie geschoren word moet stil zitten* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006).



the umbrella of the USA, occupied states and political regimes were generally restored to their pre-war status; even in the case of France, which had collaborated with the Nazis, the Republic (albeit a new one) was reinstalled. In the East, states were incorporated into the Soviet sphere of interest and borders were drastically redrawn. Consequently, large minorities – in some cases majorities – in many states did not feel ‘liberated’ at all: they were simply required to accommodate new realities of military and political power.

These developments also belong to the period of ‘reconfiguration’ in post-war Europe, in which new arrangements were reached on many different levels: within states and societies – locally, regionally and nationally – and also at the international level, often by using and continuing the war violence. The Baltic States, for example, were annexed and Sovietized, while many states expelled those who did not fit into the ‘ethnic pattern’ of the new territorial order. As its borders shifted to the west, Poland was the scene of large-scale transfer of populations – externally (Ukrainians in the east, Germans in the west) as well as internally (Poles moving west). The expulsion of around 12 million German-speaking people from Eastern European states is discussed here from the Czechoslovak perspective, but it occurred in many neighbouring states.

One of the lessons of World War II seemed to be that the ‘unmixing of peoples’ after World War I had not been radical enough. Within the restored states, whole categories of people were expelled from national communities. Former collaborators were subjected to massive retributive measures that revoked their citizenship and their liberty for years to come. The Jews of Europe were victimized doubly: by relentless persecution and mass killing during the war, and by the realities of having to cope with the loss of families, communities, and finding homes and a new existence in a post-war environment that remained by-and-large hostile to Jews, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Those survivors of persecution who stayed in Europe would remain uprooted, even when they could return to their original communities. The contribution in this volume on the reconstruction of the Polish Jewish community points to the difficulties of negotiating a place in the post-war Polish state and society at a time when ethnic homogeneity was perceived as the precondition for national reconstruction.

## Reconfigurations

The period from 1943 to 1947, as a watershed moment in twentieth-century European history, needs to be studied on its own terms, not just as an

interlude or a marker in history, but as a complicated process in which European societies were seeking peace in the wake of war. The second aim of this volume is to rethink the relationship between the local, the national and the international during this period. Many national historiographies, until recently, have been focused primarily on the reconstruction of nation-states after Nazi rule in Europe. Instead, this volume seeks to bring in what happened in specific localities and regions to highlight agency from below. At the same time, the chapters in this volume also reveal that the 'zero years' constituted a moment of intense transnational interaction and international cooperation, which was subsequently overshadowed only by the onset of the Cold War.

For Europeans, the end of the Second World War consisted of a string of loosely connected and quite drastic events. The aim of this volume is to explore how ordinary people lived through the moment of liberation, how the end of the war affected them, and how, depending on the circumstances, they made new beginnings. The contributors assume that the transition of Europe from war to peace was a product of both political contingencies and structural elements. This emerges foremost from the material and psychological damage done by total warfare and genocide as well as by post-war humanitarian crises and internal power struggles. It is also important to explore to what extent individuals and their interest groups have political agency and to what degree were they subjected to the imperatives of the victorious Allies and their geopolitical interests? As contemporaries understood very well, it mattered very much who the liberators were and what their projected relationship to the conquered/liberated territories was to be. In the end, the bitter irony of Europe post 1947 was that it was not divided between victors and vanquished, but between an East and a West in which the vanquished also managed to assume the image of the victors.

The rich existing historiography on the aftermath of the Second World War tends to have a national focus, but it does so at the oversight of equally important developments on the local/regional and international levels. One explanation is that the restoration of national political communities was of central concern for the post-war states. In many cases, their existence had been threatened or even undone by foreign occupation and new territorial arrangements. As the war ended, the nation-state, which had been called into question, had to gain, or regain, its political legitimacy. At the national level, this is largely a history of European nation-states inventing or re-inventing themselves, or indeed being invented under pressure from others as in the case of Germany or Eastern Europe, and finding a place and a purpose in the post-war world. The authority of ruling state elites was

endangered, either during or after the war, as a result of foreign occupation. Under such circumstances, national political elites in Western Europe were forced to reach out both to the local (regional) level in order to (re)confirm and enhance their power base, and to the powers of the newly emerging international order in an effort to secure their position. Therefore, the interactions between armies of occupation (as allies or as conquerors) and the people at grassroots level were a crucial element in establishing the post-war order. In the eastern part of Europe, new communist elites came to power under the protection of Soviet hegemony. Most of these 'new men' had been involved in the resistance against the Nazis during the war but, with the exception of Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia, they had none or very little national or local legitimacy. They thus relied heavily on Soviet military power to establish their authoritarian rule over largely uprooted and devastated societies between 1945 and 1947.

By including the usually separated histories of Western, Eastern and Southern Europe, this volume aims to be comprehensively European. It thereby seeks to transcend the still dominant framework of national histories and Cold War divisions in the existing historiography. The contributors also aim to look beyond the Great Powers and the national ruling elites in European societies. For this reason, we highlight the agency of different historical actors, including resisters and irregular fighters, interim rulers and local authorities, Jewish survivors and international relief workers. It is impossible to capture the history of all European societies during this period in a comprehensive way in one volume. The editors have instead decided to present a series of case studies, which serve the purpose of pointing to developments that are typical for a specific European region while at the same time encouraging transnational comparisons and generalizations.

## Trajectories

The volume is divided into three sections, each of which highlights a different trajectory of how Europeans sought a way out of war. The contributions in Section 1, 'In the Wake of War', illuminate how the formal end of war brought forth the end of Nazi rule as well as institutional changes and political transitions. At the same time, the end of mass violence only gradually produced the demobilization of societies, while the restoration of a culture of peace would remain a long-term process. Marcin Zaremba's chapter argues that all over Europe, but in Poland in particular, the Second

World War was a not just a disruptive force, breaking down social, political and cultural institutions; wartime violence and despair also left a mark on people's psychological stability on an unprecedented scale. His analysis of the wounds and traumas suffered by Polish society during six years of war and occupation shows how difficult it is to establish at what moment and in which respects the war came to an end at all. The political transition to a new authoritarian regime, large-scale vengeance, ethnic cleansing and personal score-settling in many ways continued the wartime brutalization of interpersonal relations long after peace was declared. Thus, Polish society remained within the shadow of mass violence and hatred even during the early period of reconstruction.

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann's contribution explores how defeat, occupation and questions of guilt for Nazi crimes were negotiated in the immediate post-war moment in everyday encounters between Germans and Allies. Diaries, Hoffmann argues, are the most relevant source for capturing contemporary understandings of the transition from war to peace and of such encounters more particularly. Autobiographical writings or early reports from occupied Germany do not merely reflect the larger shifts in international politics from Nazi rule in Europe to the Cold War between 1943 and 1947. More importantly, these chronicles also explain how rapidly Nazism collapsed, how sudden and unreal the post-war moment seemed, and how everyday experiences of the lawlessness and violence of Soviet rule in Central Europe turned Germans – especially in the eyes of Western observers – from Nazis into Allies.

The actual path of liberation created significant political and administrative interludes. Military interim rulers set up political and administrative arrangements that determined the first stages of the reconfiguration of post-war societies. In their comparative discussion of the French and southern Italian cases, Gabriella Gribaudo, Olivier Wieviorka and Julie Le Gac address the question of how existing institutions were able to shape the political transitions and to transform the task of finding a way out of the war into a nation-building processes. In this respect, the restoration of political communities took place at different levels: to reinvigorate the nation-state in France and restore the predominance of the regional and local political communities in the Italian South. In the French case, General de Gaulle declared republican continuity after the defeat of the German enemy and used the centralized state as a lever for the reconstruction of society. In Italy, responsibility for dealing with the legacy of war and more than two decades of Fascist dictatorship largely remained fragmented and was left to local and regional power structures.

The restoration of the centralized state in the wake of liberation is also the subject of Peter Romijn's study of military-civilian relations in the liberated Netherlands. The particular course of that liberation took the weak Dutch government in exile out of the picture in the process of arranging transitional measures. Over the course of nine months, Allied military administrators worked with local and regional provisional authorities with roots in the resistance and civil society. Nevertheless, as soon as Germany was defeated, power flowed back to a new central government in The Hague. The Dutch political culture and administration leaned strongly towards the central state, and for reasons of principle and expedience the Allied military authorities also preferred to interact with the highest authorities available. In the end, the reconfiguration that the 1944-1945 transition produced was one of institutional continuity and simultaneously innovation among the political and administrative personnel operating these institutions.

The second section, 'Reordering Communities', deals with embattled citizenship within restored, reorganized and redefined nation-states. One of the most destructive legacies of 'Hitler's Empire' and its allied and subaltern states, which ruled most of continental Europe by the early 1940s, was the massive geopolitical and genocidal mayhem resulting from racial politics and ethnic cleansing. The 'displaced person' became one of the characteristic groups of the European post-war, symbolizing the millions of people on the move in Europe in the mid-1940s.<sup>12</sup> Such displacement followed the suffering explicitly planned by rulers for specific groups, including those persecuted on racist and ethnic pretexts, slave and conscript labourers, and refugees. The Nazis and Fascists were not alone in pursuing such policies. The Soviet Union had deported populations wholesale for the purpose of controlling non-Russian internal dissent. Juliette Denis presents the Latvian case, considering in particular Latvian orphans who were deported to remote Siberian regions after the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1941. After Nazi Germany's defeat and the re-assertion of Soviet control over their native country, groups of displaced Latvian children were gradually allowed to return home. As Denis demonstrates, the Ministry of Education of Sovietized Latvia managed to bring about this operation as a result of its own initiative, without assuring formal approval from the central authorities in Moscow. They managed to exploit the confusion of the immediate post-war years and thus linked a humanitarian approach to the effort of legitimizing their own rule at home.

12 Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press 2011).

Matěj Spurný challenges the grand narrative of post-1989 Czech historiography, in which the violent character of the immediate post-Second World War period is overlooked in lieu of the 1948 Communist takeover. Even if 1948 remains a significant turning point, Spurný argues that the violence encouraged by the 1945-1948 democratic regime was more extreme in nature. The forced and violent migration of ethnic Germans from the Czech borderlands was conceived as a way of re-establishing the Czechoslovak state and the legitimacy of its political class. Thus, the post-war Czech way of dealing with this ethnic minority illustrates a main current of the mid-1940s – that of realizing the post-war imperative of ethnic homogeneity in the domain of nation building. As a matter of fact, the Communists were keen to exploit these efforts in order to establish their image as guardians of the nation.

Within the restored nation-states of Europe, specific groups of people had to engage in hard struggles to find their place. Audrey Kichelewski presents the dilemma of the surviving Jewish community in post-war Poland in the aftermath of the Holocaust. She points to the difficulties in re-establishing Polish-Jewish relations and to the many efforts of Jewish cultural organizations to restore Jewish community life. In general, she concludes, the Jews who opted to live in post-war Poland tended to adapt to the new realities of post-war society there, rather than restoring their world, destroyed as it was by the Holocaust. The drive for integration in Polish post-war society, however, did not yield the desired results as, step by step, the Communist rulers brought social and political pluralism to an end. Thus, the Jewish organizations lost their initial independence and were forced to comply strictly with the regime's ideology and policies. The reconfiguration of Jewish life thus got caught up in the reconfiguration of Polish society in general.

Another group engaged in the war and forced to renegotiate their citizenship were Soviet partisans, who had been fighting behind enemy lines. As Masha Cerovic demonstrates, these soldiers had witnessed the failures of their political and military leaders and faced immense dangers on their own when the German Wehrmacht forced its way deep into Soviet territory in 1941-1942. Consequently, they were more independently minded and, from the regime's point of view, needed to be investigated and disciplined before reintegration could become possible. The situation in the former occupied areas of the Soviet Union was extremely convoluted. On the western borders of the USSR an irregular war continued, in which Baltic, Ukrainian, and Polish nationalists, as well as Red Army deserters, were challenging Soviet power. Not surprisingly, the Soviet state decided to deploy many of

the former partisans in counter-guerrilla warfare in the effort to impose authority in the border areas. This served the double purpose of deploying personnel experienced in this kind of warfare and disciplining the former partisan fighters. Thus, the Soviet state defined the conditions for the reintegration of this specific category of veterans.

The third and final section of this volume, 'Organizing the Peace', discusses how promoting social cohesion was an essential part of creating the post-war national and international orders. This purpose was facilitated by territorial redefinitions of political communities, by organizing relief to cope with emergencies, and by efforts to strengthen the social fabric and economic potential required for sustainable reconstruction. Shaping the post-war order was strongly connected to discussions about how to avoid the agony of economic crisis and political upheaval that had dragged Europe into the war. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that all contributions in this volume emphasize how working towards political stability and social cohesion in post-war societies did not necessarily depend on internal compromise or a careful balancing of social and political interests. In most cases, power politics, social struggle and the vexing categories of war's 'winners' and 'losers' were more important.

Sabine Dullin's chapter on the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union presents the case of the Czechoslovak-Ukrainian border region of Ruthenia, which in 1944 was occupied by the Red Army. The Soviet authorities had the Red Army organize a drive for annexation, supported by an orchestrated plebiscite held under severe military control. Crucial rallying points to secure a degree of support were the promise of agrarian reform as well as support to the Orthodox Church. Thus, particular groups (poor farmers, Orthodox Christians) were mobilized to define their interests in terms of becoming Soviet citizens.

Dirk Luyten's contribution shifts the focus back to Western Europe, while explaining the different courses taken in establishing the modern liberal welfare states. Promoting social security was, in his words, social peacekeeping. An important component of the policies of rulers in the liberated and restored nation-states was the implementation of social pacts concluded during the war between employers, trade unions and representatives of bureaucracy. All those involved were eager to assume the image of resisting the Nazi 'New Order' in the interest of creating, out of the turmoil, a better future for all citizens. Luyten points to the different trajectories in nations in which the role of the state was conceived as more prominent (France, Belgium) or less prominent (the Netherlands), and to the varied styles of collective bargaining. Moreover, the ideological differences



between Christian Democrats and Socialists played a role, as well as those between technocratic bureaucrats building on their experiences of running the economy and liberal, business-oriented politicians. In fact, what was presented as a covenant for social peace and welfare proved to be a bone of contention in post-war politics of reconstruction.

The aftermath of the Second World War in Europe saw a resurrection of the nation-states that had been subjugated under Nazi rule. At the same time, the emerging confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies was resulting in the formation of new supra-national power blocs. The gradual division of Germany is the most poignant example. However, the other nations were also affected by the emergence of new fault lines in Europe, in particular in places where the fault lines crossed the territory of the nation-states, as in Greece, Poland or Yugoslavia. Polymeris Voglis discusses the impact of a new supra-national organization for providing foreign aid as a means of survival in the Greek case. He points out that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was in fact a concerted effort by the Western Allies to tie economic relief to political intervention, in this case in support of the conservative government fighting the communist resistance in a bloody civil war. Thus, the United States' general priority of reconstructing the economies of Western Europe was adapted in Greece to the purpose of defeating the Left first.

The role of the new international organizations is explored further in Sandrine Kott's study of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a player in the international politics of the 1940s. Taking the 1941 Atlantic Charter's promise of improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security as a starting point, Kott argues that at the time, the ILO was the obvious instrument for discussing the implementation of this concept. The ILO had originally been part of the League of Nations structure and had been a stronghold of organized labour on an international level. However, during the war, the political planners of post-war reconstruction reduced the role of the organization by removing it from policy-planning processes. Military and economic planners of the major allies preferred to shape labour relations according to their own interests. For strategic and domestic political reasons, they took away the setting of all kinds of labour standards from international organizations like the ILO. As a reservoir of expertise on universal labour issues, Kott argues, the ILO would nevertheless remain influential. At the same time it assumed the role of a development agency outside Europe and lost its character as a norm-setting agency for European workers' interests as had been the case in the interwar period.



In his conclusion, Philip Nord examines how the Second World War continued in several respects after it had come to a formal end. He points to the savage ethnic cleansing and violence which persisted in many places, to the efforts by the re-established states to restore their authority within their territories, and to the need to overcome the mayhem of war. But the question remains: if normalization was achieved, can it be equated with restoration? Nord makes three assertions that characterize the new configurations of the European post-war, the first being the socio-political levelling caused by the war, and in particular the definitive end of the power of the aristocratic landowning class in Eastern and Central Europe. A second feature was the reconfiguration of the political landscape in the West, which amounted to a new political centre consisting of Christian Democracy and Social Democracy. After a total war, which had resulted in massive state intervention in all areas of life, these parties used the state to push forward their plans to provide social security for all citizens. The third element is the strengthening of the nation as a guiding principle for defining citizenship within the political community. The way out of war was not found in restoration alone, but also in deep reconfigurations, firstly but not only within the nation-state.

**1**  
In the Wake of War



# The 'War Syndrome'

World War II and Polish Society

*Marcin Zaremba*

More than seventy years now separate us from the outbreak of World War II. To date, the most important trend in debates about the war's consequences for Central Europe has been to focus on the interconnections between the social, political and economic changes occurring during the war, on the one hand, and the origins of the communist bloc in that part of Europe on the other.<sup>1</sup> This approach is too narrow: it fails to take account of the importance of the psycho-social consequences of the war, which extended far beyond the political dimension.

Arthur Marwick distinguished two sociological approaches to the consequences of war in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The first focuses on changes to class structures brought about by the participation of previously unprivileged groups in the war effort. According to this approach, war provides an opportunity for building new solidarity, for socialization, and, in the case of Poland, for social self-organization within the framework of the underground state. Such underground institutions are usually described as having preserved the nation by opposing the occupier and strengthening national identity. Polish society thus emerges as a community united in struggle, sacrifice and shared suffering. The majority of Polish publications about World War II, memoir literature and scholarly literature alike, seem to follow precisely this path. In addition, this path also provides the standard model for commemorating the war.

The second sociological approach to war in the twentieth century sees it as an event akin in certain respects to a natural disaster, whose consequences were generally the same for all people who found themselves at the epicentre. From this perspective World War II should be interpreted

1 Jan T. Gross, 'The Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3/2 (1989), pp. 198-214; Gross, 'War as Revolution', in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Bradley E. Abrams, 'The Second World War and the East European Revolution', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3 (2002), pp. 623-624.

2 Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 10.

as a multidimensional catastrophe of an elemental nature. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this approach fails to recognize sufficiently the specific sociological and psychological effects of this war in particular.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I shall attempt to provide a systematic account of these effects through an examination of the Polish case. My intention is not to demystify the Polish war experience; rather, I shall attempt to generalize this experience in sociological terms, focusing in particular on those phenomena which failed to find a place in the standard heroic schema. By necessity, the picture to be presented here will be incomplete; many issues – aspects linked with political life, for example – will have to remain in the shadows. And one more disclaimer: what interests me is the final effect, namely, the state of society in the year 1945. Thus, for example, I will not be considering here the consequences of the Red Army's arrival onto Polish soil.

My analysis draws primarily on Piotr Sztompka's sociology of trauma.<sup>4</sup> Paraphrasing the title of Sztompka's book, we might call the Polish war experience 'the trauma of the great war'. This is a particular kind of 'pathology of social subjectivity'<sup>5</sup> formed as the result of a long-term, destructive traumatic experience – a collective experience of terror, shock and fear, of

3 There is an extensive body of literature on the theme of the war and occupation period. The area is less fully covered, however, when it comes to social history. Most of the social histories of the period were published after 1989 and are devoted to everyday life. The most important works include: Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vols 1 and 2 (Warsaw: PWN, 1970); Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ekonomiczna Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach drugiej wojny światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979) and idem *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1993); and Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). The first work to deal with the history of everyday life was Tomasz Szarota's book *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988). Subsequent works include: Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939-1944. Życie codzienne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2000); Stanisława Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1997); Andrzej Chwałba, *Kraków w latach 1939-1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002). For a different kind of analysis, see the classic works: Kazimierz Wyka, *Życie na niby* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984); Jan Strzelecki, *Próby świadectwa* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971). On psychological and sociological aspects of World War II, see Ewa Jackowska, *Psychiczne następstwa deportacji w głąb ZSRR w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Przyczyny, moderatory, uwarunkowania* (Szczecin: Uniwersytet Szczeciński, 2004); Alicja Rokuszewska-Pawefek, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2002); Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

4 Piotr Sztompka, *Trauma wielkiej zmiany. Społeczne koszty transformacji* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2000).

5 Ibid, p. 20.

disintegration and destruction. For Sztompka, trauma is connected with the experience of social change, especially when such change is sudden, violent, unexpected and relates to multiple spheres of life simultaneously. This kind of change entails the institutional disorganization of social and cultural life, affecting the personalities of people who live through it.<sup>6</sup> Social disruption of this kind is wrought by wars, revolutions and violent modernization processes. The Poland of 1945 was without doubt a country utterly different from the Poland of August 1939. This was a country that had not only gone through great change, but was also standing on the brink of fresh changes linked with the communist seizure of power. The war played a role equivalent to the destructive phase of revolution.<sup>7</sup> Psychologist Stefan Baley commented with regard to his research on Polish post-war youth that this generation's 'collective soul' had been 'infected by a war syndrome'.<sup>8</sup> How deeply, then, did this infection penetrate the 'collective soul' of Poles, and what was the nature of the devastation it wrought? Or, to put it in more contemporary terms, what were the sources, symptoms and cultural consequences of the war trauma in Poland?

### Trauma Sources

The first and most important source of war-related psychological traumas was the omnipresence of death. The practices linked with the burial of those killed in the course of the war (the dead were very often buried a second time over, following exhumation) can be read as an attempt to overcome this trauma symbolically. Any attempt to recreate the Polish 'post-war' landscape would need to foreground collective exhumations and funeral processions, the latter sometimes with tens of thousands of participants.<sup>9</sup> Death was everywhere; one could literally smell it through the strong stench of decay emanating from unburied bodies as early as spring 1945.<sup>10</sup>

6 On the theme of trauma see further: Sławomir Kaprański, 'Trauma i pamięć zbiorowa. Przypadek Jedwabnego', in *Stawanie się społeczeństwa. Szkice ofiarowane Piotrowi Sztompce z okazji 40-lecia pracy naukowej*, ed. Andrzej Flis (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), pp. 631-633.

7 See note 2.

8 Stefan Baley, 'O pewnej metodzie badań wpływów na psychikę młodzieży', *Rocznik Psychiatryczny*, 37 (1949), p. 37. Idem., 'Psychiczne wpływy drugiej wojny światowej', *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, 1/2 (1948), p. 12.

9 Joanna Wawrzyniak, 'W cieniu śmierci', *Polityka*, 29 September 2005.

10 One account tells us, for example, that: 'the sanitary state of Kolobrzeg was terrible, the town streets were covered in spilt blood, on which whole swarms of flies were nesting. In Zabrow near Kolobrzeg I found a store with barrels of insecticide, we sprinkled this powder over the streets,

In Warsaw there were fears of a cholera outbreak, and with good cause: a plague of mice and rats did in fact break out in the same year, lasting into the next.<sup>11</sup> Even today the final number of the war's victims is unknown. The results of pioneering research conducted by psychologists affiliated with the State Institute of Mental Health in Warsaw on the psychological effects of the war among children and young people provide a rough idea of the scale of death. Over 5,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 23 were examined as part of this study in June and July 1945. The sample of 1,500 questionnaires completed by students from Warsaw, Kraków and Lublin, indicates that 73.2 per cent of the respondents had lost a loved one, or several loved ones, in tragic circumstances. There were also cases in which seven, eight or even thirteen family members had been lost.<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the war, the Bureau for War Compensation placed the total number of victims at around 6 million.<sup>13</sup> Paradoxically, however, this figure is at once too high and too low. Too high, because today we know that the number of victims of, for example, Auschwitz, or the Warsaw Uprising, is smaller than previously supposed. The most recent estimates indicate that wartime demographic losses of Polish and Jewish inhabitants of pre-war Poland were in the order of approximately 5 million (including 2.9 million

the flies began to disappear – at the end there were none left, a great relief. The corpses were another plague, it was an unusually hot summer and decomposition of bodies came on quickly. One had to cover one's nose when walking through the streets – the stench of corpses was so strong' ('Wspomnienia Stefana Lipickiego, prezydenta miasta Kołobrzeg w okresie 1 VI – 31 VIII 1945', in Hieronim Kroczyński, *Powojenny Kołobrzeg 1945-1950. Wybór źródeł* (Kołobrzeg: Wydawnictwo Reda Kazimierz Ratajczyk, 2004), p. 100).

11 On 17 September 1945 in an article entitled 'Rat Plague in Kielecki Voivodeship', *Dziennik Powszechny* reported that: 'The Provincial Health Department has recently been alarmed by a great plague of mice and rats in destroyed districts. There are localities on the so-called bridgehead where mice have literally eaten up all the mowed wheat, leaving the shredded sheaves. Meanwhile rats are multiplying in great numbers in bunkers and mud huts inhabited by people who have lost their homes to fire, spreading disease and fear among the local population. Unless the plague of rats is brought to an end, we must expect unpleasant reports of biting of babies and children by rats.'

12 Maria Kaczyńska, 'Psychiczne skutki wojny wśród dzieci i młodzieży', *Zdrowie Psychiczne*, 1 (1946), p. 54. Thirty-six per cent of respondents had lost one person close to them; 24 per cent had lost two; 16 per cent – three; 12 per cent – four; 5 per cent – five; and 2 per cent – six.

13 The Bureau initially estimated biological losses at 4.8 million (not counting the reduced number of births – around 1.25 million), but by order of Jakub Berman this number was adjusted upwards to 6 million (Mateusz Gniazdowski, "'Ustalić liczbę zabitych na 6 milionów". Dyrektywa Jakuba Bermiana, dla Biura Odszkodowań Wojennych przy Prezydium Rady Ministrów', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, 1 (2008), pp. 99-113.

Jews).<sup>14</sup> However, even after this correction, the figure is still too low, since in the final calculation it fails to take into account the Belorussian, German and Ukrainian citizens of the Second Republic who died as a result of World War II. If, then, we take into consideration the entire 35-million-strong population of Poland in August 1939, we can make the tentative hypothesis that as many as 7 million may not have survived to the end of the war. If we add all those who survived but were displaced somewhere outside Poland (and who later remained in the West or the East), then the population of Poland shrinks by around one-quarter, or nearly 9 million, in comparison to the pre-war period. No other European country sustained such heavy losses.

While no social group survived the war intact, relatively speaking it was the intelligentsia that suffered the most serious losses. The political, intellectual and cultural elite of Polish society was decimated. It has been estimated that 37.5 per cent of university-educated people and around 30 per cent of secondary-educated people in the Second Republic perished.<sup>15</sup> To consider this from another angle: if we also take into account the group of high officials, the officers' corps, and the free professions, who left the country in 1939, in most cases never to return, then Polish society in 1945, when the population was just under 24 million, may have included between 60,000 and 70,000 university graduates and no more than 300,000 high-school graduates. In other words, this period saw the demise (in wartime migrations and exterminations, on the battlefields) of the Polish elite: educated, opinion-making, official Poland, made up of those who held dear the values and symbols of the Second Republic. In these circumstances, the post-war mobilization of institutions vital for social life and for the economy must have entailed severe difficulties. The cadres revolution of the period was not only imposed from above; it was dictated by circumstances. Only the intelligentsia was capable of giving a name to the post-war reality, of conceptualizing it, of putting a swift end to the cultural chaos and confusion, and of playing a guiding role in the post-war reconstruction.

Left alone on the battleground was the majority of the population – poor, uneducated, resentful, brimming over with anxiety and trauma, more closely connected to the Church, conservative, traditional, living mostly in villages and small towns. It was in this Poland that Polish communists

14 Czesław Łuczak, 'Szanse i trudności bilansu demograficznego Polski w latach 1939-1945', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 2 (1994), pp. 9-15. In the same issue of *Dzieje Najnowsze* on this theme see also, inter alia, texts by: Jerzy Zdzisław Holzer, Franciszek Piper, Józef Marszałek, Krystyna Kersten.

15 T. Szarota, *Upowszechnienie kultury*, in *Polska Ludowa 1944-1955. Przemiany społeczne*, ed. Franciszek Ryszka (Wrocław-Warsaw: Ossolineum, 1974), p. 412.



placed their modernizing hopes, and it was first and foremost from this group that the communist system recruited its functionaries. But the revolution from above also had its own particular base: the marginalized and the 'superfluous'.<sup>16</sup> The revolution gave them a chance for advancement, to utilize their energy and channel it against survivors of the pre-war elite who might have been inclined to resist communism.

The second source of trauma was poverty. In 1939 many German officers, convinced of their cultural superiority, took amateur photographs of 'exotic' East European poverty. But the landscape they left in their wake as they fled Polish soil in panic in 1944 and 1945, often plundering right up to the very last moment, was incomparably bleaker. Poland belongs alongside Germany and the Soviet Union in terms of the scale of economic destruction suffered during the war. In 1945 the Polish national income dropped as low as 38.2 per cent of the 1938 level,<sup>17</sup> and this had a strong impact on the everyday life of the population. Several million people lost their property, their jobs, their sole sources of income. In the lead-up to the 1946 harvest, people were talking about the spectre of famine hanging over the country. But it was not only food that was lacking. In the course of six years of war, hundreds of thousands of families had lost even the most basic belongings. As Stanisław Szwalbe, then deputy leader of the Homeland National Council, recounted, "There are families whose members don't own a single pair of shoes and when they want to go out they borrow them from neighbors. There are cases when there is a single pair of shoes and three shirts for seven people."<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that after the war it was precisely clothing, shoes and lard that were the goods most commonly targeted by thieves. Two consequences of poverty are the concentration of all the individual's cognitive processes on survival and the blunting of sensitivity to everything external to bare existence.<sup>19</sup> In such circumstances, human beings become more egotistical, less sensitive to the suffering of others, and hence quick to behave

16 On this category of people, see Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 231. See also Marcin Zaremba, 'The Myth of Ritual Murder in Post-War Poland: Pathology and Hypotheses', *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 23 (2011), pp. 465-506.

17 Hanna Jędruszczak, 'Miasta i przemysł w okresie odbudowy', in *Polska Ludowa 1944-1955...*, p. 279.

18 *Dziennik Powszechny*, 14 February 1946.

19 Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity: The Effects of War, Revolution, Famine, Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1943), pp. 25-35. These observations have been developed further in Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Chicago: Free Press, Research Center in Development and Culture Change, University of Chicago, 1958).

aggressively. It was the material deprivation of large groups of the population that lay at the root of the wartime and post-war assaults, the murders of Jews, the looting, the banditry. Poverty also propelled the post-war migrations from the lands of central Poland to the 'Recovered Territories'.

The third source of trauma was the consequences of the wartime deportations and displacements. In those territories incorporated into the Reich these processes began as early as autumn 1939. From this point until the end of the war, the Germans exiled over 860,000 people, the majority of whom were from Wielkopolska and the Łódź region. In the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* 280,000 Poles were forced to leave their homes, and 500,000 were forced to leave the capital after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. In total, 1,650,000 people underwent forced exile during the German Occupation.<sup>20</sup> In addition, over 2 million Polish citizens were sent to Germany as forced labourers.<sup>21</sup> Although deportations carried out in the territories annexed by the Soviet Union comprised around 300,000 Polish citizens,<sup>22</sup> the trauma connected with the journey and the stay in the place of exile was probably more painful and the sense of being cut off, isolated and lost more intense than in the case of the German deportations. However, the social consequences of both sets of deportations and displacements were similar: the severing of middle-class bonds (professional, local, personal) and family bonds (in the case of forced labourers and POWs), and the disintegration or disappearance of entire groups and communities.

The fourth source of trauma is connected with the collapse of social, political, and cultural institutions. In the Poland of 1945, not only had the pre-war elites disappeared, but so too had the pre-war structures: authentic, recognizable and familiar organizations, associations and institutions, which – as was the case in the West – could take immediate measures to combat anarchy. The war brought about the almost complete disorganization of social life; it ripped apart the existing networks and structures.

20 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy...*, vol. I, pp. 333-336.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 251, 255.

22 One should also add to this number: forced conscriptions into the Red Army and construction battalions, prisoners of the Gulag, people who were resettled out of the border zone, and so on. Altogether around 600,000 to 800,000 people may have been forced to leave their places of residence; see further, inter alia: Stanisław Ciesielski, Grzegorz Hryciuk and Aleksander Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2002). On the theme of the course and consequences of ethnic cleansing in this region of Europe, see Philip Ther and Ane Siljak, eds, *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

The first traumatic blow connected with the collapse of institutions came with the annihilation of the state in 1939. There is only one word which captures adequately the psychological experiences of this period: shock. 'That is', as Kazimerz Wyka has written, 'the most violent, unprepared, unexpected political, social and moral shock. A shock which spread across all dimensions of collective life, across all the assertions upon which behaviour and predictions still relied on 31 August, on 1 September.'<sup>23</sup> The collapse of the country diminished social control, and was one of the causes of what was to be the greatest panic in Polish social history. Reminiscences of the September trauma can be found easily in war diaries, post-war memoirs, and works of literature. But the annihilation of the institutional world did not end in September 1939. Later, by order of the occupying authorities, a ban was placed on the activities of nearly all institutions and organizations in the territories occupied by the Third Reich and of the majority of those located in the Soviet zone. The latter – such as institutions of higher education, theatres, schools – were also shut down after the German invasion of the USSR. The Central Welfare Council and the Polish Red Cross were essentially the only organizations whose activities were sanctioned by the Germans.

The response to the German policy of disorganization and atomization of Polish society, a measure aimed at restoring its 'social health', was the re-creation of its most important institutions in the form of underground state structures. Various underground institutions were created in this fashion: schools, a judiciary, and various forms of social assistance. There were functioning political parties, and a powerful upsurge of publishing activities did its best to meet the demand for information, and even for entertainment. New bonds, a new solidarity, were created in conspiratorial conditions. For Jan Strzelecki, 'The form of our existence was the group, held together by a bond best described by the concept of brotherhood. This existence, lived in a state of constant threat, with the consciousness that we were walking along a knife's edge, that every meeting brought the final parting closer, opened up the meaning of the word "community" for us.'<sup>24</sup> Thousands of communities of this kind created a social movement, operating in conspiratorial conditions, which was without historical precedent; a movement which strengthened Poles' faith in themselves and their hopes of a final victory, as well as providing a sense of community and shared subjectivity. Although the decisive majority of the population was not

<sup>23</sup> K. Wyka, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> J. Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

formally sworn in, this movement nevertheless possessed social legitimacy and people felt as though they were a part of it. But popular support is not the whole story. The underground movement also employed sanctions for betrayal and banditry, creating a system for controlling behaviour and attitudes.<sup>25</sup> While giving full due to the movement's achievements, however, it must be observed that underground bonds and organizations were not capable of fully replacing the 'normal', stable functioning of society and state.

The second traumatic blow was dealt with the annihilation of this world of underground institutions. The defeat of the Warsaw Uprising had a strong detrimental effect here, serving to weaken the majority of forms of underground social self-organization, which had been so crucial for sustaining social subjectivity during the Occupation. With the collapse of the underground the conspiratorial ethos disappeared and an institutional vacuum emerged that lasted until the formation of the Polish People's Party. In 1945 there were no independent authorities or power centres, whether symbolic, local, judicial or economic. Not only did many pre-war political parties fail to resume operations, but so too did professional unions, business federations, local associations and clubs.<sup>26</sup> Almost instantaneously, especially in Malopolska, the Polish People's Party exploded, its ranks swelling rapidly to nearly a million members. Many organizations and associations operating in 1945-1948 were later liquidated as the mono-organizational system was put in place. However, it would appear that the 'sociological vacuum' described by Stefan Nowak in 1979 – that is, the disappearance of middle-range bonds and cooperations – was not a creation of the communist system.<sup>27</sup> This should rather be understood as a legacy of the war and the Occupation and as a factor which played a significant role in facilitating the communist seizure of power.<sup>28</sup> In the immediate post-war period, the deficit of institutions meant a lack of social control, which resulted in chaos and anarchy.

25 Leszek Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939-1945. Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: PAX, 1988).

26 Exceptions included the Union of Polish Teachers, the Polish Western Union, the Maritime League, the Association for Friends of Children, veterans' organizations, Poland-wide scientific associations, and scouts' organizations, all of which were resurrected relatively quickly.

27 Stefan Nowak, 'System wartości społeczeństwa polskiego', *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4 (1979), pp. 155-173.

28 J.T. Gross (*The Social Consequences of War...*) and Bradley E. Abrams (op. cit.) have drawn attention to the Polish and Jewish bourgeoisie's disappearance as a result of the war (a development viewed as positive from the communist perspective). Neither of these authors, however, has commented upon the significance of the destruction of middle-range bonds.

On the post-war landscape, the Catholic Church was essentially the only Poland-wide institution that still possessed moral authority. The Church, too, sustained great losses, both in human and material terms, numbered in destroyed churches, care homes, hospitals, archives, libraries. Yet despite all this, the numbers of the Church's adherents remained steady. Metaphorically speaking, one might say that organizationally and institutionally post-war Poland looked something like Cologne after the Allied carpet bombings: an almost intact cathedral left standing in the midst of a vast sea of rubble.

The fifth traumatic factor to be examined here is the deformation of the old hierarchy of stratification. The war rendered meaningless the previous hierarchies and stereotypes of social roles. Many hitherto privileged groups experienced economic degradation during the war: directors of state companies, owners of large and medium-sized enterprises seized on the territories occupied by the Third Reich by the Main Trusteeship East.<sup>29</sup> In the Polish Eastern Borderlands, the property of the middle and upper classes was also liable to seizure by the 'worker-peasant regime'. In the name of the 'Aryanization' of the economy, in the former case, and of historical justice in the latter, thousands of people suddenly lost their footing and fell off the property ladder, sometimes losing overnight positions which families had held for generations. The old privileges, knowledge and offices ceased to be meaningful, especially in the face of shortages of potatoes and coal; more than this, they could even be targets for repression by the occupiers. As a result, the social structure flattened out and class antagonisms became less acute.

The village, too, underwent a structural revolution. Its feudal world order, resting on three pillars – lord, reeve (*wójt*) and pastor – was turned to rubble. In the Eastern Borderlands the extermination of the land-owning gentry had already taken place in 1939. In the other territories the agony dragged on until 1945. During the war the manor lost its significance as a centre of social order in the village, while its inhabitants were repressed under the German policy of exterminating Polish elites.<sup>30</sup> The village was divided in its attitudes towards these changes. For older people, the fall of 'our feudal

29 For more, see C. Madajczyk, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 515-595.

30 Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939-1956* (Warsaw: Archiwum Wschodnie, IH PAN, 1995); idem, *Zagłada polskich Kresów: ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941. Studium z dziejów zagłady dawnego narodu politycznego* (Warsaw: Volumen, ISP PAN, 1998).

lord' was often a frightening experience.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, after the war, the 'return of the lords' was feared by young people and landless people who had received land under the agricultural reform. For these latter groups, the annihilation of the manor could mean the restoration of social justice and the removal of social barriers. Their fears, worked through symbolically, would later become the fundamental source of legitimization of the new post-war social order.

Another bastion of the Polish village – *wójt* and *soltys* (the mayor and the village headman) – also lost its significance, albeit for different reasons. As functionaries of the German administrative apparatus, on the one hand, and as representatives of local society *vis-à-vis* the occupying authorities on the other, these figures had to manoeuvre constantly between the strict execution of orders of those authorities (which meant acting against the interests of the group), and deceiving the occupier in the name of the interests of the population (which might provoke repressions). Many local village leaders overstepped the border between unavoidable cooperation and collaboration, antagonizing the villagers, and losing any real influence over them.<sup>32</sup> Several hundred people were killed under sentences passed by underground courts. The number of those sentenced for collaboration after the war is unknown.

The institutions of the *wójt* and *soltys* were not the only sources of stability in the pre-war Polish village, however. Even before the war, the traditional hierarchies and arrangements had begun to undergo transformation in favour of more modern structures. A variety of village leaders had emerged: social activists, politicians, teachers, forest rangers. During the Occupation it was these people who often became the leaders of the various defensive formations set up in the villages – above all, in the Peasant Battalions – and the collective solidarity of village society became visibly stronger as the war progressed. The war increased the importance of the village: it became the hotbed of conspiracy and the partisan war, and above all, it meant salvation for starving towns – the village had food. On the other hand, it was precisely in the village that the effects of the policy of disintegration and the destruction of social bonds were most visible. The majority of denouncers and informers came from 'the people'.<sup>33</sup> Many peasant leaders, who might

31 *Wieś polska 1939-1948. Materiały konkursowe*, ed. Krystyna Kersten and Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw: PWN, 1967), vol. 1, p. 483.

32 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy...*, p. 194; C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa...*, p. 511.

33 See for example: Alina Skibińska and Jakub Petelewicz, 'Udział Polaków w zbrodniach na Żydach na prowincji regionu świętokrzyskiego', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, 1 (2005), pp.

have been capable of leading the post-war reconstruction, of providing centres of social stabilization, perished or were deported by the occupiers. To describe the situation in sociological terms, we might say that in many rural regions the traditional community of the *Gemeinschaft* type collapsed, while the embryonic modern 'society' or *Gesellschaft* was in large measure killed off. As a consequence, there ensued destabilization and loosening of the system of power and social control in the village, and it is here that we must seek the causes of the post-war chaos, anomie, plagues of reprisals and score-settling.

### Trauma Symptoms

Symptoms of war trauma could take several forms, but it is possible to pinpoint three symptoms which were emblematic.<sup>34</sup> The most important of these is the all-pervasiveness of fear during the war. This fear guided people; it determined their behaviour and attitudes. One of the exceptional things about this war was the fact that the dominion of fear was not limited to soldiers, who lived with fear constantly, but spilled over and spread through the whole civilian population, especially in Eastern Europe. For Poles, the six years of war were a period of almost permanent threat.<sup>35</sup>

In his *Introduction to the Physiology of Fear*, the literary critic Henryk Vogler, who was born in 1911, notes: 'Wherever I look at the past of our generation and our class. [...] I encounter traces of fear. Even the most learned botanist knows fewer varieties of native flora than we knew species of that native emotion.'<sup>36</sup> Each of the aforementioned sources of trauma was associated with its own specific fear and anxiety. But there was one which must be singled out as the most important: the fear of death, and after that, anxiety about the fate of loved ones, fear of arrest, of torture, of breaking down under interrogation. People lived in a state of enormous tension during the Occupation. Anybody might have 'something on their conscience' in the eyes of the occupier. In addition, the Germans did not adhere to any legal regulations. They were unpredictable. Most often the method they used for enforcing obedience was blind, meaningless violence,

123, 124; Barbara Engelking, 'Szanowny panie gistapo'. *Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940-1941* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2003), pp. 62-72.

34 Others, such as feelings of guilt and humiliation, are beyond the scope of this article.

35 As Tomasz Szarota has pointed out, Polish society was living in conditions of constant psychological stress. T. Szarota, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

36 Henryk Vogler, *Wstęp do fizjologii strachu* (Kraków: Wydaw. Literackie, 1990), p. 18.



and this engendered an atmosphere of fear. Intense repressions drove people into a state of collective psychosis, manifested in denial, fantasy and escapism, social atomization, waves of apocalyptic rumours.<sup>37</sup> Public collective executions by shooting or hanging (or, on the territory incorporated into the Reich, by guillotine), made it seem as though history had swung back to barbarian times. In June and July 1945 in response to the question 'Which event made the strongest impression on you?', Polish youth answered 'the Warsaw Uprising' (22 per cent); arrests, their own or of someone close to them (16 per cent); shootings, hangings, or other kinds of executions (14 per cent); *tapanki*, the Polish term for Nazi round-ups of people as hostages or with the aim of deporting them as forced labourers (11 per cent).<sup>38</sup> The 'great fear' – this is how we might, following Julian Strykowski, name the time of Soviet rule in the Eastern Borderlands.

The years of German Occupation partially erased the memory of that dread. But only partially: a rich breeding-ground for fear still remained in place after the war. The words 'Siberia' and 'the Soviets', *tapanka* and deportation, Oświęcim and Majdanek, the Gestapo and the NKVD – these became the most important icons of Polish fear. They were words pronounced with dread; they were symbols of the national martyrdom. The war's end did not liberate people from the tyranny of fear; it did not automatically bring their fear to an end. Instead, the fear metamorphosed into a less concrete, sometimes unspoken fear, whose sources people were not always capable of identifying or articulating at the time. This fear must be added to the long list of consequences of the war which played a major role in the process of forming Polish post-war consciousness and anxiety disorders.

There is no doubt that by 1945, Poles were psychologically shattered, but it is difficult to quantify the baggage of fear which they brought away from those six years. Post-war estimates place the number of psychologically damaged people left behind by the war at 60,000.<sup>39</sup> If today's tools from the fields of psychiatry and psychology had been available at the time, however, then it is quite possible that the number of people diagnosed with 'war syndrome' would have been considerably larger. The symptoms of this syndrome were varied, and might include emotional instability,

37 *Pro memoria (1941-1944). Raporty Departamentu Informacji Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj o zbrodniach na narodzie polskim*, compiled and edited by Janusz Gmitruk, Arkadiusz Indraszczyk and Adam Koseski (Warszawa-Pułtusk: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego w Warszawie, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztor, 2004/2005), p. 465.

38 M. Kaczyńska, *Psychiczne skutki...*, p. 55.

39 Krystyna Kersten, 'Społeczeństwo polskie wobec władzy komunistów', in K. Kersten, *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944-1956* (Londyn: Aneks, 1993), p. 8.



nervous strain, severe depression and anxiety. Long-term fear can also give rise to conformism, social apathy and passivity. In June 1945 underground activists described the post-war psychological condition of residents of Wielkopolska as follows: ‘The psychological condition of the local population [...] is [characterized by] a lingering fear, and passivity. [...] Inner rebirth has yet to take place, well-being has yet to take shape. Poles are lacking in self-esteem, they are depressed and apathetic, and concerned only with everyday material difficulties. Rousing them from the torpor is no easy matter.’<sup>40</sup> Observations of this kind serve to undermine the myth of mass enthusiasm in post-war Poland.

It was not only members of the underground who took an interest in the contemporary psychological state of the Polish people. Soon after the war a group of Polish psychologists headed by Stefan Baley, Stefan Batawia, Maria Kaczynska, and Maria Zebrowska undertook major research investigating the psychological consequences of the war.<sup>41</sup> Several decades later, after the experiences of the Vietnam War, their American colleagues diagnosed a specific category of disorders, so-called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder,<sup>42</sup> whose most frequent symptoms are depression, panic attacks, phobias, psychosomatic disorders, and substance abuse. Polish psychologists had observed precisely the same symptoms – known at the time as the ‘war syndrome’ – in their patients after World War II. Symptoms included compulsions and anxiety disorders of various kinds, which might be triggered by the wail of a factory siren, for example, or the roar of a plane engine.<sup>43</sup>

States of emotional brokenness were most visible among children, especially Jewish children. This is how *The Girl in the Red Coat*, Roma Ligocka, remembered the first post-war lessons in a Jewish school in Kraków:

40 *Raport o sytuacji na Ziemiach Zachodnich. Wielkopolska (od 15 V do 15 VI 1945)*, AAN, Delegatura Rządu, 202/III-36, k. 171.

41 Unfortunately, Stalinism prevented the completion of these studies, and the research material was partially dispersed before it had been fully processed or exploited. The researchers did succeed, however, in publishing several articles on the basis of these studies in the 1940s.

42 Cf. Maria Lis-Turlejska, *Traumatyczny stres. Koncepcje i badania* (Warsaw: Instytut Psychologii PAN, 1998); Bohdan Dudek, *Zaburzenia po stresie traumatycznym* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2003).

43 The Warsaw journalist Jadwiga Krawczyńska, for example, notes that ‘To this day the sound of a diving plane triggers a very unpleasant sensation for me, and I’m not the only one. How difficult it was to stand these continuous vibrations of air and whistlings in the years immediately following the war and occupation! So many terrible memories from September 1939 and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, day and night air-raids.’ Jadwiga Krawczyńska, *Zapiski dziennikarki warszawskiej 1939-1947* (Warsaw: PIW, 1971), p. 304.

An excruciatingly tense atmosphere rules here. Not a minute passes without someone beginning to cry. Children and teachers cry at any opportunity. Everyone is highly strung, almost hysterical.<sup>44</sup>

A tendency to weepiness and increased irritability was also observed among non-Jewish children. The war trauma manifested itself in their stories and drawings: 'Fearfulness, timidity, mistrust of strangers', Stefan Baley wrote, 'this is often a chronic reaction to war atrocities experienced by a small child'.<sup>45</sup> In response to a question asked of Polish young people in 1945, 'Have you observed nervous disturbances in yourself, or in anyone close to you?', 64.7 per cent answered in the affirmative; 31 per cent had had personal experiences of nervous disturbances; and 69 per cent had observed such disturbances among people close to them. For many people the passage of time did not bring liberation from the tyranny of fear. Memoirs and diaries recorded during the time of the Polish People's Republic and also works of literature, films and fine arts bear witness to the enduring nature of war trauma at the individual level. One memoirist used the term 'ruins disease' (*choroba ruin*) to characterize this post-traumatic stress disorder. She continued to suffer from this disorder for 'entire years' after the war.<sup>46</sup>

Psychologists have uncovered layers of war fear that date back long before 1945. 'Concentration camp syndrome' ('KZ-syndrom') was diagnosed on the basis of studies examining the state of health of former German concentration camp prisoners and their families.<sup>47</sup> In the early 1960s, only one-third of the former camp prisoners examined as part of the study failed to exhibit signs of severe impairment of mental functioning. Studies conducted almost thirty years after their liberation have shown

44 Roma Ligocka, *Dziewczyna w czerwonym płaszczyku* (Kraków: Znak, 2001), p. 137.

45 See further on this subject: S. Baley, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

46 'I remember not only the first moments of my return to Warsaw, when I was choked with tears at the sight of the abused, shattered, burnt-out city. For many days later I walked through the streets weeping, no longer ashamed of the tears flooding my eyes. When I passed the former houses of people I used to know, who were no longer alive, or had been driven away, it brought back memories of the merciless occupiers and I couldn't stop sobbing. This lasted for a long time, a very long time, for entire years. The symptoms of breakdown occurred with varying intensity, while nervous shocks used to come on unexpectedly. After the occupation, for example, I couldn't bear the sound of young people laughing loudly – as for me, I stopped not only laughing but even smiling. This was completely at odds with my usual disposition and temperament. I was irritated when anyone spoke loudly, I knew that it was unfair, but I looked round angrily when I heard laughter in the street.' J. Krawczyńska, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

47 Antoni Kępiński, *Rytm życia*, chapter *KZ-syndrom* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000).

that symptoms of KZ-syndrome remained constant to varying degrees in all those examined.<sup>48</sup> Psychologists have also found symptoms of fear, depression and interpersonal problems among people who went through the Gehenna of the Soviet deportations. Ewa Jackowska, who conducted her research in the late 1990s, found that sixty-six out of the hundred 'Siberians' she examined suffered from unpleasant recurring memories or flashbacks, while thirty-three suffered from nightmares linked with the deportations. In spite of the fact that over fifty years had passed since the deportation, thirty victims continued to exhibit clear post-traumatic stress symptoms, manifested in phobic reactions (fear of starvation and war, anxiety) and neurotic personality traits (feelings of inferiority, timidity, distrust).<sup>49</sup>

The second symptom of war trauma (strongly correlated with the first) was aggression. An increase in the level of aggression in interpersonal relations was one of the most important consequences of the war, which created a huge potential for violence and a readiness to use violence in situations of the slightest conflict. There is no doubt that even before 1939 people were reaching for violence as a matter of course and in an exceptionally brutal way during the workers' strikes and the political and racial conflicts.<sup>50</sup> But this type of violence was universalized as a result of the war. 'Village get-togethers invariably ended in fights', recalled one village teacher.<sup>51</sup> His colleagues, surveyed in 1946, reported an increased tendency to fighting among their pupils.<sup>52</sup> The use of force as a means of settling conflicts had to some extent become normal behaviour. The almost universal possession of firearms, especially in the village, was an important contributing factor. But in order for people to grow accustomed to reaching for the gun, they needed a new model of social behaviour whereby conflicts were waged for the highest stakes and aimed at the physical annihilation of the enemy. According to militia statistics, over 8,411 murders were committed in Poland in 1945. Yet this figure is much too low.<sup>53</sup> It is unlikely that it includes all

48 For the most recent survey of research, see Ewa Jackowska, *Psychiczne następstwa...*, pp. 61-84.

49 E. Jackowska, op. cit., pp. 327, 328.

50 Tomasz Marszałkowski, *Zamieszki, ekscesy i demonstracje w Krakowie 1918-1939* (Kraków: Arcana, 2006).

51 *Wieś polska...*, vol. 1, p. 421.

52 S. Baley, *Psychiczne wpływy...*, p. 21.

53 In subsequent years the number of registered homicides decreased. In 1946 the militia registered 7,146 homicides; in 1947, 2,812; in 1948, 1,345; and in 1949, 1,068. *Przestępstwa zameldowane Policji w latach 1924-1938 oraz przestępstwa zameldowane Milicji Obywatelskiej w latach 1945-1964* (Warsaw: KG MO, 1967), p. 33.

killings committed by the actual law-enforcement agencies (militiamen, UB and KBW functionaries, soldiers) or killings of Germans and Ukrainians.

Every armed conflict brings an increase in homicide rates in its wake. Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner, who have researched this issue, point to state legitimization of murder and devaluation of moral standards as the primary causes of this phenomenon: 'The radical change which ensues during wartime in the customary prohibitions on murder, which operate during peace time, may in a certain manner have the effect of lowering the threshold for using [...] murder as a means of settling conflicts in everyday life.'<sup>54</sup> But the moral corruption that occurs in wartime does not explain everything. In striving to understand these processes, we must also look to the emotional condition of Poles. In the opinion of some psychologists (such as Karen Horney) aggression and hostility are reactions to basic fear. Increased levels of individual and collective aggression can thus be viewed as trauma symptoms, as consequences of long-term experiences of terror and fear.

Archer and Gartner have proved statistically that wars leave behind a legacy in the form of increased homicide rates. However, they did not manage to establish a correlation between homicide rates and the nature of the war in question (small vs large, victory vs defeat, etc.). Furthermore, their research excluded Poland, Yugoslavia and the USSR – in a word, precisely those countries in which total war and partisan warfare were being waged simultaneously. One might risk the hypothesis that in Poland, the lowering of the threshold for resorting to murder was particularly dramatic because in this country the war was conducted with exceptional and atavistic brutality. And here we come to the next cause: as psychologists tell us, aggression fosters aggression.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to pious predictions issued from the beginning of the war, a 'purification' effect, or collective catharsis, did not come to pass. On the contrary: the experience of observing hatred and German atrocities simply removed all obstacles to further violence. Incessant references in the underground press made to the cultural gulf dividing Poles from the barbarian 'Szwaby' (a colloquial pejorative term for

54 Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner, 'Ofiary czasów pokoju: wpływ wojny na stosowanie przemocy przez osoby nie biorące udziału w wojnie', in *Człowiek istota społeczna. Wybór tekstów*, ed. Elliot Aronson (Warsaw: PWN, 2002), pp. 401, 402.

55 Henryk Pietrzak, *Agresja indywidualna i zbiorowa w sytuacji napięć społecznych* (Rzeszów: WSzP, 1992), pp. 30-32; Russell G. Geen, David Stonner and Gary L. Shope, *Agresja sprzyja agresji: materiał dowodowy przeciw hipotezie katharsis*, in *Człowiek istota społeczna. Wybór tekstów...*, pp. 377-388.

'Germans') notwithstanding, in some groups and milieus a process of the social learning of violence and brutality had been set in motion.

An example of one such 'lesson' is mentioned in Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's wartime diaries. For young men, solving problems suddenly became easy: if someone in the neighbourhood was causing trouble, it was enough to have a gun – then one would have a quiet word with the person in private, and that would be the end of the matter. This young man discovered just how easy this could be when he observed German gendarmes shooting on the spot three Jews caught at the railway station, without hesitation.<sup>56</sup> The effects of this 'school of violence' can also be seen at the level of collective behaviours. It would appear, for example, that the extermination of the Jewish inhabitants of Jedwabne was carried out in accordance with a model or script based on earlier atrocities, such as the burning alive of 700 to 800 Jews in a Białostok synagogue, perpetrated by Germans in late June 1941.

The response to the occupiers' violence was an escalation of violence on the Polish side. Together with drunkenness, aggression became a part of the wartime way of life, of a specific set of norms and behaviours, which included, in addition to those already mentioned, disregard for human life, cynicism, and a narrowing of chronological perspective to days or even hours. Those who had passed through 'the forest', one memoirist pointed out, 'mostly ceased to value human life, they had grown accustomed to a light and free life, to moonshine liquor etc.'<sup>57</sup> The blade of aggression was also turned against members of their own national group. As a consequence, the passage of years brought an increasing brutalization of social life, manifested in rising rates of crime, brawling, and horrible murders. The post-war cases of torture inflicted upon opponents of both warring camps would probably not have occurred had it not been for the earlier upsurge of aggression unleashed by the war. The idea of 'pacifying' some village or small town, even after Berlin had been taken, would probably not have occurred to commanders, had they not been witness to such practices during the war.<sup>58</sup>

It seems that the process of internalization of aggression developed with particular intensity on the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* (henceforth the GG) and Wołyn, where the Germans put on a show of cruelty for

56 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1911-1955* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2007), p. 223.

57 *Wiś polska...*, vol. 4, p. 105.

58 For an example of such 'security' operations after May 1945, see *Wojewódzki Urząd Informacji i Propagandy w Rzeszowie do Ministerstwa Informacji i Propagandy w Warszawie* (15 May 1946), k. 35.

the civilian population comparable only to (and more drawn-out than) the atrocities committed in Yugoslavia and the USSR. The significance of this experience becomes clear if we compare the 'morale' of the Polish First Army soldiers, most of whom came from the Borderlands, with the behaviour of those men who formed the Polish Second Army, mobilized on the territory previously belonging to the GG. Having examined hundreds of reports produced by the Military Information Directorate and by political-education officers, I can risk the hypothesis that soldiers from central Poland manifested cruelty towards German POWs and civilians more often. They were also more likely to appear before field-courts martial for attacking their fellow countrymen.

The causes of the rising levels of aggression are also to be found in the very nature of partisan warfare itself. Partisans (with the exception of soldiers who took part in the Warsaw Uprising) did not enjoy the same rights as POWs and therefore were usually executed by the regular units. As for the partisans, generally speaking they did not take prisoners, if only because they had nowhere to hold them. Furthermore, in contrast to civilians, underground soldiers engaging in aggressive behaviour were positively rewarded; such soldiers were decorated and treated as heroes. An exemplary case is that of 'Wildcat I' (Żbik I), one of the Home Army's diversionary soldiers in the Rzeszowski region. He had several hundred death sentences on his record. There is no doubt that he was brave, disciplined and comradely; he was also vicious and ruthless. He was one of only four men in a unit of several hundred to receive the Cross of Valour for bravery. As a reward for killing a comrade who had been accused of collaboration, he was transferred to a diversionary unit. His memoirs are a study in wartime perversion, contempt for human life, aggression and sadism.<sup>59</sup> We can also interpret them as one of many symptoms of anomie, of the decline during the Occupation of norms hitherto in force, and of the destabilization of social relationships.<sup>60</sup>

The third symptom of war trauma, and simultaneously a strategy for coping with this trauma, was alcoholism. Alcohol turns up only rarely in post-war photographs, yet it too was a consequence of the war which served to shape the 'post-war' climate. Alcohol – usually moonshine – was drunk

59 Stefan Dąbbski, 'Egzekutor', *Karta*, 47 (2005), pp. 64-97.

60 It must be emphasized that the majority of underground commanders tried to eliminate this type of behaviour, to prevent the formation of groups of 'professionals' (professional killers). However, the collapse of the underground structures caused by the failure of the Warsaw Uprising made it increasingly difficult to keep subordinates under control (L. Gondek, op. cit., p. 145 and elsewhere).

on a mass scale in cities. In the village it ceased to be limited to feast days, and the domain of the tavern became an important element of everyday village life. Before the war, it would have been scandalous for a woman to drink; but now women began drinking, along with young people and even children. Studies conducted after the war in Lublin on a group of children aged 7 to 15 indicate that out of 1,000 respondents only 264 had never tasted vodka; 474 drank 'occasionally' and 279 constantly. The questionnaire also showed that in 90 per cent of cases it was parents who played the role of 'suppliers' of alcohol.<sup>61</sup> There were villages in which moonshine was being produced in almost every peasant hut. A farmer from the outskirts of Augustow recalled that '[w]hen the blood was flowing at the front, the vodka was flowing in our houses'.<sup>62</sup>

Alcohol was the primary catalyst of post-war anti-Semitic riots. Many participants of the Kraków pogrom of August 1945 were under the influence of alcohol at the time. The anti-Semitic disturbances at Zdunska Wola in November 1945, and in Kraków in March 1946, were sparked by drunk war invalids. Intoxicated soldiers and functionaries of the MO, UB and KBW were the perpetrators of many similar incidents. The ringleader of the 1946 Kielce pogrom was a drunkard. Another of the participants, later sentenced to death, confessed that before joining the mob: 'I went home and there I drank a quarter of vodka and had a bite to eat.'<sup>63</sup> It is possible to hypothesize further that many post-war murders, too, both political and criminal, were not committed by sober people. Acts of brutality and attempts to lose oneself in drunkenness often went hand-in-hand at the time.

Moralists accused the Germans of encouraging alcoholism, and it is true that they did often pay people with alcohol. During the war people also drank because of alcohol's high calorific value and because it was useful for fighting off hunger pangs. But it was the therapeutic value of alcohol that was most important. Drinking was a tried and tested means of cheering oneself up in moments of despair and calamity. 'In confrontation with

61 Data from *Dziennik Powszechny*, 14 March 1946. The newspaper did not indicate by whom and when these studies had been conducted, but further confirmation of these findings can be found in H. Dreszerowa and J. Handelsman, 'Alkoholizm u młodzieży szkolnej', *Zdrowie psychiczne*, 2-4 (1948), pp. 112-118. The latter shows, among other things, that in the course of the war, the number of children drinking alcohol on a frequent basis doubled, while the number of teetotalers fell by 10 per cent.

62 *Wiśń polska...*, vol. 4, pp. 11, 12.

63 *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie 4 lipca 1946 roku. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona (Kielce: Urząd Miasta Kielce, Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1992), p. 122.



bitterness and a sense of hopelessness vodka gave moments of solace and – most importantly – forgetting; it relieved frustration, alleviated tension and resentful thoughts.<sup>64</sup> Alcohol made people feel powerful; it calmed the conscience; it seemed to mitigate fear.

### The Cultural Consequences of Trauma

The 'trauma of the great war' also had its impact on culture, affecting both of culture's component spheres: the normative sphere (comprising values, norms, rules, principles) and the cognitive sphere (of convictions, beliefs, opinions). It was in this field that the changes were probably both the most far-reaching and long-lasting. The war had called into question the most important values; pre-war strategies and ways of acting had lost their meaning. The collapse of the old world brought cultural upheaval in its wake, and 'the unreality of the Occupation' forced people to seek out new strategies of acting, new ways of coping with the trauma. In 1943 Pitirim Sorokin wrote: 'Calamities generate two opposite movements in different sections of the population: one is a trend toward unreligiousness and demoralization; the other is a trend toward extreme religious, spiritual, and moral exaltation.'<sup>65</sup> The Occupation gave rise to a similar situation, which can be represented most simply by employing three pairs of complementary oppositions. Sorokin indicated the first of these pairs: on the one hand, the increase of religiosity and popularization of magical thinking, possibly accompanied by a raising of moral standards; and on the other hand, a withdrawal from the Church on the part of some believers and a process leading to the atrophy of moral bonds and to anomie. The second pair is related to the family bond, which was both strengthened and weakened. Finally, the third pair concerns the strengthening of the national bond and of supra-class solidarity, the flipside of which was an exclusive definition of the national category 'we' and a deepening (or at least the continuation of the existing levels) of anti-Semitism. These dichotomies cannot be categorized as unequivocally 'good' or 'bad'. An increase of religiosity might well be highly correlated with antipathy towards Jews, for example, while the strengthening of the family bond might result in 'family-centrism' and indifference towards others.

64 Sławomir Buryła, 'Wojna i alkohol. Zaproszenie do tematu', in *Wojna doświadczenie i zapis. Nowe źródła, problemy, metody badawcze*, ed. Sławomir Buryła and Paweł Rodak (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), p. 207.

65 P. Sorokin, op. cit., p. 161.



To a certain degree, the increase of religiosity of a large part of Polish society was an obvious and predictable reaction to the fear and terror of the Occupation. In addition, everyday participation in ritual was also an opportunity for people to come together. In this sense religion acted as a substitute for other sources of bonds and social activities, which had been blocked off by the occupiers. As early as autumn 1939, Polish churches were filled as never before: 'People prayed fervently, churches were saturated with exultation and hope.'<sup>66</sup> During the periods of intense *łapanki*, when people were afraid to go out onto the streets, collective prayers were held in small courtyard chapels. The bond with the Church was strengthened (in spite of Primate August Hlond's flight from the country), and after the war this bond was manifested in mass participation in religious rites.<sup>67</sup> In turn, anti-clerical views, which were quite prevalent in the pre-war peasant movement, weakened noticeably. This was attributable to the shared fates of nation and Church, equally persecuted during the Occupation, and also to the deterioration of the Church's economic position in the village.

The spread of magical thinking, together with prophecies and predictions, especially those heralding the longed-for defeat of 'the Soviets' and the Third Reich, should also be listed among people's reactions to the trauma. The collapse of the state, uncertainty, lack of information – all of this combined created fertile ground for the flourishing of magic, which, as Bronisław Malinowski once asserted, can be understood as a kind of ritualization of human optimism, an agent of increasing man's faith in the victory of hope over fear.<sup>68</sup> The anthropologist's contention is supported by the observations of Karolina Lanckorońska, who spent several months in Soviet-occupied Lwów:

Since there was no good news, the most magnificent prophecies rained down, passed on by word of mouth, or even worse, transcribed many times over, hidden away in apartments. [...] The struggle with prophecies was difficult, for people used them as drugs, which, as we know, are a difficult thing for anyone to give up.<sup>69</sup>

66 K. Wyka, op. cit., p. 231.

67 Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943-1948* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krąg, 1985), p. 153.

68 Bronisław Malinowski, *Mit, magia, religia* (Warsaw: PWN, 1990), p. 444.

69 Karolina Lanckorońska, *Wspomnienia wojenne* (Warsaw: Znak, 2003), p. 35.

The end of the war did not liberate Poles from their addiction to magical thinking. Everywhere people were repeating prophecies linked to the date when conflict was supposed to break out between East and West. Messianic predictions served as a means of rediscovering a source of hope and faith in the future and of making sense of the current situation, which otherwise seemed miserable and uncertain. Similarly magical in its nature was the myth of ritual murder, supposedly perpetrated by Jews on Christian children, rumours of which spread like wildfire from spring 1945. The persistent repetition of this myth can be interpreted in a similar way: on the one hand, as a mark of civilizational regression, brought on by the war; and on the other, as a reflection of the human need to explain the world – in this case, to explain a world for which there could be no explanation.<sup>70</sup>

Religious extremism may have led to a rise in moral standards. But a strong case can be made for arguing that the duality of values that was characteristic of People's Poland was in fact a phenomenon that emerged earlier, during the war. This dimorphism was expressed in a basic duality of moral attitudes and values: standards were high when it came to dealing with the closest circle of family and friends and lowered with regard to the external world. This duality was the basis for the wartime schizophrenia or, as Kazimierz Wyka has written, for the wartime 'make-believe life', a phrase which he used to describe the deep rupture obtaining between reality and the normative system.<sup>71</sup> Although moral injunctions learned from parents ('because you mustn't') were still in operation, the war often left people with no choice: one had to steal and to kill in order to survive. It is undoubtedly the case that thousands of the citizens of the Second Republic displayed attachment to the pre-war set of rules and norms, passing the highest test of heroism, sacrifice and empathy towards others. The majority, however, passed over into a moral 'grey zone', oscillating from selective depreciation of certain values ('because one has to live somehow') to complete atrophy of the moral bond, an absence of obligations tying one to other people, and the rise of extreme egotism. In the opinion of Piotr Sztompka there are three possible manifestations of such atrophy: a) a culture of cynicism, characterized by widespread suspiciousness, distrust, attribution of the basest motives to others; b) a culture of manipulation, whereby the trust and naivete of other people is abused through deception and lies; and c)

70 Marcin Zaremba, 'The Myth of Ritual Murder in Post-War Poland: Pathology and Hypotheses', *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 23 (2011), pp. 465-506.

71 Kazimierz Wyka, *Życie na niby* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984).

a culture of indifference, when extreme self-interestedness, egotism, and indifference towards the suffering of others become socially accepted.<sup>72</sup>

The war proved to be a breeding ground for all three of these types of cultures, and the wartime way of life was their combined result. The culture of cynicism was a type of defensive strategy aimed at reducing trouble. An individual may respond to fear by struggling against or fleeing the threat and by adopting an attitude of deep distrust towards this world. This strategy was essential in a situation of constant threat, but it also proved to be functional *after* the war. And it came at a cost: growing social atomization and a lack of desire for any engagement. The passivity, apathy and suspiciousness of the 'local population' was a common theme and lament of reports produced by representatives of 'the people's regime'.

The war also functioned as a school for the culture of manipulation. Deception and lies were actively encouraged, especially when it came to contacts with Germans. A report of the Government Representation from late April-early May 1942 tells us that

Amongst a series of social phenomena of an increasingly acute nature, which have been starting to build up recently in the country, we must include a disturbing increase in moral corruption in many spheres of society [...] certain symptoms of which must for the moment be tolerated out of necessity, and often even fomented.

The most striking decline of moral standards concerned the ethos of work and ethics in barter, which unexpectedly proved to be second nature for Poles. The authors of the report cited above further pointed out:

Illicit barter, supported by necessity by the consumer and encouraged by the liberation organizations as society's only salvation from starvation, is however mostly tantamount to profiteering [and] indifferent to poverty, hunger and the ever greater material impoverishment of compatriots.<sup>73</sup>

The culture of manipulation was also manifest in the form of corruption. Bribes paid to Germans helped everyday life to run smoothly, and they also saved the lives of many members of the underground. However, in

72 P. Sztompka, *Socjologia analiza społeczeństwa* (Kraków: Znak, 2002), p. 188.

73 'Pro memoria o sytuacji w kraju w okresie 16 kwietnia – 31 maja 1942', in *Pro memoria...*, p. 157.

addition to being widespread in the German administrative apparatus,<sup>74</sup> bribes quickly also became the norm in interactions between Poles and yet another symptom of social disintegration.

Like the two types of cultures described above, the culture of indifference also proved essential since it guaranteed the preservation of mental health. But the problem was that it led to an exclusivity of the moral bond – to a limiting of the field of human solidarity to one's most immediate circle. The most visible indicators of the demise of the moral bond were the universalization of antisocial activities and the increase in crime. The war left behind a tendency towards anomie and deviant behaviours. Actions which, before the war, would have been considered crimes in the eyes of society, began to be treated as the norm and even as something worthy of pride. Over half (60.6 per cent) of a sample of 1,500 young people responded affirmatively to the question 'Did you commit thefts, deceptions, lies etc. in relation to Germans?' Maria Kaczynska, the author of a report on this research, observes that 'Although only 10 per cent of young people assert clearly that thefts and deception in relation to Germans had a negative influence on their characters, we must nevertheless assume that wherever there were such cases and for whatever cause they occurred, they must have left negative traces in the psyches of those who committed them.'<sup>75</sup> Teachers also surveyed in 1946 observed among their pupils a lack of respect for other people's property, an interest in guns, a lack of morality, drunkenness, and a tendency to brawling.<sup>76</sup> By the force of events, young people, in whom the pre-war values were only weakly inculcated, were the most vulnerable to pathologies. And the problem was not limited to young people. Observing the results of the war for the older generation, Maria Kaczynska predicted that

If we take into consideration the fact that nearly the entire adult society committed these acts in relation to the occupiers and that a lack of respect for other people's property was already strongly developed in our psyche (probably as a result of lack of freedom and corruption by the oppressors), then one must suppose that now, after the war, lack of honesty in relation to other people's property will become catastrophic for our national, social and private life.<sup>77</sup>

74 C. Madajczyk, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 500, 501.

75 M. Kaczyńska, op. cit., p. 62.

76 S. Baley, *Psychiczne wpływy...*, p. 21.

77 M. Kaczyńska, op. cit., p. 62.

Although the militia statistics do not reflect this definitively,<sup>78</sup> in reality criminality grew by leaps and bounds, especially among juveniles. After having observed the extermination of the Jews, Poles ceased to view the appropriation of the victims' belongings as a crime. The post-war weakness of those institutions responsible for maintaining social order fostered impunity. If only in this respect, the processes leading to anomie did not break off with the end of the war. They maintained momentum and were entrenched by the post-war migrations.

Observers were already noting the resultant pathology of the moral bond during the war itself, a pathology that intensified immediately after the war ended. The contemporary press contains commentary on the imperative to struggle against what we might call today 'moral corruption', and the Church too often made pronouncements on this theme. For example, the Bishop of Lomza Stanislaw Lukomski, whose 1940-1944 sermons have been researched by Jan Żaryn, observed a deep change in the behaviour of worshippers. Among the new pathologies of social life, the bishop listed excessive submission to the occupier by women, lack of respect for other people's property, the spread of crime, and, as a consequence, immunity to the sight of death.<sup>79</sup> A decline of 'private and public decency' was noted by the Polish episcopate in the 1946 Lent pastoral letter.<sup>80</sup> Trauma emerges only when this type of phenomena is experienced and perceived as a problem requiring treatment. 'The most visible sign of trauma', writes Sztompka, 'is the fact that people talk about it and want to remedy it somehow'.<sup>81</sup>

The aforementioned phenomena – first and foremost the culture of cynicism, indifference, and also the increase of crime and deviant behaviours – corresponded strongly with the processes to which the institution of the family was exposed. The transformations to which the family was subjected do not lend themselves to easy evaluation. Without doubt, a 'closing of the

78 According to militia data, 265,962 crimes were committed in 1945, including 26,471 robberies, 10,073 cases of bodily harm and 121,729 thefts. In 1946, 239,954 crimes were recorded, and in 1947, 227,175. Researchers have argued, on the basis of State Police data on crime in the Second Republic, that these numbers are significantly underestimated. Piotr Majer, 'Zapomniana formacja. MO w walce z przestępczością kryminalną w pierwszych latach powojennych', *Gazeta Policyjna*, 4 (2004).

79 Jan Żaryn, 'Hierarchia Kościoła katolickiego wobec relacji polsko-żydowskich w latach 1945-1947', in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, ed. Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn (Warsaw: IPN, 2006), p. 77.

80 'Panowanie Ducha Bożego w Polsce. Wielkopostny list pasterski Episkopatu', *Wiadomości diecezjalne – organ urzędowy Częstochowskiej Kurii Diecezjalnej*, Częstochowa (May 1946), p. 35.

81 P. Sztompka, *Trauma...*, pp. 36, 37.

ranks' effect had set in. This is explicable only partly in terms of population 'congestion' caused by resettlements carried out by the occupiers and the destruction of homes. Incomparably more important was the experience of living in conditions of constant threat posed by, first, the policy of the occupiers, and second, extremely rapid impoverishment. Banal as it may sound, in the face of the war catastrophe the family became an oasis of security: it enabled survival and provided a space for psychological respite. Its significance grew particularly in the economic sphere. According to 61.6 per cent of young people surveyed in 1945, the war brought about an increase in family solidarity. One 20-year-old young man, for example, recalled that 'Seeing my mother's concern for my fate, that nothing should happen to me in those times of *tapanki*, executions and other dangers, I had to love my mother even more'.<sup>82</sup>

The family's interests became the most important, and as such they set the framework for people's actions. Not everybody belonged to the 'generation of Columbuses', those young men you fought heroically in the Home Army. In circumstances of everyday threat (posed not only by *tapanki* and pacifications, but also by starvation, typhus and tuberculosis), the decisive majority of people were incapable of acting for the benefit of the broader community or even of particular individuals like, for example, Jews in need of help. The diaries of those who survived the concentration camps and the Gulag speak of apathy and insensibility to the suffering of others. The culture of indifference was also present behind the barbed wire, although not, it stands to reason, in all groups and milieus. It seems that the degree of impoverishment played the decisive role here. A widow raising a child alone in a town or a father of a family of five in the village had to focus all efforts on survival. This kind of extended individualism or egotism, labelled 'family-centrism' by sociologists,<sup>83</sup> led to a limiting of the social space in which individuals moved, and it therefore exerted a disintegrative effect. Even before the war, social solidarity had not been a strong point of the poor Polish village; after the war was over, 'family egotism' became the dominant strategy, especially in heavily impoverished regions.

The strengthening of family bonds was accompanied by an opposing tendency, whereby such bonds were weakened or even broken altogether. Husbands and fathers were fighting and dying at the front and languishing

82 M. Kaczyńska, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

83 Elżbieta i Jacek Tarkowski, "Amoralny familizm" czyli o dezintegracji społecznej w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych', in Jacek Tarkowski, *Socjologia świata polityki. Władza i społeczeństwo w systemie autorytarnym* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 263-282.

in POW camps, concentration camps, prisons and forced-labour settlements.<sup>84</sup> Their absence accelerated the process of the emancipation of women and young people. Difficult living conditions forced young people to acquire independent means of survival, and this had its influence on their relations with their parents. A new generation of young people had appeared – a generation with no memory of the pre-war years.<sup>85</sup> The bonds between the old and young generations had weakened, especially in the village and among the urban proletariat. Teachers asked in 1946 about the influence of the war on the psyches of their pupils listed a 'slackening of discipline' in second place (66 per cent of responses).<sup>86</sup> The lack of fathers destabilized the age-old patriarchal model of child-raising, which in turn deepened the phenomenon of the weakening of social norms. Many of those who survived had distorted notions of good and evil, out of which emerged post-war violence and certain of the pathologies of Stalinism. A changing of the guard did indeed take place, but it is dubious whether this change was for the better.<sup>87</sup>

The third set of cultural consequences of the war trauma in Poland concerned the question of nationality. Describing a world consumed by war could to all intents and purposes be achieved only through the use of ethnic categories. Identifications with class or milieu moved into the background; belonging to the national community was what counted.<sup>88</sup> It was upon this belonging, in large measure, that survival in this war depended. The national consciousness of all Poles was strengthened. For confirmation, we need only look at wartime Polish poetry, which exploded with national content during this period. But it was in the village that the growth of national consciousness was most visible. In September 1939 the Germans

84 The first aggregate census, conducted in February 1946, found a huge deficit of men – 2.3 million less men than women. For every 100 men, there were 121.5 women (in the old lands [i.e. pre-1939] the ratio was 100:117.8, and in the western and northern regions 100:137.1). The sex ratio was more distorted in towns (130.8) than in villages (117.4) (*Rocznik Statystyczny 1947*, p. 19).

85 K. Wyka, op. cit., p. 128.

86 S. Baley, op. cit., p. 31.

87 My diagnosis differs from that of Czesław Madajczyk, who has argued that the Occupation fostered a changing of the guard: 'Many of those who survived were able quickly to undertake difficult and responsible tasks in the public life of post-war Poland'. C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy...*, vol. 2, p. 100.

88 Krystyna Kersten has written on this theme in many of her works, e.g. 'Ruchliwość w Polsce po II wojnie światowej jako element przeobrażeń społecznych i kształtowania postaw', in K. Kersten, *Pisma rozproszone*, selected by Tomasz Szarota and Dariusz Libionka (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2005), p. 178. See also: Antonina Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni* (Warsaw: PWN, 1996), pp. 299–321.



had been welcomed in some regions of the country with 'bread and salt'.<sup>89</sup> By the time the war was coming to an end, however, this kind of everyday, 'individual collaboration' was already a rarity.<sup>90</sup> One peasant memoirist living in Kielecczyzna observed that '[t]he occupation made us politically aware, we learned the meaning of freedom, Fatherland, politics'.<sup>91</sup> But this deepening and sharpening of national identification came at a cost.

First and foremost, Polishness overshadowed and dominated all other identities. Polishness proved to be exceptionally invasive. The accelerated and forced 'patriotic education' was exceptionally lacking in positive content; often it amounted to nothing more than a basic us-versus-them, friend-versus-enemy opposition. One used to call this kind of consciousness anachronistic or 'tribal'. It dictated a readiness to sacrifice, demanded an idealization of the national past and at the same time brought into being a siege mentality. The war forced a division of the world into 'ours' (Poles, the Allies) and 'outsiders' (Germans, Ukrainians, 'Soviets'); it aroused a feeling of community through intensification of a sense of alienation and antagonism with regard to outsiders.<sup>92</sup> The war laid the foundations for a deep anti-German aversion and an extremely negative image of Germans which endured for many years. As the military actions drew to an end, there was a widespread desire in Polish society to exact vengeance for 'the wrongs done to us'.<sup>93</sup> Similar throbbings of hatred, based on fear and strong aversion, were also characteristic of Polish attitudes towards Ukrainians. A Polish-Belarusian conflict flared up in Białostoczczyzna.<sup>94</sup>

89 For example, see the account in *Wież polska...*, vol. 2, p. 24.

90 See further on collaboration: C. Madajczyk, 'Kann man in Polen 1939-1945 von Kollaboration sprechen?', in *Okkupation und Kollaboration 1938-1945. Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik*, ed. Werner Röhr (Berlin/Heidelberg: Hüthig, 1994), pp. 133-148; C. Madajczyk, *Międzywspółpracą a kolaboracją, w: Faszyzm i okupacja 1938-1945* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 335-390; L. Gondek, op. cit.; Klaus-Peter Friedrich, 'Problem polskiej kolaboracji podczas II wojny światowej (1939-1944/45)', *Res Publica Nowa*, 11 (1998), pp. 46-52; Barbara Engelking, op. cit.; Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Polska ofiarą dwóch totalitaryzmów 1939-1945', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, 140 (Paryż, 2002), pp. 13-17; J.T. Gross, 'O kolaboracji', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały*, 2 (2006), pp. 407-416.

91 *Wież polska...*, vol. 2, p. 70.

92 Krystyna Kersten, 'Polska – państwo narodowe. Dylematy i rzeczywistość', in *Narody. Jak powstawały i jak wybijały się na niepodległość?*, ed. Marcin Kula (Warsaw: PWN, 1989), p. 462.

93 Cf. Edmund Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945-1948* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1987).

94 *Dane z inspekcji inspektora Wydziału Organizacyjnego – o stanie moralnym, politycznym i organizacyjnym w mieście Białystok*, 19 September 1944, AAN, Polski "Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, sygnatura I/73, k. 11.



The extermination of the Jewish population also influenced the shape of the Polish national community. As Krystyna Kersten has pointed out many times, the consequences of the Holocaust were deep and wide. The division of society into, on the one hand, those who were earmarked for immediate execution (that is, the Jews) and, on the other, those whose suspended sentence allowed them to live a (in comparison) more normal existence under occupation (that is, the Poles), did not pass without consequence. The war strengthened the national consciousness of Poles, but it also left deep fissures in the form of national phobias, traumas and prejudices. The circumstances of the Occupation did not serve to promote openness towards other ethnic groups or a rejection or stigmatization of anti-Semitism; and this was bound to form to some degree a xenophobic national community. The formation of a national identification and the strengthening of national bonds could – just like deepened religiosity – also be reflected in attitudes towards Jews.

The war and Occupation revealed a whole palette or spectrum of behaviours and attitudes of Poles towards Jews, ranging from altruistic, heroic and selfless help<sup>95</sup> to self-interested help, and from simple indifference and viewing Jews as foreign (a position which initially did not necessarily preclude Christian impulses of the heart) to openly hostile behaviour – denouncing Jews, handing them over to the authorities and even murdering them. It was not only anti-Semitism that lurked behind the latter behaviours. Motives for violent action against Jews were ambivalent: anti-Semitism, fear, anomie, ‘family-centrism’, material reasons. That said, it is difficult to dispute the paradoxical fact that in some milieus (such as in nationalistic circles) the Holocaust failed to lead to the discrediting of anti-Semitic discourse.<sup>96</sup> In other milieus anti-Semitic views, on the contrary, were actually strengthened. In the underground it was observed that ‘the venom of the reptilian press has been imbibed by young people’, who were ‘convinced that the Germans had saved Poland from the oppression of

95 Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomocą Żydom* (Warsaw: Świat książki, 2007); Marcin Urynowicz, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej*, w: *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939-1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. Andrzej Żbikowski (Warsaw: IPN, 2006), pp. 537-626; Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Utajone miasto. Żydzi po aryjskiej stronie (1940-1945)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN, 2007).

96 Szymon Rudnicki, *Mogą żyć, byle nie u nas... Propaganda NSZ wobec Żydów*, “Więź”, April 2006, p. 111.

the Jews'.<sup>97</sup> Stefan Grot Rowecki in a famous report from September 1941 pointed out that in the Homeland, 'antisemitism is a widespread attitude'.<sup>98</sup>

The fact that anti-Semitism was reinforced, or at least preserved at previous levels, must be explained through a combination of several factors, a broader discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>99</sup> I consider the most important of these factors to be the universal rise in the level of nationalist sentiments in the years 1939-1945, the fundamental expansion of the inter-ethnic distance separating Poles from all 'others'. East European nationalism has always been highly correlated with anti-Semitism and there are no grounds to suppose that things might be otherwise during the war or immediately after its end. Laying the blame on the war does not resolve the matter. It must be recalled that even before 1939, aversion to Jews was practically universal in Polish society, that anti-Semitism was on the rise since the mid-1920s, and that the wartime crest was in fact the continuation of an earlier gathering wave. Anti-Semitism was touched off by the deep material deprivation and frustration of a huge mass of the population – consequences of the drastic collapse of the economy at the beginning of the 1930s. Incidentally, it is quite possible that, if not for World War II, it is precisely the Great Depression that would occupy the position of the most prominent and important traumatic event in the consciousness and collective memory of Poles.

The models of political culture flowing in from Germany, imitated mainly by Polish extreme-right nationalists, also had an influence on the growth of anti-Semitic views and attitudes. It seems that the influence of Nazi propaganda grew even more during the Occupation, especially in its initial phase, when the 'invincible Third Reich' still had the power to impress. The question of reception of propaganda is always a problematic one, but it is nevertheless possible to assume that its most successful targets were first and foremost simple, uneducated people, who occupied the lowest income

97 Cited A. Chwalba, op. cit., p. 161.

98 Cited Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-68* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), pp. 15, 16.

99 See further: K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi...*; Jan T. Gross, 'Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej...', *ale go nie lubię*, in his *Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939-1948* (Kraków: Universitas, 1998), pp. 25-60; Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds, *Wokół Jedwabnego* (Warsaw: IPN, 2002); Andrzej Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939-1945. Studia i materiały* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006); Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak and Dariusz Libionka, eds, *Prowincja noc. Życie i zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie warszawskim* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFiS, 2007).

brackets before the war, harboured authoritarian tendencies, and rejoiced at the fact that Hitler was 'sorting out the Jews'.<sup>100</sup>

The strengthening of anti-Semitism was possible because the voices of condemnation were not sufficiently audible. On the one hand, the problem lay without doubt in the anti-Semitism of a section of the Polish elites, evidence of which can be found by reading the underground press, the overall tenor of which was anti-Semitic.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, any empathy for the exterminated Jews, expressed via the Home Army's 'Information Bulletin' and communist bulletins, did not speak to the masses of uneducated, poor, pre-war 'superfluous' people. One hears many complaints nowadays about the catastrophic state of reading, yet sixty years ago, under the Occupation, the situation must have been incomparably worse.<sup>102</sup> Let us also recall that one faced the death penalty for possessing a radio and that in any case, even before 1939, few people owned radios in villages or working-class districts. Only a loud and forceful public protest would have been capable of reducing hostile feelings and negative stereotypes, but in the conditions of the German Occupation such voices had no chance of reaching those

100 Jan Grabowski, 'German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (2009), pp. 381-412.

101 Cf. Paweł Szapiro, *Wojna żydowsko-niemiecka. Polska prasa konspiracyjna 1943-1944 o powstaniu w getcie Warszawy* (Londyn: Aneks, 1989); Andrzej Friszke, *Publicystyka Polskiej Podziemnej wobec zagłady Żydów 1939-1944*, w: *Polska – Polacy – mniejszości narodowe*, ed. E. Grześkowiak-Luczyk (Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992); Klaus-Peter Friedrich, 'Nazistowski mord na Żydach w prasie polskich komunistów (1942-1944)', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, 2 (2006), pp. 54-75.

102 According to Andrzej Paczkowski, at around the end of the interwar period, households receiving the daily press numbered around 2.5 million, i.e. at least 5 to 7.5 million readers. There was huge diversity, both regionally, and linguistically-ethnically. For example, in the regions the majority of the Belorussian press was barely read at all, while among Germans the numbers of readers were far above the average (A. Paczkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1918-1939* (Warsaw: PWN, 1980), pp. 412-443). As far as press readership during the Occupation (in the GG) is concerned, so far nobody has risked a quantitative estimate regarding the conspiratorial press. The numbers of editions are given only occasionally and only in relation to individual titles. For example, the maximum one-off circulation of the BIP KG AK *Biuletyn Informacyjny* amounted to 50,000 copies (Jerzy Jarowiecki, Jerzy Myśliński and Andrzej Notkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1939-1945* (Warsaw: PWN, 1980), p. 49). Andrzej Paczkowski estimates that at its peak, that is in the first half of 1944, several hundred thousand copies (in all categories – dailies, weeklies, etc.) may have been published. However, this could just as well mean 400,000-500,000 as much as 700,000-800,000 copies (A. Paczkowski, private correspondence with author). The press was circulated from hand to hand, so the number of actual readers must have been much higher. It is dubious, however, that in the period of intensified extermination of the Jews, i.e. in the years 1942-1943, the readership would have exceeded one million.

who needed to hear them. If certain anti-Semitic views and behaviours failed to be stigmatized, then in a situation of a lack of social control, they became a social fact.

In seeking the causes of the increase in hostility towards Jews, one must also point to the contemporary psycho-social condition of the Polish national group. At least two factors came into play here. The first was the degradation of Poles in the socio-economic hierarchy to the position of *Untermenschen*. Some may have derived a sense of satisfaction or comfort from the fact that there was a minority group even more oppressed than them (i.e. the Jews). This made them feel secure in their limited superiority.<sup>103</sup> The second factor was connected to the increase in collective fear and anxiety.<sup>104</sup> These feelings are a psychological component of all nationalisms, including nationalism directed against Jews.<sup>105</sup> There was also another way in which Polish fear was associated with Jews. All the residents of hideouts, including children, faced the death penalty as punishment for sheltering Jews. Jews could thus become carriers of a downright biological fear and anxiety. One might say that this was always the case historically, but in wartime the threat which Jews represented could reach a level which for some people was psychologically intolerable. In this situation, refusing to give help or denouncing Jews were means of warding off the source of threat and of reducing fear.

One final factor is that Poles and especially those living on the territory of the GG, as distinct from other Europeans, went through a 'school of hatred' not only in theory but also in practice: they witnessed and sometimes participated in the murders of their Jewish neighbours, and this could not fail to leave its trace in the consciousness of Polish observers of the Holocaust.

103 'What did Poles express at the sight of you [Jews]? Laughter? Contempt? – Some satisfaction, which certainly gave them self-confidence – there are those who are lower than them', 'O tym, jak z wewnątrz getta patrzono na stronę aryjską. Z profesorem Israeliem Gutmanem rozmawia Barbara Engelking', *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i materiały*, 1 (2005), p. 230.

104 I agree with J.T. Gross, when he questions the mono-causal interpretation of the fear factor as the reason why Poles failed to give insufficient help, pointing out that this factor did not preclude the undertaking of, for example, conspiratorial activities. Gross forgets, however, that the decisive majority of the population was not engaged in any underground activity. And this lack of engagement can be explained by, among other things, conformism and fear, which were highly correlated with one another (J.T. Gross, *Ten jest z Ojczyzny mojej...*, pp. 34-38).

105 Antoni Kepiński has written: 'Maybe this [i.e. that the enemy is invisible] is why wars are becoming increasingly cruel and ruthless. This is why fear and aggression are vented mostly against innocent people, children, women, the elderly. In mortal fear of loss of one's life, everything becomes hostile, not only people, but also nature, one destroys and burns everything that gets in one's way, for fear of being destroyed oneself' (A. Kepiński, *Lęk* (Warsaw: PZWL, 1977), p. 275).

This is a question of the consequences, as Michael C. Steinlauf puts it, of 'the subjective nature of being a witness'. Answering this question, Steinlauf calls upon Robert Jay Lifton's concept of 'psychic numbing' as 'the essence of the trauma syndrome'. It may also be accompanied by anger, rage and aggression, whereby victims try to regain the strength to live.<sup>106</sup> The concept of the 'psychic numbing' of witnesses would appear to fit well with the images of Poles running amok and murdering their Jewish neighbours in Jedwabne or Radzilow, or of Jewish policemen beating up fellow Jews on the ramp leading to the *Umschlagplatz*. The experiences of life in the GG could therefore have an impact not only on the level of aggression – as we saw earlier – but also on the expansion of the distance separating Poles from others.

An interesting observation was made in this connection by Lieutenant-Colonel Minecki, officer of the Chief Political-Education Directorate of the Polish Army. After the Kraków pogrom, in August 1945, Minecki drew attention to a characteristic difference in attitudes towards Jews: between soldiers coming from beyond the Bug River, and those from the GG. 'For the former', he wrote, 'the antisemitic impulse is little known and often it is difficult for them to reconcile themselves to the fact that it could become a reason for bloody excesses. Many of them are joined by bonds of warm friendship and collegiality with their comrades-in-arms – Jews'. By the same token, 'in soldiers coming from the G.G. there is hatred of the Jewish population, deeply powerfully inculcated by the occupier, [hatred] of the kind which is the cause of every social evil'.<sup>107</sup> We find a similar observation, although not relating to the attitude towards Jews, in the work of Kazimierz Wyka. Wyka has also pointed to a difference between residents of the GG, forced labourers deprived 'of the typical infections of the occupation', and even Poles from the territories incorporated into the Reich. Perhaps the fact that they were not direct witnesses of the Holocaust explains why their distance from Jews was significantly smaller than that of their compatriots from central and eastern Poland. If this is indeed the case, then it would mean that the trauma of the experience of German Occupation on the territory of the GG may have had crucial significance for the formation of pathological attitudes and behaviours, and not only in the field of relations with non-Poles.

106 Michael Steinlauf, *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięć zagłady* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2001), pp. 67, 70-71.

107 A. Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2000), pp. 227, 228.

## Conclusion

'Modern war is total not so much in the sense of weapons and destruction as in the sociological sense', Kazimierz Wyka has written.<sup>108</sup> It would be difficult to dispute the fact that a great number of Poles in the year 1945 were 'infected by a war syndrome', were sociologically broken and fearful, and had pathological value systems. It is certainly the case that similar social scenarios were characteristic of the majority of European countries, especially those previously occupied by the Third Reich. Everywhere the ending of military activities brought chaos and a sense of uncertainty. Millions were tormented by anxiety about the future. The post-war 'migration of peoples', looting, personal score-settling, the exacting of sometimes brutal vengeance against collaborators and Germans – none of this served to foster rapid stabilization.<sup>109</sup> Violence and aggression, present in all spheres – civil war, inter-ethnic conflicts, state violence against the opposition – were endemic in many countries.<sup>110</sup> In all Western countries the inter-generational bond was weakened, and so too in this way was the bond between past and present.<sup>111</sup>

Once again, not only in Poland, a lengthening of inter-ethnic distance set in. In Czechoslovakia in 1945 the problem reached the point of mass pogroms and anti-German lynchings. Yugoslavians became witnesses to a bloody spectacle of ethnic cleansing. While it was only among Poles that anti-Semitic moods reached the pitch of collective psychosis, it should also be noted that it was not only on the Vistula River that hostile attitudes towards Jews were being registered during this period. The spectrum of behaviour was wide, ranging from unfriendly indifference to verbalized dislike and manifest hostility.<sup>112</sup> In September 1946 in the capital of Soviet Ukraine, Kyiv, hostilities escalated to the point of an anti-Semitic pogrom. In Slovakia too events reached the point where synagogues and Jewish

108 K. Wyka, op. cit., p. 27.

109 Cf. István Deák, Jan T. Gross and Tony Judt, eds, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

110 Tony Judt, 'Preface', in *The Politics of Retribution...*, p. vii.

111 Eric Hobsbawm, *Wiek skrajności* (Warsaw: Politeja, 1999), p. 22. Originally published in English as *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994).

112 Natalia Aleksiuń-Mądrzak, 'Sytuacja Żydów w Europie Wschodniej w latach 1945-1947 w świetle raportów przedstawicieli dyplomatycznych Wielkiej Brytanii', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 1 (1997), pp. pp. 65-75.

cemeteries were desecrated. In September 1945, forty-nine people were wounded as a result of a pogrom in Velke Topolcany. Similar excesses were reported in several other localities. Pogroms and anti-Jewish excesses also took place in Hungary.<sup>113</sup> Among American soldiers stationed in Germany, 22 per cent expressed the belief that the Germans were right to get rid of the Jews.<sup>114</sup>

Let us repeat it once again: the war brought trauma, destabilization of social relationships, and impoverishment to many countries. Certainly, European Jews have experienced this in a special way, but right behind them in this sad ranking come the Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians – the other residents of the ‘bloodlands’ (Timothy Snyder). However, because of the especially traumatic course of the war and Occupation, these threats and the related social tensions were strongest in Poland. Probably no other nation apart from Germany was so psychologically shattered.<sup>115</sup> Nowhere else was the elite so decimated or poverty so severe. There was probably no other country where the processes of social atomization and anomie were so far-reaching. Polish society was broken during this period as never before in its history. In fact, it resembled less a society than a kind of ‘social porridge’ – a mass of family communities with a tribal nature. Moreover, the consequences of this Trauma of the Great War were drawn out across time. The rebuilding of social bonds, normalization and stabilization, the processes of forgetting – all of these processes required time. The wartime way of life, based on the suspension of the customary, moral and legal norms during the Occupation, had taken root so deeply in the course of this period of almost six years that it endured long after the war’s end. Certain fears, traumas, habits and behaviours had entered the bloodstream of the national culture for the long term. Strictly speaking, they are still running through the system to this day, manifested in recurring ‘ethnic allergies’. The Czech philosopher Jan Patočka has written that ‘this war has not ended. Because it passed over into a specific state, which was neither war, nor peace’.<sup>116</sup> Although this quotation refers to the period after World War I, it provides an equally fitting point on which to close my reflections here.

113 K. Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi...*, pp. 134-135.

114 S.A. Stouffer et al, *The American Soldier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949-1950), vol. 2, p. 571.

115 The experience of the residents of the western republics of the Soviet Union in particular was also traumatic; but in this case, victory brought a sense of pride, and helped to strengthen institutions. See further on the theme of post-war Soviet society: Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

116 Jan Patočka, ‘Wojna XX wieku oraz wiek XX jako wojna’, *Res Publica*, 4 (1988), p. 150.



# Germans into Allies

Writing a Diary in 1945

*Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann*

## I

Returning to New York in the spring of 1950 after travelling for several months in post-war Germany, Hannah Arendt described with inimitable incisiveness the curious contrast between the horrendous destruction of German cities and the apparent indifference of their inhabitants. This juxtaposition, she conceded, could be found elsewhere in Europe as well:

But nowhere is this nightmare of destruction and horror less felt and less talked about than in Germany itself. A lack of response is evident everywhere, and it is difficult to say whether this signifies a half-conscious refusal to yield to grief or a genuine inability to feel. [...] This general lack of emotion, at any rate this apparent heartlessness, sometimes covered over with cheap sentimentality, is only the most conspicuous outward symptom of a deep-rooted, stubborn, and at times vicious refusal to face and come to terms with what really happened.<sup>1</sup>

Arendt had already touched on this contradiction between the scope of the violence during the war and the subsequent speechlessness of Germans in her book on totalitarianism, which she began writing in 1945 and completed immediately after her visit to post-war Germany.<sup>2</sup> According to Arendt, National Socialism was a completely novel form of government that not only curtailed freedom and committed heinous crimes. Terror, ideology and a permanent state of emergency, she argued, created an experiential world that had never before served as the basis for politics: a 'Third Reich' beyond reality and fiction that found its *nomos* in the concentration camps and suspended there even the distinction between life and death. Not only for Arendt did this new, total form of power in the 1930s and 1940s represent a radical break with the past that could not be comprehended with traditional

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany', in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & co, 1994), p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1976), p. 363.



political, legal, and moral concepts.<sup>3</sup> The genocidal war and the colonial enslavement of Eastern Europe appeared as the realization of the Nazi idea of redefining the political, of 'bio-politics'.

There are, in contrast, only a few paragraphs in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that directly address the question of how Hitler's Germans emerged from this experiential world at the moment of total defeat. When the terror ended, Arendt argued, so did the belief in those dogmas for which members of the Nazi party had been prepared to sacrifice their lives just a short time earlier. She attested to the suddenness of this turnabout, which many contemporary observers (and later historians) found so implausible and morally vexing. It was only on her trip through post-war Germany that Arendt believed she also recognized the 'aftermath of Nazi rule', both the rupture and the continuity. Arendt did not regard the Germans she encountered in 1949 as Nazis. Nevertheless, she believed that as a result of the experiential world of the Third Reich they lacked any form of human *empathy*, whether for their own dead, the suffering of refugees, the sight of the demolished cities or the fate of the murdered Jews.

More than sixty years after the end of the war, the question Arendt posed about the emotional turmoil that accompanied the transition from total war to cold peace remains at the centre of historical-political debates of Post-Cold War Germany. In his essay 'Air War and Literature', W.G. Sebald reformulated this question into the widely discussed claim that the scope of destruction in German cities had left scarcely 'a trace of pain' in the German collective memory. According to Sebald, after 1945 the Germans had lived as if the horror of the war had passed over them like a nightmare, mourning neither the dead nor the destruction of their cities. They not only remained silent after the war about their involvement in the crimes of the Nazi regime, Sebald argued, but also never really put into words the extreme collective experiences of the final year of the war.<sup>4</sup>

Sebald's thesis provided the unintentional impetus for a wave of recollection in the German media that – after 'coming to terms' with the crimes committed in Europe by the Wehrmacht and the Nazi *Sondereinheiten* – now wanted to talk about the suffering of the German civilian population at the end of the war. Novels, films and television documentaries

3 Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Dana Villa, 'Terror and Radical Evil', in *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 11-38.

4 W.G. Sebald, 'Air War and Literature', in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 1-104, here pp. 9-10.

on the end of Nazi rule, the Allied aerial warfare, and the violence that accompanied the advance of the Red Army were presented in this context as taboo breaking. However, contrary to Sebald's claim, German civilian victims of the war had never been 'a kind of taboo like a shameful family secret', neither for the generation that experienced the war first-hand nor for those, who like Sebald, had grown up in the shadow of Nazi violence. Rather the recollections of German civilian victims of the war had been ideologically distorted and divided. At the latest beginning in 1947 or 1948, the 'Anglo-American-imperialist' aerial warfare became a propaganda issue in East Germany, while, conversely, the suffering of Germans under the tyranny of Soviet rule – the fate of prisoners of war, in particular, and that of Germans in the 'Zone', in general – became the cement that held together anti-Communism in the West.<sup>5</sup> Thus if this 'trace of pain' disappeared at all, then only in the official consciousness in the East and the West during the 1970s and 1980s, parallel to the definitive disappearance of the ruins.

Nevertheless, the 1940s – the period between the Wannsee Conference and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – constitutes something of a watershed moment in the history of the twentieth century that is still little understood. The descent into war and genocide was followed by a return to a peaceful and, in comparison to pre-war Europe, fundamentally new political order. The 'catastrophic nationalism' of the Germans had dragged Europe into an inconceivable and apparently bottomless maelstrom of violence, with the greatest number of deaths in the entire war occurring in 1944-1945, when the German defeat was already apparent. This makes the constellation of 1947 and 1948 all the more improbable, when the enemies of yesterday became the strategic partners of a new global conflict, in whose shadow democracies were able to emerge, at least in the post-fascist societies of Western Europe and in Japan.<sup>6</sup>

Between these two extremes lies the watershed moment of the end of the war, understood here as a five-year intermediate period that began in 1943 with the looming German defeat in Eastern Europe and that came to a close only in 1947 with the inception of the Cold War. The few years

5 See the critique by Robert G. Moeller, 'Germans as Victims: Thoughts on Post-Cold War Histories of World War II's Legacies', *History & Memory*, 17 (2005), pp. 147-194; Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

6 Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds, *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

between the catastrophic defeat and the beginning of occupation rule constituted a dramatic phase of upheaval, not only for German society. While the political reordering of the world and of Germany in 1945 has been well researched, less attention has been paid to questions about perceptions of this epochal upheaval: How were war, genocide, destruction and occupation inscribed in the language of contemporaries? How did the victors and the vanquished emerge from the existential enmity of war? Where are the emotional traces of violence evident? In other words, contemporary historians have only begun to address the question raised by Hannah Arendt and W.G. Sebald about the subjective perceptions of the participants during this epochal rupture. Even contemporary witnesses, when questioned today about this experiential world, speak of it as a foreign and unreal no-man's land.

The following reflections thus begin with the hypothesis that a history of this watershed moment of the 1940s should begin with the analysis of those private texts – especially diaries – in which contemporaries recorded their perceptions of events as they were unfolding. At the moment of an epochal rupture, previous expectations collapse and new realities emerge that follow different rules of what can be expressed. 'History itself always occurs only in the medium of the participants' perceptions', as Reinhart Koselleck has noted.

The notions of the actors about what they do and about what they should not do are the elements from which, perspectively fragmented, histories coalesce. Notions and will-formation, desires, linguistically and prelinguistically generated, perceiving something to be true and holding it to be true, these are all incorporated into the situation, from which events crystallize. What the different agents regard as real about a history as it emerges and thus carry out *in actu* constitutes pluralistically the coming history.<sup>7</sup>

This also means that the catastrophic experience of rupture and upheaval in the 1940s cannot be understood solely from a single perspective – and this, drawing upon Koselleck, is my second hypothesis. The fundamentally different perspectives of the vanquished, the occupiers, and the liberated constitute the ruptured experience of genocidal war, occupation

7 Reinhart Koselleck, 'Vom Sinn und Unsinn der Geschichte', *Merkur* 51 (1997), 319-334, 324. See also Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experiences', *History and Theory*, 49 (2010), pp. 212-236.

and post-war reconfigurations. A *histoire croisée* of these connected asymmetrical perceptions and violence-laden interactions around 1945 must seek to comprehend the events from the linguistically sedimented experiential world of the participating actors, who in turn were always also observers.<sup>8</sup> Thus the challenge for a transnational history of the 1940s also lies in relating incompatible or asymmetrical experiences of violence and loss as well as their perspectivity, without at the same time conflating or retrospectively harmonizing them.

## II

It was in diaries that the inhabitants of German cities copiously detailed the horrors of the war as well as their own expectations and experiences connected to the defeat. At no other point in the history of the twentieth century does the practice of keeping a diary appear to have been so widespread as during the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> German diaries frequently began around the turn of 1945 and ended already a year or two later. They were written explicitly to record the scope of the external and internal destruction under National Socialism as well as the new experiences following Germany's total defeat, in particular those with the victors.

Only recently have historians discovered diaries as a source of subjective perceptions of war and genocide, part of a general trend that Annette Wieviorka has called 'the era of the witness'.<sup>10</sup> Although a few diaries published in the immediate post-war period did become, so to speak, representative of the experience of the world war, historians today have access not only

8 Cf. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Penser l'histoire croisée. Entre empirie et réflexivité', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 58 (2003), pp. 7-36; Nicolas Beaupré et al., 'Pour une histoire croisée des expériences d'occupation européennes (1914-1949)', *Histoire & Sociétés. Revue européenne d'histoire sociale*, 17 (2006), pp. 6-7; similarly the account of Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Cape, 2005), p. 17. Saul Friedländer argues for an integrated history of the Holocaust that follows a similar trajectory and assumes two perspectives – one 'from below' of the Jewish victims (primarily through diaries) and one 'from above' based on National Socialist policy and administration (and the corresponding documents). Saul Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben. Auf dem Weg zu einer integrierten Geschichte* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007); Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997).

9 The popularity of diaries during the Second World War was noted very early on by Michèle Leleu, *Les journaux intimes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952).

10 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jarek Stark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

to hundreds of diaries kept by Hitler's Germans, but also to those written by persecuted and murdered Jews as well by members of all the nations that participated in the war, including the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> These texts have yet to be analysed as the basis of a history that integrates the different perspectives on the epochal rupture of the 1940s.

The diaries certainly do not contain any kind of authentic (or resistant) subjectivity beyond the hegemonic political discourses of the era. On the contrary, the diaristic monologue was a standard practice of the politicization of the self in totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, as Jochen Hellbeck and Irina Paperno have recently argued in their studies on diaries under Stalinism.<sup>12</sup> Precisely this makes diaries interesting for the analysis of contemporary perceptions of the self and others. It is also something that diaries share with autobiographical and literary texts, for which they often serve as a starting point and as material.

Retrospectively composed autobiographies, biographical interviews and novels do provide information primarily about later political 'subjectivizations' (in the dual sense of self-formation and subordination). In these texts, the initial inscriptions in a diary, the emergence of new ways of seeing the past and the future are followed by a 're-writing' of these earlier experiences and expectations. All too often this distinction has been levelled, for instance, in Walter Kempowski's *Echolot*, but also in more recent historical studies, for instance, Catherine Merridale's examination of Soviet war experiences, in which autobiographical texts from different eras are mixed together without always identifying the temporal distinctions.<sup>13</sup>

Diaries can certainly also become the objects of later 're-writings'. One example of this was the debate in the German media about the new edition of the diary *Eine Frau in Berlin* (A Woman in Berlin) by Anonymous (Geneva,

11 See, especially, Susanne zur Nieden, *Alltag im Ausnahmezustand. Frauentagebücher im zerstörten Deutschland 1943 bis 1945* (Berlin: Orlanda-Frauenverlag, 1993); Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*. Over the past few years many Soviet diaries from the Second World War have become accessible. A number of these were used in Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army, 1939-1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005). For other personal accounts by Red Army soldiers in Germany in 1945, see, for example, Elke Scherstjanoi, ed., *Rotarmisten schreiben aus Deutschland. Briefe von der Front (1945)* (Munich: Saur, 2004).

12 Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). For an eloquent reading of autobiographical writings from Nazi Germany, see Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008).

13 Merridale, *Ivan's War*.

1959)<sup>14</sup> in the *Die Andere Bibliothek* series by Hans Magnus Enzensberger several years ago, during which the identity of the author was definitively resolved, but not the question of when the published version was actually composed. The German Literature Archive in Marbach recently published Erich Kästner's diary notes, the language of which deviates from his published diary *Notabene 45. Ein Tagebuch* (Zurich, 1961). Yet another example is the well-known diary by Karla Höcker *Beschreibung eines Jahres. Berliner Notizen 1945*, originally published in 1966. There are four different versions of this diary: first, the handwritten notes in a pocket calendar from 1945 recording the events; a typewritten transcription in late 1947; and finally the published version of 1966 and the second edition of 1984. The 1947, 1966 and 1984 versions deviate from the original through respective additions and omissions. These rewritings are noteworthy precisely because Höcker, a musician and writer, was not a Nazi and had nothing to hide in her biography.

It was the ambivalent political expectations about the end of the war in 1945, contained in Höcker's original diary, that were 'corrected' in the subsequent versions. For example, the following entry from April 22, written in expectation of the Red Army's conquest of Berlin, was omitted from the published editions:

And yet one lives somewhere deep inside, and the sweetness of life, the not-yet-savored, the love of everything that makes life first worth living at all is more intense than ever. [...] A heavy strike apparently quite near forces us all into the basement. Strange atmosphere, a mixture of ski hut, youth hostel, revolutionary basement, and opera romanticism. Many unfamiliar people – only in this situation does one realize how unfamiliar they are – attempt to sleep, while outside a new epoch begins. The end, the beginning of Europe? The decline of the Occident? No one knows – and I experience the desire to sleep while this occurs.

After the fall of the city, Höcker and her friend Gustav Gründgens had to clear away the street barricades earlier erected by forced labourers; her entry on 5 May, which described this, was already omitted from the 1947 transcription:

14 *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City: A Diary*, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2005).

The Commandant's Office on Kaiserdamm 88: a line of people, a Russian soldier smiling good-naturedly, a young officer with a hard and arrogant expression. Everything still seems to be very much in the making. One is given hardly any information. Of the many radio listeners in our city district, barely 30 have turned theirs in. The image of the street continues to be colourful and strange: A destroyed military glider, automobile parts, and a plundered tank lie on the Kaiserdamm; there are still swastika flags everywhere; the [swastika] cross has been removed from most of them, but the circle where it used to be is still visible. [...] It is remarkable that all of these deeply depressing external circumstances make us neither sad nor ill-humoured, nor put us 'in a bad mood'. Only the passing victorious troops – with red flags and [spring] green – followed by long columns of German prisoners casts a shadow on our souls. Then suddenly the crassness of the situation becomes completely apparent: We, the musicians, artists, citizens, the women and children of the German people, clear away as a pointless traffic obstacle, the barricades on which our men were supposed to fight the enemy, while these men, after six years of war, head out as prisoners – into the unforeseeable. And Asia triumphs!<sup>15</sup>

It was the images and emotions intended to capture the incursion of events, the 'enormous fissure that has torn through our lives', as Höcker wrote on 12 July, that were eliminated from the 1947 version of the diary. The urban destruction, the violence of the Red Army, the humiliation in everyday life for the vanquished (Höcker, for example, had to turn over her house to the British authorities), but also the uncertain future at the end of the war, all of this was either narrated in a linguistically defused form deemed more appropriate for the times or completely omitted in subsequent versions.<sup>16</sup> Like no other source, diaries allow for the precise reconstruction of how the political expectations of Hitler's Germans changed in the final two years of the war (which also conditioned their perceptions of the foreign occupation) and in the first months after the war.

15 Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, Karla-Höcker-Archiv, Nr 41: Notizen 1945.

16 This is true for other diaries, such as Ursula von Kardoff's, which became available in a critical edition only in 1992. This edition allows a comparison between the original diary and the version compiled in 1947 as well as the published version of 1962. The following entry from 12 April 1945, for example, was omitted from the 1962 edition: 'And when the others [the Allies] come with their excessive hatred, their gruesome accusations, one must be silent because it's true' (Ursula von Kardoff, *Berliner Aufzeichnungen 1942-1945*, new ed. by Peter Hartl (Munich: dtv, 1992), p. 306).



It is the expectations, as formulated in these private chronicles, that explain the apparent contradiction of why the Nazi regime, despite its imminent catastrophic defeat, was able to secure the allegiance of many Germans until the bitter end, and at the same time why after the end of the war the transition to a peaceful order could be achieved so astonishingly quickly. As indicated by the diaries as well as other sources (for example, reports on the popular mood collected by the Gestapo or the interrogations of German prisoners of war), it was the expectation of violent reprisals by 'the Jews' (usually associated with British and American aerial warfare) and the 'Bolsheviks' (the advancing Red Army) that caused many Germans to 'hang on' in the Nazi war. In the last years of the war, the propaganda of the Nazi regime as well as that of the Allies sought to level political distinctions between Germans and Nazis. Beginning in 1942, the Nazi regime indirectly confirmed rumours about the 'Final Solution' and the genocidal war in Eastern Europe in the press, seeking thereby to turn Germans into knowing accomplices of the genocide. In this way the 'Final Solution' became an eerie, open secret and a catalyst of German war society, irrespective of who had actually participated in the concrete crimes. Thus the ostensible *Volkgemeinschaft* became a kind of *Schuldgemeinschaft* or 'community of guilt' that feared the end of the war no less than its continuation.<sup>17</sup> 'The overall picture is that of collective entanglement', as Rafael Zagovec notes, 'which was initially introduced with a light hand, then solidified through the alleged war successes, and, when it could no longer be ignored that this regime had long abrogated all ethical norms, became a community of guilt, in which the fear of one's own terror apparatus and of revenge by the enemy were tied in an indissoluble bond'.<sup>18</sup> This 'community of guilt'

17 See, for example, the diary of Rudolf Z. (born in 1890), a Wehrmacht soldier and guard at the Ellrich concentration camp in 1944-1945. Archiv der Gedenkstätte Mittelbau-Dora, P 4, Bd. 135. See also Dieter Pohl and Frank Bajohr, *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis. Die Deutschen, die NS-Führung und die Alliierten* (Munich: Beck, 2006), pp. 65-76; and, more generally, Rafael A. Zagovec, 'Gespräche mit der Volksgemeinschaft. Die deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft im Spiegel westallierter Frontverhöre', in *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vol. 9.2, ed. Jörg Echternkamp (Munich: DVA, 2005), pp. 289-381; Peter Longerich, *Davon haben wir nichts gewußt! Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung, 1933-1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2006); Michael Geyer, 'Endkampf 1918 and 1945. German Nationalism, Annihilation, and Self-Destruction', in *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, ed. Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), pp. 37-67; Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Norbert Frei, 'Von deutscher Erfindungskraft oder: Die Kollektivschuldthese in der Nachkriegszeit', in Frei, *1945 und wir. Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen* (Munich: Beck, 2005), pp. 145-155.

18 Zagovec, 'Gespräche mit der Volksgemeinschaft', p. 381.



did in fact prolong the duration of the war up to the catastrophic defeat. At the same time, however, during the final stages of the fighting National Socialism lost so much support among the German population that at the end of the war (and before the beginning of official de-Nazification) hardly anyone still wanted to be identified as a Nazi.<sup>19</sup> German fears of foreign occupation, expected as racist extermination and colonial enslavement, can thus be read inversely as the admission of participation in German crimes in Eastern Europe that the Germans, in the eyes of the Allies, had allegedly failed to provide after 1945.

The anticipation of catastrophic defeat and subjugation marked the perception of the diarists even in their dreams. These dreams, in turn, provide insight into the experiences of the witnesses *in eventum*.<sup>20</sup> For example, nine-year-old pupil Sabine K. wrote on 2 May 1945:

On Wednesday night I slept very poorly. I dreamed that a Russian came to us in the basement and asked for water. Since no one else had the courage, I stood up; I had to go along a corridor somehow, then suddenly a yellow light shone on a downright Chinese physiognomy. With the most revolting sound of his lips smacking, he tore my coat off and touched me. Then I was awakened by the sound of an automobile outside our house. Now I was also terribly cold, I began to shake horribly. Mother was also awake. I stuttered softly, 'You know, I think they are here!'

The next day the family had their first encounter with the victors, which was quite different than Sabine K. had expected:

As I stand in my room in front of the mirror on the balcony window, a brown figure rides by on a bicycle and smiles up in a friendly way. I think I'm not seeing right, but it was really the first Russian. Cars soon appeared here and there; we went to the house next door and stood with J., Frau M., and Fräulein T. in front of the door. Then a very nice young guy came by again on a bicycle; a woman from number 50 said something to him, quickly brought out some schnapps, and had him show her the situation

19 Herfried Münkler, *Machtzerfall. Die letzten Tage des Dritten Reiches, dargestellt am Beispiel der hessischen Kleinstadt Friedberg* (Berlin: Siedler, 1985), p. 10.

20 Reinhart Koselleck, 'Terror and Dream: Methodological Remarks on the Experience of Time during the Third Reich', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 205-221; as well as Irina Paperno, 'Dreams of Terror: Dreams from Stalinist Russia as a Historical Source', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 4 (2006), pp. 793-824; Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*.

on the front. The old Chinese man and Herr N. went over; the lady was apparently already tipsy, for she was behaving quite scandalously. [...] We certainly don't want to undo the ruins and wounds, for then they would lose their meaning; on the contrary, they should be given the highest and purest meaning; they should have helped people. A small child can be educated only by blows, at least the kind of child that humans are. [...] Some times my heart became scalding hot when I thought of our proud hopes and compared them to our present situation.<sup>21</sup>

In other diaries as well, we find this juxtaposition of fears about revenge by the victors (often enough justified), relief about the peace, and simultaneously profound dismay about the defeat. Another Berlin schoolgirl noted on 9 May, as news of the unconditional surrender spread: 'Germany has lost the war! Everything has been in vain! Our soldiers have died in vain, fought in vain! All of the efforts have not helped at all! Who would have thought it? [...] We are nevertheless pleased that peace has now returned!'<sup>22</sup>

The first contact with the victors in the fallen cities left no doubts that the Red Army intended to exact revenge for German crimes in the Soviet Union. For many Germans the Second World War ended with Soviet soldiers forcibly entering their private quarters, not only to engage in violence or to plunder, but also to confront the defeated enemy. Virtually every diary from the Soviet occupation zone includes scenes in which soldiers and officers of the Red Army seek out conversation with Germans and show them photographs of murdered relatives. In several cases these frequently drunken encounters end in scenes of fraternization, in others in mock executions, preceded by a speech from a Soviet officer about the collective guilt of the Germans.<sup>23</sup>

21 Archiv zur Geschichte von Tempelhof und Schöneberg, Sabine K. (b. 1926), Tagebuch, Berlin-Schöneberg, 1.9.1944-21.5.1945.

22 Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, Ingrid H. (b. 1929), Tagebuch, Berlin-Johannisthal, 21.4.-23.5.1945.

23 Kempowski Archiv, Nr 3697: Hertha von Gebhardt (b. 1896), Tagebuch, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 20.4.-31.7.1945, entry from 28 April 1945. This confrontation with German complicity in Nazi crimes continued after the end of war in the daily interactions between Allies and Germans. See, for example, the diary entry of a nurse on 28 May 1945: 'The commandant has found a new flame, beneficial to me. In a suitable moment, however, I can converse well with him. He has always been friendly and amiable, to my children as well. Recently he came into my room, picked up little Cornel, gazed at Dagmar and Mathias and said, "Pretty children! – I also have wife and child, one year! The Germans killed both, so!" And he imitated the cutting open of a stomach!! "SS?" I asked. He nodded. (He was a Jew.) – [...] Reinhardt? The Russians say five years forced labour?! I cannot grasp the idea. I listen to music! I could go crazy. My dear Reinhardt!' Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, Irmela D. (b. 1916), Tagebuch [in letters to her husband Reinhardt D.], Beelitz-Heilstätten bei Berlin 18.5.45-2.9.45, Abschrift 1946: Tagebuch aus der Russenzeit.

In June 1945, German writer Hermann Kasack described retrospectively in his diary such an encounter with a Soviet officer in his villa in Potsdam:

Then, however, he began to tell with growing agitation about his sister, who, as we had to have Fräulein Kauffeldt translate for us, had been tortured and abused at age seventeen by a German soldier; the soldier, as he put it, had had 'red hair and eyes like an ox'. We sat uneasily as the Georgian officer cried out full of rage that when he thought about it he would like to break everyone's neck. 'But', he added after a pause, 'you good, you good'. He also pointed out that he had maintained his form and composure, as we had to admit. Time and again he became enraged about the fate of his unfortunate sister, and again, as so often in these days and weeks and actually in all the Nazi years, we felt ashamed to be German. After a time, which seemed endless to us but was hardly more than an hour and a half, he departed telling us he would be back the next day. [...] How disgraceful, how dishonourable to have to be German.<sup>24</sup>

Even for those who had waited for the end of Nazi rule and regarded the Red Army as their liberator, the occupation seemed like a bad dream. Martha Mierendorf, whose Jewish husband had been murdered in Auschwitz – something she already suspected in the spring of 1945 but did not know for certain – noted on 27 April: 'I must endure whatever happens to me and regard it as payment for the debt incurred by Hitler and his gang.' On 5 May, however, she also wrote: 'Every morning when I awake, it is only with great effort that I can get used to the fact that a strange world awaits outside, that everywhere my steps take me there are Russians and more Russians. That everything the victors want has to occur. Only now does everyone feel what a lost war means.' On 1 September, after four months of occupation rule and a nightmarish dream about a fit of rage against the Russians that ended with a nervous breakdown the following morning, she wrote: 'The destroyed city gnaws incessantly on my nerves and disturbs my mind, without me directly noticing it. Every step through the ruins hammers chaos, violence, and despair into my brain. It is unsettling to observe peoples' efforts to save themselves and the city.'<sup>25</sup>

24 Hermann Kasack, *Dreizehn Wochen. Tage- und Nachtblätter. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Jahr 1945 über das Kriegsende in Potsdam*, ed. Wolfgang Kasack (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1996), p. 225.

25 Marta Mierendorf diary in *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben'. Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, ed. Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 1996), pp. 101-148. On the psychological impact of war and occupation, see

The transition from war society to the occupation period occurred with a violent abruptness that contemporaries already comprehended as an epochal break. 'Newspapers that are only a few weeks old appear strangely unreal – so that it makes one shudder!' actress Eva Richter-Fritzsche wrote in her diary in Berlin on 4 May 1945.<sup>26</sup> Ernst Jünger noted in Kirchhorst north-east of Hannover on 15 April 1945: 'A sense of unreality still predominates. It is the astonishment of people who stand upright after a heavy wheel has run through them and over them.'<sup>27</sup> People were stunned not by the violence tied to the upheaval (which, on the contrary, was described especially in women's diaries with conscious laconism<sup>28</sup>) but rather by the catastrophic scope of defeat in a war that Nazi Germany had conducted in such manner that the vanquished could expect no peace.

In retrospectively written autobiographies (or subsequently rewritten diaries), the catastrophic nationalism and the racism towards the Soviet occupiers (and previously towards the Eastern European slave labourers) were often eliminated. Connected to this, most of them also omitted the recognition contained in diaries of 1944 and 1945 that given their own brutal occupation and genocidal war in Eastern Europe Germans could expect no leniency from the victors, as well as the relief that an unconstrained interaction with the occupiers could soon begin. This was one of the reasons why, contrary to Allied expectations, Germans offered no serious resistance to foreign occupation after the war.

In contrast to France in 1871 or Germany in 1918, the 'culture of defeat' of the vanquished after 1945 did not aim at revenge.<sup>29</sup> As Dolf Sternberger

Svenja Goltermann, 'Im Wahn der Gewalt: Massentod, Opferdiskurs und Psychiatrie 1945-1956', in *Nachkrieg in Deutschland*, ed. Klaus Naumann (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), pp. 343-363; Greg Eghigian, 'Der Kalte Krieg im Kopf: Ein Fall von Schizophrenie und die Geschichte des Selbst in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone', *Historische Anthropologie*, 11 (2003), pp. 101-122.  
 26 Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, Nachlaß Eva Richter-Fritzsche (b. 1908), Tagebücher 1941-1945, Berlin-Pankow, 4 May 1945.

27 Ernst Jünger, *Jahre der Okkupation* (first published in 1958), in Jünger, *Strahlungen II* (Munich: dtv, 1988), 413. The diary entry for 16 May reads: 'It is in the nature of things that we are more affected by misfortune in our own family, the suffering of our own brother – just as we are more closely caught up in his guilt. They are ours. We must stand for them, must pay for them' (ibid, p. 451).

28 Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 55.

29 This has been overlooked in the otherwise pioneering study by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003). See, however, the similar argumentation for Japan after 1945 in John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

noted in his diary on 14 July 1945 (which was published in excerpts in the first issue of his journal *Die Wandlung*), Germans saw themselves as ‘coerced accomplices [*erzwungene Mitschuldige*]’.<sup>30</sup> Out of a diffuse sense of guilty entanglement they were initially prepared to accept the defeat and with it the occupation, which, as Mierendorf noted elsewhere, also transformed those Germans who had not been members of the Nazi party into the vanquished. Thus the diaries not only reflect events at the end of the war, but are also themselves ways of enacting these events. They provide information about why things occurred as they did and not otherwise. The authors of German diaries written at the end of the war expressed little doubt about the legitimacy of Allied occupation (a fact that should not be obscured by the nationalism and racism that persisted in the language of the defeated). This changed only with the beginning of the Cold War.

### III

The occupiers, the vanquished and the liberated perceive events differently. At the same time, however, their often asymmetrical perceptions are so intimately related that they have to be analysed in their historical entanglement. This is particularly true for total wars and semi-colonial occupation regimes, which arrived in Europe with Nazi genocidal policies in the 1940s. As acting observers, the participants and their perceptions are part of the events. These perceptions co-determine how a conflictual interaction takes place and the significance it is retrospectively ascribed. This insight, long recognized as a matter of course in postcolonial studies, is by no means widely accepted in contemporary history. The reasons for this are not merely ideological (for instance, the adherence to national-historical master narratives that always only accentuate one’s own national perspective) even if in a critical manner. Government sources, organized in national archives, also constitute a problem for this kind of transnational history. The plans and decrees of occupation bureaucracies, the opinion surveys and reports on the popular mood commissioned by them, the tribunals and re-education campaigns all provide only limited information about the contingent interactions between occupier and occupied and their mutual perceptions. How does our perspective on Germany’s watershed years between 1943 and 1947 change when the perceptions of the Allies – as

30 Dolf Sternberger, ‘Tagebuch. Reise in Deutschland – Sommer 1945’, *Die Wandlung*, 1 (1945/46), p. 107.

found in Soviet, American and British diaries, a number of them written by German emigrants returning in the uniform of the victors – are included in our field of inquiry?

The private notes of the vanquished were often written exclusively for absent family members and were published only in isolated cases (and with greater temporal distance). The situation is completely different for the diaries, letters and travel reports of the Allies. In 1945 and 1946 the Allied media were filled with eyewitness reports of post-war Germany, although this interest did wane quickly. George Orwell, Stephen Spender, Edith Stein, Dorothy Thompson, Norman Cousins, Melvin Lasky, Alfred Döblin, Max Frisch, Vassily Grossman, and Il'ja Ėrenburg – there was hardly a well-known intellectual of the era who did not travel to Germany after the war to write about the vanquished enemy, either as an occupier or as an observer. However, the overwhelming impression of war and desolation also led thousands of members of the occupation armies and administrations to record and to publish their own perceptions, whereby internal and external censorship also resulted in significant rewriting of their private notes. This was particularly true for the Soviet side, where the discrepancy with official propaganda was especially evident, but was initially the case for the West as well. The Allies' moral condemnation of the Germans at the end of the war often contrasted sharply with the concrete experiences with the vanquished recorded in their private notes.

The Allies came to Germany not as liberators, but as conquerors. The German defeat was unconditional not only militarily, but also morally and politically. The victorious powers agreed that the supreme goal was to defeat and punish Germany for the crimes committed during the war. In 1945, Germany and Japan were regarded as enemies of humanity and ceased to be sovereign subjects of international law. Before soldiers of the Allied occupation entered the country, they were instructed in meetings and in informational brochures to make no distinction between Germans and Nazis.<sup>31</sup> The Allies also expected that there would be bitter partisan

31 Before the invasion onto German soil, Red Army Soldiers were urged by their officers to set up their own 'revenge tallies'. A report from the front on 5 April 1945, for example, included: 'On 24 February, shortly before the attack, the company's Komsomol assembly addressed the question: "Why am I avenging myself on the German conquerors?" Many preparations [...] were made for this meeting. For all of the Komsomols and other young people a reprisal tally was collected, [...] which would illustrate the brutal crimes of the German-Fascist intruders. The reprisal tallies were collected in the following way: In every company there was a notebook, in which all soldiers and officers wrote down the personal suffering the fascists had caused them.

warfare after the capitulation, as there had been in Nazi-occupied Europe during the war, and that Germans would call for revenge and reprisals for the total defeat, as they had in 1918. This image of an intractable enemy prevailed in Allied public opinion even months after the end of the war.

The fact that the German civilian population had waited for the end of both Nazi rule and the war and readily accepted Allied occupation was thus one of the unexpected and confusing experiences for occupiers on the ground, who noted this incredulously and often with rage in their diaries and letters. Konrad Wolf, for example, a lieutenant in the Red Army and son of émigré German writer Friedrich Wolf, wrote (in Russian) in his diary outside of Berlin on 19 March:

I must say that the few inhabitants who have remained in our section seem terribly frightened by German propaganda; for this reason they say what we want to hear only to please the Russians. They whine that Hitler and Germany have come to an end. One encounters much cajolery; at times it is simply awful. [...] All more or less major cities have been severely damaged, in part through bitter fighting, in part also through the hatred of our soldiers. [...] Many of my acquaintances here, indeed even friends, probably think that I see this all and feel sorry for the German cities, the population, etc. I say quite openly, no, never will I regret this, for I have seen what they have done in Russia.<sup>32</sup>

Another Red Army soldier wrote in a letter home from Berlin on 27 May:

When I now cross the street, the German rabble (*petura*) bows down to the ground (just as it does to all the soldiers and officers of our unit). I believe this is not because they love and respect us. It is because they

This material was then summarized, and the result was an impressive indictment file against the German executioner.' Central Archive of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation [TsAMO RF], f. 372, op.6570, d.76, l.304-305, quoted in Elena Senjavskaja, *Psichologija vojny v 20 veke. Istoričeskij opyt Rossii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999), p. 269. Information booklets distributed among the Western Allies left no doubt about what to expect from the German civilian population. See, for example, the booklet of the Twelfth United States Army Group from early 1945 entitled *Don't Be a Sucker in Germany*: 'The German people may appear to be friendly and docile as you move into Germany. Are they? [...] Would you be friendly to a foreign army that occupied your home town and gave you orders? If some friend of yours back home shot one of those men, wouldn't he be a hero to you and the whole community?'

32 Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, Konrad Wolf Archiv, Nr 2031, Tagebücher [in Russian] 1944/45; see also *Konrad Wolf* (Archiv-Blätter 14) (Berlin: Archiv der Akademie der Künste, 2005), pp. 84-85.



have seen our strength, our power, and our steadfastness. They now fear the justice of the victor. [...] But we understand that we are now in the cave of the enemy forced to his knees, a predator.<sup>33</sup>

Again and again the faces of submissive Germans are described in the diaries as 'beastly' (*zverskij*).<sup>34</sup> At this point in time there was hardly any difference between the language of the private diaries and official Soviet war propaganda.<sup>35</sup>

The Germans had left a gruesome trail of violence in Eastern Europe, especially in their labour and extermination camps, the significance of which is difficult to overestimate for the perception of advancing Red Army forces. For this reason the ruins of demolished German cities made no great impression on them. One soldier, for instance, wrote laconically in a letter home on 9 May 1945: 'Berlin has been destroyed down to its foundation walls, like our Michajlov.'<sup>36</sup> Four days later, a major who had been a philosophy professor in Voronezh before the war wrote to a former colleague: 'I looked at the ruins in Berlin and said to myself, that is the bill for Stalingrad, for Voronezh, for thousands of burned down cities of ours.'<sup>37</sup>

Irrespective of the desire for revenge, Soviet eyewitness accounts also expressed horror at the violence against German civilians. One officer recorded his impressions of such a transgression:

Burning German cities. Traces of short-lived battles on the roads, groups of captured Germans (they surrendered in large groups, fearing they'd be shot if they did so individually), corpses of men, women, and children in apartments, lines of carts with refugees, scenes of mass [*illegible*], raped women [*illegible, crossed out by the author*] [...] abandoned villages, hundred and thousands of abandoned bicycles on the road, an enormous mass of cattle, all of them bellowing (no one was there to feed the cows or give them water) – all these were "battle scenes" of the offensive by an army of avengers, scenes of the devastation of Germany which compelled

33 Scherstjanoi, *Rotarmisten schreiben aus Deutschland*, 184-186.

34 Russian State Archive for Literature and Art (RGALI), Moscow, Fond 2581, op.1, d.1, ll. 118-141: Lazar Bernštejn, *Zapisnye knižki s dnevnikovymi zapisjami, 1933-1960; Dnevnikovye zapiski o poezdke v Germaniju, 6 March-25 April 1945 before the Oder [River], 7 March 1945.*

35 See Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, "Our City, Our Hearts, Our Families": Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda', *Slavic Review*, 59 (2000), pp. 825-847.

36 Scherstjanoi, *Rotarmisten schreiben aus Deutschland*, p. 170.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 178.



the surviving Germans and their children to renounce the struggle with Russia.<sup>38</sup>

The writer and popular war reporter Vassily Grossman, who had written the first eyewitness account of the remains of the extermination camps in Treblinka and Majdanek in 1944 and had learned that year that his mother, like all the Jewish inhabitants in the Ukrainian city of Berdychiv, had been murdered by German Einsatzgruppen in 1941, noted in his diary in Schwerin in April 1945:

Horrifying things are happening to German women. An educated German whose wife has received “new visitors” – Red Army soldiers – is explaining with expressive gestures and broken Russian words that she has already been raped by ten men today. The lady is present. Woman’s screams are heard from open windows. A Jewish officer, whose family was killed by Germans, is billeted in the apartment of the Gestapo man who has escaped. The woman and the girls [left behind] are safe while he is here. When he leaves, they all cry and plead with him to stay.

In the language of Grossman’s diary we can already recognize the anti-totalitarian author of *Life and Fate* who knew the meaning of Stalinist rule: ‘The leaden sky and awful, cold rain for three days. An iron spring after the iron years of war. A severe peace is coming after the severe war: camps are being built everywhere, wire stretched, towers erected for the guards and [German] prisoners urged on by their escorts.’ And then after the conquest of Berlin, he wrote:

Prisoners – policemen, officials, old men and next to them schoolboys, almost children. Many [of the prisoners] are walking with their wives, beautiful young women. Some of the women are laughing, trying to cheer up their husbands. A young soldier with two children, a boy and a girl. Another soldier falls down and can’t get up again, he is crying. Civilians are giving prisoners water and shovel bread into their hands. A dead old woman is half sitting on a mattress by a front door, leaning her head against the wall. There’s an expression of calm and sorrow on her face,

38 Nikolaj N. Inozemcev, *Frontovoj dnevnik*, ed. M.M. Maksimova (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), p. 209, quoted in Oleg Budnitskii, ‘The Intelligentsia Meets the Enemy: Educated Soviet Officers in Defeated Germany, 1945’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 10 (2009), p. 638.

she has died with this grief. A child's little legs in shoes and stockings are lying in the mud. It was a shell apparently, or else a tank has run over her. (This was a girl.) In the streets that are already peaceful, the ruins have been tidied. [German] women are sweeping sidewalks with brushes like those we use to sweep rooms.<sup>39</sup>

Such descriptions of the German defeat did not appear in the official press of the victorious powers in the spring of 1945, even in the West. On the contrary, it was the photographs and reports of the liberated concentration camps in Dachau, Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald in the American and British media in April 1945 that first really ignited the moral condemnation of the Germans at the end of the war.<sup>40</sup> Many members of the British and American occupation administration came to Germany with these images in their heads. 'I was delighted to find myself wholeheartedly anti-German as soon as we crossed the border', a British lieutenant wrote in his pocket calendar on the way to Berlin on 27 May. 'What infuriated me was to see them so well dressed and complacent.'<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the Western Allies' initial encounters with the German civilian population differed from those of the Soviets. Arriving in Berlin, the aforementioned British officer, who would be appointed commander of the Tiergarten district of Berlin, wrote on 1 July: 'We were all very impressed by the fact that the Germans were very [*crossed out by the author*] glad to see us.' When British troops officially entered Berlin a few days later, they were celebrated by the population and greeted with flowers, 'because it means for them the real end of the war and that the presence of the Russians had seemed too much like War.'<sup>42</sup> In a letter (on captured handmade stationary

39 RGALI, Fond 1710, op.3, d.51, 239-245: Vassilij Grossman, *Zapisnaja knižka. Vesna 1945. Boisa Berlin*, 233 (for a slightly different English translation cf. Grossman, *A Writer at War: Vasily Grossman with the Red Army, 1941-1945*, ed. and trans. Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova (London: The Harvill Press, 2005), pp. 333, 338-339), in marked contrast to his published reports, for example, Grossman, 'Doroga na Berlin, 3. V provincii Brandenburg', *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 26 February 1945; Grossman, 'Na rubeže vojny i mira II', *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 23 June 1945.

40 Norbert Frei, 'Wir waren blind, ungläubig und langsam'. Buchenwald, Dachau und die amerikanischen Medien im Frühjahr 1945', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 35 (1987), pp. 385-401; Dagmar Barnouw, *Ansichten von Deutschland (1945). Krieg und Gewalt in der zeitgenössischen Fotografie* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1997); Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung. Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998).

41 Imperial War Museum, London, Department of Documents, no. 88/8/1: Lieutenant Colonel M. E. Hancock MC, Berlin Diary, 1945.

42 Ibid.

of the 'Führer'), a United States sergeant wrote to New York on 14 July: 'As we wander down the broad streets, the people bow and scrape around us, waving or smiling at us. Children greet us. Where are we? In liberated Paris or in conquered Berlin? Good-looking, faultlessly dressed blondes smile at us, and we attempt to scowl, to recall Buchenwald and Dachau.'<sup>43</sup>

It was not only in Berlin that Germans greeted the British and Americans as liberators following the military defeat, a reversal that the Soviet side observed with mistrust. Leonard Mosley, who accompanied the British occupation army as a war reporter, described similar scenes in the Ruhr:

One could understand the people being relieved at our coming; one could understand the old warriors from the trade unions of pre-Hitler days, the staunch anti-Nazis who had escaped the concentration camps, coming out to welcome us. But the noisy, demonstrative greeting of so many, the obvious happiness of all who saw us, was a phenomenon that I find hard to explain; yet there it was. The conquering army rode into the Ruhr and thus sealed the doom of Nazi Germany; and the German workers, for whom this was defeat, cheered our coming and celebrated it in practically every city we visited.<sup>44</sup>

George Orwell reported with no less astonishment, although more scepticism, from south-western Germany in May 1945: 'At present the attitude of the people in the occupied territory is friendly and even embarrassingly friendly.'<sup>45</sup> Edgar Morin also began his travel report *L'an zéro de l'Allemagne* (published in Paris in 1946) by noting his surprise at the friendly submissiveness of the Germans he encountered.<sup>46</sup>

The expectation of a civil war against the occupation and the experience of acquiescence by the German civilian population in defeat – in the case of the British and Americans even being celebrated as 'liberators' – was a contradiction that the Allies could understand only as political hypocrisy.<sup>47</sup>

43 'Fahrt durch Berlin. Aus einem Brief von M/Sgt. Charles Gregor', *Aufbau* (New York), 17 August 1945.

44 Leonard O. Mosley, *Report from Germany* (London: Gollancz, 1945), p. 28.

45 George Orwell, 'Now Germany Faces Hunger', *Manchester Evening News*, 4 May 1945, in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, vol. 17: *I Belong to the Left: 1945* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), p. 133.

46 Edgar Morin, *L'an zéro de l'Allemagne* (Paris: Édition de la Cité Universelle, 1946).

47 In light of expectations of a popular insurrection stoked by Nazi propaganda, the Allied victors did not hesitate during the first months of the occupation to issue draconian punishments, including death sentences against German youths, even when their crimes had no recognizable

There is hardly a diary or travel report that does not express indignation about the fact that after the defeat the Germans suddenly no longer wanted to be Nazis and that they concealed or withheld their 'true' feelings, which could only have been hatred of the occupiers. For this reason, the initial friendly interactions with the German civilian population immediately after the war appeared politically suspicious.

The prohibition on fraternization issued by the Allies to punish the Germans and to protect their own soldiers in the case of a guerrilla war soon proved to be pointless, as the diaries richly illustrate. For German and Soviet diarists as well, the interactions between vanquished and occupier – not only the open liaisons between Allied soldiers and German women – were the most significant impressions of the initial post-war months. This all too unconstrained interaction with the defeated enemy became the prevailing issue of the occupation, to which the Western democracies responded differently from the Soviet Union. Even more than the violence at the end of the war, it was the lawlessness and terror through which the Stalinist regime sought to prevent this contact between occupier and vanquished in everyday life that cost the Soviet Union any moral credibility it had earned in the war against Nazi Germany.

Whereas the British and the Americans came to Germany with a strict prohibition on fraternization that they gradually loosened the closer the vanquished and the occupiers became in everyday life, the Soviet troops were completely separated from the German civilian population (and the Western Allies) beginning in 1946 and all private contact with Germans was forbidden. Many Soviet officers and soldiers subsequently deserted to the West, often with their German lovers.<sup>48</sup> In the diary of young Soviet lieutenant Vladimir Gelfand – the most important subject of which was his relationships with German women (and the formal calls he paid to their families) – desperation about the restrictions imposed by the victors was already evident in August 1945, when the first measures regarding the barracking of Soviet soldiers were introduced:

political connotations. Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany, 1600-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 752.

48 Significantly there is no historical study on consensual relationships between Red Army soldiers and German women. The pioneering account of the Soviet occupation by Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995), covers only the violence at the end of war. See, in contrast, the extensive literature on GIs and *Fräuleins*, most recently Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Now it is time to rest a bit, to see what one has never seen before – the world abroad – and to become acquainted with that which one knew so little about and which one had no clear idea about – the life, the mores and customs abroad – and finally also to go into the city, to see people, to talk to them, and to drive around, to enjoy a tiny bit of happiness (if this should exist in Germany). We have been forbidden to speak to the Germans, to spend the night at their residences, to purchase anything from them. Now the final things have been forbidden – to visit a German city, to go through the streets, to look at the ruins. Not only for soldiers, for officers as well. But this can't be true! We are humans, we cannot sit in a cage, all the more so when our duties do not end at the barracks gate and we've already had it up to here with the conditions and life in the barracks, darn it all. [...] What do I want? Freedom! The freedom to live, to think, to work, and to enjoy life. Now all this has been taken from me. I have been denied access to Berlin.<sup>49</sup>

Over the next two years Gelfand, who was stationed outside Berlin, was able repeatedly, albeit with increasing difficulty, to arrange assignments in the city. 'Here there is more freedom', he noted on 14 January 1946, after such a visit. On the streets 'one frequently sees Red Army soldiers walking arm in arm with German women or embracing them. There is no separate entrance for cinemas and theatres, and the German restaurants are always quite full with officers.<sup>50</sup> During subsequent visits, the last of which occurred in late 1946, Gelfand was troubled by the conspicuous contrast between the vanquished, who enjoyed ever more freedoms and abandoned their fearful respect of the occupiers, and the Soviet victors, whose freedoms were curtailed in every respect – an impression reinforced by visits to a homeland ravaged by war under Stalinist rule.

The changes in the way 'Russians' were depicted in British and American diaries and travel reports on the basis of contacts on the ground in occupied post-war Central Europe is a significant issue that has received almost no attention to date. In the spring of 1945, the Allies still dismissed German reports of Red Army violence as Nazi horror propaganda. Beginning in the

49 Vladimir Gelfand, *Deutschland Tagebuch 1945-1946. Aufzeichnungen eines Rotarmisten*, ed. Elke Scherstjanoi (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2005), p. 116. For a transcript of the Russian original, see <http://www.gelfand.de/1945gvv.html>. Many Soviet deserters originally stationed in Germany made similar statements in interviews conducted by American social scientists during the early 1950s. See the extensive transcripts of the Harvard Émigré Interview Projects (for example, vol. 28, no. 541), Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

50 Gelfand, *Deutschland Tagebuch*, p. 205.

summer of 1945, however, the diaries included with growing frequency descriptions of threatening, even sinister experiences with the Stalinist regime. These intensified the catastrophic impression of the demolished cities and of the desolate humanitarian situation in post-war Germany, leading left-liberal journalists such as Victor Gollancz to intervene on behalf of the vanquished in the tradition of English social reformers.<sup>51</sup> In their everyday encounters with Germans, Western observers were confronted with a dilemma that the British commander of the Tiergarten district of Berlin summarized in his memoirs in 1946: 'It was quite impossible to harbour feelings of any hostility towards these unfortunate wretches.'<sup>52</sup>

British and American diarists certainly also regarded the suffering of the German civilian population as just punishment for German crimes, not least those committed in extermination camps. This changed, however, over the course of 1945. At the beginning of December Isaac Deutscher, who had reported from Germany regularly for the British *Observer* since the end of the war, wrote:

A few months ago criticism of inhuman and unreal conceptions of a Carthaginian peace were still regarded as some sort of heresy. Even mild and decent people seemed to breathe revenge. Now the pendulum has swung almost to sentimental sympathy for defeated Germany. 'We must help Germany to get back on her feet' has become a fashionable phrase.<sup>53</sup>

This sentimental sympathy can be found in many letters and diaries of Western observers, including those of returning émigrés. Peter de Mendelssohn wrote (in English) to Hilde Spiel in London on 18 November 1945 that, although he did not want to diminish what they had gone through together in England during the war, it was nothing in comparison to that which ordinary people had gone through in the completely demolished city of Nuremberg. 'One wants to turn one's face away and never look at it again.

51 Victor Gollancz, *What Buchenwald Really Means* (London: Gollancz, 1945); Gollancz, *In Darkest Germany* (London: Gollancz, 1947).

52 Imperial War Museum London, Department of Documents, Lieutenant Colonel R.L.H. Nunn, *Memoirs*, written in 1946, p. 172.

53 Peregrine [i.e. Isaac Deutscher], 'European Notebook: "Heil Hitler!" Password for a Flat in Germany', *The Observer*, 9 December 1945. For this shift in British public opinion see also Mark Connelly, 'The British People, the Press, and the Strategic Campaign Against Germany', *Contemporary British History*, 16 (2002), pp. 39-58, similarly for the United States: Astrid Eckert, *Feindbilder im Wandel. Ein Vergleich des Deutschland- und des Japanbildes in den USA 1945 und 1946* (Münster: Lit, 1999).

The last thing one feels like doing is passing sweeping judgements over old women and little pale children playing in indescribable ruins, children with one leg, one arm, blown-off hands, scarred faces etc.<sup>54</sup>

For Western observers, life among the ruins of German cities paradoxically became the symbol of the cultural catastrophe and the watershed experience at the end of the war. Stephen Spender, for instance, noted in his diary in October 1945 after a tour of the former *Reichshauptstadt*:

Later, we made our way across the ruins of the city, to see those sights which are a very recent experience in our civilization, though they have characterized other civilizations in decay: ruins, not belonging to a past civilization, but the ruins of our own epoch, which make us suddenly feel that we are entering upon the nomadic stage when people walk across deserts of centuries, and when the environment which past generations have created for us disintegrates in our own lifetime. The Reichstag and the Chancellory are already sights for sightseers, as they might well be in another five hundred years. They are the scenes of a collapse so complete that it already has the remoteness of all final disasters which make a dramatic and ghostly impression whilst at the same time withdrawing their secrets and leaving everything to the imagination. The last days of Berlin are as much matters for speculation as the last days of an empire in some remote epoch: and one goes to the ruins with the same sense of wonder, the same straining of the imagination, as one goes to the Colosseum at Rome.<sup>55</sup>

There was hardly a diary or travel report that did not include detailed descriptions of the German landscape of ruins, which over the course of the year increasingly marked the public image of Germany in the West. These documents testified to the shock about the surreal everyday life in an occupied country. John Dos Passos, for example, wrote in his travel report in 1946: ‘The ruin of the city was so immense it took on the grandeur of a natural phenomenon like the Garden of the Gods or the Painted Desert.’<sup>56</sup> After visiting a Berlin bar where German women danced with the victors, Dos Passos wavered between repulsion and pity. He identified the limits of empathy:

54 Letter by Peter de Mendelssohn to Hilde Spiel, Nürnberg, 18 November 1945; Münchener Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia. Literaturarchiv, Peter de Mendelssohn-Archiv B134.

55 Stephen Spender, *European Witness* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), p. 235.

56 John Dos Passos, *Tour of Duty* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), p. 319.

As I lay in that jiggling berth in the military train out of Berlin, I was trying to define the feeling of nightmare I was carrying away with me. Berlin was not just one more beaten-up city. There, that point in a ruined people's misery had been reached where the victims were degraded beneath the reach of human sympathy. After that point no amount of suffering affects the spectator who is out of it. [...] Once war has broken the fabric of human society, a chain reaction seems to set in which keeps on after the fighting has stopped.<sup>57</sup>

'Two wrongs don't make a right.' This final sentence of Dos Passos's travel report from occupied Germany soon defined the basic tenor of a critique of the Allies' punitive treatment of the vanquished enemy, not only in private notes but in part also in the public opinion of Western democracies, which ultimately led to a liberalization of occupation policies. Swedish writer Stig Dagerman formulated an unusually harsh version of this critique in a travel report on the Western occupation zones in 1946:

Our autumn picture of the family in the waterlogged cellar also contains a journalist who, carefully balancing on planks set across the water, interviews the family on their views of the newly reconstituted democracy in their country, asks if the family was better off under Hitler. The answer that the visitor receives has this result: stooping with rage, nausea and contempt, the journalist scrambles hastily backwards out of the stinking room, jumps into his hired English car or American jeep, and half an hour later over a drink or a good glass of real German beer in the bar of the Press hotel composes a report on the subject 'Nazism is alive in Germany'. [...] The journalist [...] is an immoral person, a hypocrite. [...] His lack of realism here consists in the fact that he regards the Germans as one solid block, irradiating Nazi chill, and not as a multitude of starving and freezing individuals.<sup>58</sup>

As a rule, however, criticism was directed at the lawlessness and violence of Soviet occupation, particularly after the beginning of the Cold War. It is no coincidence that the two most cited reports even today on Red Army violence at the end of the war initially appeared in English. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich diaries were published in New York in 1946 as *Berlin Underground* and then a

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>58</sup> Stig Dagerman, *German Autumn*, trans. Robin Fulton (London: Quartet Encounters, 1988), pp. 9-10 and 12-13.



year later in German as *Der Schattenmann*. The anonymous diary *A Woman in Berlin* (written by Marta Hillers) was also initially published in New York in 1954, translated by James Stern (who had himself written a report from post-war Germany entitled *Hidden Damage* in 1947), and then five years later in German.<sup>59</sup> Narratives of victimization, the emphasis on German suffering in the war and the post-war that reappeared in the (West) German media starting in the late 1940s and that was also critical of the Western Allies,<sup>60</sup> gained significant impetus from the moral campaign by liberal democracies against the Soviet Union and Stalinist terror beginning in 1946-1947. The first contact 'on the ground' in occupied post-war Central Europe contributed decisively to disillusionment about the Soviet political system – for the vanquished, but also for occupiers and observers in the West.<sup>61</sup>

The inception of West German democracy is thus marked not only by the geopolitical constellation of the Cold War, the imposed democratization,<sup>62</sup> and the currency reform, which triggered the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s. Prior to these were the expectations of the final war years, the different private experiences in the encounters between Germans and Allies at and after the end of the war, and the moral narratives that arose from these transnationally intertwined relations. From these encounters between occupier and occupied an independent political dynamic emerged that could be controlled only with difficulty and that, as I have argued here, influenced the divided post-war order in a sustained manner.<sup>63</sup> The way Germans dealt with their own guilty

59 Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Berlin Underground*, trans. Barrows Mussey, with an introductory note by Joel Sayre (London: Latimer House, 1948); *A Woman in Berlin*, trans. James Stern (New York: Harcourt, 1954).

60 The critique of Allied occupation within the German public beginning in 1947 has been analysed by Josef Foschepoth, 'German Reaction to Defeat and Occupation', in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Foschepoth does not interpret this critique as a result of Allied occupation policies, but merely as a German strategy to reject notions of collective guilt.

61 For example, Eric Hobsbawm tells of such a disillusionment (which, however, was soon eclipsed by the Cold War). The British communist and historian came to Germany in 1947 as a re-education officer and was impressed by the stories of one of the participants in his seminars – Reinhart Koselleck – about his experience as a German POW in a Soviet camp. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (New York: Abacus, 2002), pp. 179-180.

62 See, for example, Riccarda Torriani, "Des Bédouins particulièrement intelligents?" La pensée coloniale et les occupations française et britannique de l'Allemagne (1945-1949), *Histoire & Sociétés. Revue européenne d'histoire sociale*, 17 (2006), pp. 56-66.

63 Similarly, Klaus Dietmar Henke, 'Kriegsende West – Kriegsende Ost. Zur politischen Auswirkung kollektiver Schlüsselerfahrungen 1944/45', in *Erobert oder befreit? Deutschland im*

involvement with the Nazi regime drew its essential impulses between 1943 and 1947 from the historically contingent confrontation between Germans and Allies and their asymmetrical perceptions at the end of the war.

For Soviet occupiers, who came from a country that had been demolished by Nazi Germany, the destruction of German cities was seen as a just form of reprisal, particularly given the fact that the Germans they encountered at the end of the war were invariably better nourished, better clothed, and possessed more material wealth than their own families had ever had. The hatred and hostility of the war continued on both sides in peace, irrespective of the propaganda of German-Soviet friendship introduced shortly thereafter, which rarely corresponded to an everyday lived reality in the early years of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). 'For people of a different generation, those who have not felt it themselves, it is impossible to imagine the entire extent of the hatred of Germans that accumulated during the war years', one member of the Soviet occupation administration recalled in the early 1980s. 'Even later, when this hatred of Germans slowly disappeared, when they became normal people for us, an invisible, insurmountable barrier remained between us.'<sup>64</sup> For Soviet soldiers and officers, the encounter with Germans meant not only the hour of retribution, the moment when they could, in a reversal of German racism, become the masters of the master race. It also meant – as the diaries indicate – the recognition that peace would not bring them the freedom they had hoped for and that the life that awaited them at home also made them the losers of this war.<sup>65</sup>

Shock about the demolished German cities and the desolate, humiliating everyday life under foreign occupation was, in contrast, a privilege of Western observers and of a post-war humanitarianism that had experienced first-hand neither the immense scope of Nazi extermination nor the war brutally conducted by the two totalitarian regimes between the Volga and the Elbe. Paradoxically, for Western observers it was devastated and occupied post-war Germany (and not, for instance, the desolate death zone left by Nazi Germany in Eastern Europe) that became the symbol of a war that had destroyed the principles of civilization. The vanquished become the speechless, passive victims of this war – an attribute that Germans

*internationalen Kräftefeld und die Sowjetische Besatzungszone (1945/46)*, ed. Hartmut Mehringer et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999), pp. 13-17; Henke, *Die amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995); for Japan: Dower, *Embracing Defeat*.

64 E. Berg, 'Dva goda v okkupirovannoi Germanii', *Pamjat'. Istoričeski Sbornik*, 5 (1981/82), pp. 7-41, 10 and 12.

65 Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1947-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

soon adopted for themselves and that continues to inform the memory of the Second World War in the Federal Republic of Germany today (even in critical rejections of the victimization narrative).<sup>66</sup> Such appropriations can be identified in individual figures of speech. For example, talk about 'zero hour', criticized today as an apology for German guilt, can be traced back to Edgar Morin's travel report *L'an zéro de l'Allemagne* (1946) (published in German translation in 1948 as *Das Jahr Null. Ein Franzose sieht Deutschland*). The term was further popularized by Roberto Rossellini's neorealist film *Germania, anno zero* (Germany Year Zero) (1947-1948), which was shot amidst the ruins of Berlin and portrayed the anomie of post-war Germany.

Nevertheless in their everyday encounters with the vanquished, Western occupiers were confronted with a dilemma described by Peter Weiss in Swedish exile in 1947:

I feel sorry for them when I see how they starve, how they suffer (that is precisely what makes me so tired), but it is not my fault. I never wanted to sit here in the heart of this foreign country and make myself their judge. That is a role that I was forced to assume, but duty demands that I play this role to the end. [...] With all my might I must remember that I am not dealing with friends here, but rather with enemies (if also defeated ones).<sup>67</sup>

This dilemma coloured contemporary political analyses of the aftermath of the Nazi regime that denied Germans the very empathy that occupiers from liberal Western democracies felt compelled to acknowledge. Arendt's travel report cited at the beginning also vacillated, I think, between shock about the desolate ruins of post-war Germany and the attempt to resist any emotional sympathy for Hitler's Germans.

66 See, for example, Elisabeth Domansky, 'A Lost War: World War II in Postwar German Memory', in *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 233-272; A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Wulf Kansteiner, 'Losing the War – Winning the Memory Battle: The Legacy of Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust in the Federal Republic of Germany', in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Claudio Fogu et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 102-146; Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006).

67 Peter Weiss, *Die Besiegten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985; Swedish original, 1947), p. 57. See also: Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Ein unwahrscheinlicher Alptraum bei hellem Licht". Peter Weiß' Berliner Phantasmagorien "Die Besiegten", *German Politics and Society*, 23 (2005), pp. 128-137.

# Two Paths to the Same End?

The Challenges of the Liberation in France and Italy

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The fact that France and Italy shared something of a common fate during the 'dark years' is clearly sufficient grounds to justify a comparison of the two cases. Indeed, both countries were characterized by their ambiguity. On a domestic level, the Fascist and the Vichy regimes both claimed to be launching a national revolution and they did so, at least initially, with the passive, if not the active, consent of their populations. On an international level, the two 'Latin sisters' were allies of the Reich, an alliance that was official in the case of Italy and rather less obvious in the French case, even though Marshall Pétain set his country 'on the path of collaboration' on 24 October 1940 and at no time supported British or American action, including during the Anglo-American landings in North Africa in November 1942. In 1940, however, Charles de Gaulle launched his famous appeal and kept the 'true France' in the war. In 1943 King Victor Emmanuel III assented first to the deposition of Mussolini and then to the conclusion of an armistice which transformed Italy, until then supporting Germany, into an ally of the Anglo-Americans. The declaration of co-belligerence on 12 October 1943 made this turnaround official. At the moment of their liberation, the two countries faced, in many respects, a comparable situation. First of all they had to negotiate their new status with London and Washington, or indeed with Moscow, which was by no means a foregone conclusion in either case. The British and the Americans distrusted their partners: they harboured doubts about Badoglio's resolve and only grudgingly acknowledged General de Gaulle, whose government was not recognized *de jure* until 23 October 1944. The two governments also had to eliminate the legacies of Fascism and Vichyism which, given the popularity of these political experiments and their hold on the army and the administration, was a high-risk undertaking. The French and Italian populations were subjected to a harsh German occupation until 1945 and maintained complex relations with their liberators thereafter, and they lived throughout this period in a context dominated by shortages, military operations and the violence of war.

These factors set out a common framework which makes it possible, and pertinent, to undertake a comparison of the two countries. As such, France and Italy were placed, *ex ante*, in comparable, though by no means

identical, historical conditions. However, the paths these two countries took out of war were, *ex post*, fundamentally different. This chapter will help make sense of the different ways in which France and Italy negotiated their transition to peace, without losing sight of the numerous factors which, despite certain similarities in their situation, make each case unique. Such a comparison has three benefits. Beyond the singularity of each nation's fate, it allows us to understand that the choices made by Philippe Pétain and Benito Mussolini created, to use a concept favoured by sociologists, a situation of path dependency, constraining their respective countries to play assigned roles within strict margins of manoeuvre, regardless of the will of the population. It also offers a means of distinguishing between those factors which, in the transition out of war, were exogenous (the decisions of Berlin, London, Moscow and Washington) and those which were endogenous (the weight of traditions, social structures and political precedents). Finally, it allows us to comprehend that these transitions to peace were also governed by internal dynamics which played out in unique contexts after 1943-1944, leading ultimately to profoundly different situations.

## Timing

First and foremost, the two countries were liberated at very different speeds. In the Italian case, the process dragged on for almost two years: the Allies landed in Sicily during the night of 9-10 July 1943, liberating the south of the country in 1943, but they did not break through the Gustav line until the end of May 1944 and only entered the north of the country in April 1945. With the exception of Corsica, reconquered in September and October 1943, the liberation of French metropolitan territory did not begin until the Allies landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944, but the Allied advance that followed was particularly rapid. Paris fell on 25 August 1944, and the French-American forces that landed in Provence on 15 August 1944 in the framework of Operation Dragoon moved up the Rhône Valley at top speed. The bulk of French territory was therefore liberated in around three months, after which the Germans only occupied a few pockets on the coast and part of Alsace.

The fact that the liberation of Italy was more spread out, in both temporal and spatial terms, resulted in the atomization of the territory. Different regions were subject to fundamentally different forms of war, occupation and political rule. The greatest rupture divided the north and centre from south along the Gustav line, the former occupied by the Reich and subject to the authority of the Italian Social Republic of Salò and the latter ruled

by a king closely controlled by the Allies. This division reawakened old fractures, since the Gustav line followed the geographic and cultural frontier which, until 1861, separated the multiple northern principalities from the southern kingdoms of Naples and the Two Sicilies, conquered by Garibaldi in the course of the Expedition of the Thousand. Post-war accounts drew on older representations distinguishing the north, the symbol of a politicized and armed resistance, from the supposedly politically backward south.

As a result, these territories were unequally exposed to the violence of war, a variation in regional experiences which also characterized the French case. Certain French regions, above all Normandy, were profoundly affected by the violence of combat. Normandy was a war zone between the launch of Operation Overlord and the beginning of Operation Cobra on 25 July 1944. Pounded by incessant bombardment and devastated by a series of battles, this region bore the brunt of the violence. During the summer of 1944, 14,000 civilians perished in Lower Normandy, half of them undoubtedly as a result of the bombing conducted between 6 and 15 June.<sup>1</sup> Whole cities, including Caen and Saint-Lô, were razed to the ground. Ports that the Allies attempted to capture from solidly dug-in German units were particularly hard hit: Le Havre, Dunkirk and Saint-Malo were almost completely destroyed. Conversely, a large part of French territory was spared from such violence, particularly as a result of the German retreat ordered by Hitler on 16 August 1944, which explains why several cities, including Lyon, Dijon and Lille, fell practically without combat.

In Italy, on the other hand, the violence of war was infinitely more brutal because it lasted longer and affected a much larger territory. The Allies had been bombing the peninsula since the start of the war, focusing particularly on the south, and in October 1942 they began a campaign of bombing raids on the main cities, hoping to break Italian resistance, topple the Fascist regime and oblige the government to capitulate.<sup>2</sup> Turin, Milan, Genoa, Naples, Palermo, Taranto, Bari and Messina were among the principal targets. France was also the victim of bombing – 67,078 French people were killed – but neither the British nor the Americans intended to use this means of targeting civilians and inciting an insurgency against

1 Michel Boivin, Gérard Bourdin and Jean Quellien, *Villes normandes sous les bombes* (Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen-Mémorial de Caen, 1994), p. 25.

2 Gabriella Gribaudo, 'Bombing and Land War in Italy: Military Strategy, Reactions, and Collective Memory', in *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp and Stefan Martens (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 116-134; Gabriella Gribaudo, *Guerra totale. Fra bombe alleate e violenze naziste. Napoli e il fronte meridionale 1940-1944* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005).

the Pétainist regime.<sup>3</sup> In Italy the Germans had also prepared a series of defensive lines (principally the Gustav line and the Gothic line) which slowed the Allied advance. They also employed scorched earth tactics as they retreated, taking any goods and materials that they judged necessary for the war effort with them. In France, the Germans retreated in an orderly fashion after 16 August and abstained from establishing defensive lines with the exception, as previously noted, of the Vosges.

The violence of combat and the presence of German and Allied troops produced different results on either side of the Alps. In Italy, the war had laid bare the adventurism of the regime and the incapacity of the ruling classes either to organize civilian life or to protect the population: anti-aircraft defences proved ineffective, as did the rationing system. All the structures of daily life were in crisis.<sup>4</sup> Bombing raids and their trail of destruction aggravated the circumstances, leading to tragic situations such as that of the city of Naples, according to an Allied report:

The city had suffered very severe damage. The gas, electricity, water and sewage systems were out of action and a considerable number of people lived more or less permanently in Air Raid Shelters. It was evident that these factors, operating in a depressed, malnourished, unwashed populace of nearly a million, were ideal for the occurrence and rapid dissemination of infectious disease. [...] During the period October 1943 to February 1944, there were 1500 known cases of Typhus in Naples and its immediate vicinity.<sup>5</sup>

Particularly low rations and scorched earth tactics only further exacerbated the situation which, in terms of food and sanitation, painted a particularly bleak picture.

The liberation of France was undertaken in circumstances that were in many respects less tragic. Certainly, destruction had been widespread. The war had laid waste to a quarter of all housing, destroyed 22,000 kilometres of railway lines out of a total of 40,000, and by 1944 industrial production

3 Eddy Florentin, *Quand les Alliés bombardaient la France. 1940-1945* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), p. 446.

4 Gabriella Gribaudi, 'The True Cause of the "Moral Collapse": People, Fascists and Authorities under the Bombs: Naples and the Countryside, 1940-1944', in *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940-1945*, ed. Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp and Richard Overy (London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), pp. 219-238; C. Baldoli, A. Knapp, *Forgotten Blitzes: France and Italy under Allied Air Attack, 1940-1945*, London, Continuum 2012.

5 Allied Force Headquarters, Typhus Commission, *Notes on the Civil Typhus Outbreak: Italy, 1943-44*. British National Archives (henceforth BNA), WO 220/414.



had fallen to just 38 per cent of 1938 levels.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, shortages weighed heavily on the population. In August 1945, meat rations were limited to 100 grams per person per week.<sup>7</sup> In the region of Marseille, young people in category J3 (a privileged category) were only consuming 1781 calories per day.<sup>8</sup> Nutrition, in turn, had an effect on the state of public health. A survey of school children in the thirteenth district of Paris revealed, for instance, that the weight of boys aged 15-16 had, on average, fallen by 7.6 kilograms between 1935 and 1944 and that the average height had fallen by 7 centimetres.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, unlike its neighbour, France did not experience famine or epidemics between 1944 and 1947 and public sanitation remained at the most satisfactory level possible for a country bled dry by four years of war and occupation.

### The Question of Power

Widespread shortages presented a political risk that was all the greater for the fact that they coincided, in both France and Italy, with something of a power vacuum. In Italy the Fascist regime had collapsed in the south but neither the king nor the Prime Minister, Badoglio, was able to build national unity around their own persons. In the north, the Salò Republic was also contested by the resistance, which grew in strength as time passed. In France, the *État Français* ('French State', the official title of the Vichy regime) had disappeared into thin air as the Allies advanced. Nothing, however, guaranteed that General de Gaulle would manage to impose his rule. The attitude of the communists was cause for concern, not least because misery offered a fertile terrain for revolt.

The Allies assessed these risks lucidly but not without concern for the potential disorder that could threaten their military operations. They guarded against such dangers by striving to impose their control. Italy became subject to the rule of the Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (AMGOT) in Sicily and the Allied Military Government (AMG),

6 Jean-Pierre Rioux, *La France de la IVe République*, vol. 1, *L'ardeur et la nécessité. 1944-1952* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1980), pp. 33 and 36.

7 Note by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Supply, 24 July 1945, Archives nationales de France (henceforth ANF), F<sup>23</sup> RAV 1.

8 Report sent by the Commissaire de la République in Marseille to the Minister of Supply, undated (December 1944 or January 1945), ANF F<sup>23</sup> RAV 2.

9 Letter from the director of the National Institute of Hygiene to the Minister of Supply, undated, ANF F<sup>23</sup> RAV.



a less restrictive formulation, in the rest of the peninsula as it was progressively liberated. Power, in other words, came into the hands of the military, which was demonstrated by the fact that the Anglo-Americans treated the Italians as enemies, not as allies (otherwise they would have, like Norway, enjoyed the status of 'liberated territories').<sup>10</sup> Even if divergent visions set Washington, favouring strict control, in opposition to London, advocating a form of indirect rule, the two powers conserved the bulk of Fascist cadres and avoided launching a brutal purge so as not to disorganize the administration of the country even further. In February 1944, the liberated territories came under the control of the Italian government. The latter nevertheless had to respect the directives of the Allied Control Commission, which insisted that the clauses of the armistice signed on 29 September 1943 be observed. Carrying out the orders of the commander in chief, and receiving political recommendations from the Advisory Council for Italy, the commission, the only interlocutor of the Italian government, reserved the final say for itself. The primacy of the military justified American reticence in associating the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) with the conducting of Allied policy in Italy, despite the good conduct of the French Expeditionary Corps (CEF) on the front. To the great despair of the Italians, however, the transfer of responsibility was very gradual, and some areas that were considered particularly sensitive remained under the jurisdiction of the AMG for a long time, including Naples, an extremely important port for communications and military supplies, which remained under AMG control until 1946.<sup>11</sup>

France had an altogether different fate, owing to the decisive action of General de Gaulle. Having brushed aside his rival, General Giraud, de Gaulle successfully re-established his power in North Africa, singlehandedly overseeing the destiny of the CFLN from 2 October 1943. He relentlessly insisted that the Allies negotiate the forms of power which would impose his authority when the Liberation came, but neither London nor Washington took him up on this offer, preferring to leave the question open. However, preparations for Operation Overlord obliged the Allies to look beyond temporary arrangements. Roosevelt resigned himself to sign a draft directive, on 15 March 1944, intended for Commander in Chief Dwight Eisenhower:

10 On these questions, see David Ellwood, *Italy, 1943-1945* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985). Originally published as *L'alleato nemico. La politica dell'occupazione in Italia 1943/1946* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977).

11 Maria Porzio, *Arrivano gli alleati. Amori e violenze nell'Italia liberata* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2011); Gloria Chianese, *Quando uscimmo dai rifugi. Il Mezzogiorno tra guerra e dopoguerra* (Rome: Carocci, 2004).

You will have ultimate determination of where, when and how civil administration in France shall be exercised by French citizens remembering always that the military situation must govern. [...] In order to serve the setting up of any such civilian administration in any part of France you may consult with [the] French Committee of National Liberation and may authorize them in your discretion to select and install the personnel necessary for such administration. You are, however, not limited to dealing exclusively with said Committee for such purpose in case at any time in your best judgment you determine some other course is preferable. [...] You will have no talks or relations with [the] Vichy regime except for the purpose of terminating its administration *in toto*.<sup>12</sup>

These instructions marked an important rupture since they broke irrevocably with the État Français, with which any negotiations were henceforth ruled out. Unlike in the case of Italy, Roosevelt did not imagine dealing with the former Vichy administration. Similarly, as his instructions show, he did not intend to place France under the rule of AMGOT, contrary to the legend spread by the Gaullists during and after the war: unlike her 'Latin sister', France was not considered as an enemy which needed to be 'occupied'. Roosevelt refused, however, to consider de Gaulle's committee as a legitimate government, recommending to his supreme command that it remain open in the choice of political authorities. In short, the problem concerned not so much the future status of France but rather the question of who had the power to appoint the administrators of liberated France: the American president demanded this right, a right which de Gaulle, invoking national sovereignty, refused to concede to him.

After the landings of 6 June 1944 the situation evolved rapidly. De Gaulle stopped begging for Allied endorsement, as he explained to the British ambassador Duff Cooper in April 1944. Recalling the meeting in his memoirs, de Gaulle wrote that

the formality of recognition no longer interested the French Government. What was important was to be recognized by the French nation. And that fact was now established. The Allies could have helped us to gain

12 Franklin D. Roosevelt, Instructions of 15 March 1944, National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth: NARA), RG 331/12/108.

countenance when it had been useful. They had not done so. At present, the matter was without importance.<sup>13</sup>

The head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic instead imposed his power from below by installing a handful of faithful followers in Normandy. This devolution of power worked out for the best: the officers of Civil Affairs were pleased with their close collaboration with the Gaullist authorities, and Eisenhower abstained from making the question a matter of principal. The warm welcome de Gaulle received on 14 June 1944 in Bayeux, the first French town to be liberated, followed by his 'coronation' through his triumphal parade into Paris on 26 August, showed the Allies the futility of their opposition. They therefore resolved to recognize the Provisional Government *de jure*, but still waited until 23 October to do so.

France and Italy did not, therefore, experience their liberation under the same legal conditions. Enjoying all its rights, France was considered (at the risk of taking a rather optimistic view of the situation in practice) as an independent power and as a victor; Italy only enjoyed limited sovereignty and needed to obtain the assent of London and Washington in order to act. While Italy escaped the fate that befell Germany, it came out of the ordeal singularly diminished, all the more so because high political tensions were accompanied by conflicts between the liberated population and their liberators on a local level.

## Encounters

The conventional image of the liberation is one of jubilant civilians celebrating the arrival of their liberators. While this image is not entirely false, it nevertheless merits serious qualification, particularly when one takes the attitude and behaviour of the Allied troops into account.

In Italy, Allied soldiers behaved more as occupiers than as liberators, showing little concern for the local population. The Allies waged war as they pleased, without worrying unduly about the security of civilians. The number of accidents rose as a result. A German bombing raid on the port of Bari on 2 December 1943 detonated the Allied stores of mustard gas, claiming hundreds of victims. A train transporting bombs exploded at the station of Torre Annunziata, not far from Naples, on 21 January 1946 causing

13 Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. L'Unité. 1942-1944* (Paris: Presse Pocket, 1980; 1st ed., 1956), p. 261.

54 deaths, injuring around 300 and making 9,000 homeless.<sup>14</sup> Drivers drove at breakneck speeds, causing numerous accidents.<sup>15</sup> The relative opulence of the soldiers, meanwhile, reinforced their arrogance and widened the gulf that separated them from an emaciated population. Agostino degli Espinosa concluded:

For years some had waited for these men as a source of salvation, many others who had not waited for them thought of them as benevolent friends. Instead, they were tough soldiers, strengthened by unimaginably powerful equipment, scornful and arrogant, especially towards those who fawned upon them. They took the things they desired rudely on account of their power; they were not cordial or friendly even if they were extremely polite; it was never possible to touch their hearts in a state of equality. Not only were they winners, proud of their victory; they were men who believed themselves to be superior.<sup>16</sup>

The fate reserved for women confirms the complexity of the situation. The second sex was very much the victim of the liberators, who raped thousands of Italian women. The troops of the French Expeditionary Corps in Italy are particularly notable for the large scale of such violence. The breach of the Gustav line in May 1944 was accompanied by millions of cases of looting and rape. In total, the French command in Italy received almost 20,000 requests for compensation for theft and 1,500 for rape.<sup>17</sup> Perpetrated in the mountains of southern Latium by groups of soldiers (mainly from the French colonies) who were frustrated by the tough winter battles, avid for revenge and in

14 Report of Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri, 30/01/1946 (A.C.C. (Administration Control Commission) 156/790C/49, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma). Photographs of the disaster have been uploaded onto Youtube by vesuvio.web.com under the title "Torre Annunziata 21 gennaio 1946 "Immagini della memoria".

15 Maria Porzio, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

16 Agostino degli Espinosa, *Il regno del Sud. 8 settembre 1943-4 giugno 1944* (Rome: Migliaresi editore, 1946), p. 136. Agostino degli Espinosa, writer and economist, wrote the chronicle of the events which characterized the history of the Kingdom of the South, through the memory of his own experience, witness testimonies of numerous protagonists, newspaper articles and Italian and Anglo-American diplomatic documents. A singular character in the context of the time, a monarchist and legitimist, but also a sincere anti-fascist and advocate of a genuine renewal of the political and social life of the country, he succeeded in giving a profound vision of reality and the contradictions experienced by the population of the South.

17 Note by Jacques Gachet on civil reparations, 17 September 1947, Service Historique de la Défense, 4Q157 (consultation dérogatoire).

search of war booty, these crimes terrorized civilians.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, spaces of fraternization opened up between Italians and Anglo-Americans: 2,062 marriages were celebrated in the city of Naples alone.<sup>19</sup>

The situation was different in liberated France, even if France also suffered its share of violence. The lorry drivers who plied the 'Red Ball Express' to bring war materiel as close as possible to the front rarely exercised prudence and caused numerous accidents. Allied troops, when they were not actually committing misdemeanours or engaging in criminal activities, often behaved as if in a conquered territory. 'There is the usual looting and stealing by British troops, particularly on the coast, which is causing unfavourable comparisons between the behaviour of our troops and the Germans', Brigadier R.M.H. Lewis noted on 14 June.<sup>20</sup> Some soldiers refused to pay for their purchases, while others even committed veritable 'hold-ups'. Rapes were also perpetuated. In the American case, the Judge Advocate General estimated that 181 women, French or foreign, had been raped in France between June 1944 and June 1945.<sup>21</sup> In the British case, the courts martial punished 2,897 thefts, 275 cases of 'impropriety' and 1,033 diverse crimes over the all of the theatres of operations in the years 1944 and 1945.<sup>22</sup> By all accounts these numbers are underestimated. In the French department of Manche alone, the historian Michel Boivin has estimated, 208 rapes and around 30 murders were committed by American troops.<sup>23</sup> However, this violence represents only the sombre part of the liberation. In many towns the population celebrated the Allied troops who had delivered them from the Pétainist or Nazi yoke. That is not to say, however, that this liberation resolved all the political and social tensions of the day.

18 Julie Le Gac, *Vaincre sans gloire. Le corps expéditionnaire français en Italie (novembre 1942-juillet 1944)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013), pp. 417-467; Gabriella Gribaudi, *Guerra totale*, op. cit., pp. 510-571.

19 Maria Porzio, op. cit., p. 146.

20 Brigadier Lewis, Second Army, letter to DCCAO, 14 June 1944, NARA RG 331/54/292.

21 J. Robert Lilly, *La face cachée des GI's. Les viols commis par des soldats américains en France, en Angleterre et en Allemagne pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Payot, 2003), p. 155.

22 Comprehensive Summary of Court-Martial Convictions (British Other Ranks, Home and Overseas), BNA, WO 93/53.

23 Michel Boivin, *Les Manchois dans la tourmente de la guerre. 1939-1945* (PhD thesis, University of Caen, 2003), pp. 1094-1096.

## Social Unrest

The arrival of the Allies hardly brought an end to antagonisms, although once more the situation differed between France and Italy. On the Italian peninsula, the British and Americans opted to support the king and General Badoglio, a questionable solution to say the least. Badoglio, as head of the Army General Staff since 1925, had employed barbaric tactics during the war against Ethiopia in 1935. In political terms his nomination was far from a rupture with the old regime. On a social level, too, tensions were exacerbated because of the inefficiency of his government. Incapable of negotiating the armistice with the Anglo-Americans, he had abandoned soldiers to their fate and allowed 600,000 prisoners to be captured by the Germans. Badoglio proved equally incompetent at feeding the starving population. In December 1943, bread rations in Naples fell to 100 grams per day and, even though they subsequently increased, they still could not provide more than a thousand calories a day in February 1944.<sup>24</sup> Even though the government was opened up to include other parties, it by no means enjoyed the confidence of the population, not least because it failed to maintain order. Bandits criss-crossed the countryside and the Mafia, suppressed under Fascism, raised its head once more.

Formed after the fall of Mussolini, the first Badoglio government (25 July 1943 to 17 April 1944) was composed of numerous military figures and state functionaries who had played an important role in the politics of the deposed regime. The parties which had formed the Committee of National Liberation (CLN) – the Socialist and Communist parties, the Party of Action (Partito d'Azione) and the moderate parties of a liberal bent – agreed to participate in Badoglio's second national unity government (22 April 1944 to 8 June 1944). Recently returned from exile in the Soviet Union, the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti took the crucial decision to participate in the government and to 'freeze' the institutional question regarding the monarchy until the end of the war. After the liberation of Rome, the king, who had refused to abdicate, was forced to nominate his son, Umberto II, as General Lieutenant of the Kingdom. The government came under the leadership of a representative of the political parties, the liberal Ivanoe Bonomi.

At the same time, the partisan groups which were fighting in the north against the Republic of Salò and against the German occupiers were

24 Paolo De Marco, *Polvere di piselli. La vita quotidiana a Napoli durante l'occupazione alleata (1943-1944)* (Naples: Liguori, 1996), p. 157.

unified under the control of the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale Alta Italia (Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy, CLNAI). The representatives of the partisans were even more resolved to combat the institutions and figures of the Fascist regime; they were also fully committed to struggle to change social relations. They therefore always sought the support of the workers and peasants, though this policy was not without its contradictions: sometimes the actions of the partisans provoked Nazi reprisals. The difference between the two situations was remarkable. In the north, the suffering of the populations generally emanated from the collaborationist government and the German occupiers; the representatives of the CLNAI, the partisan leaders, thus represented the struggle against a despotic and violent power and were able to incarnate hopes for change in the future. In the centre-south, on the other hand, civilians had to obey a new government and parties that were not legitimized either by a popular vote or through resistance struggle and which seemed to strive harder to impose themselves in the new balance of power than to defend and protect the populations.

In the liberated territories, the scale of shortages, combined with disappointment in a government that had maintained the bulk of Fascist cadres, provoked a backlash from the local population. In 1943, local republics were formed in Sanza, near Salerno, and in Caulonia in Calabria. Civilians lynched or killed fascists, peasants occupied lands and employees went on strike. The authorities responded in part through the Gullo decrees, which transferred wasteland and badly farmed fields to landless peasants, but above all it resorted to force. On 19 October 1944 the *carabinieri* opened fire on a Palermo strike committee demanding wage rises, causing 16 deaths and injuring 104 people.<sup>25</sup> These uprisings, it should be noted, remained largely spontaneous: the parties of the left played no role in either initiating or prolonging them.

The army was not spared from this movement of civil disobedience. After the declaration of co-belligerence the Badoglio government decided to launch an appeal for volunteers to fight alongside the Allies. Poorly equipped and commanded by generals who had led Fascist forces, this army struggled to recruit from within a population that was tired of the Fascist regime and the long years of war, and that did not wish to fight all over again. The authorities decided to impose conscription in September 1944, which only resulted in widespread unrest. Many young men evaded the draft:

25 Rosario Mangiameli, 'La regione in guerra', in *Storia d'Italia. Le regioni dall'Unità a oggi. La Sicilia* (Turin: Einaudi 1987), p. 557.

200,000 of those called up in February 1945 did not respond. In the post-war period, more than 50,000 trials for desertion were commenced, confirming just how widespread the refusal to fight had been. While the decrees of March 1946 abolished the death penalty and long prison sentences for this offence, thousands of Italians were deprived of their citizenship for many years, losing their right to vote, their driving licences and so on.<sup>26</sup> Other young men rebelled. In Ragusa in Sicily (4-9 January 1945) the government sent in the troops, leading to thirty-seven deaths and eighty-seven people being injured, numbers that undoubtedly underestimate the real casualty rate.

In the occupied territories, disobedience and the rejection of the war were directed against the authorities of the Salò Republic. The Italian Social Republic (RSI) had sought to reconstruct the army in order to strengthen its position in the alliance with the Reich. In November 1943 the Minister of Defence, Rodolfo Graziani, called up all youths born in 1923 followed by all men born in the years 1923-1925. When recruitment met with little success, a new decree, promulgated on 14 February 1944, introduced the death penalty for draft-dodgers and deserters. This was followed by a decree which promised a legal pardon for all men who enrolled voluntarily before 18 April 1944. Despite harsh Fascist repression, characterized by round-ups and death sentences during the winter of 1943-1944, few men responded to these summons. Instead, these measures drove young men to join the partisans: 'the stronger state constraints on young men became, the higher the numbers of volunteers for the partisans rose'.<sup>27</sup> Draft-dodging thus took place on a large scale and was comparable, in many respects, with that which characterized the Kingdom of the South. In both cases it revealed a refusal to pursue war and to recognize the legitimacy of the state.<sup>28</sup> After the entry of the anti-fascist parties into the governments of national unity, the resistance leadership was unified and came together with the desire to transform the partisan groups into a veritable army. The unified command oversaw the insurrection of the northern towns in April 1945, which became the symbolic date of the Italian liberation. Alongside a core of resolute and politicized combatants, however, throughout this period there was also a fluctuating mass of young men, hesitant and uncertain, who were fleeing

26 Enzo Forcella, 'Un altro dopoguerra', preface to Maria Occhipinti, *Una donna di Ragusa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), p. 24.

27 Lutz Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione tedesca in Italia 1943-1945* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1993). On the history of the resistance in Italy, see Santo Peli, *La Resistenza in Italia. Storia e critica* (Turin: Einaudi, 2004).

28 Santo Peli, *La Resistenza in Italia...*, op. cit., p. 48.



the army of the Social Republic on the one hand but who did not manage to brave life in the partisan groups on the other. Many were on the run for the whole of the war; others found compromise solutions by engaging in the war industries or in the Organisation Todt.

From the winter of 1943-1944 onwards, the Germans and the 'Repubblicini' violently attacked the partisan groups in order to drive them out of the territory. Violent roundups, accompanied by mass shootings, were carried out in Tuscany, Emilia, Piedmont and the Veneto. By imposing a policy of terror on the civilian population, the Germans hoped to break all ties of solidarity with the combatants. The razing of villages, reprisals extending to whole territories (such as at Marzabotto and Sant'Anna di Stazzema) and mass deportations all grew in frequency. Although Allied bombs were falling on the peninsula, it was above all the violence of the Fascists and the Germans which affected the population. To this extent, the population in the north experienced the extreme face of Fascism which nourished anti-fascism and gave succour to those parties which represented it and which headed the resistance. In the post-war period this movement became known as the 'north wind', as opposed to the supposedly more moderate and conservative winds blowing from the south.

In the south, meanwhile, civil society felt abandoned and poorly represented. Civilians responded to shortages by developing autonomous but anomic forms of behaviour. Stimulated by the presence of the Allies, the black market developed on different levels ranging from modest family trafficking to networks involving the Mafia or Camorra. 'It has come to the attention of this Headquarters that Black Markets operating on a large scale are flourishing in the city of Naples and surrounding area', a report of 14 January 1944 revealed.

It has also been found that the sources of supply of these black market stocks are, to a large extent, Allied military supplies. During November and December approximately \$20,000 worth of stolen US military supplies, principally food and fuel, were recovered. This is believed to represent only a small part of the military supplies which found their way into Black Market channels.<sup>29</sup>

On a different level, prostitution became increasingly widespread. On 11 January 1945, *Il Risorgimento* – the only newspaper authorized to appear

29 Headquarters Peninsular Base Section, by command of Brigadier General Pence, L.F. Nickel, Lt. Col. A.G.D. Adjutant General, 14 January 1944 (ACS, ACC, shelf 158, reel 694, file 40).

in Naples – revealed that between 1 October 1943 and 31 December 1944, 14,325 prostitutes had been arrested or sent to hospital.

The inability of the authorities to guarantee a minimum standard of living, as well as the repression of popular revolts, forced the population to become self-reliant. Italians sought salvation by developing free strategies rather than by relying on the legal authorities in which it had no confidence, a development which contributed to the further discrediting of politics.

France, meanwhile, was largely spared from social unrest. Shortages were certainly the order of the day and the black market, far from collapsing upon the departure of the Germans, only flourished after the liberation: 'its techniques have hardly varied and have not been renewed in the course of the last five years', the regional directors of the Bank of France observed in March 1945. 'Only its relative importance has changed.'<sup>30</sup> Small- and large-scale trafficking coexisted, stimulated by the presence of an American army that had rare products at its disposal: petrol, sugar, cigarettes and chocolate. Le Havre and Marseille became two crucial hubs for black-market exchanges.<sup>31</sup> The authorities tried in vain to fight back with repressive measures, but never actually resorted to the use of force.

Unlike in Italy, social discontent did not turn the French population against the authorities, as the case of the army illustrates. While young Italians were refusing to respond to the call to arms launched by the Badoglio government, 190,000 Frenchmen joined the French army after August 1944 to pursue the war in Germany, hold the Alpine front and clear out the Atlantic pockets.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, the imposition of conscription by the Italian Social Republic drove 250,000 young Italians into the ranks of the resistance, but this enrolment did not take place within a legal or state framework, an indication that the political situation, on the other side of the Alps, was singularly different.

War and occupation gave rise to deep social distress on both sides of the Alps. Both populations hoped that the liberation would bring an improvement in the material situation, but such hopes were soon dashed, and the disappointment was all the more acute for the fact that people had been hoping more than just the return of white bread. The two populations had hoped for economic and social renewal, a form of New Deal. Did this

30 Banque de France, 'Synthèse des succursales', March 1945, cited in Fabrice Grenard, *La France du marché noir (1940-1949)* (Paris: Payot, 2008), pp. 256-257.

31 Fabrice Grenard, *La France du marché noir*, op. cit., p. 261-262.

32 André Martel, *Histoire militaire de la France*. Tome IV, *de 1940 à nos jours* (Paris: PUF, 1994), p. 234.

mean there was a threat of revolutionary uprising? The presence of Anglo-American troops, the prudence of Stalin and the strategy of the Communist parties – intent in the first instance to play the card of national unity – all suggested that such action would be futile. Yet the burgeoning of social conflicts in Italy, and the strikes of 1947-1948 in France, revealed the deep dissatisfaction of two populations which, despite the liberation, felt let down by the timidity of the post-liberation reforms. This disappointment soon gave rise, in France at least, to the notion of a 'betrayed revolution'.<sup>33</sup> In truth, the political situation was far from simple, even though it obeyed singularly different logics in each of the two countries.

## Purges

The eradication of the Vichy and Fascist regimes was in fact undertaken along markedly different lines. On 28 December 1943, under pressure from the Allies, the Badoglio government had promulgated a decree in order to purge the administration. But the agents of the old regime managed to delay its application, which in turn brought the next government, opened up to other political parties on 22 April 1944, to adopt a new decree on its first day in office to punish the 'criminal and illegal acts of Fascism', which notably foresaw the setting up of provincial commissions composed of a judge and two jurors. The magistrates, as a general rule, bore witness to a lack of eagerness to punish the guilty of the Fascist regime, whether big or small. After the king had been sidelined and his son nominated as the General Lieutenant of the kingdom – the official abdication did not take place until 9 May 1946 – a High Court of Justice was set up in July 1944. It was limited, however, to judging the small fry of the previous regime, with the notable exception of General Roatta, accused of having been behind the murder of the Rosselli brothers and of running a brutal regime of occupation in the Balkans. The progress of the Allied troops, finally, led to extraordinary courts of assizes being formed in order to punish Fascist crimes which, it was believed, had covered northern Italy in blood.

In January 1944 the CLNAI was given a mandate to coordinate the partisan struggle in the north and to organize a form of clandestine government, yet the committee doubted the good faith of the central government. It thus created popular courts of assizes which carried out justice in such a summary fashion that innocent people sometimes got caught up in it, including

33 'Betrayed Revolution' is the title of a work published in 1945 by the communist Pierre Hervé.

the families of Fascist dignitaries. Likewise, a harsh purge was carried out after 25 April 1945, the date from which the *Comitati di liberazione* launched an order of insurrection to hasten the war in the north to a finish. This order led to an orgy of violence. In the city of Turin alone, the purge claimed 1,138 victims. The head of the Fascist Party in Piedmont's capital, Giuseppe Solaro, reputed for his fanaticism and cruelty, was condemned to death by a tribunal of partisans, and obliged to walk through the city in front of jeering crowds to be hanged in the same public square where, just a few days earlier, four resisters had been hanged on his orders. The most strongly symbolic moment of the purge and the end of the war was of course the execution of Mussolini and his mistress on 28 April 1945: they were hanged in Milan in a public square used by the Fascist regime for the hanging of partisans. Crowds attended the display of the bodies and took out their anger on the corpses.

Unlike in France and England, Italy had not known a regicide in its history, a watershed between opposing periods. [...] The last to arrive in this area, as in others, Italy experienced the execution of the Duce when the twentieth century was well under way. And the macabre exposition of the corpses which renewed the tradition of the deposed/dead tyrant, which needs to be shown to the people, all the while making reference to Fascism which had practiced it in the same place.<sup>34</sup>

Conversely, many major criminals escaped punishment. While General Graziani, head of the armed forces of the RSI, was sentenced to nineteen years in prison for his crimes, he was granted a remission of seventeen years and was liberated three months after being sentenced.<sup>35</sup> From 22 June 1946, the government also decided on an amnesty, the fluid conditions of which permitted genuine Fascist criminals to be acquitted while condemning, for example, young people who had deserted. The Fascist criminals benefitted, moreover, from the laxity of the Court of Appeal which, as a general rule, rendered invalid the judgements pronounced by the extraordinary courts of assizes. 'The Court of Appeal', the historian Hans Woller has argued, 'not only exaggerated but in many cases overstepped the bounds of what could be tolerated, to the point that some of its sentences represent one of the

34 Claudio Pavone, *Une guerre civile. Essai historique sur l'éthique de la Résistance italienne* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2005; original Italian edition, 1991), p. 600.

35 Hans Woller, *I conti con il fascismo. L'epurazione in Italia 1943-1948* (Bologna: Il Mulino 1997; original German edition, 1996), p. 318.

darkest and most depressing pages in the entire history of Italian justice'.<sup>36</sup> In the same vein, thousands of state functionaries, despite being sentenced by Italian or Allied Commissions, were ultimately acquitted by means of appeal. In 1960, every one of the 135 chiefs of police in Italy had been a loyal servant of the Fascist regime.<sup>37</sup>

The purge resulted in the exacerbation of tensions in the Italian peninsula. In spite of legislative measures, the apparatus of Fascism remained largely in place at the liberation, provoking anger from part of the population that found itself faced by its former enemies in the police, the army or in the agricultural cooperatives as if nothing had changed. The indecisiveness of the new government contributed greatly to delegitimizing all forms of authority and encouraging civil society to practice a form of civil disobedience.

The post-war purges followed a wholly different trajectory in France. A savage purge was implemented, even before the liberation, which led to between 8,000 and 9,000 extrajudicial executions.<sup>38</sup> While around a thousand were pronounced by exceptional tribunals, 80 per cent were perpetrated 'partly during the occupation, [and] mostly during the battles of the liberation', which suggests that they can be considered as acts of war rather than the sign of blind violence.<sup>39</sup> The Gaullist government, however, quickly set about bringing the purge under control. It became principally confined to the Courts of Justice, instituted by the *ordonnance* of 26 June 1944, while a High Court, formed by the *ordonnance* of 18 November 1944, was charged with legal proceedings against dignitaries of the French State. The civic chambers, for their part, oversaw cases of '*indignité nationale*' (which took away the citizenship rights of those whose behaviour during the war years was found 'unworthy of the nation'), while the military tribunals that oversaw the purge in North Africa, both before and after the foundation of the Courts of Justice on the mainland, passed judgement on French as well as foreign citizens convicted, for instance, of war crimes.

The purge, as Henry Rousso has emphasized, was carried out on a massive scale: 311,263 cases were opened at the Courts of Justice and the Civic Chambers. It was also relatively severe, since between 1,500 and 1,600 death sentences were carried out and over 35,000 Frenchmen were condemned to prison sentences. Those responsible at the highest level were severely

36 Ibid., p. 546.

37 David Stafford, 'La transizione europea', in Eric Gobetti, ed., 1943-1945. *La lunga liberazione* (Milan: Franco Angeli 2007), p. 34.

38 Henry Rousso, 'L'épuration en France. Une histoire inachevée', in Henry Rousso, *Vichy, l'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 501.

39 Henry Rousso, art. cit., p. 500.

punished, beginning with the two heads of the French State: Philippe Pétain and Pierre Laval were condemned to death. Pétain, the hero of Verdun, saw his sentence commuted, finishing his days on the Ile d'Yeu. Public functionaries were also struck hard: overall between 22,000 and 28,000 functionaries were affected, including in the police forces. The severity of the judges should not, however, be exaggerated. Many of those responsible at a high level of the administration escaped punishment, including René Bousquet, the Chief of Police. Appeals brought before the Council of State allowed many complainants, in the course of time, to win their cases. Between 1945 and 1950 the percentage of verdicts that were repealed never fell below 50 per cent, and even rose above 80 per cent in 1957.<sup>40</sup> It should also be noted, for good measure, that the process was interrupted by two amnesty laws, in 1951 and 1953, which contributed, alongside the pardons and remissions, to the gradual emptying of the prisons. In 1946, 29,000 prisoners were held in French jails as a result of the purge, but their number had dwindled to 1,000 in 1954 before falling to just 9 in 1960.<sup>41</sup>

Be that as it may, the purge was considered as failure in both countries, one country deploring its severity and the violence unleashed by the new victors, the other denouncing the impunity enjoyed by the representatives of the old order. It resulted in the exacerbation of social divisions in France and Italy, countries which were, in addition, subjected to territorial revisions.

## Territorial Revisions

Both before and during the war, the Italian Fascists had pursued a policy of Italianization, directed against the Slavs. At the end of the war ethnic conflicts re-emerged, growing as a result of the political dispute that set the Yugoslav communists, supported by the PCI, in opposition to the local Italian population. Tito wanted, in fact, to annexe Istria and Venezia-Giulia, accelerating the march of the Ninth Yugoslav corps towards Trieste. On arriving there it engaged in arrests and summary executions, the first victims of which being the resisters enrolled in the CLN, feared by the Titoist government for its anti-communism. On 12 June the Allies reached

40 Alain Bancaud and Marc Olivier Baruch, 'Vers la désépuration? L'épuration devant la juridiction administrative, 1945-1970', in *Une poignée de misérables. L'épuration de la société française après la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, ed. Marc Olivier Baruch (Paris: Fayard, 2003), p. 486-487.

41 For an overview, see Olivier Wieviorka, 'Épuration: la guerre civile n'aura pas lieu', *Les collections de l'Histoire* (July-September 2005), pp. 11-19.

the city and the Titoist troops withdrew to behind the Morgan line, although they continued the purge in the area under their control, while Trieste was placed under Allied authority and not returned to Italy until 1954. This was an important episode: not only did clashes between Slavs and Italians become more frequent, despite Allied tutelage, but 350,000 Italians fled the Yugoslav zone. Italy, like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, was not spared the influx of migrants which resulted from post-war border changes.

France, meanwhile, was spared this fate. Neither its frontiers nor its metropolitan population were subjected to the repercussions of war, with the exception of the hundreds of thousands of French citizens who, as deportees, prisoners or workers returned to France once the liberation came. A subtle but crucial difference, however, was that the French Empire was already creaking under strain, which did not bode well for the future. Colonized peoples, shaken by the defeat of 1940, subject to intense pressure during the war and open to the winds of independence unleashed by the Atlantic Charter and the pronouncements of President Roosevelt, no longer intended to accept white rule passively. In January 1944 violent disturbances erupted in Morocco. On 1 December 1944 a protest of Senegalese *tirailleurs*, demanding the payment of their wages, was savagely put down in Thiaroye in Senegal. On 8 May 1945 a peaceful demonstration, demanding the liberation of Messali Hadj, was bloodily suppressed in Sétif and Guelma in Algeria.

Beyond their differences, these two examples confirm that, after the defeat of the Reich, the pre-war territorial order could no longer be sustained as before. Territorial contentions poisoned relations between Rome and Belgrade; and the irruption of demands for independence, even though minimized by Paris, eventually sounded the death knell of the Empire and brought about the fall of the Fourth Republic. This eventual collapse confirmed the ambivalence of the end of the war and the return to peace. On the one hand, societies, resistance forces and even sections of the political elite wanted a profound change in the rules of the game; on the other, the traditions, the political networks and the general inertia associated with the old order persisted. And the former did not manage to impose themselves on the latter: the party political system which was established after the war was, it must be said, singularly ill-equipped to meet these new challenges.

### **A New Political System?**

The end of the Vichy and Fascist regimes, and the dreams which had kept resistance hopes alive even in the darkest of hours, led many men and



women to hope that liberation would profoundly alter the political order. In both countries these hopes were cruelly dashed.

In Italy, political renewal came up against tough obstacles. First of all, the Badoglio government and its successors avoided carrying out a thorough purge. From 25 April 1945 onwards, the date of the insurrection in the north and the definitive liberation of the peninsula, two territorial parties faced each other: those who represented the resistance in the north and those who had participated, after September 1943, in the governments of the parts of Italy liberated by the Allies. The former pressed for profound change in state institutions and a veritable purge while the latter, already implicated in the old apparatus of power, proved more attentive to the balance of power and to the renewal of institutions and social relations. For a brief period of time, the 'north wind' appeared to prevail: still united in a national coalition the parties accepted to confer the presidency of the council to the resistance leader of the *Guistizia e libertà* brigades, Ferruccio Parri, who belonged to the Partito d'Azione (21 June 1945 to 8 December 1945). But the Parri government soon succumbed to the blows of the moderate representatives who intended to liquidate the Committee of National Liberation, hasten the return of the old prefects, and to bring the purge to a close. The presidency therefore passed to the leader of the Christian Democrats, Alcide de Gasperi. Parri was also abandoned by his allies on the left who wanted to maintain their role in the new political configuration.<sup>42</sup> It is significant, in this respect, that the highly contested amnesty law was signed by Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Communist Party and Minister of Justice in the de Gasperi government. The gulf separating the population and the political parties thus only tended to grow. The latter gave the impression of fighting over political posts rather than defending their ideas, as a disenchanted Vittorio Foa noted:

The coalition of the parties has remained a gymnastics competition rather than becoming a centre of reference and a promoter of ideas that go beyond the sphere of the parties. [...] The government and the parties have gradually become detached from the needs and profound aspirations of the ordinary people. [...] They have clashed on remote and abstract policy positions.<sup>43</sup>

42 A brilliant description of the historical context and of the day-to-day conflicts between the old guard and the new political forces can be found in a work by Carlo Levi, anti-fascist of the *Partito d'Azione*, writer and eyewitness of events: Carlo Levi, *L'orologio* (Turin: Einaudi, 1950).

43 Vittorio Foa, *Scritti politici* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2010), p. 112.



‘The political parties can make all the compromises they want and negotiate mutual concessions in the context of government; however, this is not sufficient to build a democracy, especially if the instruments of state policy are still those of fascism, not just of the people but also of the arbitrary forms of behaviour’, he added in January 1946, barely a few months before the referendum.<sup>44</sup> Many elements brought about division, ranging from the issues at hand (Fascism, the resistance, Communism, the Church, etc.) to the people who should, by all logic, have gathered people together, such as the king. Majorities came together to reject the monarchy, which was certainly compromised by the attitude it had adopted towards Fascism, and to elect the Christian Democrats by a comfortable margin in the legislative elections of 1948. But this vote expressed, above all, a desire to reconnect with a form of normality after the combined shock of Fascism and war.

France, meanwhile, did not sink into the torment of disillusion, even if the political landscape was characterized by relative stability. Indeed, the war only gave rise to one truly new party, the Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) which wore the colours of Christian Democracy and supposedly embodied fidelity to General de Gaulle even if it above all served to attract the votes of the moderate right. Despite its ambitions, the resistance was incapable of creating its own political body, with the exception of the Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance (UDSR), a modest party which nonetheless managed to play a pivotal role skilfully and to offer secure ministerial careers to its members, starting with François Mitterrand. Neither the French Communist Party (PCF), nor the Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (SFIO) made use of the war years to modernize politically. The lucid reflections that Léon Blum made in *À l’échelle humaine* did not capture the public imagination and the old guard reconnected after 1946 with the outdated cult of Jules Guesde. The PCF, meanwhile, continued to tread its Stalinist path.

Power relations had nevertheless been altered. Socialists and Communists dominated the political landscape while the right and the radical socialists had almost entirely disappeared from the scene.<sup>45</sup> But this situation was in no way a product of the war. The left had been gaining ground since 1932, a fact which undermines claims that the liberation represented a political

44 Ibid. p. 148.

45 Olivier Wieviorka, ‘Replacement or Renewal? The French Political Elite at the Liberation’, in *The Uncertain Foundation: France at the Liberation*, ed. Andrew Knapp (New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 82 sq.

earthquake, especially since the right, after 1945, had sixty-two deputies whom the elected representatives of the MRP could join.<sup>46</sup>

The relative absence of tensions between the population and the central government was not, therefore, due to an improbable rearrangement of the political landscape but instead to a range of other factors. On one level, General de Gaulle managed successfully to incarnate national unity. He enjoyed an incontestable moral position based on the struggle that he had pursued since the foundational act of 18 June 1940. He also managed to consolidate this position by restoring the authority of the state, making a series of visits to the provinces that further established his popularity and, ultimately, associating all parties in a government which brought together the full breadth of the political spectrum. Through his words, and through a prudently executed purge, he managed to eradicate Vichyism and unite the French by claiming, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that the mass of the population had participated in the act of resistance. The de Gaulle government and its successors also began a thorough process of reform. Large-scale nationalizations allowed the state to control such vital sectors as energy, banking, insurance and transport. Unlike in the United Kingdom, indicative planning allowed the activity of these public companies to be coordinated, so that they worked in unison towards the modernization of the country. State intervention in the economy was also coupled with a generous policy towards salaried workers, which took shape with the introduction of social security through the *ordonnances* of 4 and 9 October 1945. Ultimately, many developments, including votes for women, the reform of the status of tenant farming, and the creation of the *École nationale d'administration* (ENA), promised a better tomorrow.

There was nothing revolutionary about these reforms: they had been advanced and debated during the 1930s. Far from provoking debates and controversies as they had during the interwar years, however, they enjoyed broad consensus after 1945. By revealing the delayed development of France, the defeat of 1940 had resulted in a hunger for modernization, which was further stimulated by the shortages of the occupation and the spectacle of the American army. Disorientated by the crisis of the 1930s, the right had watered down its liberal, free-market policies, especially as the Vichy regime had accustomed the employers to working with together the public

46 Gilles Richard, 'Les droites et le Parlement, 1944-1948. Essai de mesure globale', in *La recomposition des droites à la libération. 1944-1948*, ed. Gilles Richard and Jacqueline Sainclivier (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp. 49-59.

authorities.<sup>47</sup> Discredited by their close association with Philippe Pétain, conservative forces were too weak at the time of the liberation to oppose state intervention. Perhaps they also assumed that social reforms would stop short of toppling of the *cadres* of the liberal economy, a hypothetical threat rendered credible by the high scores of the Communist Party.<sup>48</sup> In all events, the French were able to envisage a future with relative optimism because, unlike after the First World War, the public mood was not to return to the status quo ante but to lay the foundations of a France that was at once more modern and more fair.

The neo-Fordist compromise of 1945 – to increase mass production and at the same time guarantee decent wages and a form of social security – was strong enough to last until the 1980s: no government, whether on the right or the left, called social security or nationalization into question. Many problems persisted, however. While the French would have hoped for a revision of institutions, the constitution of the Fourth Republic, grudgingly accepted by only a small majority, reproduced the same faults of the Third Republic which, when stormy weather came, did not give the executive the means to resolve the crises that were about to unfold. Similarly, members of the resistance, however animated they may have been by generous intentions, revealed themselves to be strongly conservative when it came to the question of empire. Shortages also created tensions that would only be exacerbated further by the Communist Party's calls for a 'battle of production', which led to a silencing of proletarian demands for the reconstruction of the country. These tensions were present in French society but, unlike in Italy, they did not explode until 1947-1948. Taken together, the aura of General de Gaulle and the capacity of the PCF to control a significant part of the working class offer an explanation for this period of reprieve, one which Italy never experienced, perhaps for lack of a charismatic leader determined to engage in policies of economic and social reform at the time of liberation.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the end of the war marked a moment of transition between conflict and the restoration of a form of normality. This transition was certainly complex in both France and Italy, as a result of the combined effects of the pursuit of the war, the intervention of the

47 Richard F. Kuisel, *Le capitalisme et l'Etat en France. Modernisation et dirigisme au XXe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard 1984; US edition, 1981). See also Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

48 Michel Margairaz, *L'Etat, les finances et l'économie. Histoire d'une conversion. 1932-1952*, 2 vols (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1991).

Allies in domestic affairs, the legacies of Fascism and Pétainism and the political and social dynamics that were unleashed after 1943 in Italy and after 1944 in France.

The military operations, as we have seen, followed different rhythms, which exposed the Italian peninsula to violence that was infinitely more murderous than that which affected France. Likewise, London and Washington placed Rome under a tutelage from which Paris was spared thanks to the political sense of General de Gaulle who was capable, through his words and actions, of imposing a brief but energetic purge while at the same time beginning a powerful movement of reform, reforms from which the Badoglio government abstained. A gulf henceforth separated the government from those it governed in Italy, which incited the population to defy the authorities and to seek the path of salvation in autonomy. The diversity of experiences during the two-year period from 1943 to 1945 also led to divergent interpretations of past events and created a divided memory of the war. These elements exercised a powerful influence on political behaviour and over the formation of the republic by widening the historical rift between north and south. The struggle in the north, moreover, also developed as a form of civil war between Fascists and anti-fascists which, on the level of local communities, had many consequences in the post-war years in terms of resentments, reprisals and conflicts.<sup>49</sup> In France, conversely, national unity, formed under the aegis of the 'man of 18 June', circumvented conflicts and difficulties. Unlike its neighbour, France did not experience civil war, however resentful the resistance, which was quick to denounce 'the betrayed revolution', and the Vichyites, who were inclined towards bitter brooding, may have been. Political traditions, it is true, were not the same in each case. While the nation-state was taken for granted in France, in Italy it did not constitute the essence of the political community, a community which instead resided in the city, the province, or the region (where, moreover, political and ideological allegiances continued to evolve, in contrast with the relative stability of political allegiances observable in French regions). France, as a result, began the second half of the 1940s in a mood of relative optimism since the government, casting a veil of forgetting over the legacies of the past, launched itself into a programme of modernization coupled with genuine, albeit imperfect, social justice. In Italy, on the other hand, the legacies of two decades of Fascism were far

49 On the violence in Emilia against those accused of having collaborated with the Salò Republic, which continued for many years after the war, see Guido Crainz, *L'ombra della guerra. Il 1945, l'Italia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007).

from eradicated and the divisions of the past, complicated by the emerging Cold War, weighed heavily. In France, the difficult challenges of war and occupation had led to a consensus being formed around economic and social progress. In Italy, meanwhile, the war only stirred up divisions and weakened a country which, in 1945, remained poor. The French ultimately placed their trust in the state and in an elite group of public functionaries to usher in a period of post-war prosperity that would last three decades, the so-called 'Trente glorieuses'; Italy's post-war recovery could only be achieved, conversely, by drawing on the vitality of civil society. The end of the Second World War therefore set the two 'Latin sisters' on markedly different paths.

*Translated by Tom Williams*

# ‘Liberators and Patriots’

Military Interim Rule and the Politics of Transition in the Netherlands, 1944-1945

*Peter Romijn*

## Between Liberation and Peace

In September 1944, British and American forces occupied the strategically important Dutch town of Nijmegen as part of Operation Market Garden.<sup>1</sup> After several days of heavy fighting, an emergency issue of the first local newspaper appeared. ‘The yoke of slavery is cast off now’, announced the acting mayor. He expressed his delight about the arrival of the Allies and told the citizens to behave in a disciplined way, as the war was not over yet. The front page displayed three more solemn statements. A proclamation by Queen Wilhelmina promised a swift transition to freedom and normalcy: ‘the Netherlands shall rise again!’ The Prime Minister, Pieter S. Gerbrandy, announced that a temporary state of siege had been declared, under which the Allied commanders would exert the highest administrative authority. The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, told the citizens that he had assumed that authority, and added, ‘all means at our disposal will be required in order to dispel the enemy from your country. The battle will bring you much more deprivation [...] but be patient, the end is near.’<sup>2</sup> Thus, the transition from occupation to liberation, from oppression to independence, and from war to peace, began as a period of interim rule by the Allied military. The dynamics of this crucial episode and its impact on the restoration of the Dutch state after German occupation is the topic of this chapter.

More than six decades after the end of the Second World War, the event of ‘the’ liberation is generally remembered with images of cheering crowds, military vehicles covered with celebrating civilians and smiling soldiers. The dominant memory of a happy liberation contributes to the narrative of a successful transition to peace, democracy and prosperity. The liberation

<sup>1</sup> Christ Klep and Ben Schoenmaker, eds, *De bevrijding van Nederland 1944-1945. Oorlog op de flank* (Den Haag: SDU, 1995), 133-137.

<sup>2</sup> *De Gelderlander Dagblad van Nijmegen*, 22 September 1944, pictured in *De onvergetelijke uren. Omzien naar de bevrijding* (Zutphen: Terra s.a., 1985), p. 43.

lives on as the specific moment of transition out of catastrophe and into a much happier post-war period and, consequently, remains a powerful marker in the history of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Even though the political history of the Netherlands may not rank among the most problematic and divisive in Europe,<sup>4</sup> it is important to note that the Dutch transition from war to peace was not predetermined, nor without passionate debates and political struggles over options for reconstructing the state and society.

The liberation of the Netherlands was part of larger processes of social and political transition all over Europe, which entailed more than simply chasing away the enemy oppressor. In many states, the transition from national socialist and fascist rule to successor regimes installed by the various Allied powers was a prolonged struggle for power and for legitimacy. Regime change began long before the actual liberation of the national territories and would come to an end only after a certain degree of social and political stability had been reached. 'Liberation' is actually a politicized term used for describing the regime change by suggesting its desired impact. Considering all the states liberated from German occupation, one might ask, 'who felt reason to celebrate liberation?' For Soviet-occupied Poland, for Allied-occupied Austria, or for north-western Europe, for example, the answer would be quite different. In the Netherlands, 'liberation' came with a friendly occupation by allies after an oppressive foreign occupation. Even so, significant parts of the Dutch population were not in the mood to celebrate.

For obvious reasons, more than 100,000 Dutch supporters of the defeated national socialist 'new order' did not feel liberated at all.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, these people lost their freedom and were ostracized, persecuted, put in prison camps and made to fear for their lives. Leaving aside the vanquished, the victims and their families had little more reason to celebrate exuberantly. A large majority of Dutch Jews had been deported – more than 107,000 out of a total of 140,000. Small numbers of these deportees, about 5,200, had survived only to return to the few members of their families who had

3 Accordingly, the Dutch government took steps to centralize the official celebrations from 1946 onward. A National Committee was mandated to organize the form and content – and it still does so.

4 Richard Ned Lebow, 'The Memory of Politics', in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 19.

5 Including their families between 250,000 and 300,000 – a conservative estimate. Peter Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig. De afrekening met 'foute' Nederlanders*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Olympus, 2002), p. 164.

survived in hiding.<sup>6</sup> Returning to the liberated societies and taking up their old lives, they met with much indifference and many difficulties.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people were on the move, as 'displaced persons': compulsory labourers and political prisoners in Germany, and people hastily evacuated from war zones. The International Red Cross Committee reported that in May 1945 one-fifth of the total population of little more than 9 million was displaced. These people may have been happy enough that the Nazis had been defeated, but their memory of the time is still bittersweet.

The Netherlands had been occupied in May 1940 by German armed forces. Adolf Hitler had installed a German civil administration at The Hague under command of his personal representative, Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart.<sup>8</sup> The end of German rule came between September 1944 and May 1945, as part of a violent and exhausting campaign waged by American, British and Canadian forces supplemented by Polish and French units, plus exiled Dutch troops. Vast armoured columns of tanks, trucks, and other vehicles carried men, arms and supplies to and through the Netherlands. During the final nine months of the war, the fighting caused large-scale destruction and human suffering in areas already exhausted by the hardship and violent oppression of the German occupation. The end of national socialist and fascist rule came with large piles of rubble; a 'clean slate' did not exist when the Second World War came to an end. In the Netherlands as everywhere else, the enemy occupation had eroded the authority of the national states and their administrations. Amidst mental disorientation and material destruction, political and civil leaders could only warn that the 'war was not over' and that the 'peace still had to be won'.<sup>9</sup>

6 Peter Romijn, 'The War 1940-1945', in *The History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. Johannes C.H. Blom, Renate Fuks-Mansfeld and Ivo Schöffer (Oxford/Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), pp. 296-299.

7 Martin Bossenbroek, *De Meelstreep. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001), introduction, pp. 9-13.

8 Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and German Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (London: Berg, 1988).

9 Selected literature: Nele K. Beijens, *Overgangspolitiek. De Strijd om de macht in Nederland en Frankrijk na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2009); Herman de Liagre Böhl and Guus Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam. Een strijd om macht en moraal* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1989); Henk Termeer, *Het geweten der natie. De voormalige illegaliteit in het bevrijde Zuiden september 1944-mei 1945* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1994); Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*; Olivier Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Megan Koreman, *The*



With the Axis powers defeated, the liberated nations were challenged to construct their future political and social regimes. In the Netherlands, as in the other liberated states of north-western and western Europe, the Allied military victory restored indigenous political elites to power. In the immediate wake of war, the first aim of the returned rulers was to channel all forces in society towards the re-unification and re-construction of the downtrodden nations. This chapter aims at a better understanding of the dynamics of 'getting out of the war' and 'organizing the post-war'.<sup>10</sup> In the dynamic process of transition, the Allied military authorities played a leading role. They took control in liberated areas, engaging with representatives of what remained of the civil society and the administration. At the same time, they garnered influence at the national level, where central government was re-installed. This chapter will point out that for the Allied, interim military rulers in the Netherlands, 'getting out of the war' meant holding the reins and, at the same time, delegating responsibility to those who could handle their own affairs.

## Preparing for Interim Rule

Military occupation and liberation require as many preparations in the fields of economy and politics as other military operations do. The Allied planners belonged to SHAEF, the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Forces in Europe under General Eisenhower. The planning committees took a leading role, in particular with regards to the smaller nations like the Netherlands, and prepared instructions for their Dutch counterparts.<sup>11</sup> In 1943 SHAEF assigned lawyers to prepare formal arrangements with exiled governments and with the Free French leadership. Formally, these covenants recognized the exiled governments as legitimate rulers and as partners in the post-liberation processes of regime change. A 'legal agreement' with the Netherlands, concluded on 16 May 1944, gave General Eisenhower full authority to deal with administrative matters in the liberated Netherlands until Germany surrendered.

*Expectation of Justice: France, 1944-1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Peter Schrijvers, *Liberators: The Allies and Belgian Society, 1944-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Nico Wouters, *Oorlogsburgemeesters 40/44* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2004); Peter Romijn, *Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd. Besturen onder de Duitse bezetting* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Klep and Schoenmaker, *De bevrijding van Nederland*, pp. 78-79.

The mandate for this projected military rule was embedded in international law, particularly in the 1907 Convention of The Hague, which regulated the rights and obligations of occupying armies towards the territories under their control. Regarding complications in occupied Italy and disputes with General de Gaulle, the Allies came to prefer light arrangements for liberated western Europe. They expected to leave as much business as possible to the indigenous authorities. Therefore, indirect rule of newly liberated states was anticipated as soon as military operational necessity would allow. The first priority of the Allied commanders was to establish security and safeguard supply lines in the rear of the advancing troops. This required that they arrest armed collaborators and possible saboteurs, gain control of the armed resistance, and consolidate their monopoly on violence as soon as possible. Next came the need to restore public life in the liberated territories. International law explicitly required the Allies to provide relief in areas destroyed by fighting, as well as to re-establish and supervise indigenous public authorities.<sup>12</sup>

Indirect rule called for the Allies to cooperate with indigenous counterparts. For the duration of the transition, the Dutch administration would operate under the supervision of the Civil Affairs branch of General Eisenhower's command.<sup>13</sup> Such devolution of authority to the liberating Allied Forces was difficult for most exiled governments to swallow, in particular for de Gaulle's Free French. On the other hand, the lesser allies like the Dutch had no other choice and decided to be pragmatic about it. After all, the legal agreement made it clear that the sovereignty of the returning national governments would remain formally unchallenged. Regarding the military situation, the various parties had to decide to what degree the Allied commanders would exercise emergency powers. The legal status of the Dutch side was defined through the institution of a 'Special State of Siege' for all liberated territories. In accordance with existing Dutch constitutional law, under the State of Siege, a Military Authority would be responsible for exercising emergency powers in order to safeguard the security of the state.<sup>14</sup>

12 Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and Its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, The Hague, 18 October 1907, <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/195>.

13 Text in 'Civil Affairs Agreement', 16 May 1944: Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1986), pp. 658-660.

14 Louis de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 9 'London' ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), pp. 1358-1371.

For this purpose, in 1943, the Dutch Government had decided to found a body called the Netherlands Military Authority or NMA (Militair Gezag or MG). This was conceived as a corps of militarized civil servants recruited in England under the leadership of a Chief of Staff-NMA, Major-General Hendrik J. Kruls. NMA was instructed to follow the advance of the Allied forces and – under the overall authority of SHAEF – exercise the authority of the Dutch government over the indigenous civil administration. Their priorities would be to safeguard public order, discipline the indigenous resistance movement, arrest Dutch collaborators and take measures for social and administrative reconstruction.<sup>15</sup> NMA started as a small task force numbering 740 officers and those of other ranks, which had assembled when the first patches of Dutch territory were liberated, but it would develop within the course of a year into a huge, nationwide, shadow bureaucracy of about 16,000.<sup>16</sup>

While preparing the Allied occupation, a main concern for the exiled governments in London, including the Dutch, was the position of the indigenous resistance movements. They feared a power vacuum within their states in the event of a possible collapse of German rule. In such a case, autonomous and revolutionary forces within the resistance might aspire to take over power and prevent the exiled rulers from re-establishing their authority. The ‘London’ governments were hardly in a position to estimate the actual strength of such tendencies, particularly not in the Dutch case. Prime Minister Gerbrandy was among those who feared the left-wing element of the resistance. The conservative part of the exiled Dutch community anticipated a return of the revolutionary situation of November 1918. In those confusing days, after the German Emperor had abdicated, the Dutch Socialist leader Pieter J. Troelstra had announced that his party was ready to assume power. This verbal move had effectively been countered by a mobilization of royalist militias, and the young Protestant politician Gerbrandy was one of those who had enlisted to rush to The Hague and defend the established order.

In order to prevent a power vacuum, Gerbrandy’s government had started preparations to establish its political control over the indigenous resistance. The armed branch of the Dutch resistance was a patchwork of small groups

15 Peter Romijn, ‘Did Soldiers Become Governors? Liberators, Resistance and the Reconstruction of Local Government in the Liberated Netherlands, 1944-1945’, in *World War II in Europe: The Final Year*, ed. Charles F. Brower (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 265-288.

16 *Overzicht der werkzaamheden van het Militair Gezag gedurende de bijzondere staat van beleg. 14 September 1944 4 Maart 1946* (’s Gravenhage, s.a.), p. 43.

carrying only light arms. Their actions were intended to support other resistance activities, such as liberating prisoners, attacking registry and rationing offices, and killing dangerous collaborators. After the invasion in Normandy, the Dutch government called for all armed resistance to join a new national organization, to be called the Forces of the Interior (Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten). In doing so, the Dutch authorities followed the example of the Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur under General Pierre Kœnig.<sup>17</sup> The government appointed a conservative officer from the former Colonial Dutch Army, General Henri Koot, acting Commander in the occupied territories. Prince Bernhard, the son-in-law of Queen Wilhelmina, would be the Supreme Commander of the Forces of the Interior. He was also Commander of the Dutch Brigade of some 2,000 troops who had been trained in England during the war. The Queen in particular hoped that after the foundation of the Forces of the Interior, the Dutch resistance would be able to contribute to the liberation of the Homeland, like the French resistance had. Bernhard was a flamboyant and charismatic man who displayed much enthusiasm for all things military. His position would be largely symbolic, because SHAEF remained in direct operational control of the small Dutch forces. Moreover, as long as the Forces of the Interior were insufficiently organized, the idea that they would be able to liberate the nation was as risky as it was romantic. Bernhard's own Chief of Staff referred to it in his diary as, 'a wild scheme, full of dangers, almost certain to produce a civil war', expressing the hope that the Allies would beat the Germans before the Dutch resistance could become active.<sup>18</sup>

The political and strategic importance of the new structure of the resistance under the authority of the Prince soon became evident. Only after the Forces of the Interior had been founded did the Allies start to send large amounts of arms by air into the occupied territories.<sup>19</sup> Tens of thousands of adventurous men, at the time more than eager to contribute to the liberation of their country, found their way to the Forces. Meanwhile, the more independent-minded leaders of the original fighting squads felt overruled and hedged in – precisely what 'London' had expected to achieve. In heated discussions on the eve of liberation, these fighting squad leaders expressed

17 For the reasoning of Queen Wilhelmina in this matter: De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A *Het Laatste Jaar*, 1 ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), p. 179.

18 Diary of PGA Doorman, entry for Friday 1 September 1944, in *Het geheugen van Nederland*, [http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/EVDO01:NIMH01\\_KBN013000041](http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/EVDO01:NIMH01_KBN013000041).

19 De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, p. 164 and further.

the fear that their units would be 'torpedoed' by the newly centralized command and therefore were reluctant to accept their orders.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the exiled government had made more preparations for securing its influence over the political transition as part of the liberation. In May 1944 London appealed to the main organizations in the Dutch resistance to nominate their representatives to the newly created Grand Advisory Council (GAC) of the Resistance. The formal assignment was to council the government about measures to be taken to prepare for transition. A coordinating committee composed of three political neutrals, along with a left- and a right-wing member, performed the real job: uniting the resistance in loyalty to the Queen's government. The most prominent figure in the Committee was the moderate Social Democrat Willem Drees. A parallel step was the appointment of the 'Council of Trusted Representatives' (College van Vertrouwensmannen), assigned to exercise the powers of government in case of a vacuum. This council was composed of prominent men, representing different political affiliations and professional backgrounds. Before the liberation was a fact, the Council began preparing for the purge of the administration and the civil service, sending reports to London advising whom to dismiss and whom not.

The Dutch approach of disciplining and subordinating the resistance differed from the French and Belgian approaches, in which the authority to intervene was given to single individuals – in France, to the Republican Commissars appointed by General de Gaulle, and in Belgium, to Walter Ganshof van der Meersch, who as Haute Commissaire à la Sécurité de l'État was commissioned to take control over all government bodies concerned with maintaining public order and justice.<sup>21</sup> Hesitating to delegate strong executive power, the Gerbrandy government, in typical Dutch fashion, decided to split responsibility for the transition period between a range of institutions. Mandates and competences were not clearly divided, and it was only to be expected that collisions might occur between the different organizations operating in the underground. Moreover, the Dutch government was badly informed about the capacities, ambitions, and expectations of the many tendencies encompassed by the Dutch resistance. At the same time, the underground leadership was not aware of the role the NMA, the entity by which Dutch military administrators would operate under the umbrella of the Allied Supreme Command. After all, the fear of revolution and civil war among the émigrés was equalled by distrust on the part of

20 De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, 305.

21 Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium*, pp. 37-39.

the resisters towards the authoritarian impulses of the government. Queen Wilhelmina's promises about the return of democracy, as printed in the Nijmegen newspaper, should be read from this perspective. However, the actual importance of these multilevel preparations for transition would be decided during the course of the liberation of Dutch territory.

## Liberation in Upheaval

On 6 June 1944 a middle-aged Dutchman wrote in his diary how the news of the Allied invasion in Normandy reached his small town. People who clandestinely listened to the radio news from London went into the streets and discussed the prospects of a quick liberation from German rule. All were excited and many rumours were spread. On the very same day the black market prices of food, tobacco and shoes dropped 30 per cent.<sup>22</sup> In fact, it would be a long time before the Allied armies reached the Low Countries. Normandy is about 500 kilometres from Brussels and 700 from Amsterdam, and it took until August before in France a breakthrough was realized. In early September 1944 the Allies crossed the southern borders of Belgium and, within a week, a large part of that country was liberated.<sup>23</sup> Belgium survived the occupation with relatively little material damage and, perhaps even more importantly, the country remained intact and political authority undivided. In contrast, during the nine months to follow, the Dutch would live through interrelated and accelerating elements of disaster: material destruction, a humanitarian crisis and a fragmentation of their state and society.

Hardship and disruption were not a matter of warfare alone. The Allied invasion in Normandy had quickly undermined the efficacy of the German and national socialist regimes of occupation.<sup>24</sup> In early September 1944, the German Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart declared martial law, and on Hitler's instructions, authorized the police and SS to execute arrested resisters on the spot.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the struggle between national socialists and resistance activists produced a 'cumulative radicalization' and further disruption of society. In the struggle between oppression and resistance

22 Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie *Dagboekfragmenten 1940-1941* ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), pp. 379-381.

23 Schrijvers, *Liberators*, p. 55.

24 Conway, *The Sorrow of Belgium*, pp. 16-17.

25 Romijn, *Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd*, pp. 505-508.

both sides targeted mayors and officials in the registry and rationing offices. Arming all male National Socialists and creating a militia (*Landwacht*) for protection contributed to the scale of killings on both sides. Consequently, the Dutch administration lost its capacity to cope with the disintegrating forces of occupation, terror and war. Local administrations became little islands of their own, exposed to ever more radical and demanding occupiers. They continued their work while compromising and muddling through.

Large numbers of people were uprooted owing to evacuations, forced labour, persecution, and the need to hide from the occupier, and in the end they were vexed by hunger and the violence of war. People were obliged to flee from areas in which battle was being waged to such an extent that by the end of the war, about 20 per cent of all Dutch were displaced in one way or another. Thus, the fabric of society was severely damaged, ties between people were severed, and family and friends were no longer available for support in case of need. Mutual trust, which is a lubricant of society under ordinary conditions, withered away as a consequence of the violent erosion of social and moral norms. Nobody could recall situations in which the law of the jungle had been so dominant. Many ordinary Dutch transgressed the norms they had internalized in normal times, disobeying authorities, entering the black market, or stealing firewood from abandoned houses, while resisters robbed rationing offices and killed collaborators.<sup>26</sup> In January 1945, a Commander of the Interior Forces described the situation in occupied Amsterdam as one of 'progressive exhaustion', both physical and mental. Under the circumstances, his men were 'running wild'.<sup>27</sup>

Under these circumstances, the Allied offensive offered the only viable possibility of relief. However, after the swift liberation of Belgium, the German armies on Dutch territory managed to set up a strong defence. By late September 1944, hopes for another breakthrough had been defeated by the failed Allied airborne operations in the Arnhem and Nijmegen area. Between September and December 1944, the provinces south of the delta of the Rhine River came under control of the Allied forces step by step. The eastern and northern parts of the Netherlands followed as late as April 1945. The densely populated western parts of the country, including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, remained under German authority until the collapse of the Nazi regime in early May 1945. Despite desperate requests by the Gerbrandy government, the Allies refused to change their top strategic priority, which was and remained the defeat of Nazi Germany.

26 Romijn, *Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd*, pp. 513-514.

27 Böhl and Meershoek, *Bevrijding van Amsterdam*, p. 25.



In the liberated areas, the Allied front troops first wanted to consolidate their positions. After securing a specific area, the operational commander would decide how to protect the campaign from the rear. In order to make sure that the local authorities were reliable, he would engage with local town halls and resistance leaders and decide whom to appoint to positions of responsibility for the time being. Then a town-major was assigned to take care of military-civilian relations. Field security units were deployed in order to safeguard the rear of the combat troops by means of counter-intelligence operations, including interrogations of arrested collaborators. Next came the Civil Affairs Section of SHAEF, charged with the assignment 'to facilitate military operations' in the countries within their sphere of responsibility.<sup>28</sup> SHAEF needed to install loyal and efficient administrators. For the Netherlands, they did not have specific persons or parties in mind. The guiding principle was to apply indirect rule if possible, and to intervene only when vital allied interests were at stake. Such interests were of course tied to the post-war geopolitical order, with which all conquering powers were concerned. The 'Country Units' for Civil Affairs were relatively small. In September 1944, the Dutch unit consisted of thirty-eight British, Canadian and American officers under the command of Canadian Brigadier A. de L. Cazenove.

The Dutch counterparts of the Allied Civil Affairs units were the representatives of the Netherlands Military Administration, NMA. Upon arrival in liberated Dutch territory, they were far from able to take control of the local situation. Their preparations for regime change often proved futile, as many local resisters had taken their own measures, following political agendas of their own. They had removed incumbent mayors and aldermen and replaced them with new men close to or part of the resistance. Such steps were difficult to undo. Local resisters were not at all inclined to recognize NMA officers as representatives of the Government and challenged their authority. In the course of the liberation of Nijmegen, for instance, the collaborationist mayor was removed from office and arrested. The local resistance, the Allied Civil Affairs officer, and the NMA commissioner respectively nominated three different mayors for the town.<sup>29</sup> It took much

28 National Archives, Washington, DC: Coll. Nr 322.01/7 Archive of SHAEF-Mission (Netherlands); Canadian National Archives, Ottawa: Coll. 205.SI.043 CDI, SHAEF Mission to The Netherlands; Charles Perry Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa, 1948), pp. 302-303.

29 Romijn, *Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd*, p. 611.



time and persuasion before local resisters and notables would accept the authorities of the representatives of NMA.

More generally, the Dutch military administrators met with distrust in the southern parts of the Netherlands, even though they were wearing British battledress.<sup>30</sup> The first batch of NMA personnel during the war had stayed in London as civil servants or business people. They now were received as technocrats in uniform, who did not understand a thing about what life had been like during the occupation. Moreover, most of the staff was not from the south, with its distinct political culture dominated by Roman Catholicism. This provoked traditional southern sentiments against secular and Protestant 'Holland' traditionally ruling from far away. All this could be countered only by recruiting new officers from the south. After the liberation of the industrial centre of Eindhoven in particular, new men became available. Philips Electronics, established in Eindhoven, made able engineers and organizers available. The company also provided a provisional radio station for the liberated area, Radio Herrijzend Nederland (Radio the Netherlands Reviving).

Both the lack of personnel coming from London and the stalling liberation of the rest of the country made it imperative for the NMA to cooperate with the organized resistance of the south. This entailed recognizing their grassroots activism and adopting at least part of their ambitions for the transition. The first testing ground was the arrest of all national socialist collaborators. NMA had been instructed by the government to employ the local police to arrest all who were considered traitors. When arriving in the liberated areas of the south, the Civil Affairs officers found that local resisters had begun to take their revenge on these people. During the first weeks, 'arresting squads' of the resistance rounded up thousands of pro-German Dutch, taking them from their homes, mistreating them and putting them in makeshift prison camps.<sup>31</sup> General Kruls tried to restore orderly conduct, and a full conflict arose over the responsibility for making arrests. Resisters argued that the Dutch police had been compromised by collaboration itself and therefore should not have the power to make arrests. Recognizing established facts, the NMA command gave in and accepted the Forces of the Interior as an auxiliary police, formally authorized to make arrests. This concession would create a large problem on a national scale, as the procedures would later reoccur in the rest of the country. Before

30 Dick Schoonoord *Het Circus Kruls. Militair Gezag in Nederland 1944-1946* (Amsterdam: NIOD/digital book, 2011), [http://www.niod.nl/publications/niod\\_publications\\_on\\_line/](http://www.niod.nl/publications/niod_publications_on_line/), pp. 313-317.

31 Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*, p. 163.

the end of 1944, at least 10,000 collaborators would be behind bars in the south – a number that was to multiply in the year to follow. In the summer of 1945, at least 120,000 and perhaps as many as 150,000 people were living in prison camps, often under disastrous conditions<sup>32</sup>

After securing the territory to the rear of the advancing troops the next step was dealing with the living conditions of the civilian population. Relief and rehabilitation were politically sensitive issues. The local economy had come to a standstill, and in many places food, heating and other essential commodities were extremely scarce. As the war continued, supplying the front took absolute priority. To make matters worse, distribution of relief goods was severely hampered by the destruction of the infrastructure (especially bridges and railway lines). Stories of warehouses filled with stockpiles of food rotting away, or being traded by entrepreneurial military men, started to circulate through the starving areas. In November 1944, liberated Eindhoven saw a so-called 'hunger strike' for more food.<sup>33</sup> The German-controlled Dutch media on the other side of the front line were obviously eager to highlight these matters, while the resistance press was duly concerned. Most of these papers condemned the 'damage to the Allied War effort'. The underground communist paper *De Waarheid*, however, said that if two months of Allied rule had not produced satisfactory conditions, the local people were fully entitled to press for improvement.<sup>34</sup> Cazenove did not panic but instead helped the NMA to improve logistics in order to enhance the daily rations to acceptable levels and distribute the available food more efficiently.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, the very experience of social disintegration had also produced a remarkable counter-movement, both in the liberated south and in the still-occupied areas. Professional people and leaders from civil society took responsibility for all kinds of emergency measures, which could be called 'provisional arrangements' at a grassroots level. Medical doctors, nurses, clergymen, schoolteachers and other notables improvised medical support and food relief. Their committees engaged local resistance leaders, who reciprocated by involving the same people in their plans for regime change. They worked with the local administration, even with some collaborationist 'new order' burgomasters. Such perceived 'turncoats' obviously

32 Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*, p. 164.

33 De Jong *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, p. 601; Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, p. 169.

34 A survey of the underground press reports in the occupied Netherlands, late November 1944, in De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, pp. 608-609.

35 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, p. 172.

hoped their cooperation would testify to their professionalism and patriotic intentions. Such spontaneous assumption of public responsibility arose out of the general sense of emergency. The response was consistent with the reflexes of Western European bourgeois societies, in which political and professional elites were used to sharing responsibility and leadership.<sup>36</sup> The practice continued over the course of the liberation, in the shape of newly founded 'committees for social reconstruction'.<sup>37</sup> In hindsight, these provisional arrangements were indispensable social capital for bridging the cleavage of authority that opened between the two regimes of occupation. They provided the political and social networks that were crucial to the Civil Affairs units' efforts to make progress on the ground, and in the longer run, to repair the texture of society.<sup>38</sup>

### The Politics of Interim Rule

In liberated Belgium, the Allied Mission to Belgium under British Major-General George Erskine had been able to establish itself quickly in the government centre in Brussels. Erskine focused all attention on the level of the central state, which encompassed both the government and the Belgian military liaison to the Allies, headed by former Cabinet Minister Paul Tschoffen<sup>39</sup> The Dutch situation, however, developed in quite a different way. The central administration remained in occupied territory until the very end. The Civil Affairs officers were only able to connect to local authorities and resistance leaders in liberated territory. From early September 1944 onward, the exiled government could not play a role in ruling the liberated area, as it was geographically spread between London, Brussels and liberated Breda, later Eindhoven. The Cabinet did not enjoy much prestige in the liberated south and was in fact more or less ignored by NMA and resistance leaders.<sup>40</sup> When in late September 1944 a delegation of the Cabinet arrived in the south in order to take stock of the situation, they

36 Martin Conway and Peter Romijn, 'Belgium and the Netherlands', in *Twisted Paths: Europe, 1914-1945*, ed. Robert Gerwarth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 108-109.

37 A.F. Manning "Het bevrijde zuiden": kanttekeningen bij het historisch onderzoek', in *Herrijzend Nederland. Opstellen over Nederland in de periode 1945-1950*, ed. P.W. Klein and G.N. van der Plaats ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 9-28; Termeer, *Het geweten der natie*, pp. 537-559.

38 Romijn, *Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd*, p. 60 and further.

39 Conway *The Sorrows of Belgium*, pp. 63-64.

40 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, pp. 264-265.

were stopped near the town of Boxtel and placed under arrest by a resistance squad for the inability to show satisfactory identification papers.<sup>41</sup> Kruls, the Chief of Staff of NMA, bluntly advised the Cabinet members to stay away from the liberated areas until he had done what he was assigned to do and normality had been restored. In order to get his way, he even threatened to resign if the Cabinet ministers would not stop criticizing his policy, thus 'giving the people an impression of indecision' which would undermine all his authority.<sup>42</sup> In this conflict, the Civil Affairs section provided backup support to Kruls and NMA<sup>43</sup> – albeit silently and without giving the impression of meddling in Dutch internal matters.

The Gerbrandy government had been formed in 1940. As with most governments in exile, it had been steadily hampered by strong political disagreements, which came to a crescendo mounting to a high as soon as the policy to pursue reconstruction appeared on the agenda.<sup>44</sup> The fact that the liberation was prolonged over the course of nine months made the situation even worse: waiting for liberation while simultaneously being in conflict was extremely unproductive. Queen Wilhelmina had an agenda of her own, aspiring to wield strong executive power under her personal leadership. The ministers quarrelled with the Queen and among themselves over preparations for the transition regime. In January 1945, the government collapsed, owing to an acute conflict over the extent of the political purges. A reconstructed Cabinet under Gerbrandy once again received a royal mandate to continue its work until German surrender and complete liberation. The government managed to improve its efficacy by accepting influential 'new men' from the liberated south into government positions. Men like Louis Beel, Jan de Quay (both of them later Prime Ministers), and Harry Tromp enjoyed the confidence of large parts of the resistance of the south and in their turn managed to channel the activism from below.

Meanwhile, resisters in the liberated areas organized themselves into local committees under the umbrella of the Gemeenschap van Oud-Illegale Werkers Nederland (Community of Former Resistance Activists in the Netherlands). This organization melded a rather conservative and religious mindset with grassroots activism. The members argued that they had proven to be the best category of Dutch citizens, and therefore were

41 De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, p. 795.

42 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, p. 268.

43 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, pp. 280-281.

44 Martin Conway and José Gotovich, *Europe in Exile: European Exile Communities in Britain, 1940-1945* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, 2001).

entitled to take the lead in the reconstruction to come. During the winter of 1944, the Dutch military administrators recruited new personnel mainly from the ranks of the former resistance, while the Allied authorities brought together veterans from the armed resistance, the Forces of the Interior, as auxiliary forces in light infantry battalions. This created new opportunities for former resisters to exercise agency and, at the same time, disciplined them, so that the most suitable persons were absorbed into the structures of government and administration, both at the local and at the central level. Consequently, potential leaders of autonomy-minded grassroots organizations became socialized into the politics of responsibility. Many other activists felt outmanoeuvred and complained that 'the regular resisters' had been forgotten.<sup>45</sup>

When, in April and May 1945, the eastern and northern provinces of the Netherlands were liberated, followed by the western heartland, the question of how to control resistance activism turned into the question of how to 'demobilize' resistance as a movement. The fear of a socialist revolution was soon overcome. The Dutch Communists had been a strong presence in the resistance, but the underground party had lost many cadres to ruthless German persecution. In the liberated south, the communists were much weaker than in the other regions. Upon arriving in the east and north, the Allied Civil Affairs and NMA officers discovered that the resistance in these areas was more moderate and responsive to authority than their counterparts in the south. After the exhausting final winter of occupation, sentiments were more oriented towards pursuing reconstruction as normalization. In the industrial centres in the west, however, the left-wing resistance kept up a strong call for social and political change. When Gerbrandy returned to Amsterdam in early May 1945, he noticed the display of red flags and muttered 'Amsterdam has grown quite red!'<sup>46</sup> The liberation of this potentially more radical part of the country, however, coincided with the beginning of the restoration of the central state.

After the liberation, Gerbrandy relinquished the mandate of his Cabinet, and within a month, Queen Wilhelmina inaugurated a 'national cabinet for recovery and renewal'. The moderate socialists Willem Schermerhorn and Willem Drees led the government, which was essentially a coalition of centrist reformers, ready to implement emergency measures in order to work towards normalization. This transitional government, which remained in office until the first parliamentary elections of May 1946, identified with

45 Romijn Snel, *streng en rechtvaardig*, pp. 257-258.

46 Quote Gerbrandy in Böhl and Meershoek, *Bevrijding van Amsterdam*, p. 15.

the grand ideals of the resistance. The Communists and the conservative Protestant party ARP did not get Cabinet posts, even though their membership had been over-represented in the resistance movement. In absence of a regular parliament, the Grand Advisory Council of the Resistance convened to discuss the needs of the day, starting with purges and reconstruction. Although inherently critical of any kind of compromise, the GAC leadership entered into a dialogue with the government. The Council membership encompassed a broad spectrum of political tendencies, all of which called for negotiations to define their collective political position permanently and made it impossible for the left-wing members to dominate this body.<sup>47</sup> The Left, moreover, more than the Right, identified with the new government and expected it to fulfil the ambitions of the resistance. Prime Minister Schermerhorn publicly cultivated his personal identification with the resistance movement by claiming that his Cabinet was the 'Central Assault Squad' of the Dutch people. Behind closed doors he said something quite different: 'the main thing is to demobilize resistance, that is, to make sure that they will not be an independent force in politics'.<sup>48</sup> By means of this approach, during the crucial first month of the reconstruction, the new government turned the GAC into a loyal, if critical partner, instead of a contender for power.

## Soldiers and Civilians

The impact of the Allied presence did not remain limited to administrative matters or the politics of transition. The 'human factor' is essential in the relationship between any occupying army and the civilian population. It would be too simple to expect the happy days of liberation to continue endlessly. In fact, there were many constraints in the mutual understanding between Allied soldiers and Dutch civilians, beyond the existence of a language barrier. A Canadian Civil Affairs officer articulated the loss of normativity at stake:

The Government is going to find that the people are not easy to deal with and that their morals have suffered severely during the past five years. It is hardly to be expected that a people who have been taught for such a long period to cheat a foreign administration, to steal from it, lie to it,

47 Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*, pp. 256-266.

48 Quotes Schermerhorn in Romijn *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*, p. 256.

falsify reports, and to work for it as little as possible will quite suddenly turn around and become amenable to governmental decrees.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, the Allied troops endangered this mutual understanding through their large-scale looting and vandalizing. SHAEF recognized complaints, but the only remedy – repressive action by military police – did not materialize.<sup>50</sup> As Prime Minister Gerbrandy discovered during an inspection tour of the liberated southern provinces late in 1944, complaints about the misconduct of the liberators were widespread. In private homes and town halls, particularly in evacuated areas, safes were broken open, or blown up, and plundered. Local authorities and NMA found it almost impossible to convince Allied commanders to persecute such behaviour.<sup>51</sup> SHAEF sent the Brigadier General Oliver L. Haines, Theater Inspector General US Army, to liberated Nijmegen in order to find out more. Haines denied that looting was a general practice of the American troops and blamed British and Polish troops and Dutch civilians for stealing from empty houses and public buildings.<sup>52</sup> Only after Germany's surrender was SHAEF prepared to reverse priorities and issue more forceful rules against 'looting by individuals, or bodies of individuals', threatening to court-martial all those who of contravened the order.<sup>53</sup>

In fact, the occupation produced an intense social interaction. The soldiers from afar took the war to the homes of the Dutch. They brought food, stories, and a large variety of consumer goods, sources of excitement and imagination. The occupied society had endured years of increasing austerity and sheer poverty. Commodities deepened the importance of civilian-military relations, both materially and psychologically. Cigarettes in particular, but chocolate and gasoline as well, became alternative currencies. Nylon stockings were the novelty of the day, conveying the promise of a more glamorous way of life and restoring sex appeal. New business opportunities arose, as the rationing of food and many other provisions had been in force as early as 1939. Mounting shortages had given rise to

49 National Archives, Washington, DC: SHEAF-Mission (Netherlands) Fortnightly Report, 31 May 1945.

50 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, p. 380; compare for liberated Belgium: Schrijvers, *Liberators*, chapter 6 ('Currents of Discontent'), pp. 144 and further.

51 Martin Bossenbroek, Gerard Nijssen and Erik Willems *Oranje Bitter. Nederland bevrijd* ('s Gravenhage/Zwolle: Koninklijke Bibliotheek/Nationaal Archief/Uitgeverij Waanders, 2010), pp. 26-29.

52 Schoonoord, *Circus Kruls*, pp. 384-385.

53 Bossenbroek et al., *Oranje Bitter*, p. 30.



large-scale bartering and a black market. Starving people from the urban areas in the western part of the Netherlands in particular had swept over the countryside in order to trade their valuables for potatoes, corn, meat and the like. Bands of racketeers had started to operate black markets under the guise of resistance. Such activities found new incentives with the arrival of the Allied forces.

Austerity remained in force for quite some time and kept the unofficial economy booming. Persecution of economic criminality by Allied personnel remained strictly within the jurisdiction of their operational commanders. Dutch military and civil administrators could only complain, and for obvious political reasons they were reluctant to do so.<sup>54</sup> The presence of Allied forces in the Netherlands also created an improvised, but rapidly expanding service industry. During the German occupation, the Germans had requisitioned indigenous labour. Since early 1944, they had unsuccessfully advertised 'a fair daily wage, soup and well-prepared sandwiches' for those who appeared for work that was considered dangerous and unpatriotic. Now, in contrast, tens of thousands were magnetically drawn to the Allied forces, their money, cigarettes and status. Farmhands, mechanics, cooks, translators, clerks and many others found temporary employment on such a scale that the Dutch authorities worried that not enough rural labour would be available for collecting the harvest of 1945. This withdrawal from the primary sector of the economy was stimulated by the importation of corn, as well as other food, and was reinforced by the attractions of better paying administrative, technical and military jobs.<sup>55</sup>

Especially during the first stages of occupation, when the central state was still in the possession of the enemy, and subsequently, when it had to be reconstructed before it could function properly, the Civil Affairs branches relied on the support of well-motivated local men. Allied operational commanders adopted units of the Forces of the Interior, the armed resistance, as auxiliary troops. Young men in particular were able to share the golden glow of victory. They wore the modern and attractive military uniforms well and drove trucks and jeeps. Thus, the most vital elements of the liberated population were not just disciplined but also socialized into the military structures of the new rulers. The pragmatic methods by which the Allies connected to the newly occupied society contributed to the empowerment

54 De Jong *Het Koninkrijk*, vol. 10A, pp. 579-580.

55 Weekly Reports of the NMA, in Archives NIOD Institute for War-, Holocaust- and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam, no. 260: Collectie Militair Gezag.



of a younger and more vital part of the population and at the same time endangered the position of the traditional elites.

Cheering Dutch greeted the Allied troops as heroes. In occupied Germany, the soldiers were under orders not to fraternize with German civilians, but in the Netherlands, signs along the main highways told the soldiers: 'Remember: the Dutch are our allies, treat them kindly'. That treatment the Dutch intended to return. Nevertheless, incidents with locals occurred, especially when big leave centres were created, where Allied personnel stationed in Holland and Germany could spend time with local girls. Cases of rape were documented more than incidentally, but silenced in the chain of command and not addressed by the Dutch authorities. An often-quoted opinion of a Canadian officer indicates the mood of the military: 'Children here behave like beggars, men like thieves, and women like tarts.'<sup>56</sup> The soldiers' presence provoked a public discourse of moral concern, focused not on the behaviour of soldiers, however, but on female sexuality. For obvious reasons, the moralists found it more appropriate to address the women than to target the soldiers. Dutch authorities warned their Allied counterparts that several of the women meeting allied personnel were known to have previously engaged with German soldiers before. During the occupation, an unknown but large number of Dutch females had established relationships with German men, most of them military. Between 12,000 and 15,000 children had been born out of these relationships.<sup>57</sup> The conquered nation had perceived its honour trampled by their behaviour. When the liberation came, those who had been humiliated took their revenge by means of a wholesale humiliation of implicated women. Like elsewhere in Western Europe, a tidal wave of shearing followed closely behind the passing Allied armies.<sup>58</sup>

The problem now was that the men involved were no longer enemies, but allies. At the same time, the liberation once again opened the public sphere to clergy, authorities and other opinion makers who wanted to vent their concern. Expressions of joy for the liberation, including public dancing, drinking, and, of course, sex, all collided with restrictive Dutch

56 National Archives, Washington, DC: SHEAF-Mission (Netherlands) Fortnightly Report, 31 May 1945.

57 Monika Diederichs, *Kinderen van Duitse militairen in Nederland. Een verborgen leven* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2012), pp. 19-20.

58 Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile': des femmes tondues à la libération* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2000).

social values and lifestyles.<sup>59</sup> In the summer of 1945, the editor of a left-wing periodical came under attack for his suggestion that Dutch girls should be given prophylactics when meeting Allied soldiers.<sup>60</sup> Soldiers were issued brief vocabularies of Dutch terms, in which words and phrases related to socializing appeared frequently, and families invited them as guests. At least 2,000 Dutch women became engaged to Canadian soldiers and emigrated over the course of 1946.<sup>61</sup> Many of the Canadian troops were from British Columbia and the Prairie Provinces and had rural backgrounds. This made them relatively acceptable as in-laws, as their lifestyle and prospects were considered to be in harmony with those for which Dutch parents would hope. Meanwhile, the soldiers had to remain in the Netherlands as long as troopships for transporting them home were insufficiently available. For months to come Canadians in particular would be deployed for reconstruction projects, like bridges, roads and rubble clearing, a form of forced labour which has been lost to public memory.

### Evaluation: The Impact of Military Interim Rule

At the end of the German occupation, many political and civil leaders warned that the 'war is not over' and that the 'peace still has to be won'. Nevertheless, as soon as the war was over, a psychological change occurred, as General Charles de Gaulle describes in his war memoirs: 'No sooner had the sound of gunfire faded than the world's appearance changed.'<sup>62</sup> What applied to liberated France was also true for the Netherlands: as soon as the Axis powers had been defeated, the combined forces and sentiments of the peoples were no longer mobilized for warfare. Now the liberated nation was challenged to construct the future political and social order. Even though the political rhetoric of the reconstruction at the time was very much oriented towards the future, the process of 'seeking peace in the wake of war' nourished essentially conservative reflexes. In a way, the magnitude and nature of the problems of the time determined the solution: restoration. The cooperation between the Civil Affairs units and their Dutch

59 Frederik J.J. Buitendijk et al., eds, *De reactie van ons volk op de bevrijding. Vijfde Interfacultaire Leergang Rijksuniversiteit Groningen* (Groningen-Batavia: J.B. Wolters, 1946).

60 De Liagre Böhl and Meershoek, *De bevrijding van Amsterdam*, pp. 83-90.

61 <http://www.refdag.nl/oud/bin/00109bin05.html>.

62 Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. Le Salut, 1944-1946* (Paris: Plon, 1959), p. 257. Published in English translation as *The War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle: Salvation, 1944-1946*, trans. Joyce Murchie and Hamish Erskine (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), here p. 204

partners, the NMA, constituted a provisional regime. Before the liberation began, the Allies saw the central government as the self-evident partner in the creation of a legal framework for civil affairs on the foundation of international law.

In their policy for the Netherlands, the Allies followed the functionalist logic of military occupation in general as formulated by the Dutch sociologist Cor Lammers. He holds that securing collaboration in an occupied society will be most successful when the occupier engages with the indigenous authorities at the highest level. Working through a national government and benefitting from its authority is the best lever for implementing specific measures without having their legitimacy perpetually challenged.<sup>63</sup> On the contrary, seeking collaboration at lower levels, including the local, carries an imminent danger of entangling the occupiers in the mudflats of internal discord. While preparing their military administrations, the Allied planners had already considered these matters.<sup>64</sup> In the Netherlands, as elsewhere in Western Europe, SHAEF opted for a pragmatic policy of cooperating with indigenous societies, where it best served their operational interests. For them, 'getting out of the war' included holding the reins as well as delegating responsibility to those who could manage their own affairs.

The Allied liberators temporarily supervised a liberated country without a central government. In doing so, they had to decide for themselves, at the local level, how to deal with looting or lack of provisions. In the long run, this might have seriously damaged civilian-military relations and thus have had a political impact on the transition. After the German surrender, when a new government had been formed, the Allies helped restore its authority and gradually build its legitimation. Crucial plans were restorative in nature: they sought to consolidate their monopoly on violence and aimed to re-establish public order, food security, infrastructure and the administration. The establishment and enforcement of a monopoly on violence was of crucial importance to both the Allied forces operating in the liberated area and to that area's own government. The Dutch government had cultivated a fear of independent action by the armed resistance. It had prepared the military and political structures to subordinate the resistance for the purpose of preventing such a development. Even though grassroots

63 C.J. Lammers, *Vreemde overheersing Bezetten en bezetting in sociologisch perspectief* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005); C.J. Lammers, 'Levels of Collaboration: A Comparative Study of German Occupation Regimes during the Second World War', *The Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences*, 31 (1995), pp. 3-31.

64 Coles and Weinberg, *Soldiers Become Governors*, pp. 821-832.

activism of the former resistance remained strong, the men and their leaders quickly complied with the Allied authorities, who offered certain degrees of participation and agency. In the course of the process, this attitude of compliance was gradually transferred to their own Dutch authorities. The NMA played an intermediary role, first by securing the support of the organized resistance in the matter of the arrest and purging of collaborators, and subsequently by absorbing the most able and influential persons from the resistance to strengthen their own ranks.

Once military interim rule was established in the whole of the liberated Netherlands, the central state was best able to benefit from the material support needed to advance its goals. The Dutch authorities begged and borrowed a number of resources from the Allies: relief goods, uniforms, arms, office equipment, Bailey bridges, and transport, to mention only a few. In liberated Holland, roads, railway tracks and river crossings had been heavily damaged. Traffic had largely come to a standstill, and only military transports moved over longer distances. The Allied authorities put cars, trucks, and airplanes at the disposal of the central government. This enabled officials to connect once again with local authorities, reprimand or dismiss those who had failed, and encourage those officials who were charged with implementing national policies. When, for instance, the governor of the Province of Frisia received a telegram from the Minister of the Interior telling him that he was suspended from office in order to have his behaviour towards the Germans scrutinized, the senior official felt insulted and refused to leave his office. The Allied transport pool lent Minister Beel an airplane to see the reluctant official in person and to tell him to leave his post. The minister managed to neutralize the mounting tension in the province between those who sympathized with the governor and those who wanted to get rid of him, thus underlining the authority of 'The Hague'.

The politics of transition took the shape of continuous challenges to the legitimacy of the interim authorities – of the exiled government and the NMA, of incumbent local administrators, of those who were put in place after the purges, and in the end, even of the national organizations representing the resistance. Owing to the policy of indirect rule, the Allied Civil Affairs units largely managed to keep away from the heat. When the situation gradually normalized after the war and the German occupation had come to an end, the Chief of Staff of NMA, General Kruls, said that the best thing the NMA could do for the government was to be an interim

administration: in this respect, it could draw all possible criticism and then disappear.<sup>65</sup>

The political impact of Allied military interim rule was that it facilitated the restoration of the central state. The Allies' first role was to remain supportive: the Civil Affairs units did not take over the central state, nor did they force the local level 'out of business'. 'Back to normal' implied the restoration of the exiled governments to their legal positions. The withering and partial collapse of the indigenous administrations by the end of the occupation has been termed 'destatification' by Martin Conway, referring to the Belgian case.<sup>66</sup> In the Netherlands, the phenomenon occurred as well, and lasted longer. It was countered, however, by a pragmatic policy of what may be called 'restatification' by the indigenous elites, supported by the Allied military rulers. Despite the fact that war and occupation had disabled and discredited the administration from top to bottom, the state as such had remained the undisputed top level in the political structure. It seemed obvious that the need for relief and reconstruction required a return of the central state, rather than its elimination. The demise of the pre-war political system and its personnel had required an injection of *élan* from the start, calling for new people who might be able innovatively to reconstruct the liberal-democratic system. The political alternative from the extreme right had been utterly compromised by national socialist rule and terror, whereas the communist extreme left was not strong enough to impose its influence on transition politics.

Part of the effort entailed using public ceremonies as an instrument to claim transition for the central state in the name of the nation. Like General de Gaulle in France, Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Bernhard appeared in liberated towns and were cheered at. During the summer of 1945, public feasting and solemn commemorations went hand in hand, while floats and stadium games consolidated collective experience into national history. Thus, the liberation became celebrated as a confirmation of restoration.<sup>67</sup> The central state, when taken back by the patriotic forces, provided a trusted infrastructure for administrating and regulating society. The state was still conceived as the exclusive provider of legal norms, protection, and regulation. Making transition work was seen as identical to making the central state work, taking control over local and regional alternative powers.

65 Beijens, *Overgangspolitiek*, pp. 210-212.

66 Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium*, p. 51.

67 Nele K. Beijens, *Overgangspolitiek. De strijd om de macht in Nederland en Frankrijk na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2009).

Making the state operate once more from the top down, and ensuring that the usual authorities were again active and functional made sense to the people at the top. In fact, they made it clear to activists at the lower level that they had no choice but to advance by working within the trusted structures – for instance as aldermen, mayors, or officials in relief and reconstruction agencies. The latter aspired to such prizes and largely refrained from founding the parallel executive bodies that generally characterize revolutionary situations. 'Demobilizing the resistance' did not just consist of handing over weapons – it also implied a larger programme of discontinuing its existence as a politically organized movement.

This was not at all a smooth and predictable process. What mattered was that the Allied Civil Affairs officers did not intervene very much in the internal Dutch political struggle. Sometimes they acted in a corrective way, for instance when the cruelties in the internment camps for collaborators became too notorious.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, all Dutch competing for power began by seeking connections with them, as sources of power, prestige and provisions. The military element of liberation offered a fresh context: it helped people share in the golden glow of victory and produced a fresh outlook on life after an increasingly bleak occupation by a radical enemy. The associations between military organization and uniforms and images of vigour and agency accommodated the collective desire to solve the immense problems of the day by vigorous means. Relief goods and military supplies established a material relationship between liberators and liberated society. Moreover, the liberators were not only problem solvers – they also produced optimism.

Consequently, even as soldiers, the Allied military brought the promise of a return to peace and normal life – even to a life better than the one before the war. Their image was attractive to those who had lived in the growing claustrophobia of occupation, from which the free and modern world and its enticements had been inaccessible. As Peter Schrijvers points out in *Liberators*, his book on the Allies in liberated Belgium, the Allied soldiers as rulers were quick to rely on their 'soft power' in winning over the liberated society.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly enough, the military element was both a vector of mobilization and demobilization of society. Mobilization is obvious: both the final campaign of the war and the reconstruction were presented as battles to be won. The Dutch transitional government proclaimed the need for the people to liberate themselves from the enemy, from the damage he had done,

68 Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig*, p. 186.

69 Schrijvers, *Liberators*, p. 257.

and from the failures of the past. At the same time, the military metaphor of 'demobilization' was gratefully employed to promote normalization: members of the resistance were first supposed to integrate themselves into military structures of command, then subordinate themselves to the constitutional government, and finally lay down their arms and behave like responsible civilians once again.

**2**

## Reordering Communities





# The Latvian Orphans Released from the Siberian Special Settlements (1946-1947)

The Story of an Unusual Rescue in the Post-War USSR

*Juliette Denis*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, around 1,300 Latvian ‘orphans and semi-orphans’ came back to Latvia from the remote Siberian regions to which they and their parents had been deported on 14 June 1941.<sup>1</sup> Their liberation from the ‘special settlements’ remains an unusual episode of the overall history of the Stalinist repression and rehabilitation, and a Latvian historical myth. To understand the singular story of the ‘Latvian children from Siberia’, one should look back into the history of the annexation, the Sovietization of Latvia and the war experience. When the Russian Empire collapsed, the former ‘Western provinces’ became independent. The three Baltic countries (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) were included in the ‘secret protocols’ of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact signed on 23 August 1939 and fell into the Soviet sphere of influence. They did not share the fate of Poland, which was immediately invaded and divided between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The USSR annexed the Baltic countries only in June 1940, after the rout of the French army by the Wehrmacht convinced Stalin to reinforce the western Soviet borders. The so-called ‘Baltic revolutions’ embedded the beginning of Sovietization. At first, the Soviet authorities cautiously took over the Latvian territory. A year after the annexation of Latvia and the two other Baltic States in the summer 1940, the Stalinist state, the NKVD and the Latvian new authorities coordinated simultaneous operations of mass repression in the newly annexed territories. These actions were aimed at eradicating the most prominent members of the old economic and political elites. Some 15,000 Latvians suffered from deportation. 6,000 people, mostly men, were condemned to severe sentences, mainly to forced labour in camps, where many of them soon perished.<sup>2</sup> The families of these

1 A few hundred Estonian children were also concerned by the return from special settlements, but I will focus on Latvian contingents, as they were the majority of the young special settlers affected by the journey home, and because the Latvian authorities were directly involved in the organization of the return.

2 Janis Riekstins, ‘The 14 June 1941 Deportation in Latvia’, in *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia under Soviet and Nazi Occupations, 1940-1991*, ed. Valters Nollendorfs, and Erwin

'enemy elements' – women and children – were banished from Latvia and sent to the so-called special settlements in the depth of Siberia.<sup>3</sup>

During the war, like most of the Soviet people, the Latvian special settlers (women and children) suffered from unbearable living conditions: the death rate increased, the youngest died from starvation or illness, other children lost their parents and survived in Siberian orphanages. When the war was over, Latvian deportees, their relatives in Latvia, and various officials (both in Latvia and in Russia) started to worry about the deported children. Whereas the Soviet leadership did not intend to free any special settlers, including even the young, the Latvian children benefited from an unexpected deliverance from their enforced exile in 1946, which no other national group of repressed citizens enjoyed in the immediate aftermath of war. Returning to Latvia allowed them to escape the dreadful conditions of the special settlements. Survivors later recalled their journey home as an unbelievable and extraordinary tale of suffering and individual courage with (sometimes) a happy ending. It was not only the children themselves, when they became adults and even elderly, who contributed (consciously or unconsciously) to the development of a mythological narrative of the rescue of the Siberian children. Because of the growing interest for child victims of Stalin in contemporary Latvia, some authors also considered the story a proof of the Latvian nation's heroic resistance to Stalinist barbarism.<sup>4</sup>

Oberländer (Riga: Institute of History of Latvia, 2005), pp. 62–87.

3 Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will. The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2003); Viola, Lynne, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Nicolas Werth, "Déplacés spéciaux" et "colons de travail" dans la société stalinienne', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 54 (April–June 1997), pp. 34–50; V.N. Zemskov, *Specposelency v SSSR. 1930–1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005). On the children's fate, see S.S. Vilenskij, A.I. Kokurin, G.B. Atmashkina and I.J. Novichenko, eds, *Deti GULAGA: 1918–1956* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond 'Demokra-tiia', 2002); Corinna Kuhr, 'Children of "Enemies of the People" as Victims of the Great Purges', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 39 (1998), pp. 209–220; Lynne Viola, "Tear the Evil from the Root": The Children of the Spetsreselentsy of the North', in *Modernization of the Russian Provinces*, special issue of the journal *Studia Slavica Finlandensia*, 17, ed. Natalia Baschmakoff and Paul Frye (Helsinki, 2000), pp. 34–72; Marta Craveri and Anne-Marie Losonczy, 'Growing up in the Gulag: Later Accounts of Deportation to the USSR', *Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Working Papers*, SFMSH-WP-2014-62 (2014); Marta Craveri and Anne-Marie Losonczy, 'Trajectoires d'enfances au goulag. Mémoires tardives de la déportation en URSS', *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance 'irrégulière'* (2012), pp. 193–220; 'Childhood in the Gulag', *Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag*, 2011, <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/salle/childhood-gulag>.

4 Dzintra Geka, ed., *Sibīrijas bērni: mums bija tas jāzstāsta*, 2 vols (Riga: Fonds 'Sibīrijas bērni', 2007); Virtual Museum Occupation of Latvia, <http://www.occupation.lv/#!/en/ekspozats/07III3dx>.

However, the archives reveal a more complex and official process that saw Soviet Latvian, Russian and central authorities involved in the framework of a legal procedure.

This article aims to understand the profiles and motivations of individual, collective and official actors involved in this event. I would like to contextualize the children's journey home within the political and social background of the post-war Soviet Union. While the case of the Latvian children at first looks marginal in the large and shattered Soviet space after the war, it nevertheless stands at the crossroads of various issues in the Soviet post-war period and in the history of Latvia's Sovietization. These include the meaning of childhood and 'orphans' in the wartime Soviet Union; political networks and decision-making processes; chaotic conditions that engendered many unexpected situations; and the post-war displacements of population that occurred almost simultaneously within the Soviet borders and from other countries into the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> I will argue that the return of the Latvian deported children can be understood in the framework of other post-war waves of returns to Latvia: re-evacuation from the East and repatriation from the West.<sup>6</sup> They affected 'legal' and 'free' categories of Soviet Latvian citizens, who were forced to leave the Latvian territory before or during the 'Great Patriotic War' for various reasons and who returned to their homeland from 1944 on. Mix-ups occurred between these tangled waves of return to Latvia. This confusion, and the way in which different actors exploited it, allowed for a short and decisive period of clemency towards the youngest and most vulnerable Soviet Latvian deportees. Based on archival documentation<sup>7</sup> as well as on interviews with former deportees, collected as part of the project 'Sound

5 Catherine Gousseff, 'Des migrations de sortie de guerre qui reconfigurent la frontière: ouverture et refermeture de l'URSS avant la guerre froide', in *Frontières du communisme*, ed. Sophie Cœuré and Sabine Dullin (Paris: Découverte, 2007), pp. 428-442.

6 On evacuation and re-evacuation, see Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2009). On repatriation, see A.F. Bicherkhov, *Istoriya repatriacii sovetskikh grazhdan: Trudnosti vozvrashchenija (1944-1953 gg.)* (Saratov: izd. GOY VPO, 'saratovskaja gos. ak. prava', 2008); Igor Govorov, 'Fil'tracija sovetskikh repatriantov v 40-e gg.: celi, metody i itogi', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49/2-3 (April-September 2008), pp. 365-382; Pavel Polian, *Zhertvy dvykh diktatur: zhizn', trud, unizhenie i smert' sovetskikh voennoplennykh i ostarbajterov na chuzhbine in a rodine* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002).

7 I mostly rely upon the archives of the department of orphanages of the Latvian Ministry of Education (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs (LVA), f.700, op.6), and I also used published or unpublished archival material coming from the Russian and Latvian state archives (mostly from the Evacuation Committee and the Sovinformbiuro, Gosudarstvennyj Arhiv Rossijskoj Federacii (GARF), f.8581; the Latvian Department for repatriation, LVA, f.270, op.2).

Archives: European Memories of the Gulag',<sup>8</sup> my article treats two matters. First, I present the general context of war and post-war displacements from and to Soviet Latvia and their influence on the return of the Latvian children from Siberia. Second, I focus on the decision-making process that led to the concrete organization of the children's journey home.

## Categories of Displaced Latvian Children in the 1940s

### Latvian children in the Soviet rear: Deportees and evacuees from Latvia

To understand the roots of the population displacements in post-war Latvia – and the importance given to childhood care in the 1940s – let us briefly examine the major population displacements which occurred from 1941 to 1945 in the Baltic area and at the specific experience of the children in exile.<sup>9</sup> After the annexation of the three Baltic countries, the Soviet Union carried out a severe but restricted repression of several clearly defined groups. From the end of 1940, the central authorities, together with Latvian and Siberian regional governments, started to plan a broader operation, in order to arrest local elites and to expel their families to the East.<sup>10</sup> This occurred on 14 June 1941. The majority of the men condemned to forced labour died in the Soviet camps during the war: some were shot, but the great majority died because of the dreadful living conditions in the camps from 1941 to 1945. Women and children were scattered in Siberian *kolkhozy*. As families of 'enemy elements' were also affected by the operation,<sup>11</sup> women and children constituted a significant proportion of the total number of 'deportees of 14 June 1941'. From 3,000 to 4,000 children and teenagers under the age of sixteen accompanied their families into exile.<sup>12</sup>

8 Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag, op. cit., <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/home/homepage>; Ruta Upite, *Dear God, I Wanted to Live* (New York: Gramatu Draugs, 1983); Interview with Hava Vestermane, Riga, 16 April 2010.

9 Alain Blum, Marta Craveri and Valérie Nivelon, eds, *Déportés en URSS: Récits d'Européens au goulag* (Paris: Autrement, 2012).

10 N.L Pabol' and P.M. Poljan, eds, *Stalinskie deportacii 1928-1953. Dokumenty* (Moscow: Fonf demokratija, 2005), doc 2.73, pp. 215-217.

11 Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50/1 (1 January 2008), pp. 91-117.

12 Daina Bleire and Antonijs Zunda, eds, *Histoire de la Lettonie. XXème siècle* (Riga: Jumava, 2005), p. 278.

All Soviet children found themselves in harsh circumstances during the war (in occupied and non-occupied territories alike).<sup>13</sup> The young 'special settlers' faced specific conditions. The children's death rate was high. The youngest children suffered from the journey itself. For instance, as one of survivor testified, her eighteen-month-old sister died in the train. Her mother felt guilty until her death because she had forgotten the baby's clothes when the Soviet perpetrators came to arrest her and her children.<sup>14</sup> For those who survived the long journey (which lasted around one month because of the German invasion), the arrival in Siberia looked like a slave market. The heads of the Soviet *kolkhozy* did not welcome the Latvian families made up exclusively of women and children. These vulnerable families found themselves in the remotest and poorest forest *kolkhozy*.<sup>15</sup> Many of these mostly urban and educated people, deprived of basic goods and clothes, died during the first months of deportation. The children particularly suffered from starvation and from the lack of medical care. The local NKVD and the local Soviet authorities underlined the alarming situation in the special settlements, but no one would take responsibility for improving the living conditions. However, sometimes they managed to distribute food to special settlers.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, many children remained without any family support and were sent to Siberian orphanages, where the living conditions were even worse.<sup>17</sup>

Latvian authorities did not have any official prerogative in caring for the special settlers, but they were able to care for other categories of children at war. Indeed, other Latvian children found themselves in the Soviet rear.

13 N.L. Pobel' and P.M. Poljan, eds, *Okkupirovannoe detstvo. Vospominaniya te, kto v gody vojny eshche ne umel pisat'* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010); Jan T. Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, eds, *War through Children's Eyes: The Soviet Occupation of Poland and the Deportations, 1939-1941* (Stanford: HIP, 1981).

14 On Silva Linarte's testimony, cf. Denis Juliette, 'Les images de l'enfance', in *Déportés en URSS. Récits d'Européens au goulag*, ed. Alain Blum, Marta Craveri and Valérie Nivelon (Paris: Autrement, 2012), pp. 109-133; Interview with Silva Linarte, Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag, Cercec/Rfi, Paris, Daugavpils (Latvia), 13 January 2009, and Sound Archives..., op. cit., <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/salle/silva-linarte>.

15 N.L. Pobel' and P.M. Poljan, eds, *Stalinskie deportacii 1928-1953. Dokumenty* (Moscow: Fon demokratija, 2005); Interview with Austra Zalcmāne, Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag, Cercec/Rfi, Paris, Riga, 17 June 2008 and 14 January 2009, and Austra Zalcmāne's testimony, Sound Archives... op. cit., <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/salle/austra-zalcmāne>.

16 N.L. Pobel' and P.M. Poljan, eds, *Stalinskie deportacii 1928-1953*, doc 2.100, pp. 265-269.

17 E. Pelkauskis, ed., *Politika okkupacionnykh vlastej v Latvii, 1939-1991: Sbornik Dokumentov* (Riga: Nordik, 1999), p. 176; Interview with Peep Varju, Tallinn, 19 January 2009, Sound Archives. European Memories of the Gulag, Cercec/Rfi, Paris, Peep Varju's testimony, Sound Archives... op. cit., <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/salle/peep-varju>.

They were included in the contingents of 'evacuees' who fled the advancing German army from 22 June, a week after the mass deportation of 14 June. The Latvian authorities, and especially the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Latvian Republic (SNK LSSR) Vilis Lācis were very concerned with the fate of the children at war. As early as 22 June 1941, a Latvian decree aimed to rescue the children from bomb attacks and later from the German occupation.<sup>18</sup> No other Soviet evacuation decree showed such interest in the protection of 'unproductive categories of population'. As the Latvian decree was published before the central order (published only on 24 June), the Latvian authorities may have benefited from more autonomy than other Soviet local republics in setting out their own principles of evacuation.<sup>19</sup> As a result, some orphanages or childhood institutions were displaced to the Soviet rear. For instance, in the very first days of the German invasion, a pioneers' camp from the Courland, the western region of Latvia, was moved deeper into the East – the children were already on holiday, and the staff of the camp managed to follow the evacuation movement to Russia without the parents' agreement.<sup>20</sup> Even if they could not complete the evacuation plan (as elsewhere in the Soviet Union) because of the suddenness of the German invasion, the Latvian republican and central authorities managed to re-settle children's homes to the east.<sup>21</sup> Other children fled Latvia with their parents, especially the Jewish families.<sup>22</sup> In total, as a consequence of official and 'self'-evacuation, around 50,000 Latvians (and among them around 15,000 Jews) found themselves in the Soviet rear, and among them 80 per cent were women and children.<sup>23</sup> When they arrived in the USSR, the evacuated Latvian authorities tried to negotiate their integration into Siberian cities and rural communities. Some measures were taken in order to organize food supplies and winter clothes. Others measures paid special attention to the evacuated children. Many children were left to their own devices, because their parents were dead, in the army or in the production system, or simply missing. Throughout the Soviet Union, individuals or officials launched several campaigns for

18 GARF, f.6822, op.1, d.43, ll.19-21.

19 Besides, the Latvian specificity may also be explained by the remaining Western influence in the Latvian government: one can assume that Vilis Lācis had carefully followed the Battle of Britain and the evacuation of the children of London and imitated the British example.

20 UDRIS V.A., *Deiatel'nost' evakuirovannogo naseleniia Latviiskii SSR v sovetskoi tylu v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny (1941-1944)* (Riga: Cand.-thesis, 1972), p. 77.

21 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, ll.100-101.

22 Interview with Hava Vestermāne, op. cit.; LVA, f.PA-101, op.4, d.8, ll.94-110.

23 LVA, f.PA-101, op.1, d.52, ll.132-141.

supporting and adopting the evacuated children in distress.<sup>24</sup> The evacuated Latvian authorities, once again, paid even greater attention to Latvian children.<sup>25</sup> Despite official measures aimed at improving the evacuees' living conditions, evacuees usually experienced the same living conditions as deported people: both categories of displaced people found themselves in a highly vulnerable position. Moreover, the regions to which evacuees were moved were the same areas to which deported populations had been sent: although the Soviet authorities tried to avoid confusion between the categories of 'enemies' and 'loyal citizens', many mix-ups occurred, and the two displaced groups maintained epistolary and sometimes face-to-face relations.<sup>26</sup> Such confusion continued in the post-war period.

It seems that the Soviet Union developed a policy of childhood care (mostly for 'legal' and 'free' categories of children at war), which unfortunately produced only negligible results, and that the Latvian authorities took specific initiatives to protect the younger generation from the dreadful consequences of the conflict. They gained some aptitude and knowledge in the field of childhood care, especially of the protection of the orphans.

### **The Soviet Latvian Children, Victims of War: Post-War Concerns in Childhood**

In the post-war period, Soviet propaganda often referred to the tragic wartime fate of Soviet children. The image of the 'Soviet child' embodied the suffering of the whole Soviet people, both in occupied and non-occupied territories, and became the most valuable symbol of the sacrifices of the Soviet population. Many publications, written both for internal and international propaganda, pointed to the extermination of Soviet children in occupied territories.<sup>27</sup> One of the most symbolic figures during the war years on the home front, the Soviet child also became the most powerful prototype in the post-war period to denounce the Nazi atrocities. Post-war Latvia was

24 Rebecca Manley, op. cit.

25 LVA, f.270, op.1, d.77, ll.2-5.

26 Interview with Diāna Kratiša, Riga, 27 March 2009, Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag, Cercec/Rfi, Paris; Diāna Kratiša' testimony, Sound Archives..., op. cit., <http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en/salle/diana-kratisa>, UPITE Ruta, op. cit., p. 83. See also Juliette Denis, op. cit.

27 Moine Nathalie, 'La Commission d'enquête soviétique sur les crimes de guerre nazis: entre reconquête du territoire, écriture du récit de la guerre et usages justiciers', *Le Mouvement Social*, 1/222 (2008), pp. 81-109.



not an exception to the Soviet rule: the condemnation of the Nazi crimes depicted in the archives of the State Extraordinary Commission or in the public trial of German dignitaries in 1946 also presented the murder of 'Latvian children' as the most barbaric crime of the German invaders, but did not systematically mention the Jewish origin of the victims.<sup>28</sup>

But soon, the category of the child victims of war was enlarged to include other groups of children spared from extermination, including the Displaced Persons (DPs) in Germany. Documents produced by Latvian and central authorities as well as official publications show that the Soviet regime paid great attention to the Latvian children spread among the western zones of occupation in Germany.<sup>29</sup> As most of the Latvian refugees, who fled Latvia on the eve of the return of the Red Army, categorically refused to be repatriated to Soviet Latvia, and as the Western authorities claimed their support, the Latvian (and more generally Baltic) DPs, the Soviet leadership and the Latvian republican authorities began to develop a large propaganda campaign.<sup>30</sup> Both in the Soviet Union and in the western zones of occupation, they aimed to convince the DPs to come back to their homeland, and denounced the Western clemency for some famous collaborators. In this public opinion battle, displaced Latvian children in Germany again took on a particular role. For unknown reasons, some orphanages had been 'evacuated' by the German authorities in 1944-1945, along with their Latvian staff. These Latvian children, spread over the Western zones of Germany, became a major issue in the repatriation debates between the Soviet Union and

28 *Soobshchenie chrezvychajnoj goudarstvennoj. komissii po ustanovleniju i rassledovaniju zlodejaniy nemecko-fashistkikh zakhvachikov i ikh soobshnikov o prestuplenijakh nemeckikh zakhvachikov na territorii Latvijskoj SSR* (Riga: VAPP, 1945).

29 LVA, f.270, op.2, d.6130, l.56.

30 Indeed, when the Red Army launched the decisive attack on the Baltic area, many Latvians fled to escape the re-establishment of the Soviet order. At first they gathered in Courland, where the German army remained until 9 May. Most managed to flee to Germany before the capitulation. In 1945, between 160,000 and 200,000 Latvians found themselves in the Western zones of Germany. Just a few thousands were 'forced labourers' displaced by the Third Reich during the war, and quickly repatriated by the Soviet military administration in Germany. The others managed to escape the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany, and, once in the Western zones, refused to be repatriated to Soviet Latvia. Estonians and Lithuanians also fled to Western Germany. The Baltic Displaced Persons claimed their right to reject 'forced repatriation' to the USSR and the Western Allies, as they did not recognize the annexation of the Baltic States, supported them. Unlike other groups of 'former' Soviet citizens (POWs and forced labourers from Russia, eastern Ukraine, etc.), the Baltic DPs were soon excluded from the global resolutions taken in Yalta and stayed in Germany, waiting for some possibility of emigration. Juliette Denis, 'Complices de Hitler ou victimes de Staline? Les déplacés baltes en Allemagne, de la sortie de guerre à la guerre froide', *Le Mouvement social*, 244/3 (2013), pp. 81-98.

the Anglo-American allies and a weapon in the rhetorical battle between former Allies in the very first steps of the Cold War. The Soviets argued that their innocent victims of the Third Reich now became victims of the Latvian traitors and their Western supporters.<sup>31</sup> They published many articles denouncing the 'despicable task' of the fascist Latvian DPs and of the imperialistic Allies – who tried to avoid a legitimate return of Latvian children to their homeland. As a result, the repatriation of Latvian children from the western zones of Germany became a political task. From 1946, Molotov and the Latvian authorities manipulated the 'Latvian orphans' question' and popularized the legitimacy of the return of the Latvian children to their Motherland through mass media. That specific concern constituted a global political background that allowed for the return of other categories of orphans.<sup>32</sup>

The 'orphans' question' was not only a (geo)political issue: it also gained some social and police-related aspects. Because of the demographic losses of the war and the catastrophic food situation, many children gathered into criminal bands that terrorized the countryside and some city centres. Lots of children escaped the orphanages, which they considered a kind of penitentiary. The local NKVD agencies in the liberated territories and in the remote eastern and central Asian regions felt overworked by the children who roamed though Siberia, and tried to find solutions to this juvenile criminality.<sup>33</sup> Sending them back home appeared the most efficient response to the drastic situation. In this particular matter, the wishes of Latvian deportees, citizens and authorities coincided with the preoccupations of the Soviet State police. Therefore, from 1941 to 1946, different inclinations reinforced the 'children question' in Soviet Latvia. War experiences and post-war stakes revealed both general Soviet tendencies and specific Latvian issues. They participated in the overall context that led to the return of the Latvian deported children. Gradually, the category of 'orphans' emerged from different social and political issues. In 1946, the necessity of bringing back the 'free' categories of Latvian orphans to Latvia, both from East and West, was a preoccupation shared by many Soviet officials and institutions.

31 GARF, f.8581, op.2, d.195, ll.30-31.

32 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, ll.100-101.

33 N.V Smirnova, *Deiatel'nost' organov UNKVD-UMVD v bor'be s detskoj besprizornost'iu i beznadzornost'iu v Leningrade i Leningradskoi oblasti godi 1941-1949* (PhD thesis, Saint-Petersburg, 1997).

## The Return of Latvian Deported Children: An 'Organized Saga'

### Re-evacuation and repatriation: The return of 'free' categories to Latvia in 1944-1946

Following the decision-making process that led to the return of the Latvian deported children is not an easy task: many actors were involved in the process, and evaluating their respective roles remains difficult because of the lack of archival material.<sup>34</sup> However, one can compare the measures with regards to other waves of return to Latvia: official re-evacuation and repatriation, from East and West. The post-war Soviet context (and especially the Latvian situation), the chaos and confusion between different kinds of population displacements, contributed to existing policies towards 'free' children being extended to banished Latvian children.

The re-evacuation of children who left Latvia after the German invasion played an important role in the subsequent return of deported children. As the Soviet Army and authorities entered Latvian territory in the summer of 1944, the Soviet government began to organize the re-evacuation of the Latvian evacuees spread throughout the Soviet Union. The department of orphanages of the Ministry of Education was entrusted with the task of dealing with the evacuated Latvian children who remained without any family support. In some cases, the staff of the ministry managed to find their parents – who were mobilized into the Red Army, posted elsewhere in the Soviet Union, or had stayed in occupied Latvia. Other orphans re-entered their pre-war orphanages or other childhood institutions. The re-evacuation was largely completed by 1945, but it became a model for further displacements of children from the rear in Russia.<sup>35</sup> The necessity of repatriating Latvians from Germany promptly replaced the task of re-evacuating Latvians from the Soviet rear. From November 1945, the Soviet central authorities involved in the repatriation of Soviet citizens deported to Germany pressed for a stronger focus on the Latvians remaining in Germany. In Riga, the Latvian department for repatriation, the government and the Ministry of Education raised the issue of the Latvian children in the Western zones of occupation in Germany. They searched for their relatives in Latvia, made them write official requests for the repatriation

34 In particular, the role of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union should be clarified.

35 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, ll.100-101.

of their children, and published several lists of Latvian orphans living in the Western zones of Germany.<sup>36</sup>

Between 1944 and 1946, the effort to bring these children back to Latvia was a real concern. This interest resulted from the drive to rebuild the nation, from the international situation, and also from humanitarian considerations. Indeed, post-war living conditions in Latvia (and in the other Baltic republics) were much better than in other Soviet territories: because of structural and circumstantial reasons, the economic infrastructure had been more or less preserved, whereas other formerly occupied territories, and even non-occupied Soviet regions, suffered from serious shortages of primary goods. Some liberated Soviet territories went through a period of real starvation in 1946.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, from the Latvian authorities' point of view, the return of the Latvian orphans was also a priority in order to rescue them from the hardship they faced in other Soviet territories. The dreadful living conditions of the young special settlers also started to be known in Latvia. After the end of the war, special settlers had could write to their relatives in Latvia and depicted in their letters the high mortality, the shortage of food, the lack of medical care, and the harsh working conditions in the forest *kolkhozy*<sup>38</sup> that even the children and teenagers had to face. Even if the post-war living conditions in Siberia were slowly improving, families of deported children requested authorization to raise the children in Latvia to save them from the risk of perishing in the special settlements.<sup>39</sup> According to semi-mythological stories, some isolated free Latvian citizens who happened to find themselves in special settlements also alerted the Ministry of Education of the risks of dying that the special settlers faced constantly.<sup>40</sup> The main executives of the ministry seemed to agree to give

36 LVA, f.270, op.2, d.6130, l.56, 159, 181; d.6120, l.88.

37 Veniamin Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946-1947 godov: proizkhodenie i posledstvija* (Moscow: RAN, 1996).

38 Ruta Upite, op. cit., p. 85.

39 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.12, l.37, 52.

40 Interview with Silva Linarte, op. cit. One of these adventurous Latvians, a certain archaeologist named Urtan, became quite famous in Latvia in the end of the 1980s. Local newspapers paid tribute to him as the sole originator of the salvation of the children. According to an article published in a newspaper in Latgale, he went to Siberia to rescue a single family, and then he agreed to the Latvian mothers' urgent demand to rescue their children, too. As a result, he bribed a station manager who gave him the permission to use a few wagons to bring the children back to Riga. Therefore, in the opinion of many survivors, only one individual's initiative saved them from the special settlements. If this 'Urtan' actually took part in the organization of the journey home (LVA, f.700, op.6, d.14, l.25, 27), he was far from being the only one involved in the process.

the Latvian families a positive answer, but then a specific event allowed them to start asking other institutions about the fate of the Latvian children.

### Organizing the return of the Latvian deported children

These processes provided the general context for the return of the Latvian orphans. The concrete process began thanks to a chaotic and unexpected episode that launched the organization of the rescue. In the beginning of February 1946, the Soviets managed to repatriate from Germany the boarders of a Latvian orphanage located near Liepāja before the beginning of the war ('Mladenca'). The Latvian children disembarked in Russian Crimea by mistake. Therefore they had to be 're-evacuated' from Russia, although at first they were 'repatriated' from Germany. Confusion between re-evacuation and repatriation often happened, 'lost' Soviet citizens displaced during the war for different reasons had an undetermined status and needed to be taken charge of by various institutions.<sup>41</sup> The permanent delegate of the Latvian republic in Moscow first heard about the situation of the Latvian orphans in Crimea and informed his Latvian colleagues in the Ministry of Education.<sup>42</sup> Everybody agreed that the 'repatriation-re-evacuation' of these children should be planned for the summer, when the weather was less harsh. In the meantime, the Minister of Education suggested him to 're-evacuate' not only the children of Crimea, but also the orphans of the regions of Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk: he had in mind the group of deported children, even if he did not use the official terminology. Many requests the Ministry sent to the central authorities remained deliberately vague about the children's official status: the Latvian Ministry of Education asked for the 're-evacuation' of Latvian children spread over the western Siberian regions without specifically mentioning why they found themselves in those Siberian regions: as if they were other 'free' Latvian children who had been unexpectedly uprooted during the war.<sup>43</sup> However, while negotiating with other local Soviet institutions – the Latvian Supreme Soviet, and the Latvian MVD – the main leaders of the Ministry of Education did reveal the profile of the children thus targeted: they asked for official authorization to free 'orphans and semi-orphans' from the special settlements.<sup>44</sup>

41 In 1946-1947, the Latvian 'department of arrivals and integration of the repatriated Soviet citizens' had to deal with both repatriation and re-evacuation; the department was not responsible for the returns from other parts of the USSR. See, for example, LVA, f.270, op.2, d.6146.

42 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, l.89.

43 *ibid.*, l.10.

44 *ibid.*, l.13.

The Crimean case not only provided an impetus for the return of all the Latvian children from Russian territories; it also provided a pattern of the organization of a displacement from Russia to Latvia. The Latvian Ministry of Education sent delegates to Russia to help the orphanages to move back to Latvia, and exchanged correspondence with its Russian counterpart to get transportation facilities and food supplies.<sup>45</sup> This collaboration between the Latvian and Russian authorities, launched to solve the Crimean issue, remained operative during the whole process of the 're-evacuation' of the Latvian children from Siberia. After their requested were accepted, the Latvian Ministry of Education began to cooperate with the RSFSR Ministry of Education and the Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk local authorities to help them in finding the scattered deported children and providing them with supplies for their journey home.<sup>46</sup>

Even though I have not yet found an official Soviet decision that sanctioned the return of the deported Latvian children, I have not found any documents documenting the refusal of the central and Russian authorities either. One can explain the Soviet clemency largely by the chaotic situation generated by the growing number of orphans in the post-war period, especially in remote Soviet regions where many young evacuees and deportees lost their parents. The Soviet authorities may have turned a blind eye to the return of Latvian children, even if their return was partly outside the boundaries of the Soviet principles of definitive exile. But they needed to empty the overcrowded orphanages, and the special settlements more generally, of the great number of orphans, of whom the regional authorities could not take care.<sup>47</sup> The Latvian initiative did not present any political danger (because of the small number of children concerned) and at the same time could have relieved some childhood institutions of their burden.

Progressively, the Ministry of Education subtly enlarged the categories of children involved in the process of return. At first, it officially concerned inmates of Siberian orphanages and 'semi-orphans' residing in the special settlements with their mother. Finally, even children of large families, or those whose mother was not able to take care of them, were also included in the lucky groups of 're-evacuated' children. As the same time, the age of the children was also raised from 16 to 18 years old.<sup>48</sup> More than one hundred

45 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, l.38.

46 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, l.57, l.76.

47 M.R. Zezina, 'Social'naja zashchita detej-sirot v poslevoennye gody (1945-1955)', *Voprosy Istorii*, 1 (1999), pp. 127-136.

48 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, l.13; op.13, ll.14-17.

Latvian children came back to Latvia each month from May to November 1946.<sup>49</sup> The Latvian Ministry of Education played an essential role in the decision-making process that led to the formalization of the return of the children from exile. They did not encounter any refusal from any of the other actors they addressed, either in Latvia or in the Russian and even central institutions.<sup>50</sup> The post-war social context and the chaotic interlacing of displacements of various population categories may explain the success of the Latvian project. One can assume that the return movement to Soviet Latvia, both from the East and from the West, provided the background for the return of the Soviet deported Latvian orphans: the infrastructure and the legitimacy of the return of the deported Latvian children were established by the population displacements that occurred after the war.

### **The epic journey from Siberia to Latvia: Between State supervision and deportees' individual efforts**

As one might expect, the documents of the Ministry of Education and the Siberian children's past and recent testimonies present different, sometimes opposite versions of the same episode. The very different nature of the sources explains the contradictions between the two narratives. Indeed, who could expect the deportees, especially the youngest ones, to understand the political processes that led first to their exile, then to their unexpected liberation? However, the discrepancy between archival materials and oral testimonies also allows for a more complete understanding of the political and social mechanisms of the journey home.

How did the Latvian authorities manage to locate several hundred children spread out among Siberian orphanages and special settlements? In the first case, they could rely upon the local educational authorities, which registered the 'Latvian orphans' in the childhood institutions. They also requested the Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk regional authorities to carry out the same research in *kolkhozy*,<sup>51</sup> but it seems that many special settlers heard about it thanks to their own networks. As many former deportees remember, in the spring of 1946 in Siberia, many deported families heard this unbelievable news that came out of nowhere: Latvian 'orphans' and 'semi-orphans', who lost one or two of their parents during the war, were allowed to leave Siberia and return to Latvia! This was sudden news for

49 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.13, ll.14-17, l.15.

50 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.12, l.150.

51 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.2, l.10; d.23, l.15.

which many families were unprepared.<sup>52</sup> It is still not easy to understand how the Latvian families, spread over thousands of scarred kilometres, heard about it. Sometimes, Latvian families received letters from others deportees, or from their relatives in Latvia, who informed them about the opportunity to send back the children.<sup>53</sup> Latvian deportees quickly decided to send back their children, allowing them to escape the awful local living conditions. But they had to prove that they could provide them with a decent life (because of sickness, for example). Besides, as expected by the Latvian Ministry of Education, they needed to obtain official authorization for their children to return to Latvia.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, even if the Latvian deportees were not well informed by the *kolkhoz* authorities or the commandants of the special settlements, they latter had to follow a legal and formal procedure that no testimony reveals.<sup>55</sup> In order to help the children to get on the trains back to Latvia, the Latvian Ministry of Education sent a few workers to Siberia (as it already did in Crimea).<sup>56</sup> They supervised the journey home from the main train stations, but were not able to pick all the children from the *kolkhozy*. Thus, in many cases, children and teenagers went across huge forests or sailed along the Siberian rivers by themselves to Tomsk or to Krasnoyarsk.<sup>57</sup> They were then taken in charge more officially and efficiently when they arrived in major Siberian cities, and travelled the rest of the way back by train.

Due to post-war circumstances in the USSR, the journey was quite epic. It was a long and disturbing journey through a devastated country, where food was scarce and the infrastructure gravely damaged. Sometimes, food was unavailable or a child was sick and needed special care. In such circumstances, the Latvian delegates contacted the Ministry of Education and asked for some more money or official support to get supplies.<sup>58</sup> Most of the time, their presence remained too episodic to be noticed by the children. The story told by Silva Linarte shows that the children did not pay attention to the adults who came to rescue them. Silva's older sister was in charge of an entire carriage crowded by children (actually, she may have been the 'head of the brigade' constituted by Latvian officials to coordinate the children's

52 Interview with Silva Linarte, op. cit.; Interview with Austra Zalcmāne and Lilija Kajone, Riga, 14 January 2009, Sound Archives: European Memories of the Gulag, Cercec/Rfi, Paris.

53 Ruta Upite, op. cit.

54 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.12, l.150; d.13, ll.14-17.

55 Interview with Silva Linarte, op. cit., LVA, f.700, op.6, d.12, l.150.

56 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.13, ll.14-17.

57 Ruta Upite, op. cit., p. 111.

58 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.14, l.8, 10, 13, 25, 27.



groups).<sup>59</sup> She left the carriage for a few minutes to bring back some hot water. While she was away, the train left. All the children were screaming and crying but had no way of stopping the train. According to Silva, a few hours later the train was ordered to go back, because there was no available holding siding for it at the next station. It came back. The children looked at the window, and saw the little girl, sitting on the platform, all alone with her hot water, silently crying. She got on the train, and never got off until her arrival in Riga.<sup>60</sup> One could imagine that the train went back to the previous station because some Latvian delegate asked for it.

Therefore, in oral or written testimonies, survivors mostly ignored the Latvian officials whom the Ministry of Education sent to Siberia, and their role in their salvation. They used passive sentences to describe their journey, such as 'our names were entered into a register' or 'so far, three hundred children from the Krasnoyarsk region had been transported to Latvia'.<sup>61</sup> Of course, most of them were far too young to understand what was happening to them or to whom they could be grateful. But even older teenagers do not pay tribute to the different Soviet actors, including the Latvian delegates, who helped them to go home. For example, Ruta Upite, aged almost eighteen, was aware of the presence of a Latvian delegation, but considered their members as dreadful communists, as representatives of the state that banished her and her family from their homeland. On the way back home, in Moscow, she met one of them. This was how she remembered, in 1950, Comrade Luss (Luze), a woman whose role was essential:<sup>62</sup> 'Soon a motorcar stopped near the tracks and from it emerged Comrade Luze – a woman who had escorted the first orphans' group from Krasnoyarsk. I was glad that she wasn't our escort. With her stern looks and mannish attitudes she was the stereotypical female communist. She was stout, with a broad face, and wore a big shiny brass comb in her short hair.'<sup>63</sup> Children and teenagers, whether right after their return or later when they old, could not face the fact that the state that had condemned them to exile could also release them from Siberia.

From the spring of 1946 to the end of the year, more than one hundred children left Siberia for Latvia each month. The number of families requesting to benefit from this measure was constantly growing, and Latvian

59 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.13, ll.14-17.

60 Interview with Silva Linarte, op. cit.

61 UPITE Ruta, op. cit., p. 121-122.

62 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.13, ll.14-17.

63 Ruta Upite, op. cit., p. 132.

delegates had to organize new convoys of children until the middle of 1947.<sup>64</sup> Together with deportees' relatives, they continued to search for Latvian orphans in Siberia. Some Estonian children also benefited from this measure and went back to Estonia through Latvia. When they arrived in Riga, many relatives or directors of orphanages, alerted by telegram, were waiting for the children.<sup>65</sup> The young 'returnees' started a new episode of their life and later their fate diverged. Some of them succeeded in quickly adapting to local circumstances and languages that they had forgotten or fantasized about, others faced more difficult situations, other were even sent back to Siberia (with or without their relatives) for a second time in 1949-50.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

This case study concerns a very small number of people: some 1,300 Latvian and a few hundred Estonian children. However, it helps us to understand many aspects of post-war Soviet Latvia and post-war displacements in the Soviet Union. The story of the Latvian orphans from Siberia raises four questions about the aftermath of war and its remembrance. First, it shows how population displacements in post-war Latvia were closely linked to each other. A broad wave of returns to Latvia involved many different categories of displaced people, and for the authorities the different kinds of displacement were very close to each other. Each wave of return involved a specific interest in children for social, political or even geopolitical reasons. The return of Latvian children from both East and West provided infrastructures and legitimacy for the return of the deported Latvian orphans. Moreover, the confusion rooted in the post-war circumstances in Europe and the USSR allowed for the return of people of 'enemy descent' in the context of a more general re-evacuation and repatriation to Latvia. As far as the Latvian case is concerned, this example shows that the post-war movements of population should not be evaluated separately. They all closely shared the same chronology, patterns and actors. Second, the gradually increasing interest in the fate of an 'un-protected' child and, even more, an 'orphan' stemmed from the tragic losses of the war in the Soviet

64 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.14, l.5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 16.

65 LVA, f.700, op.6, d.16, l.56.

66 Interview with Austra Zalcmane and Lilija Kajone, op. cit.; Interview with Peep Varju, op. cit.

Union that accelerated the necessity to forge some kind of 'state policy of childhood care'. Internal social and policing issues, as well as international debates, reinforced the urgent need to take care of the children, especially the orphans. Latvian and Soviet concerns converged: for different reasons, Latvian individuals living in the Republic and in Siberia, Latvian officials, the NKVD and the Russian local authorities agreed on the necessity of emptying Siberian orphanages and the special settlements more generally. Third, the return of the outcast children from Siberia was a reflection of a post-war period in which the course of the Sovietization of Latvia was not yet settled. Facing many structural, social and policing issues, the Kremlin continued to give to some institutions and population categories a degree of flexibility. Its policy towards Latvia became more radical from 1947 onwards. The story of the Latvian children remains an exception in the Soviet post-war space: one can assume that the Ministry of Education in Latvia took full responsibility for this return. But this initiative was made possible, once again, thanks to other post-war official and general displacements, and thanks to the collaboration between Latvian and Russian authorities concerned by the waves of returning Soviet citizens. To conclude, I wish to underline the meaning of this episode for both the history and memory of Latvian Sovietization. It allows for a more precise comprehension of the fate of the deportees and the involvement of different institutions, and it also remains a mythological aspect of the 'national history' of the newly independent country of Latvia. The story plays an important role in the disqualification of the 'Soviet' institutions (even if the Latvian Ministry of Education was Soviet as well) and in the glorification of Latvian national 'heroes' (even if many communists, both Latvian and Russian, made the return possible). It contributes to the memorial conflicts that regularly set Latvia and Russia, or the most nationalistic fringe of the Latvian 'ethnic' group and the Russian-speaking minority, in opposition to each other.

# Migration and Cleansing

Building a New Society in the Czech Borderlands after 1945\*

*Matěj Spurný*

After the war ended in May 1945, the border areas of the Bohemian lands became a site of a radical historical experiment. What had been planned and practiced by the Nazi authorities under German rule since October 1938 was now completed. The ethnic groups that had lived here together for hundreds of years were forced to separate according to seemingly impartial, but actually political and instrumental rules. More than 3 million people were uprooted.

Most of the German-speaking inhabitants' were forced to leave. Hundreds of thousands were expelled by acts of violence; then millions were 'transferred' in a more organized and internationally accepted way. Another 2 million people came in to take their place, taking the property that was abandoned, and some settled down there. Most of the newcomers were Czechs from the interior, but there also were Slovak and Czech returnees from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Romania, as well as Roma from eastern Slovakia or Slovak Hungarians who had been sent there against their will.

Moving, losing or gaining property, leaving behind an old home or getting a new one were not, however, the only consequences of this modern migration of peoples. Demographic change went hand in hand with legal disruption, which changed the character of the rule of law in Czechoslovakia, and altered the discourse about the terms and conditions, which legitimized the marginalization, segregation and refusal of the civil rights of great numbers of formerly Czechoslovak citizens. All of that, the subject of this chapter, even more than geopolitical and demographic changes, contributed to the dramatic transformation of Czech society and the Czechoslovak state in subsequent years and even decades.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term 'German-speaking inhabitants' as a descriptive category (for those people whose first language was German). 'Ethnic Germans' is used to indicate a group, which was defined as 'German' by the (in most cases Czechoslovak) legislation of the period described in this article.

## The Post-War History of Czechoslovakia Revisited

In 2007, the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes was established in Prague by the Czech government. The mission of this special state-run institution, which combines historical research, archives and politics, has been to conserve and protect the grand narrative of the Czech nation. This story, one of the cornerstones of Czech national identity, is based on the opposition between democratic tradition, allegedly deep-rooted in Czech society since the Middle Ages (and proved by the existence of interwar Czechoslovakia),<sup>2</sup> and feudal or, later on, 'totalitarian' oppression coming mostly from outside.<sup>3</sup> Following this model, the short post-war period has, since late 1989 (and among underground or exile historians even earlier), mostly been interpreted by Czech scholars as a struggle between democracy (or democratic political parties) and the emerging 'totalitarianism' that was eventually installed with the Communist takeover of late February 1948.<sup>4</sup> The legislation of 2007, which enabled the establishment of a central institute for research on authoritarian rule in Czech contemporary history, was intended to codify this narrative. Accordingly, the period between 1945

2 The origin of this concept can be traced back to the historical and philosophical works of the nineteenth-century Czech intellectuals, such as František Palacký and Tomáš Masaryk. A simplified and popular version of this narrative was also constructed by the Communist ideologues Václav Kopecký and Zdeněk Nejedlý (arguing that Communists were the heirs to the best national traditions of the Czechs) and the story has surprisingly survived (in a mirror image to the Communist version) even after the changes of 1989.

3 This approach to post-war Czechoslovakia, especially the Communist period, is deeply rooted among the post-1989 scholars with experience of dissent or exile, such as Karel Kaplan. See, for example, Karel Kaplan, *Největší politický proces: M. Horáková a spol.* (Prague: ÚSD, 1995) and idem, *Tajný prostor Jáchymov* (České Budějovice: Actys, 1993). It is also influential among younger scholars (often affiliated with the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes), for instance, Petr Blažek et al., *Akce 'K': vyhnání sedláků a jejich rodin z usedlostí v padesátých letech: Studie, seznamy, dokumenty* (Prague: Pulchra, 2010); Tomáš Bursík, *Přišli jsme na svět proto, aby nás pronásledovali: Trestanecké pracovní tábory při uranových dolech v letech 1949-1961* (Prague: ÚSTR, 2009); and Pavel Vaněk, *Pohraniční stráž a pokusy o přechod státní hranice v letech 1951-1955* (Prague: ÚSTR, 2008).

4 See, for example, Eva Broklová, 'Československo na cestě k totalitarismu', *Na pozvání Masarykova ústavu 1/2004* (Prague: MÚ, 2004), pp. 137-144; Jiří Kocian, *Československá strana národně socialistická v letech 1945-1948: Organizace-program-politika* (Brno: Doplněk, 2002); idem, 'Politický systém v letech 1945-1948', *Politické strany: Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a v Československu 1861-2004*, ed. Jiří Malíř and Pavel Marek (Brno: Doplněk, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 1165-1173.

and 1948 had to be systematically excluded from research that focuses on the ‘totalitarian’ repression of the Czechs in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

Seen from this common perspective, February 1948 represents the turning point in twentieth-century Czech history. Democracy, the rule of law and humanism, which were desired by most Czechs, were suppressed by the Communist coup and external (Soviet) powers, which were interested in capturing Czechoslovakia for themselves. The influence Stalin exercised over the Czech Communists is described, in this narrative, as the main reason why the post-war Communists completely rejected the tradition of the pre-war Czechoslovak Communist Party, which had enjoyed links with the democratic socialist tradition.<sup>6</sup> The importation of Soviet practices then culminated in the show trials of the early 1950s.<sup>7</sup>

Many aspects of modern Czech history (especially post-1945 history) relativize or even contradict this grand narrative. Though the main Czech works on this period published in the last two decades<sup>8</sup> tend to describe the beginnings of the ‘totalitarian regime’ as entailing an extremely high degree of state-induced violence and an unprecedented number of victims, it is important to realize that between 1945 and 1947 the extent of the violence committed by the state, its security forces and other bodies was far greater than in the ‘Stalinist’ period that followed (1948-1953). The so-called ‘third republic’ (Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948) declared itself a democratic state and emphasized the rule of law. Its parliamentary democracy was, however, limited to parties united in the so-called ‘National Front’ – Christian Democrats, Socialists and Communists. The strongest party of the interwar Czechoslovakia, the Agrarian Party, was outlawed. Nationalizing a huge part of the industry, redistributing land and repression against ethnic minorities were practiced with the agreement of all parties of the National Front and a huge majority of the Czech- and Slovak-speaking inhabitants. However, this practice of disintegrating the rule of law helped

5 Under the Act of Parliament, which established the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Zákon č. 181/2007 o Ústavu pro studium totalitních režimů, o Archivu bezpečnostních složek a o změně některých zákonů), only the ‘totalitarian’ periods of 1938-1945 and 1948-1989 fall within its competence.

6 See the works of Karel Kaplan or, for example, Jacques Rupnik, *Histoire du Parti communiste tchécoslovaque: Des origines à la prise du pouvoir* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1981).

7 Karel Kaplan, *Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2001).

8 See footnotes 3 and 4.

to dismantle democracy and paved the way to the Communist takeover in February 1948.

In the 1950s, the character of the violence changed and new groups that had not been persecuted before (including priests, rich farmers and soldiers who had served in foreign armed forces) were hit hardest. After right-wing politicians and leaders of the Agrarian Party, who were sentenced between May 1945 and May 1947, politicians from socialist parties, including some Communists, were also sent to prison or executed between 1949 and 1953. Nevertheless, the total extent of state-induced violence gradually decreased, as is evident from the number of deaths, which dropped from the tens of thousands in 1945-1947 to several thousands in the first half of the 1950s, and then decreased even more in the second half of the 1950s. This does not of course make the repressive character of the Communist dictatorship or the suffering of the victims any more acceptable, but the context is important if one wants to understand why a large part of society perceived such demonstrations of political power as legitimate.

Recent works of history, written mostly by the younger generation of Czech<sup>9</sup> and (to a greater extent) non-Czech scholars, have already pointed out some of these contradictions. Whereas Tomáš Staněk and Adrian von Arburg,<sup>10</sup> and also Benjamin Frommer,<sup>11</sup> have documented and analysed the great amount of violence in post-war Bohemia and Moravia, a systematic comparison of physical violence before and after 1948 has yet to be written.

In other central European traditions of writing about history, the emphasis on the democratic traditions that opposed Communist dictatorial rule in the post-war years is not as strong as it is among Czech historians. Here, too, however, one sees an important shift in the interpretation of post-1945 history – from victimization to the notion of the assignment of responsibility and the participation of most of society in dictatorial rule, the stigmatization of minorities, or the ‘state of exception’ (*Ausnahmezustand*).<sup>12</sup> One of

9 Many of these contradictions are considered and some of the dominant discourses are challenged in one of my recent books about ethnic and cultural minorities in the borderlands of Bohemia and Moravia: Matěj Spurný, *Nejsou jako my: Česká společnost a menšiny v pohraničí 1945-1960* (Prague: Antikomplex, 2011).

10 Tomáš Staněk, *Poválečné ‘excesy’ v českých zemích a jejich vyšetřování* (Prague: ÚSD, 2005), and Tomáš Staněk and Adrian v. Arburg, ‘Organizované divoké odsuny?’, *Soudobé dějiny*, 16/3-4 (2005), pp. 465-533.

11 Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

12 The reformulation or decline of the rule of law in the post-war era has frequently been discussed from a European perspective (for example, by Tony Judt and Mark Mazower) and the question of retribution plays a central role in the debate. See, for example, István Deák et

the most important discussions among historians and the general public concerning this interpretative shift has been about Poland.<sup>13</sup>

When emphasizing the continuities of policies and practices in Bohemia and Moravia in the 1940s, one must take into account the central role of ethnicization the citizenship and property rights and of social ‘cleansing’.<sup>14</sup> This ‘vision of purity’<sup>15</sup> stands in fundamental opposition to the idea of the rule of law, which ensures equal rights for every citizen, until he or she is sentenced by a legitimate court. The Czech borderlands provide a convincing case study documenting that, in contrast to the Czech national grand narrative, cleansing was not merely an instrument of the imported ‘totalitarian’ dictatorships. In the democratic ‘Third Republic’ of Czechoslovakia, from early May 1945 to late February 1948, as I shall try to demonstrate here, a wide range of concurring decisions, processes and projects were in place, based on the same conviction that what is unreliable or foreign needs, as a preventative measure, to be removed.

al., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). The ‘state of exception’ (*Ausnahmezustand*), as a broader concept going back to the works of Carl Schmitt, is also useful when conceptualizing what happened in the early months after the war, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

13 See Jan T. Gross ed., *The Holocaust in Occupied Poland: New Findings and Interpretations* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012); idem, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and idem, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

14 The term ‘cleansing’ has mostly been used by historians in connection with the plans and practice of the physical extermination or forced displacement of ethnic groups. See Philip Ther and Anna Siljak, eds, *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). I, however, use the term in a broader sense – namely, as a discourse of modernity and the practice of social engineering, whose aim is to remove certain social or ethnic groups from a territory or a community. I am referring to the argument presented in Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); idem, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca: Polity Press, 1991); and Gerd Koenen, *Utopie der Säuberung: Was war der Kommunismus?* (Berlin: Fest, 1998). In his discussion of events in post-war Bohemia and Moravia, Frommer, in *National Cleansing*, uses the word ‘cleansing’ to describe the policy of retribution after 1945. Glassheim uses the term to describe the expulsion of the ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia in 1945-1947 (Eagle Glassheim, ‘The Mechanics of Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, 1945-1947’, in Ther and Siljak, eds, *Redrawing Nations*, pp. 197-220). Stanisław Jankowiak does the same in ‘“Cleansing” Poland of Germans: The Province of Pomerania, 1945-1949’, in Ther and Siljak, eds, *Redrawing Nations*, pp. 87-106. For a use of the term close to my own in the current article, see David Gerlach, ‘Beyond Expulsion: The Emergence of “Unwanted Elements” in the Postwar Czech Borderlands, 1945-1950’, *East European Politics & Societies*, 24 (2010), pp. 269-293.

15 ???



## Nazi Rule in Czechoslovakia and the Continuities of the Ethnicization of Law

The division and subsequent complete breakup of the Czechoslovak Republic following the Munich Agreement of September 1938 put an end to the sovereignty of a Czechoslovak state but also to a principle that had shaped Czechoslovak law until 1938: the equality of citizens regardless of nationality. When the German administration took over sovereign power in the hived-off Sudetenland, this area became part of the German Reich. From then on, German citizenship law applied there, which since 1933 had developed from an institution of the rule of law into a political tool of racial segregation.<sup>16</sup> A uniform citizenship was replaced by graduated classes of rights based on ethno-racial criteria which applied for the area of the former Czechoslovakia. The discriminating distinction drawn between citizens of the Reich, who alone enjoyed full legal status,<sup>17</sup> and mere citizens, who, in accordance with the Nuremberg racial laws, were not of 'German or related blood' now came into force in the Sudetenland, as well.

After the occupation of the remaining Czech territory and the setting up of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, the criteria of ethno-racial selection qua citizenship became more stringent. Only 'German national inhabitants' of the Protectorate became German citizens and citizens of the Reich. The remaining inhabitants of the Protectorate of 'Czech nationality' were given the new, separate – and inferior – status of citizen of the Protectorate (not of the German Reich). The downgrading of citizenship status determined and justified the reduction of property rights for citizens of the Protectorate up to and including the power of disposal over property vested in the German occupying power.

The full radicalism of National Socialist racial policy hit the Jews. As mere 'protected persons' (*Schutzangehörige*) their legal status was inferior to that of 'Protectorate citizens', in a special category that no longer afforded them any legal protection – contrary to the euphemistic wording. They were subsequently robbed of their material livelihood and then deprived of their physical existence.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to Jewish business people, who had been

16 See Dieter Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen. Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), esp. pp. 393-420.

17 §3, 1. Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz vom Reichsbürgergesetz vom 14.11.1935.

18 Diemut Majer, *Fremdvölkische im Dritten Reich: ein Beitrag zur nationalsozialistischen Rechtssetzung und Rechtspraxis in Verwaltung und Justiz unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der eingegliederten Ostgebiete und des Generalgouvernements* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1981).

expropriated through Aryanization,<sup>19</sup> Czech property owners in the Protectorate, although subject to ethnically discriminating restrictions on their rights of disposal over economic assets, were not radically dispossessed.

The development of plans for the expropriation and expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia and the political practice of discriminating and marginalizing ethnic minorities in post-war Czechoslovakia can be interpreted as a consequence of the National Socialist concept of nationality and a reaction to the cruel reality of the German occupation of Czech lands between 1938 and 1945. However, the Czechoslovak plans to ethnicize access to citizenship and to collectively dispossess all members of certain national minorities, which were developed between 1943 and 1945 by the government in exile in London and put into practice after May 1945, represent more than just a consequence and reaction to Nazi rule. This policy in fact adopted the main principles of discriminating or privileging people in accordance with their membership of an ethnic group and represents a continuity of principles realized under National Socialist rule.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Czech Borderlands as a Laboratory of a New Society: The Plans and the Reality**

In 1945, the Czech political authorities may have had divergent visions of the country's future. In one respect, therefore, a broad consensus held the parties of the National Front and opinion-makers together. They considered the segregation of the German-speaking inhabitants of Czechoslovakia, their subsequent displacement, and the consequent resettling of the borderland with 'Slavs' to be legitimate and beneficial.

The forced migration of the German-speaking (former) Czechoslovaks and the repopulating of the borderlands were viewed by contemporaries as a justified reaction to the war and the 'Munich Betrayal.' But they should not be interpreted as just taking advantage of the special historical

19 Osterloh, Jörg: *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung im Reichsgau Sudetenland 1938-1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006).

20 More to the question of citizenship and property in Czechoslovakia before and after 1945, see Gosewinkel Dieter and Matěj Spurný, 'Citoyenneté et expropriation en Tchécoslovaquie au lendemain des deux Guerres mondiales', in *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 61/1 (2014), pp. 26-61

circumstances.<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, expulsion, resettlement, confiscation of property and its redistribution had to be (and successfully were) integrated into the traditional national narrative about the thousand-year struggle with the 'German element', as the last chapter of the story about an oppressed nation, which lived to see justice.

The historical narrative of redressing wrongs that were hundreds of years old (since the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 or even since the German settlement of Bohemian lands in the thirteenth century) therefore still did not offer any clear, generally acceptable vision of how a new society was going to be formed. But the Communist authorities were able not only to come up with such a vision, but also to take measures for its implementation in practice. From their point of view, the forced migration of the ethnic Germans after the war was only a first step in the radical reconstruction of Czechoslovakia into a purely Czech, socialist, and ultimately Communist society.

### The dream of homogeneity

The men who organized the settlement of the Czech borderlands after the ethnic Germans had been displaced from the region saw their task not just as solving the immediate demographic and economic problems. Resettling the borderlands was not understood as merely filling up an empty space. On the contrary, the borderlands were to be settled by the 'best of the best', that is, nationally reliable, hardworking and politically conscious people. A new society was meant to emerge there, healthier, more effective and more just than any society in the history of the Bohemian lands.

The belief in the avant-garde role of the borderlands in post-war Czechoslovakia is reflected in these utopian visions. German society and German 'inhumanity' were meant to be replaced by an ideal Slav community, characterized by 'German' virtues, such as a high level of discipline at work, but also by solidarity and creativity, two allegedly Slav virtues. Unity and reliability became central values of the project. In the effort to achieve homogeneity, removing the sources of conflict between old and new settlers seemed to be the primary task. The influential conservatives among the original Czech settlers wished for nationally reliable and nationally 'pure' borderlands, which were, however, politically and economically adjusted to

21 See, for example, the speeches of Edvard Beneš from 1945, which include both of these interpretative frameworks. Edvard Beneš, *Odsun Němců z Československa 1940-1947* (Prague: Dita, 2002).

the structures and hierarchies of interwar Czechoslovakia. The left-wingers, who were predominant, understood the broader context.

The Communist Party therefore managed to combine existing Czech nationalism with its members' own quest for radical social change and succeeded in becoming the only convincing guarantor of both processes. The Communist press called for the rapid confiscation of 'all enemy property', to 'tear economic and consequently also political power out of the hands of those who had misused this power against our nation and our state in the past'.<sup>22</sup> The Communists declared that building a new society in the borderlands was just the prologue to what had to happen throughout the country. As the Party ideologue and Minister of Information Václav Kopecký put it in April 1946: 'Here in the borderlands a new morality should be created, which will be raised high above the old selfishly egoistic sensibility. This new morality will form the consciousness of a new attitude to property, that is, the consciousness that all property here in the borderlands has a kind of national blessing. The borderlands must be the vanguard, on the road of political progress as well.'<sup>23</sup>

It was only a short step from the 'national blessing of property' to the 'new morality' and 'political progress'. A new society of workers and peasants had to be built in the borderlands and then expanded to the rest of the country. It was over the question of whether the borderlands were to become a nationally homogenized and improved version of interwar Czech society or the vanguard of the desired social revolution, that the different political and ideological fronts clashed. The side represented by the Communist Party became dominant in the borderlands as early as the first year after the end of the war.

Reality, however, was dramatically different from these utopian visions, starting from the point that at first seemed to be the easiest and most consensual in the whole process, namely the segregation and subsequent displacement of the ethnic Germans.

22 'Osídlení pohraničí – dosavadní úspěchy a nejbližší úkoly', *Sever*, 26 February 1946, p. 1.

23 The original Czech reads: 'Zde v pohraničí měla by být vytvořena nová morálka, povýšená vysoko nad sobecky egoistický cit, vytvářející vědomí nového vztahu k majetku, a sice to vědomí, že veškerý majetek tu v pohraničí má jakési národní posvěcení. Pohraničí musí jít napřed i na cestě politického pokroku' 'Ministr Kopecký ke kulturním pracovníkům v Ústí nad Labem', *Sever*, 16 April 1946, p. 1.

## The ethnic Germans

Between 1943 and 1945 the Czechoslovak government in exile in London developed plans to make citizenship a matter of ethnicity and to dispossess all members of certain national minorities. These plans were both a reaction to and the adoption of principles implemented under Nazi rule in the Bohemian lands. The goal was relatively clear: to find a legal construction, by which ethnic Germans living on the territory of Czech lands could be deprived of their civil rights, which would enable the Czechoslovak state to transfer these people out of its territory.<sup>24</sup> Confidence in legal means and in the anticipated international agreement about the 'transfer' of ethnic Germans from east-central Europe was limited. Because of that, the authorities supported and partly organized the 'uncontrolled expulsion' (*divoké odsuny, divoké vyhánění*) of hundreds of thousands of the so-called 'Sudeten Germans', which took place in spring and summer 1945.<sup>25</sup> Tens of thousands of German-speaking inhabitants of the Bohemian lands had been killed or died as a result of these violent actions before the internationally permitted transfers even began.<sup>26</sup>

As usual, however, the social reality was much more complicated than the plans for a fast and thorough ethnic cleansing of the Bohemian lands. Since the national identity of hundreds of thousands of Czechoslovak citizens was ambiguous and uncertain, drawing a clear line between people who were to be considered part of the nation and those who were to be excluded was impossible. This was the reason why the revocation of Czechoslovak citizenship for ethnic Germans (the precondition for their forced resettlement to Germany, based on the presidential decree of 2 August 1945) did not,

24 According to the plans of the Czechoslovak president, Edvard Beneš, and his government in exile in London, and in compliance with the international agreements, more than three million now former Czechoslovak citizens of German ethnicity were expelled from Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1947. For more on the political and diplomatic proceedings that led to the so-called 'transfer of the Germans' of Czechoslovakia, see Detlef Brandes, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938-1945: Pläne und Entscheidungen zum 'Transfer' der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005). Documents showing Czech policy towards Czechoslovak Germans in 1945 to 1947 are compiled and commented on in Tomáš Staněk and Adrian von Arburg, eds, *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí 1945-1951: Dokumenty z českých archivů*, Pts I and II (Středokluky: Zdeněk Susa, 2010-2012).

25 For more on the topic, see Staněk and Arburg, *Organizované divoké odsuny?*

26 According to the Czech-German Historical Commission, the number is between 20,000 and 30,000. 'Stanovisko Společné česko-německé komise historiků k odsunovým ztrátám. Stellungnahme der Gemeinsamen deutsch-tschechischen Historikerkommission zu den Vertreibungsverlusten', *Soudobé dějiny* 3/4 (1996), pp. 600-603.

somewhat surprisingly, include any definition of German nationality.<sup>27</sup> The task of defining nationality in thousands of unclear cases was delegated to the Interior Ministry. Minister Václav Nosek and the officials of special departments and commissions developed a complicated tangle of regulations, making fine distinctions which in the end decided the fate of individuals. Civil servants at the ministry also had to judge many cases on an individual basis, which created opportunities for interference and corruption.

This inability to distinguish clearly between ethnic Czechs and ethnic Germans, together with the efforts to achieve economic stability (which was to be assured with the help of the necessary German labour force) and exceptions for ethnic Germans who had resisted Nazism and the Occupation or had suffered under the Nazi terror ('anti-fascists') meant that about 200,000 German-speaking Czechoslovaks were able to stay in Czechoslovakia, or had to stay there. They constituted a heterogeneous group. The 6,500 officially recognized anti-fascists, who stayed in the country constituted a tiny part of the ethnic Germans who remained in Czechoslovakia. There were a number of reasons for this. For months after the war, no central authority existed that would defend anti-fascists from the violent Czech attacks against them and that would be able to prevent their expulsion. The definition of anti-fascist was so narrow that ethnic Germans who were not politically organized in the Social Democratic or Communist Party or associations, found it difficult to demonstrate their loyalty to the 'Czechoslovak' nation. Even if Czechoslovak citizenship was acknowledged, it was of little help if property had already been lost.

For months many anti-fascists found themselves stateless. This uncertainty and the difficulty of making a living persuaded many of them to leave Czechoslovakia. Former German Social Democrats and Communists were sometimes even forced to leave by officials from the Czech and East German socialist parties in the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, legitimating their removal to the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany as a 'transfer of cadres' (*Kadertransfer*).

Among the much larger group of ethnic Germans who remained (many of whom doing so because the Czechoslovak authorities had forced them to) were the 'indispensable experts'. In their case, pragmatic and economic reasons for allowing them to remain in the country were more important

27 In the German lands and in Eastern Europe, 'nationality' means much the same thing as 'ethnicity', because a sharp distinction has traditionally been drawn between 'nationality' and 'citizenship'. In this understanding, nationality is defined by language and other 'objective' signs and has to be separated from the question of what state a person belongs to.

than questions of guilt or innocence. During 1946, in an exchange between the government and the Ministry of Interior, the limit on the number of German experts and workers in important branches of industry who should be prevented from leaving Czechoslovakia was lowered from about 200,000 to 60,000 people (including family members). Some 20,000 German experts (55,000 people if one includes their remaining next of kin) did not leave the country, working mainly in agriculture, mining, and the glass and textile industries.

Most of the 100,000 mixed families were allowed to stay. 'This task' argued the Czech National Socialist Party in the summer of 1945, 'concerns children, who have to be made Czech and whom we do not want to lose! There are not so many of us that we can dismiss so many thousands of children, who are half our blood.'<sup>28</sup> In the summer and autumn of 1945, special re-education camps were established primarily for families where the father was German (according to the ethnical segregation, which was rooted in a Czechoslovak law of 1945) and although it took a number of years before mixed families got their citizenship and property rights back, the post-war authorities continued to suspect their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state.

Paradoxically, the largest group of ethnic Germans who remained in Czechoslovakia, some 65,000 people, did not belong to any of these special categories. These ethnic Germans remained, because the American administration in Germany was not willing to accept any more transports after a certain date. Many of these 'unapproved' Germans, whom the Czechoslovak authorities also considered, 'unreliable', lived in the borderlands. The making of state policy towards this German minority was, at least until the summer of 1949, was influenced by suspicion and the language of ethnic cleansing.

Once defined as German, a person lost everything. In the presidential decrees, in exceptional circumstances some ethnic Germans retained citizenship and their civil rights. One had to prove that he or she had fought against Nazism or suffered under its terror and had remained loyal to the Czechoslovak Republic. But these people<sup>29</sup> (with infrequent exceptions)

28 NA [National Archive], f. 100/24 (Klement Gottwald), sv. 137, a.j. 1494, Zázpis jednání vlády 10.7.1945.

29 These Germans, whom the authorities called 'anti-fascists', were ultimately just a tiny proportion of the ethnic German population which remained in Czechoslovakia after the forced migrations. For more on the various remaining groups of Germans, see, for example, Emilia Hrabovec, 'Politisches Dogma kontra wirtschaftliches Kalkül', in *Heimat und Exil*, ed. Peter Heumos (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), pp. 163-185; Benjamin Frommer, 'Expulsion or Integration: Unmixing Interethnic Marriage in Postwar Czechoslovakia', *East European Politics & Societies*,



were first incriminated, made into pariahs, and had to wait for the final assessment of their request for months or even several years. That was the initial situation of the vast majority of the ethnic Germans who had escaped the fate of the 3 million who were expelled.

In 1947 and again in the first months after the Communist takeover in February 1948, the ethnic Germans of Czechoslovakia became subject to another forced displacement, from the borderlands to inland areas. The Communist authorities (from government members to local officials) were the most radical supporters of this new policy, using it as an instrument to legitimate their own policies and actions, especially after the coup. Between 1947 and 1949, some 30,000 to 40,000 German-speaking inhabitants of the border regions were robbed of their homes and often deprived of the opportunity to work in the occupations for which they had been trained. At least officially, mixed families and anti-fascists were not affected. At first, the authorities tried to 'disperse' those who had not been transferred to Germany, because the transports were suspended, and whose 'reliability' had not been demonstrated, as well as some industrial specialists. These people were relocated to the central regions of Bohemia and Moravia, where they mostly worked in agriculture.<sup>30</sup>

The political and economic elites at the time, as well as later historians, talked about the economic reasons for this forced relocation of labour. In fact, more people were needed in the border areas and the removal of thousands of skilled workers exacerbated the labour shortage problem. In western Bohemia and elsewhere, citizens of Czech origin, mostly re-emigrants, were forced to work in industries after the relocation of German workers. The spiral of social engineering accelerated.

The real motivation for these transfers was the desire to create ethnically purified borderlands without large islands of German-speaking inhabitants. Internal documents of the Ministry of Interior from early 1948 contain references to the 'acceleration of the assimilation process of Germans transferred to wholly Czech neighbourhoods'. This can be viewed as signalling

14/2 (2000), pp. 381-410; and Heike van Hoorn, *Neue Heimat im Sozialismus: Die Umsiedlung und Integration sudetendeutscher Antifa-Umsiedler in die SBZ/DDR* (Essen: Klartext, 2004).

30 Von Arburg cites 28,701 people of whom there is concrete documentary evidence that they were in fact deportees, another 88 transports (with an average of 4,600 people per train), for which the lists of deportees are missing, and 6,478 people who were to be deported but of whom we have no evidence that they were in fact deported. See Adrian von Arburg, *Zwischen Vertreibung und Integration: Die tschechische Deutschenpolitik 1947-1953* (PhD thesis, Charles University, Prague, 2004), p. 344. For more on the topic, see Tomáš Dvořák, *Vnitřní odsun 1947-1953* (Brno: Matices moravská, 2012).



a shift in the paradigm. After two or three years of making a clear division between so-called Czechs and so-called Germans, the people who had been excluded now had to be re-assimilated. The 'internal dispersion' can, of course, reasonably be seen as a continuation of ethnic cleansing and coercion, but it is also fair to interpret it as a cautious beginning of a new period in Czech policy towards the German minority in the first years of the socialist dictatorship, in which assimilation and integration slowly replaced the coercion and segregation of the immediate post-war years.

### **A new heterogeneity**

The ethnic Germans who could not be expelled from the country or moved inland were by no means the only 'alien' group that disturbed the dream of unity in the post-war borderlands. People of various places of origin, cultural backgrounds, ethnic and class identities settled there. There was a great plurality of reasons, many of them contradictory, why the population became heterogeneous instead of the planned utopian homogeneity.

During the Second World War, while preparing the displacement of the ethnic Germans, the Czechoslovak authorities, especially members of the government in exile in London, planned to bring emigrants who had left the Bohemian lands or Slovakia during the last hundred years, back to their homeland. The reasons for this repatriation operation were not only economic and demographic, but also highly important ideologically. Returnees, who the politicians (mainly in London) claimed had kept their Czech or Slovak identity even after decades abroad, were supposed to strengthen the Slav character of the Czech borderlands. Most of them came from Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, but between 10,000 and 20,000 new settlers came from the West (Belgium, France, Germany and other countries).

Again, reality was often more complicated than the imagined 'homecoming' of the 'Slav brothers'. Returnees from Vienna or Silesia often spoke German with each other. Consequently, many new Czech inhabitants of the regions where these people had come to settle bombarded the authorities with complaints about a new wave of German arrivals. Returnees from Romania and Yugoslavia had come from backward social and cultural circumstances, and so the Czechoslovak state felt it necessary to care for them during their first years 'at home' – starting by providing them with clothes from the moment they arrived, and offering support in arranging adequate jobs and housing. Even the roughly 40,000 new-comers from Volhynia (a historic region in the north-west of today's Ukraine), who were

probably the most patriotic of all the returnees, caused great problems in the borderlands. As members of devout Christian communities, who had experienced the Stalinist terror only a few years before, they soon became 'reactionary' in the eyes of other atheist, leftist new settlers. In the allocation of formerly 'German' property in the borderlands, members of the national committees or officials of the Ministry of Agriculture had to give preference to the Vohynian Czechs who had been Red Army soldiers and were now arriving with their families and this led to envy and conflicts with the earlier post-war settlers.<sup>31</sup>

Whereas returnees, at least to some extent, came voluntarily to the Czech borderlands, other newcomers found themselves in even more difficult circumstances. Probably the most exotic settlers were the roughly 20,000 Greek Communist partisans and their children, who had had to leave their country during and after a civil war. They had to leave everything at home and arrived in the snowy Sudeten mountains in the late 1940s, without any knowledge of Czech or Slovak. The Czechoslovak state, however, saw to the needs of the Greeks, since they were considered 'victims of imperialism' and as political allies. Before their parents arrived, Greek children grew up in children's homes in the borderlands. The adults were given houses or flats and were integrated into work, mostly in forestry. Tens of thousands of Hungarians from southern Slovakia not only came to the Czech borderlands in consequence of forced migration, but also became victims of forced labour there, until the Communist government abolished this practice after coming to power in 1948.<sup>32</sup>

According to official Czechoslovak statistics from 1950, 202,526 Czech and Slovak emigrants returned to their 'homeland'. The vast majority of them settled in the Czech borderlands, where jobs and houses were available. For the same reason, more than 150,000 Slovaks and tens of thousands of Roma Holocaust survivors from eastern Slovakia came here as well. If we add to that figure the approximately 200,000 remaining ethnic Germans, the 40,000 ethnic Hungarians who had been moved there by force, and the 20,000 Greek refugees, we see that more than a third of the approximately 2,500,000 inhabitants of the borderlands were neither ethnically nor culturally Czech.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the other two-thirds were not as homogenous as the builders of the new borderland society wished. Conflicts between the old

31 For more on the topic, see the section 'Cleansing on Demand' in the present chapter.

32 For more on this and Communist nationality policy in general, see Spurný, *Nejsou jako my*.

33 The statistics are from František Čapka, Lubomír Slezák and Jaroslav Vaculík, *Nové osídlení pohraničí českých zemí po druhé světové válce* (Brno: Doplněk, 2005), p. 188.

Czech settlers and the new Czech settlers influenced the atmosphere of many regions and municipalities for decades.<sup>34</sup> Rather than homogeneity, the consequence of the ethnic cleansing and rebuilding of the population of the Czech borderlands was a new heterogeneity.

## Cleansing on Demand

The deeply modernist dream of a homogenous society without individuals who were perceived as unreliable,<sup>35</sup> which was so strongly articulated in the case of the border areas of the Bohemian lands after the Second World War, could not be made a reality. This failure, represented by the chaos and disparateness of the newly built society, was not interpreted as evidence of the perversity of the main idea, which legitimated what was happening. On the contrary, the lack of success even strengthened the demand for a rigorous purging of what was perceived as foreign or simply dangerous by authorities, local officials, and many 'ordinary citizens'.

To achieve a united society free from all potentially unreliable elements, the authorities were allowed to circumvent, adapt, or even ignore existing law, and also to create new laws hastily. The rulers were able to change things rapidly, but no one was able precisely to define the boundaries of the desired purity. Like any system that prefers force and power to rules that apply equally to everyone, so too the post-war Czechoslovak state made room for intervention by the authorities, influence-peddling, and corruption as its integral parts.

In the border regions of the Bohemian lands, the policy of ethnic cleansing relativized the rule of law from the end of the war onward. It was characteristic of the period that particular 'cleansing' operations in borderland communities were conducted without any support in existing legislation.<sup>36</sup> The authorities sometimes used a radical redefinition of former legislation or chaotically drafted new laws, orders, decrees, ordinances and regulations. This practice continued in a similar manner after the 1948 Communist takeover.

34 For more on the relationship between old and new settlers, see Andreas Wiedemann, *Komm mit uns das Grenzland aufbauen!*, *Ansiedlung und neue Strukturen in den ehemaligen Sudetengebieten 1945-1952* (Essen: Klartext, 2007), pp. 279-318.

35 For more on the connection between modernity, homogeneity and cleansing, see footnote 12.

36 See, for example, NA, f. 315/1 (ÚPV) [Úřad předsednictva vlády, that is, the Office of the Government Presidium], k. 1027, sg. 1361/17, *Osídlování obranného pohraničního pásma*, porada na ÚPV, 22 October 1946.

The notion of 'unreliability', which became the central criterion in deciding whose civil rights were to be respected or ignored, was not new in the Czech or Czechoslovak context. Not only in popular thought, but also in legislation, this category had already been established in interwar Czechoslovakia under the State Defence Act of 1936.<sup>37</sup> In the predominant view of the times, the close link between ethnicity and reliability (or unreliability) had been strengthened after Germany annexed the borderlands and then occupied rump Czechoslovakia six months later.<sup>38</sup>

In many cases, the discourse about reliable citizens, the logical counterpart of which was the removal of all unwanted and unreliable inhabitants, was not just an aspect of state policy. Demands for cleansing and resettlement, even more radical than the previous ones, were articulated by the local Czech-speaking population, especially by new settlers in the borderlands. In the first two post-war years, as we have seen, these demands were directed mostly against the remaining ethnic Germans and communities of ambiguous (partly German) ethnicity, such as 'mixed' families, the inhabitants of the Bohemian-Austrian border region of Vitorazsko, and Croats living at the Moravian-Austrian border who had been accused of having been involved in 'Germanization'.<sup>39</sup>

After the authorities acknowledged that heterogeneity or extraneousness had not disappeared after the last covered goods wagons full of Germans had left Czechoslovak territory, they targeted even broader social groups in the cleansing spiral. In addition to the not particularly successful efforts to remove people with criminal pasts from the borderlands, the cleansing was also applied elsewhere, for example, to all eighty-seven towns and villages of Těšínsko, a small region at the Polish border.<sup>40</sup> Těšínsko was viewed as such a nationally mixed area that one of the relevant plans suggested

37 René Petráš, *Menšiny v meziválečném Československu* (Prague: Karolinum, 2009), pp. 242-244.

38 For more on this aspect, see Dieter Gosewinkel and Matěj Spurný, 'Citoyenneté et expropriation en Tchécoslovaquie au lendemain des deux Guerres mondiales', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 61/1 (2014), pp. 26-61.

39 They had been accused by the Moravian National Committee (Zemský národní výbor), local committees of the Settlement Office (Osídlovací úřad) and the accusations were developed at the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Interior, and the inter-ministerial committees (*vládní meziministerská komise*). Locals, neighbours and new settlers were also engaged into the process of stigmatizing people who were identified as 'Croats'. For more on the Croats of south Moravia, see Dvořák, *Vnitřní odsun*, pp. 201-300.

40 In Czech, Těšínské Slezsko or Těšínsko, in Polish, Śląsk Cieszyński, or, and in German, Teschener Schlesien, is a historical region in south-east Silesia whose population at the time was about 250,000.

controlling it by administrative commissions made up of 'reliable' Czech officials from the interior.<sup>41</sup>

Even odder was the resistance of the security forces and the local Czech community to letting the Gypsies (Romani people) stay near the border. The central authorities too had considered them 'unreliable elements' in the early post-war years. Consequently, the Ministry of Defence welcomed the idea of interning the Gypsies in labour camps. But the Ministry requested that those camps not be placed near the 50-kilometre zone along the state border. For reasons of state security, they argued, the camps should be placed in the interior of the Bohemian lands.<sup>42</sup> The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs also assumed that the 'border zone would be cleansed of Gypsies'.<sup>43</sup> State measures to control Gypsy job-hopping were in accord with all the other attempts to resettle the wide border zone with a homogeneous and loyal population. This, however, was often contrary to meeting the pressing need for labour in these depopulated regions.

Considering the assumed role of the returnees, the effort to construct a reliable community in the borderlands was somehow absurd. As we have seen, returnees, particularly those coming from Volhynia, were initially considered reliable patriots who appeared to have the desirable anti-German attitude. After the ambiguity of identities and political 'unreliability' of these people became clear, the authorities prevented them from settling down in compact communities or working in industries that were important for the defence of the state. Moreover, with regard to returnees coming from predominantly German places like Vienna or Upper Silesia, the ministries voiced their concerns about the reliability of these Germanized colonists. As an employee of the Ministry of Education put it immediately after the returnees had arrived in the west Bohemian town of Loket: 'We have our doubts whether these invited colonists are going to make good, reliable border guards. We feel it would probably be better for our state if these

41 NA, f. 100/24 (AÚV KSČ, Klement Gottwald), k. 45, sl. 854, fol. 218-225), Memorandum o zřízení správních komisí na území Těšínského Slezska v obcích s většinou státně nespolehlivého obyvatelstva (1945-1946).

42 NA, f. 315/1 (ÚPV), k. 1163, sg. 1424/b/1, Zařazení cikánů do pracovních táborů; návrh vládního usnesení. Přípis MNO. 9 May 1947.

43 Tomáš Dvořák, 'Regulace pohybu obyvatelstva po roce 1945 a Romové: Kontinuita nebo nové trendy?', in *Milý Bore...: Profesoru Ctiboru Nečasovi k jeho sedmdesátým narozeninám věnují přátelé, kolegové a žáci*, ed. Tomáš Dvořák, Radomír Vlček and Libor Vykoupil (Brno: Matice moravská, Historický ústav AV ČR, and Historický ústav FF MU, 2003), pp. 321-325.

people had an opportunity to assimilate into the purely Czech milieu in the interior.<sup>44</sup>

The social cleansing of the borderlands population, more thorough than elsewhere in post-war Czechoslovakia, was a spontaneous act carried out by various authorities and the security forces in the first years after the Second World War. It was one of the most characteristic means by which the new society was constructed. Primarily in this sense, it is reasonable to see the post-war borderlands as a laboratory of the dictatorship that followed after the February 1948.

### Conclusion: Continuities in Post-War Czech History

A high degree of state-organized violence, as well as efforts to segregate different social groups, were practices that Czech society had experienced during the war and the Occupation. With astonishing ease, these principles found their way into the inventory of the Czechs' own political and social practices and were largely considered 'normal' by the authorities and ordinary citizens. After the liberation, this approach was used not only against the ethnic Germans, who were collectively identified as the people who had caused the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and the suffering experienced during the war. The new society of the new nation-state needed, according to most of its citizens, to be rid of all actual and potential threats. In addition to the ethnic Germans (and the ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia), people of mixed ethnicity, Gypsies, German-speaking Jews,<sup>45</sup> and south-Moravian Croats were seen as alien and unreliable. And the political authorities, as well as local agents, soon turned the logic of cleansing against other 'unreliable elements' who were not primarily ethnically defined.

The political practice of stigmatizing and segregating those whose participation in the building of society is perceived as undesirable is generally considered an instrument of dictatorial rule. These dynamics, which may also be reasonably defined as social cleansing, did not, however, lose any of their momentum in post-war Czechoslovakia. This policy was in part formulated by the central authorities, the security forces, and the elite

44 NA, f. 315/1 (ÚPV), k. 1026, sg. 1361/7, *Nástup kolonistů, hlášení*. This document is from an official at the Ministry of Education and Propaganda, 16 December 1945.

45 For more on that, see Matěj Spurný, 'Unerwünschte Rückkehrer. Staatsbürgerschaft und Eigentum deutscher Juden in der Nachkriegs-tschechoslowakei', *Naharaim (Zeitschrift für deutschjüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte, Jerusalem)*, 8/1 (2014), pp. 120-141

of the political parties, as the historians Tomáš Staněk and Adrian von Arburg have convincingly demonstrated.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, cleansing was intensified and conducted more radically in numerous activities and by numerous requests at the local level. This demand, articulated 'from below', was a characteristic feature of the second half of the 1940s, as well as the beginning of the 1950s.

The indisputable continuity in the Czechoslovak leaders' ideas about society and in their political practices from 1945 to the 1950s, should not, however, be reduced to a simplistic statement that the post-war expulsion of the Germans brought about the onset of the Communist dictatorship.<sup>47</sup> The immediate post-war plans for the segregation and removal of alien elements have roots which go back at least to the war years. It was after the annexation in autumn 1938 and during the Occupation, when, in the discourse, the close link between ethnicity and reliability (or unreliability) had been developed and adopted by a considerable part of Czech society. The general Czech acceptance of the post-war expulsion of the Germans as being an equitable solution, and the continuing acts of repression against the remaining Germans, demonstrate just some of the ways that the Czechs in general were thinking and acting.

Of all the political actors of the time, the Communists managed best to take advantage of this social demand for their own ends. They became the most credible guarantor of the radical transformation of society, a transformation enabled by instruments that the Communist Party would later successfully use to secure power in the dictatorship they established, and to turn against different social groups, while gradually reducing the extent of physical violence used by the state from the mid-1950s onward.

The cleansing of Czechoslovak society, legitimizing various forms of repression, terror, and physical violence, was not merely a method by which the rulers would keep the ruled down. It was more like an expression of the will of broadly based groups in society, which acquired energy 'from below'. The Communist Party did not of course invent or even reinvent this instrument, but it did use it to legitimate its rule. Cleansing, both before February 1948 and afterwards, was not used against society; rather, it was used by society against some of its own members.

46 Staněk and Arburg, *Organizované divoké odsuny*.

47 Some dissident Czechoslovak historians of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Ján Mlynáryk and Petr Pithart, argued along these lines. See, in particular, Jan Křen, ed., *Češi–Němci–odsun* (Prague: Academia, 1990).



# To Stay or to Go?

Reconfigurations of Jewish Life in Post-War Poland, 1944-1947

*Audrey Kichelewski*

We are now at crossroads. It is a major historical moment which commands upon us major historical missions. One of these missions is to continue to build the golden chain [*die Goldene kayt*] between the past and the new future.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the main Yiddish newspaper of post-war Poland in 1946, the historian Filip Friedman, whose pioneering work in collecting evidence and testimonies of the Holocaust in order to enable survivors to live their lives, already perceived and voiced the doubts and dilemmas of Polish Jews in the aftermath of the war. Yet, while a survivor who strongly advocated for the continuity of a Jewish presence in post-war Poland, he left the country only a few months later, in 1947, moving first to Germany then to the United States, a more suitable place for him to accomplish his mission of maintaining the 'golden chain'.

One of the major keys to understanding the situation of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust resides in shifting the focus from the long-standing historiographical assumption of an inevitable exodus<sup>2</sup> to a story of complex Polish-Jewish encounters and experiences. This story shapes the forms and contents of the reconfiguration of Jewish life in post-war Poland as well as explaining individual choices made by survivors: to stay or to go.

Jewish survivors found themselves in a paradoxical situation in post-war Poland. On the one hand, their fate was hardly a priority in a country ravaged by war and uncertain about its political future. Almost 6 million Polish citizens (more than half Jewish) had died, 30 per cent of Poland's

1 Excerpt from the article 'Our historical moment', *Dos Naye Lebn*, 27 (1946), p. 2.

2 To quote only a few titles focusing on anti-Semitism and emigration as the defining factors of the Jewish experience: Paul Lendvai, *Anti-Semitism without Jews* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971); Marc Hillel, *Le Massacre des Survivants: En Pologne après l'Holocauste, 1945-1947* (Paris: Plon, 1985); Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 Lipca 1946* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1992); Natalia Aleksion, *Dokąd Dalej? Ruch Syjonistyczny w Polsce 1944-1950* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002); Joshua D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).



pre-war population. This demographic decline affected above all urban communities, where the intelligentsia and Jews tended to live. Entire cities lay in ruins, starting with the capital city, Warsaw, almost totally destroyed after the repression of two successive insurrections: the ghetto (April 1943) and the city (August 1944). Poland's borders changed after the war, shifting westwards through the loss of nearly half of its eastern territories to the Soviet Union; Poland's population also changed after the forced displacement or removal of Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians. Combined with the death of 90 per cent of the 3.5 million Polish Jews, most of the country's pre-war minorities were gone after 1947. Lastly, the political climate was very violent and uncertain, with a quasi civil war going on between supporters of the London government in exile and the new pro-communist regime installed in Lublin by the Red Army since July 1944.<sup>3</sup> In this context, the priority for ordinary Poles was their daily survival in a time of great scarcity. In a society where migrants were to be counted in millions on the roads and where social links were severely damaged by the war and forced migrations, the reappearance of a handful of psychologically damaged and physically wrecked Jews would seemingly be no cause for attention.<sup>4</sup>

And yet, that was not the case. The negative stereotypes attributed to Jews since the Middle Ages, firmly grounded and elaborated during the interwar period, reactivated under both Soviet and Nazi occupation, had not disappeared with the annihilation of the Polish Jewish population.<sup>5</sup> These stereotypes led, at least, to frequent hostile attitudes towards Jewish survivors and returnees from the Soviet Union, such as verbal attacks and administrative or professional discrimination. Combined with the climate of political violence (with the imposition of a regime seen as foreign and dangerous, hence as Jewish), and a precarious economic situation in which Jewish survivors' legitimate property claims became an intolerable threat, anti-Jewish prejudice had at times more dramatic consequences. Between

3 For an overview of post-war Poland, see Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943-1948*, trans. John Micgiel and Michael H. Bernhard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Andrzej Paczkowski and Jane Cave, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

4 Krystyna Kersten, 'Forced Migration and the Transformation of Polish Society in the Postwar Period', in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Philip Ther and Ana Siljak (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

5 Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

1944 and 1947 hundreds, if not thousands, of Polish Jews were killed by their fellow citizens across the country.<sup>6</sup> The 'Jewish question' was hence raised again, despite the tiny number of Jewish survivors (240,000 at its peak in July 1946) and the official support granted to them by the new regime, thereby wishing to gain legitimacy among the Western democracies. Yet, this same regime showed an ambiguous helplessness towards the post-war persecution of Jews and certainly did not consider their wartime suffering as noteworthy.

Faced by this situation, Jewish survivors had to choose between pursuing their lives outside Poland – and many other ideological and psychological parameters were involved in this choice – and accepting this new place in Polish society, granting them equal rights for the first time in Polish history, yet demanding the acceptance of radical changes in Jewish identity and way of life. The best way to understand the dilemmas that shaped ephemeral Jewish post-war reconstruction in Poland is through a closer analysis of those forgotten voices of the past, the Jewish voices of the survivors, but also those of the people who looked at them, from below, in the everyday interactions with their Polish counterparts, and from above, starting with the local administration up to the higher members of the *nomenklatura*. Encompassing the Jewish perspective, as well as that of Polish society and of the authorities, provides an enriched, complex and non-teleological vision of post-war reconstruction.

## Surviving the Holocaust

[Jews who had survived the war in Poland] came [...] to gaze on walking miracles – whole Jewish families, complete with fathers, mothers, and children. In Poland, on liberation day, hardly more than a hundred Jewish families stood intact. But here were Jewish families by hundreds.<sup>7</sup>

This report written by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or AJDC, a relief organization headquartered in New York, clearly shows how diverse the population of Jewish survivors was. While a very small number

6 On the issue of post-war violence and anti-Semitism in Poland, see Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

7 Report on 'Return to Poland: 140 000 Polish Jews Come Home', 18 July 1946, Collection 45/54, File 734, Archives of the American Joint Distribution Committee, New York (hereafter AJDC).

of them survived the war in Polish occupied territory, most of them (170,000) owed their lives to the fact that they had been evacuated far into the Soviet Union from the eastern Polish territories between 1939 and 1941.<sup>8</sup>

There were hence different categories of Jewish survivors. Very few remained alive from the concentration and labour camps and the subsequent 'death marches'. Regina Fingier, survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and the Majdanek camp, remembered the day when the camp into which she had been driven by the Germans was liberated: 'Finally, 18 January 1945 marked the splendid and decisive moment of the liberation of Częstochowa from German occupation. We are free. We got rid of the burden of five years of slavery and persecution.'<sup>9</sup>

Those survivors, whose number is estimated at a mere 36,000, were not only deprived of food, clothes, goods; they were also physically wrecked. 'My hand was paralysed after I received a gunshot in Auschwitz, I wasn't able to work',<sup>10</sup> recalled Halina Birenbaum, aged fifteen when she was liberated from Neustadt-Glewe camp, where she ended up after surviving the Warsaw ghetto, Majdanek and Auschwitz. The 60,000 or so survivors who spent the war hiding in forests, caves and attics were hardly in better condition. Only those who managed to hide under a false identity or who joined the underground forces could possibly think of something else than survival when they were free again. Coming back to life meant in some cases retrieving one's true identity (although many kept their 'Aryan' names after the war) and looking for relatives: 'I was a free man again; I could get back to my real name, Jozek Rosenberg. I felt time had come to start looking for my daughter Henia',<sup>11</sup> wrote the person known as Józef Nowak since 1940.

The repatriates from the Soviet Union were generally in much better mental and physical condition. Yet, they were only a fraction of the 350,000 Jews – out of 1.5 million – evacuated before the Nazi invasion of 1941. Many had perished during transport, life in camps, gulags or fighting in the Soviet Army. Their way back home, through an organized repatriation of Polish citizens between 1945 and 1946, was not a pleasant trip. Leo Kantor, 6 years old at the time, recalls:

8 All estimation figures of Jewish losses and survivors come from Grzegorz Berendt, 'Straty osobowe polskich Żydów w okresie II wojny światowej', in *Polska 1939-1945. Straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami*, ed. Wojciech Materski and Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw: IPN, 2009), pp. 62-75.

9 Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute (hereafter AJHI), 301/161, testimony of Regina Fingier, p. 13.

10 Halina Birenbaum, *Powrót do ziemi praojców* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1991), p. 8.

11 Joseph Rosenberg, *Nazywam się Józef Nowak* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2004), p. 77.

I remember the fright and lack of comfort of this journey. [...] In the wagons, near the stove whose pipes escaped from the rook, babies were born, old people wailed, cries and domestic arguments could be heard. [...] Bags full of dry bread and sort of biscuits were our basic food. Children were washed in small worn out tubs. To relieve oneself, one jumped out of the wagon, some ran holding up their pants while the locomotive whistled departure.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their differences on wartime experience, the vast majority of Jewish survivors shared near total material deprivation. Most of them had to abandon all their property during their flight or deportation while those who had managed to keep a few valuables soon had to sell or trade them for food or temporary shelter. Moreover, their homes had been either destroyed during the war or taken over by their Polish neighbours, often reluctant to give them back. Sabina Rachel Kałowska, hiding under a false identity and helped by her non-Jewish husband-to-be, recalled her difficult return to her hometown near Kielce: the new owners of her house threatened to kill her while other neighbours refused to give back even her Passover dishes, claiming they bought them from the Germans.<sup>13</sup> Many other testimonies contain similar experiences.

More dramatic even than material bareness was the terrible physical condition of most Jewish survivors, who suffered from hunger and numerous diseases. An inspection of Jewish shelter homes in the spring of 1945 established that 60 per cent were unfit for work and one-third suffered from tuberculosis.<sup>14</sup> Another report was even more alarming: '16,000 Jews now living in Poland suffer from illness or disability. 60 per cent have tuberculosis.'<sup>15</sup> Granted, the overall health conditions in post-war Poland were very poor -- chronic plagues and high mortality rates prevailed, especially among Polish children. Yet, the percentage of the sick and disabled among Jews was much closer to that among Polish former camp inmates

12 Testimony of Leo (Leszek) Kantor, collected for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews within the project 'Virtual Shtetl', <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/wroclaw/16,accounts-memories/27019,leo-leszek-kantor-wyjechac-ze-strzegomia>.

13 Sabina Rachel Kałowska, *Uciekać, aby żyć* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), pp. 228 and 235.

14 Report quoted in Aleksium, *Dokąd dalej*, p. 73.

15 Dispatch from Canadian correspondent Jacob Apenszlak, sent 28 August 1945 to the World Jewish Congress. Quoted in Anna Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie 11 sierpnia 1945* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000), p. 14.

than among the general population.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the Jewish population recovered much more slowly: a report of an AJDC representative in Warsaw dated 1947 stated that still more than a third of them could not work because of illness, disability, age or an inability to go out.<sup>17</sup>

Survivors were not only physically wrecked but also psychologically broken, a twofold fragility often ignored and misunderstood. Noach Lasman, a labour camp inmate who hid in a self-made cave, heard from a military doctor examining him upon his enlistment in the Polish army at the end of the war:

- 40 kilos! Like four big geese. Did you have a chronic disease?
- Never.
- My boy, with such a low weight, I cannot take you. You should go back home and ask your mum to cook you a decent meal!<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, most of the reports on the condition of Jews in 1945 insist on the link between their material and moral distress, as do many testimonies. Contrary to what one usually imagines happens to civilians after an armed conflict, the end of the war did not bring any moment of happiness, or reunion of families or even relief to Jews; it was rather the time to count the dead. Most eloquent in voicing those feelings are the testimonies collected immediately after the war by the Jewish Historical Commissions.<sup>19</sup> Maria Klein, who saw her husband and 15-year-old son dying in front of her, realized: 'It is only now that I fully feel my sorrow, all illusions, all hopes have vanished. None of my relatives who perished or were killed in the most brutal way will ever come back.'<sup>20</sup>

Happiness about being liberated was often short-lived and tinged with sadness: 'I was dancing for joy in the streets. But I remained depressed', remembered survivor Józef Malczyk.<sup>21</sup> Others even asked themselves what the point of living on was: 'I came back to Przemyśl, to my relatives.

16 Comparison established by Marcin Zaremba, 'Mit mordy rytualnego w powojennej Polsce. Archeologia i hipotezy', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2 (2007), p. 114.

17 Quoted in Yosef Litvak, 'The American Joint Distribution Committee and Polish Jewry, 1944-1949', in *Organizing Rescue: National Jewish Solidarity in the Modern Period*, ed. Selwyn Ilan Roen and Benjamin Pinkus (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p. 299.

18 Noach Lasman, *Wspomnienia z Polski. 1 sierpnia 1944-30 kwietnia 1957* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1997), p. 23.

19 On this institution, see Natalia Aleksion, 'The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, 1944-1947', *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, 20 (2007), pp. 74-97.

20 AJHI, 301/12.

21 AJHI, 301/873.

Unfortunately, none of them was there and I wonder why I stuck so desperately to life? What for?' wrote Anna Mous, who hid in the forest after escaping the Przemysł ghetto in 1942.<sup>22</sup> Irrespective of their wartime experience, readjustment to 'normal life' after years of persecutions was a daunting challenge. Those engaged in armed resistance found the freedom for which they had fought useless now that no one could enjoy it, especially as the survivors were not welcome: 'No one is waiting for us to enjoy this freedom. This freedom is the cemetery of our relatives on the one hand and this ever burning fire of hatred against us which remains after Hitler.'<sup>23</sup>

Sadness and solitude often raised questions about their own survival: why them and not their relatives? Moral dilemmas were frequent: was not their survival a kind of treason to the fate to which they had been assigned? Getting back to life meant, in the first place, looking for relatives. Listening to special radio broadcasts, reading notices in newspapers and writing letters to Jewish local committees was a routine activity. By the first semester of 1946, the Warsaw Jewish committee received 4,709 letters from Poland and abroad but was able to answer only 657.<sup>24</sup> Survivors also often tried to go back to their hometowns, hoping to get some information about their families. It is only when they realized their loneliness that they reflected upon it: 'I walk, I stop, I wander like a ghost, I look for a single living soul', Moses Goldblat told the Silesian Jewish Historical Commission, where he eventually found a substitute for his lost family: because 'there are more of them, I cuddle up my fellow men'.<sup>25</sup>

This post-liberation search for food, shelter, comfort and family is an integral part of the post-war story of Polish Jews. It weighed heavily upon subsequent individual trajectories and on the answers given to the major survivors' dilemma: to stay or to go, a question that not only arose from those post-war experiences, but was also grounded in Poland's political and economical situation.

22 AJHI, 301/317.

23 AJHI, 301/161, Regina Fingier, 13.

24 AJHI, Central Committee of Polish Jews (hereafter CKŻP), Organisational Department, File 303/29.

25 AJHI, 301/2093.

## Escaping Violence for a Better Future

Among the Jewish population, positive attitudes towards emigration are nurtured. An important part of the Jewish population is not completely convinced that democratic Poland will be able to eradicate the bad seed of fascism and the scum of anti-Semitism that remains after five years of Nazi occupation.<sup>26</sup>

Marian Rubinstein, author of this report by the Office for the Jewish Minority, created as early as December 1944 within the Ministry of Public Administration in order to handle the Jewish survivors, himself Jewish and close to the Communist Party, clearly showed how worried the Jewish community was about the rise of violence against Jews. Yet he rather aimed at prompting reaction from his superiors, claiming that inaction from the Polish authorities would only reinforce an emigration deemed harmful for a country that badly needed manpower for its reconstruction. Hence, he pointed out the reality of a massive exodus of Jewish survivors that had started even before the peak of violence in 1945 and 1946, culminating with the pogroms in cities like Rzeszów, Kraków and Kielce.

To be sure, Poland's Jewish population increased during the immediate post-war years, while survivors freed from camps, coming out of hiding or returning from the USSR enlisted in local Jewish committees in order to get vital assistance. Whereas in May 1945, only 42,662 Jews were registered, they amounted to 243,926 a year later.<sup>27</sup> This increase was most largely due to the organized repatriation of 136,579 Jews from the Soviet Union in the spring and summer of 1946. These figures are approximate, as some Jews feared registration or left the country immediately without enlisting, while others, moving from town to town, registered several times. Yet, at the same time, the flow of departure had already begun, a development that is also very difficult to evaluate as it was mostly illegal. Estimations can, however, be made through the major illegal emigration channel, the Zionist Coordination or Brichah. Founded by survivors in Vilna in 1944 and aiming at evacuating the Jewish population from Central and Eastern Europe to Palestine, Brichah managed to smuggle 51,000 Jews out of Poland by June

26 Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereafter IPN), 00231/146, vol. 1, Report dated 2 January 1945, pp. 180-181.

27 Tadeusz Epsztein, 'Żydzi w powojennej Polsce w świetle archiwaliów Wydziału Statystyki i Ewidencji Centralnego Komitetu Żydów w Polsce (1945-1950)', *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów*, 219 (2006), pp. 391-405.

1946.<sup>28</sup> Data from the displaced person camps of occupied Germany and Austria gives a total of 110,000 Polish Jews in April 1946, meaning that tens of thousands more had fled by other possible means.<sup>29</sup>

In June 1946, when the Jewish population in Poland reached its post-war height of 240,000, some 70,000 to 100,000 had already gone, often without previous registration. The Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946 would only reinforce the exodus. During the second half of 1946, almost 100,000 Jews left Poland, three-quarters of them through Brichah. In 1947, the tide ebbed with only 15,000 departures. Yet, within less than three years, more than half of the Jewish survivors had left their home country. How can this exodus be understood?

Among the various push-and-pull factors already mentioned, lying in the wartime experience and the painful return to life among survivors – loss of home, families, landmarks and the refusal to live in the cemetery of their relatives – more political and contextual factors were at stake: the renewed attractiveness of a Jewish state-to-be strongly encouraged by Zionist activists combined with episodes of anti-Jewish violence that Polish authorities watched without doing much, if not considering it as a fruitful incentive helping to get them rid of the embarrassing 'Jewish problem'.

Concerning the first issue, the importance of Brichah as the major emigration channel would *prima facie* infer that Zionism had gained popularity among Jewish survivors. Indeed, wartime experience and hard living conditions in post-war Poland reinforced a feeling of national consciousness among many survivors, confirmed in numerous testimonies. A young recruit in a kibbutz in Gdańsk was asked in September 1945 about her motivations:

Until recently, I thought that the Jews should assimilate because they aren't able to have their own country. Now, after surviving this horrible war [...] in which they [...] demonstrated that they can defend their honour with dignity at the cost of their lives, I have changed my mind. I think that the Jews should yearn for their own country in which Jews from all over the world could find their home.<sup>30</sup>

28 On Brichah, see Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 119-126.

29 Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warsaw: PWN, 1993), p. 212.

30 Quoted in Natalia Aleksyńska, *Dokąd dalej*, p. 133.



Sociologist Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska, who studied the Polish Jewish community in 1947-1950, confirmed the attractiveness of Zionism among survivors irrespective of their social status or degree of assimilation, although she noticed that those who, for professional reasons, were victims of the new Communist regime (mostly the intelligentsia, craftsmen and the self-employed) mainly voiced pro-Zionist opinion as a way of opposing the regime. Furthermore, supporting Zionism did not necessarily mean wanting to emigrate.<sup>31</sup> Hence, however attractive Zionism may have been as an idea, relentless propaganda efforts still had to be made by Zionist organizations in Poland to enrol candidates for a journey that was long and unsafe. Young people were the main target. By the summer of 1945, there were already some eighteen *kibbutzim* throughout Poland, where Zionist youth organizations prepared some 1,500 young people to their future lives in Erets-Israel, but mostly provided them with food, shelter and a sense of home. This meant that for many survivors, enlisting in Zionist organizations was simply a way to get some help or to leave the country; it was not necessarily a conscious, ideological choice but rather a pragmatic one.

A probably more significant push factor was the climate of violence experienced by Jewish survivors returning home. As a result of pogroms, armed underground resistance activities, train assaults killing Jewish repatriates, isolated and collective attacks, at least 650-750 Jews died and twice as many were wounded.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, this violence took place in a general atmosphere of upheaval: deportations and expulsions of German and Ukrainian minorities as well as the ongoing civil war between supporters of the former Home Army and pro-Communist forces killed many more on a daily basis. Yet, compared to the overall population of Jewish survivors, and considering that defenceless women and children made up a significant part of the victims, those 200 to 300 assaults in less than two years are striking. This eruption of violence had various reasons: the reactivation of old anti-Jewish stereotypes such as the charge of blood libel; disputes over property in a context of severe economic shortages; anti-Semitic accusations of Judeo-Communism; the wartime brutalization of minds combined with

31 This research could only be published decades afterwards, partially in Poland in 1965, later in full abroad: Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska, *A Social Analysis of Postwar Polish Jewry* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Centre for Jewish History, 1986).

32 The exact numbers are not known and vary from 600 to 1,500. See Jan Gross, *Fear*, p. 65; David Engel, 'Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26 (1998), pp. 43-85; Andrzej Żbikowski, 'Morderstwa popełnianie na Żydach w pierwszych latach po wojnie', in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944-2010*, ed. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2012), pp. 70-93.

Nazi propaganda that permitted the killing of returning Jews who reminded Poles of their wartime guilt by inaction, approval and sometimes even complicity in persecution.

Furthermore, this physical violence was the culmination of a much more pernicious, widespread resentment against Jewish survivors that expressed itself variously through prejudice against children, discrimination at work, administrative quibbles and other verbal threats – which undoubtedly gave them a strong impetus for departure. Lastly, this omnipresent hostility was even more painful to bear for Jewish survivors as they could not count on the Polish authorities to defend them.

Despite repeated warnings and pleas for action voiced by representatives of the Jewish community in numerous reports to different organs of the Polish authorities, the latter were very slow to react. Only after the Kraków pogrom of August 1945, in which five people died and dozens were wounded, did the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party put on its agenda the ‘issue of pogroms’.<sup>33</sup> None of the twenty-five perpetrators of the pogroms who were prosecuted stayed in prison for more than two years, most of them being granted amnesty several months later.<sup>34</sup> The sole public trial came only after the Kielce pogrom a year later, condemning nine perpetrators to the death penalty. Public condemnation of violence and instructions given to local police to ‘fight vigorously to protect the life and property of the Jewish population’<sup>35</sup> went unheeded. To be sure, the new regime did not yet have enough authority to enforce the law, but it certainly did not have much to gain in terms of political support if it strove to protect a minority which, in general opinion, was held to be the main associate of the highly mistrusted rule it was imposing on Polish society.

Moreover, the government’s inaction in preventing anti-Jewish violence served an unspoken policy of ethnic cleansing that would result in transforming the country into a monolithic, Catholic and Polish nation in a compromise that simultaneously suited the Communists, the ethno-nationalist political forces and the powerful Church.<sup>36</sup> The same applied to

33 Minutes of the meeting dated 16 August 1945, quoted from Aleksander Kocchański, ed., *Protokoły posiedzeń Sekretariatu KC PPR, 1945-1946* (Warsaw: ISP-PAN, 2001), pp. 92-95.

34 On the Kraków pogrom, see Anna Cichopek, ‘The Cracow Pogrom of August 1945’, in *Contested Memories*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman, pp. 221-238.

35 New Files Archives (Archiwum Akt Nowych, hereafter AAN), Office of the Council of Ministers, 5/133, Instruction no. 116 from General Headquarters of Civic Police (Milicja Obywatelska), 25 July 1945.

36 On the concept of ethnic cleansing, see Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). See also:

its rather liberal attitude towards Jewish emigration from Poland. Although officially advocating and acting in order to allow only legal emigration – hence giving itself a better image among the Western democracies – Poland's new government turned a blind eye to the massive exodus that was going on and it was not until months after the Kielce pogrom, when the bulk of the Jewish population had already left, that it started controlling emigration more efficiently.

The dramatic spark of anti-Jewish violence certainly intensified deep ethnic divisions and worsened the already very negative image of the Jewish minority rather than welcoming it in a new Polish citizenship. On a short-term basis, Jews living in the countryside moved to bigger cities in search of protection; Jewish institutions tried to organize self-defence committees, gathering up to 2,500 armed men to guard Jewish sites; individuals chose to keep their 'Aryan' identity, thinking they would be more secure as a result. But these could only be temporary choices. The Jewish minority needed to imagine other ways to secure their place within Polish society. Whereas Jews refused either to keep hiding or to accept to be forgotten as victims while entering the new ideological framework, many still strove to restore some kind of Jewish life, required by the immediate necessity of handling an anxious flock of helpless survivors but also because they truly believed in their duty of building a new Polish-Jewishness.

### ***Nusech Poyln: Rebuilding Jewish Life in the 'Polish Way'***

What are Jews in Poland doing now?

One Jew – place advertisement in newspapers, looking for relatives.

Two Jews – create a company of actors and open a theatre.

Three Jews – create a political party.

Four Jews – head the Central Committee.

Five Jews – open a *kibbutz*.

Six Jews – rent a flat together.

And the remaining Jews are waiting for an exit visa...<sup>37</sup>

Ther, *Redrawing Nations*. On the Polish case: Jan Behrends, 'Nation and Empire: Dilemmas of Legitimacy during Stalinism in Poland, 1944-1956', *Nationalities Papers*, 37 (2009), p. 448.

37 Moshe Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh treyn. Zamlung fun humoristisch-satirishe shafungen funem nokh-milkhomedikn lebn fun Poylishe yidn* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1947), p. 19.

This sarcastic joke by Moshe Nudelman, a Yiddish writer who left Poland for Argentina, exemplifies how colourful social and cultural Jewish life could be in the aftermath of the Holocaust, yet how unstable, precarious and even almost idealistic it could also be. Still, at the end of the war, most survivors registered in one of the 155 local Jewish committees that opened until 1946, in search of help but also in search of a home that would provide them with any kind of social, cultural and emotional comfort. More politically committed Jews enlisted in one of the eleven political parties or youth organizations; religious Jews could join any of the eighty religious congregations that had replaced the pre-war *kehila*. All told, more than thirty different institutions existed to take care of some 200,000 people, a significant figure that stemmed from pre-war traditional forms of Jewish organizational life rather than from the actual needs of a population on the move. It also closely followed the cultural pattern of the new Polish government based on a national coalition of political forces, which aimed at shaping and controlling every aspect of social, cultural and educational life.

The beginnings of the organization of Jewish life in post-war Poland originated in the need to provide the survivors with vital assistance. Specific offices within the Polish administration first carried out this task, such as the Office for Assistance to the Jewish Population, headed by Bundist Shlomo Herszenhorn from August 1944. While Jews were the only minority in Poland for whom a particular institution was established, it came into existence in light of their specific needs rather than with the express purpose of developing specific policies for one single ethnic group. Later on, an Office for the Jewish Minority was created within the Department of Minorities in the Ministry of Public Administration. Contrary to those offices headed by individuals strategically or ideologically linked to the regime, the establishment of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKŻP) in November 1944 proceeded from a different inspiration, as it was a body of chosen Jewish representatives of the political parties. It stemmed from the desire to unite local groups of survivors and hence facilitate the distribution of assistance to the Jewish population.<sup>38</sup> This body, providing essential help and accounting for the representation of Jewish interests among state administration, very soon became 'the socio-political

38 On the beginnings the reshaping of Jewish institutions in post-war Poland: David Engel, 'The Reconstruction of Jewish Communal Institutions in Postwar Poland: The Origins of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, 1944-1945', *East European Politics & Societies*, 10 (1996), pp. 85-107.

representation of Polish Jews'.<sup>39</sup> According to its statutes, every Polish Jew living in Poland could be a member. Article 3 listed its fields of competence: 'social help among Jewish population', 'rebuilding economic life', 'making the Jewish population more productive', 'assistance to children', 'organization of health care', 'legal assistance', 'assistance to the repatriates', 'helping [...] during emigration procedure' and even 'meet[ing] the religious need of the Jewish population in Poland'. The last issue was, however, eventually given to another institution newly created in February 1945: the Jewish Religious Congregations.<sup>40</sup> In 1947, there were eighty local branches of these congregations, administrating thirty-eight synagogues, dozens of prayer houses and thirty-six religious schools. Both these religious and secular institutions started to function efficiently when they were granted financial support from abroad, primarily the AJDC, whose help amounted to \$20 million in the years 1946-1949.<sup>41</sup>

The primary goal of these institutions was to provide social help, as that is what survivors needed first and foremost. In Kraków, as early as summer 1945, dozens of shoes and litres of soup and milk were handed out every day by the local Jewish committee.<sup>42</sup> In December 1945 in Gdańsk, 70 hot meals were served daily, a number that increased up to 160 three months later, while the Jewish population amounted only to 1,200.<sup>43</sup> The specifically created Department of Social Help within the CKŻP made up 80 per cent of total expenses of the organization in 1946 and still accounted for 60 per cent a year later.<sup>44</sup> Social assistance also included medical care for the sick, the disabled and the elderly. Within the CKŻP, the pre-war Association for the Healthcare of Jewish Population or TOZ was reactivated in February 1946, administrating sixty dispensaries, seven health centres and several medical centres, sanatoria and rest homes.<sup>45</sup>

39 'Resolution of the National Meeting of PPR (Polish Workers Party) Activists among Jewish Milieu', quoted in Bernard Mark, 'Do dziejów odrodzenia osiedla żydowskiego w Polsce po II wojnie światowej', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 51 (1964), p. 14.

40 In Polish: *Kongregacje Wyznania Możeszowego*. On this institution: Ewa Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja Wyznania Możeszowego na Dolnym Śląsku na tle polityki wyznawczej PRL 1945-1968* (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 1999).

41 Yosef Litvak, 'The American Joint', pp. 269-312.

42 AJHI, CKŻP, Presidium, vol. 24, Information about CKŻP for 1945, pp. 188-245.

43 AJHI, CKŻP, Presidium, vol. 5, Minutes of Sixth Conference of General Secretaries of Jewish Committees, 31 December 1946.

44 AAN, 201, vol. 28, Report from Governmental Commissar for Productivity among Jewish Population in Poland, 12 June 1947, p. 11; Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze*, p. 467.

45 On this institution in Poland, see Ignacy Einhorn, *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1921-1950* (Toruń: Marszałek, 2008).

Special attention and priority was given to children, who need to be cared for and educated. As local committee in Gdańsk stated in 1946:

Given that the Jewish nation in Europe lost six sevenths of its population, maintaining alive and protecting every child is an issue addressed to all Jewish population. The Office for Child Protection does its best for every child to be properly fed, dressed and educated.<sup>46</sup>

More than a million Jewish children perished in the Holocaust. In Poland, only 5,000 children were registered by the CKŻP in the summer of 1945.<sup>47</sup> All Jewish institutions strove at first to find children hiding in Polish families and orphanages, in order to give them back to their families, relatives abroad or simply to get them back to the Jewish community. The CKŻP opened a specific office responsible for searching for children while religious congregations had 34 day care centres in 1947 and were still devoting 23 per cent of their budget to the assistance of children in 1948.<sup>48</sup> The Zionist Coordination Brichah was also looking after Jewish orphans, placing them in *kibbutzim* before sending them out of Poland. According to a confidential note from an AJDC representative in Poland in 1947, the Zionist organizations led the orphan care field, with 173 children's homes and *kibbutzim*, housing 13,000 children.<sup>49</sup> The same institutions also competed in children's education. Leadership in this field went to CKŻP schools, which in 1947 managed to educate 30 per cent of the children in their secular network of schools – where they were taught in Polish and Yiddish – an additional 20 per cent was shared by religious schools and Zionist schools, which taught in Hebrew.<sup>50</sup> The latter two declined rapidly with the emigration of both Zionist and orthodox families. This also meant that more than half of Jewish children at that time went to regular Polish schools.

Another important action undertaken by Jewish institutions concerned cultural life. This should not be surprising as even in the darkest hours of

46 AJHI, CKŻP, Department of Statistics and Records, File 55, Annual Report of Jewish Committee in Gdansk, 1946 – quoted in Grzegorz Berendt, *Żydzi na gdańskim rozdrożu, 1945-1950* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo 44, 2000), p. 119.

47 AJHI, CKŻP, Department of Culture, File 11, Annual Report of Department of Child Protection, 1946.

48 AAN, Minister of Public Administration (MAP), 1101, Organizing Committee of Jewish Congregations to GUS, 18 March 1947; *ibid.*, Organizing Committee of Jewish Congregations to MAP, 29 September 1948.

49 AJDC Archives in New York, 982: Confidential Report, 5 February 1947, p. 6.

50 On the children and the Jewish school system in post-war Poland: Helena Datner, 'Dziecko żydowskie (1944-1968)', in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów*, pp. 243-281.

the persecution, Jews in ghettos and camps continued to write, paint, stage plays or recite poetry. The first cultural event occurred in liberated Lublin in December 1944: a concert of Jewish songs that made a deep impression on the audience, as Yiddish theatre director Jonas Turkow remembered: 'All rejoiced in the great miracle by which the Jewish songs, the Jewish lyrics still live and outlived the enemies.'<sup>51</sup> Yet survivors were initially mostly concerned with looking for relatives and, for this purpose, the media first had to be re-established, which would become major cultural production and circulation networks. Radio broadcast in Yiddish were aired several times a week on Polish national radio for survivors to place missing persons appeals and giving news about Jewish life in Poland and abroad.<sup>52</sup> But the more popular media was the press: 78 different titles in Polish, Yiddish and Hebrew had a total circulation of 400,000, which is quite remarkable when compared to pre-war figures – 370 titles with a circulation of 790,000 – for a population reduced by 90 per cent.<sup>53</sup> This literature included the various political parties' newspapers as well as publications dedicated to children, local life, literature, and history.

A wide range of institutions were created or reactivated in order to promote a renewed Jewish cultural life. Most of them, although formally independent, were to a certain extent at least financially reliant on the CKŻP. Among them were notably the Association of Yiddish Writers and Journalists, the Association of Yiddish Stage Artists, a filmmaking company called Kinor, the Jewish Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, and a publishing house called Yiddish Buch.<sup>54</sup> Because of the dramatic war losses, the membership of those various institutions had, of course, been considerably reduced: while there were 269 Yiddish writers registered in the pre-war association, merely around 40 enlisted in 1946; only roughly 50 actors had survived among the 400 members of the pre-war Yiddish actors' union. Their achievements proved, however, quite remarkable. For instance, the Yiddish theatre, apart from touring shows, had two permanent Yiddish programmes set up after the war in the cities of Wrocław and Łódź. The latter sold 28,000 tickets in 1947 but the audience was probably larger as

51 Jonas Turkow, *Nokh der bafrayung* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1959), 77.

52 AJHI, CKŻP, Department of Culture and Propaganda 303, vol. 13, files 68-112.

53 Figures drawn from Józef Korzeniowski, 'Bibliografia czasopism żydowskich w PRL', *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, 139-140 (1986), pp. 143-154.

54 On those institutions, see the relevant articles in Elvira Grözinger and Magdalena Ruta, eds, *Under the Red Banner: Yiddish Culture in the Communist Countries in the Postwar Era* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).



many came by invitation.<sup>55</sup> The audience in Lower Silesia amounted to 60,000 for the 115 performances of the local Jewish theatre.<sup>56</sup> It can thus be inferred that almost every Jewish member of a Jewish institution went at least once to the theatre. Another example of the efforts made to promote the Yiddish language were the 350 titles issued by Yiddish Buch between 1947 and 1967, although actual Yiddish-speaking potential readers were scant, a fact that reveals its role as a showcase rather than as genuine mirror of a thriving Yiddish readership.

And yet, the most rewarded efforts undertaken by Jewish institutions for the readjustment of survivors to the new social reality are probably to be seen in their professional lives, though their situation at the end of war was very difficult. The majority was physically unable to work, some faced discrimination in hiring, while the 'traditional' Jewish professions – trade and craft – were not considered 'productive' by the new regime, hence they were scorned. The 'productivization' of the Jewish population was a major assignment given to the CKŻP. A specific section was devoted to assistance in providing survivors with jobs, professional training and loans for the creation of individual or, preferably, collective businesses: Jewish cooperatives. The cooperative movement, dating back from the beginning of the century in Poland, brought together mostly craftsmen in traditional Jewish sectors – tailors, shoemakers, furriers. The first cooperative societies emerged in Łódź and Kraków in 1945, promoted by the Bund party, which had supported this form of work organization before the war.<sup>57</sup> The CKŻP quickly took over the centralization of these cooperatives, labelled Jewish simply because the majority of the workers were CKŻP members. In February 1946, it established a Central Union of Cooperatives named *Solidarność*, which both supplied workshops with raw material and helped in selling their products. Their number increased quickly, from 20 in 1945 to a peak of 232 in 1949, hiring at that time more than 15,000 people, half of whom were Jews.<sup>58</sup> Lower Silesia, which had the largest population, also gathered 60 per cent of the 'Jewish' cooperatives and two-thirds of its workers. As summarized

55 Leszek Olejnik, 'Z dziejów teatru żydowskiego w Łodzi po II wojnie światowej', in *Łódzkie sceny żydowskie: studia i materiały*, ed. Małgorzata Leyko (Łódź: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2000), pp. 146-147.

56 Anna Hannova, 'Ku upaństwowieniu Teatru Żydowskiego – na Dolnym Śląsku', in *Teatralna Jerozolima. Przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, ed. Anna Kuligowska-Korzeniewska (Warsaw: Errata, 2006), 90-92.

57 On the history of Jewish cooperatives in the aftermath of WWII, see Michał Grynberg, *Żydowska spółdzielczość pracy w Polsce w latach 1944-1948* (Warsaw: PWN, 1986).

58 *Ibid.*, p. 89.



by JDC representative in Poland William Bein in 1948: 'Cooperatives hire fifteen per cent of the Jewish population. They play a tremendous role as they not only provide educational training and bread-and-butter but they also spark confidence in life and secure feelings.'<sup>59</sup> 'Jewish' cooperatives, as well as professional training was probably more rewarding in terms of the rebuilding of some kind of community links and atmosphere among Jewish survivors than in implementing a thorough transformation of their professional occupations. After all, Jewish employment continued to focus on craft, trade and office jobs and, in any case, the majority of Jews right after the war remained unable to work. Furthermore, the issue of 'productivization' was one of the few to gain consensus among the different political parties that cooperated within the CKŻP: while the Communists and the Bundists advocated 'productive' work because it brought Jews closer to the Polish working class, the Zionists saw this professional training as good preparation for a future life in Israel.

### **Conclusion: Normalization Instead of Reconstruction?**

Such compromises surely fostered attempts for a reconstruction of Jewish social and cultural life in post-war Poland. This momentum was, however, soon to be lost, mainly because of the continuous flight out of the country of those who were most committed to idea of rebuilding Jewish life in Poland, but also because of the country's political context. By 1947, the coalition supporting the new regime backed-up by Moscow had increased its power. This transformation strongly impacted the Jewish minority: a new Jewish man had to be moulded, faithful to his past yet resolutely forward-looking and adjusted to the new Socialist society. In this sense, it seems more appropriate to talk about the *normalization* of the Jewish survivors – adapting themselves, with the help of Jewish institutions, to new realities – than about the *reconstruction* of a world that had forever vanished and could never possibly be the same. This normalization was initially supported by leftist Jewish parties – Communists, Left Zionists and Bundists – working together in the CKŻP to assist, educate and readjust Jewish survivors to the new life of Communist Poland. The latter in turn had to adopt this paradigm, whether inside or outside this new Jewish community or, if not, either had to leave the country, which most did, or stay in internal exile.

59 AAN, Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, Department of Organizations, 295/IX, vol. 408, p. 132.

A full range of options therefore existed for Jewish survivors in Poland in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Most would search for ‘normalcy’<sup>60</sup> out of the country, others by putting away feelings of belonging to any Jewish group. As for the Jewish life that was being built according to new principles, the consensus that existed for a short time proved fragile and fell victim to the Stalinization of the country. Communist Jews active in Jewish institutions steadily took over their leadership and enforced their vision. From 1948 on, political pluralism gradually vanished with the emigration of many activists of Orthodox and Zionist parties, as well as many Bundists who refused the forced merging of their party with the Communists. By the end of 1949, all Jewish institutions had ceased to be independent. Welfare and cultural organizations were merged and centralized in the tightly state-controlled Socio-Cultural Union of the Jews in Poland (TSKŻ) and contacts with international institutions, including their primary donor, the JDC, were cut off.<sup>61</sup> The Jewish community and its leaders would from now on strictly have to comply with the regime’s ideology and its fluctuations, while even those who did not participate whatsoever in this model of organizational Jewish life and yearned for invisibility would still remain ‘the threatening Other’<sup>62</sup> within large segments of Polish society and would fall victim to negative stereotypes constantly updated and manipulated by the Communist regime.

Ultimately, the years 1944-1947 represent a major moment of reconfiguration in Jewish survivors’ lives in Poland after the Holocaust. They had to accommodate themselves in a regime that defined the criteria for belonging to the nation – excluding, for instance, such minorities as Germans and Ukrainians. Although Jews nominally met these standards, they were mostly still unconsciously excluded both by the state and by Polish society, which hardly accepted their survival. Anti-Jewish violence was the most dramatic confrontation with the new Poland, which undoubtedly triggered many individual decisions to leave. Yet, emigration was just one of the possible options survivors had in order to go back to ‘normal life’; after all,

60 On the issue of ‘normality’ in post-war Europe, see Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, ‘Introduction: Violence, Normality, and the Construction of Postwar Europe’, in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3-13.

61 On the end of pluralism in the ‘Jewish street’: Grzegorz Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950-1956: z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2008); Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Najnowsze*, pp. 472-477.

62 A concept developed in Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

the decision to leave is always a more difficult choice to make than deciding to stay. Normalizing one's life could and did actually begin in Poland for most of the Jewish population: getting back to health, looking for relatives, finding a place to live, going back to school and to work. Jewish institutions certainly supported this normalization, although their aim of rebuilding Jewish life could not stand the harsh reality that the richness and diversity of pre-war Jewish life was gone.

'No one will ever dictate to me where I shall live' said Marek Edelman, leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising who remained in Poland until his death in 2009.<sup>63</sup> No one individual, for sure, yet in those years when life choices had to be made quickly, the socio-political frameworks built by authorities and Jewish representatives within Polish society weighed heavily on individual choices to stay in Poland or to go.

63 Quoted in Joanna Szczęsna, 'Przyszła do mnie Polska – portret Marka Edelmana, 1919-2009', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 October 2009, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75515,7109033,Przyszla\\_do\\_mnie\\_Polska\\_\\_\\_portret\\_Marka\\_Edelmana\\_.html?as=2&ias=3&startsz=x](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75515,7109033,Przyszla_do_mnie_Polska___portret_Marka_Edelmana_.html?as=2&ias=3&startsz=x).

# Fighters Like No Others

## The Soviet Partisans in the Wake of War

*Masha Cerovic*

From 1941 to 1945, close to 35 million Soviet citizens served in the ranks of the Red Army. Almost 7 million of them died, about a third of all Soviet casualties in the war and 5 million were taken prisoner, half of whom died in captivity.<sup>1</sup> About 800,000 Soviet citizens fought in the ranks of the partisans, while 1.5 million are thought to have fought, at one point or another, on the German side. In 1945, over 8 million Red Army soldiers were awaiting demobilization, while the Soviet state also had to deal with the return of 5.5 million displaced persons: *Ostarbeiter* and POWs. The sheer numbers involved and the extreme diversity of these war experiences are staggering. On top of that, the main difficulty the historian faces is in the definition of the ‘wake of war’ for the Soviet Union. The 1940s appear as a continuum of wars, demobilizations and remobilizations, with an according multiplicity of experiences of what is known in French as the ‘*sortie de guerre*’. In this long process, the Soviet state tried to address – ideologically, politically, legally and socially – the multiplicity of war experiences, by adapting and redefining the mirroring images of the inner enemy/traitor and the socialist hero, a dichotomy that had been central to Soviet discourse ever since the October revolution. The Soviet authorities had three aims: to punish; to screen and control; and to reintegrate veterans into society and promote their interests, in a process in which the boundaries of the social body were redrawn and identities recast.<sup>2</sup>

To try and offer an overview of the complex processes unfolding in the wake of war in the Soviet Union, this article will focus on the experiences of one particular group of fighters, the Soviet partisans – those 800,000 men and women who engaged in armed resistance against the German occupation of the Western territories of the Soviet Union, an occupation that

1 On the manifold experiences of Soviet fighters during the war, see Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Picador, 2006).

2 For two seminal discussions of this complex interaction between the state and Soviet citizens, especially veterans, in the Soviet Union after the war, see Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Elena Jur'evna Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

lasted from a few months to over three years, on a territory encompassing 2 million square kilometres and about 80 million inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Although Soviet partisans formed only a tiny minority of Soviet fighters during the war, their fate offers a particularly interesting entry point for the study of the transition from war to peace in the Soviet Union, as they were central actors and objects for the policies of the Soviet state in the wake of war. First, a majority of them also fought in the Red Army, either prior to their involvement in the partisan movement or after the liberation of the territory on which they were active; they were thus often both veteran soldiers and partisans. They were key actors in shaping and carrying out the purges of collaborators and traitors. In occupied territories, they were the eyes and arms of the Soviet state, and their views strongly influenced the Soviet authorities in their subsequent treatment of the population upon liberation. On the other hand, they were viewed with high suspicion by those same Soviet authorities, and were submitted to a process of screening or 'filtration' by the security services upon their return to the Soviet rear or upon liberation, which meant that some of them became victims of the purges carried out by the Soviet state against elements deemed 'disloyal'. They played a key role in the immediate aftermath of liberation, as the Soviet state drew heavily on them to ensure the pacification, administration and reconstruction of liberated territories. Many ended up in the administration, in the security services, and in the Red Army itself upon liberation. The aim of the article will be to highlight the complexity of the interactions between the state and the men and women who had fought for it, thus demonstrating their loyalty to it, but also gaining a new assertiveness, which in turn put new pressures on the Soviet authorities as they negotiated the rebuilding of the Soviet state on the rubble left by the German occupation.

In 1941, the future partisans were faced with their first transition from a state of war to a wary peace, as surprising as this may seem. Indeed, the German occupation was seen by most Soviet citizens left on occupied territory as a swift end to the war. For them, the war seemed to have ended barely after it had begun. The swift advance of the German army meant that the Soviet authorities could not even carry out military mobilization in large swathes of the western Soviet Union; mass desertion and captivity also depleted the ranks of the Red Army in the first weeks and months

3 Cf. Kenneth Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerrillas: Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

of the war.<sup>4</sup> Many of those early Red Army ‘veterans’ simply returned to civilian life, fleeing the German POW camps or benefitting from German policies that freed Ukrainian as well as many Belorussian POWs. For many of those left behind on occupied territory in 1941, the rapid collapse of the Soviet state and swift victory of the German army were interpreted as signs that the war had ended. One partisan, for example, described the mood of the population in north-eastern Belorussia in autumn 1941 as follows: the people believed that ‘the war has ended, Moscow is taken, Kalinin has surrendered Moscow with a white flag, a temporary government has been formed, Molotov was appointed president of the temporary government, negotiations about the peace treaty are being carried out with him, Stalin has flown out of Moscow to America.’<sup>5</sup> Many also saw this moment not only as the end of the Soviet-German war, but also as the end of the war that had started with the October revolution, a return to the old order of things. As one woman peasant in Belorussia summed it up, now that the war had definitely ended, ‘the landowners will return to the landed gentry, the peasants to peasantry, the aristocrats to nobility’.<sup>6</sup> Would-be partisans rejected this view, and their first aim was to reintroduce war into the occupied territories, to reframe the German occupation not as a transition to a new post-war order but as a war in itself. Their first targets were local collaborators and police. They saw themselves as the instruments of Soviet justice in occupied territory, thus launching a wave of retaliation against perceived ‘traitors’ that would stretch well beyond 1945. Self-proclaimed ‘avengers of the people’, the partisans saw themselves as representatives of the Soviet state in occupied territories. Indeed, their views on the inner enemies, the ‘traitors’, would have a deep impact on the policies of the Soviet state during and after the war.

The partisans redefined, on their own, the category of the inner enemy or the ‘traitor to the Fatherland’. They drew on the pre-war Stalinist political culture, but changed, and sometimes radicalized, the definition of the inner enemy so as to make sense of the reality of widespread collaboration on occupied territory. Collaborators – members of the local administration, starting with the village heads, the local police forces, informants and spies, or anyone opposing the Soviet partisans – were considered to be ‘traitors to

4 See Merridale, *Ivan's War*; Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-1945* (New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 427; Mark Edelen and Michael Geyer, ‘States of Exception: The Nazi-Soviet War as a System of Violence, 1939-1945’, in *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, ed. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 383.

5 Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (hereafter RGASPI) f.69, op.1, d.283

6 National Archives of the Republic of Belarus (hereafter NARB) f.1405, op.1, d.1171, p. 154.

the Fatherland', and therefore sentenced to death by the partisans wherever they could find them. The mere phenomenon of widespread collaboration with the Germans served to reinforce pre-war representations of the inner enemy. The war was thus seen as the last great test for Soviet citizens, finally revealing friends and enemies, as one partisan doctor explained:

for all the people left on enemy territory, a severe exam took place, which showed who was really a true patriot of his country and his people, and who wasn't. At a time when the heart of every true patriot was aching [...], then the traitors met with joy and went to serve those hunters of men. They went to serve in the Gestapo, in the police, and in other vile posts, they helped the Germans crucify their own people. But during those same difficult times, the true patriots dug rusty weapons out, went looking for them in the water, they cleaned them and they went to the forests and the swamps, to take revenge against the enemy and against the traitors for the violation of the liberty and the honour of their people.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the inner enemy had revealed itself. Class, however, was no longer an adequate criterion. From 1941 on, only acts would reveal the true nature of the people as either patriots or traitors. The war offered possible redemption to those who had fallen victim to Stalinist terror; it also meant definitive condemnation without the possibility of redemption to those who collaborated with the enemy. As one partisan put it, 'if 25 years of Soviet life did not succeed in re-educating those people, then they were truly irredeemable'.<sup>8</sup> This was seen as a moral failure of the 'traitors', one rooted in nature, in biology, which warranted the death not only of the culprit but also of his whole family, infected by this moral virus. The objective was to 'destroy them with all their breed',<sup>9</sup> 'burn them with their roots'.<sup>10</sup> This meant that whole families, and sometimes even entire villages deemed to be 'police villages', were routinely targeted by the partisans.<sup>11</sup> This shift did echo the increasing biologization – some would argue, racialization – of the

7 Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine (hereafter TsDAGO), f.62, op.1, d.1804, p. 75.

8 NARB, f.1405, op.1, d.1171, p. 6.

9 TsDAGO, f.64, op.1, d.59, p. 1.

10 NARB, f.1405 op.1, d.423, p. 423.

11 Cf. Masha Cerovic, "Au chien, une mort de chien". Les partisans face aux "traîtres à la patrie", *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49/2-3 (2008), pp. 239-262.

inner enemy on the part of the Soviet state<sup>12</sup>; the systematic killing of the families of traitors, however, including the widespread killing of women and children, clearly went beyond the retributive policies of the Soviet state.<sup>13</sup>

Besides these collaborators, the partisans also held other groups in particular contempt. They often saw the pre-war Soviet elites, including leading members of the Party, as having failed their people and country to the point of treason. Prisoners of war were also viewed with contempt and suspicion. Even without knowing the official Soviet policy regarding POWs, many partisans suspected them of being mere deserters, cowards and traitors. Only those who were wounded when taken prisoner or who rapidly escaped captivity avoided this widespread suspicion. Finally, some ethnic groups were also considered with suspicion by the partisans, most prominently the Crimean Tatars and the Jews. From the spring of 1942 on, partisans sent report after report to Moscow stringently denouncing the Tatar population of Crimea for collective treason. Their unqualified calls for harsh reprisals against the Crimean Tatars would, tragically, be answered by the Soviet authorities in the form of their mass deportation in May 1944.<sup>14</sup> Anti-Semitism was also widespread and although the treatment of Jews by the Soviet partisans varied greatly, in many instances, the partisans expressed shock and outrage at their mass killing by the Germans, but also contempt for their perceived apathy; moreover, in many units, Jewish survivors were seen as German spies or criminals, while it was not rare for partisans to prey on helpless Jews.<sup>15</sup>

The Soviet authorities did not consider it the partisans' task to carry out justice against those traitors; they did, however, rely on partisans to identify

12 Cf. Amir Weiner, 'Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism', *The American Historical Review* 104/4 (1 October 1999), pp. 1114-1155; Eric D. Weitz, 'Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges', *Slavic Review* 61/1 (April 2002), pp. 1-29.

13 On the punishment of families and children of 'enemies of the people', cf. Corinna Kuhr, 'Children of "Enemies of the People" as Victims of the Great Purges', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 39/1-2 (1998), pp. 209-220; Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50.1 (1 January 2008), pp. 91-117.

14 Cf. Juliette Denis, 'De la condamnation à l'expulsion: la construction de l'image de collaboration de masse pendant la Grande Guerre Patriotique', in *Les déportations en héritage: les peuples réprimés du Caucase et de Crimée, hier et aujourd'hui*, ed. Aurélie Campana, Grégory Dufaud and Sophie Tournon (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), pp. 29-52.

15 Cf. Kenneth Slepyan, 'The Soviet Partisan Movement and The Holocaust', *Holocaust & Genocide Studies*, 14/1 (2000), pp. 1-27; Leonid Smilovitsky, 'Antisemitism in the Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944: The Case of Belorussia', *Holocaust & Genocide Studies*, 20/2 (2006), pp. 207-234; Nechama Tec, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).



them. Throughout the war, they asked the partisans to list collaborators and report them. In the spring of 1944, they finally sent precise instructions to the Belorussian partisans to draw detailed lists of collaborators in order to 'create a working base for the Soviet justice institutions after the liberation'.<sup>16</sup> The partisans were asked to prepare two lists, one of 'active' enemies presenting an immediate threat, and another of 'passive' ones only suspected of being enemies by the partisans. They were to be divided into categories: citizens who had shown sympathy with the Germans or hostility to the Soviet power; socially alien elements; people who had held civilian functions in the administration of occupied territories; people who had collaborated militarily with the Germans in various units; former collaborators who had defected to the partisans; German spies; Belorussian and Polish nationalists; members of the Communist Party and of the Soviet security services and Red Army soldiers who had not participated to the partisan movement. Upon liberation, the partisans were also the first people to whom the Soviet authorities turned to identify former collaborators.<sup>17</sup>

While they saw themselves as the punishing arm of the Soviet state in occupied territories, the partisans played a peculiar part in the screening and purging processes after the liberation, in which they would interestingly find themselves on both the acting and receiving ends of the 'filtration' process. Indeed, the treatment of partisans by Soviet authorities upon liberation greatly varied. The filtration processes started as soon as the war began. Wary of Red Army soldiers returning from occupied territories, who were always suspected of desertion or even of being German spies, the Soviet government had set up so-called 'special camps' under the supervision of the Department for Prisoners of War of the NKVD (security services) at the end of 1941.<sup>18</sup> All Red Army personnel returning from occupied territory had to be screened in those special camps, where they would be interviewed multiple times by different intelligence and security agencies. All in all, about 350,000 men went through this screening process in the special camps from 1941 to 1944. However, given that this process could take months, a parallel procedure was established in 1942, whereby returning groups of Red Army soldiers were sent to Red Army reserve units, where they would be sorted out and screened quickly, usually before being returned to the

16 NARB, f.1450, op.2, d.1031, p. 32-41.

17 Cf. Vanessa Voisin, *L'URSS contre ses traîtres. L'épuration soviétique, 1941-1955* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015).

18 Igor Govorov, 'Fil'tracija sovetskih repatriantov v 40-e gg. XX vv.: Celi, metody i itogi', *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49/2 (2009), pp. 365-382.

front. Only Red Army commanding officers still automatically had to be sent to the special camps, where they often faced harsh treatment: a third of the almost 50,000 officers who went through the special camps were sent to the infamous punitive battalions upon screening, while the rest were sent to work in industry. In 1942 and 1943, partisans faced both those procedures, regardless of whether they were former soldiers or not. This was often a protracted process, which the partisans resented. For example, in the summer of 1942, most partisans from the Smolensk region returned to the Soviet front lines, as the Red Army had succeeded in pushing the front back westwards after the Battle of Moscow. From 80 to 90 per cent of the partisans were sent to the Red Army reserve units, where they waited for up to three months to get clearance. Among them, women, the sick and the heavily wounded were demobilized and sent back to civilian life. The commanders of the partisan units, meanwhile, were sent to the special camps. They were thus treated as Red Army commanding officers, although hardly any of the partisan commanders were above the rank of NCO. Their decision to return from the occupied rear to the front line was considered by the Soviet security services to amount to desertion. For those partisans who were indeed commanding officers of the Red Army, their partisan activity was not seen as redeeming; on the contrary, the Soviet authorities seemed to be particularly wary of the prospect of having out-of-control commanding officers fighting autonomously on occupied territory. The most famous case is that of Colonel Nichipurovich, a personal acquaintance of General Zhukov, who had taken the command of a strong partisan movement in a region of eastern Belorussia; he was recalled to Moscow in September 1942, sent to a special camp, then imprisoned by the security services and died in jail in 1944.<sup>19</sup> For most partisans however, this first screening and filtration process did not end nearly as tragically. While a minority was demobilized, about 80 per cent of the partisans who joined the Red Army in 1942-1943 were sent back to the front line, while a minority was sent back to the German rear.<sup>20</sup> However, this reintegration into the Red Army was far from unproblematic. Complaints were numerous and varied. First, the length of the process was tiresome, as the partisans particularly resented the obvious suspicion with which they were treated. Second, they found that their service time and rank as partisans, and even in the Red Army prior to that, were often ignored; they received no payment for that time,

19 See Bogdan Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen 1941-1944: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009).

20 Cf. Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerrillas*.

medals were often refused, and they were almost systematically sent back to the front as rank-and-file soldiers, even if they had been NCOs before or during their time with the partisans. Finally, their reintegration into the Red Army posed other problems: after their time as guerrilla fighters, they often resented both army discipline and the Red Army commanders, who in turn often complained that the former partisans were uncontrollable. On the other hand, especially as the war progressed, a majority of partisans had never been Red Army soldiers before; they lacked not only army discipline habits but also basic military training, which they did not receive before being sent back to the front. Thus, the headquarters of the partisan movement received scores of letters from former partisans asking to be relieved of their new Red Army duties and sent back to the German rear as partisans.

The situation changed radically for the partisans who re-encountered the Red Army in 1944. The priorities of the Soviet authorities had by now changed and the recruitment needs of the Red Army were no longer their main preoccupation. Over 250,000 partisans, in Ukraine and Belorussia, gradually met with the advancing Soviet forces on liberated territory. Only 40 to 45 per cent of them were sent to active duty in the Red Army. The fate of the others shows the intricacy of the process of reintegrating the liberated territories into the Soviet Union, as was the case of Belorussia, where about 180,000 partisans were met by the advancing Red Army forces during the liberation of the republic between September 1943 and August 1944. Although some eastern regions had been liberated in the autumn of 1943, in the wake of the Red Army counteroffensive after the Battle of Kursk, most of the republic was liberated in the course of Operation Bagration, launched on 22 June 1944. The capital, Minsk, was liberated on 3 July, almost three years to the day after its occupation by the Germans. Brest, the last city to be liberated in Belorussia, was taken by the Red Army on 28 July. Symbolically, the liberation was celebrated with a huge parade in Minsk on 16 July 1944, during which 22,000 partisans marched through the almost entirely destroyed capital city. In parallel, partisans were quickly drawn to the numerous tasks facing the Soviet authorities in their effort to pacify, rebuild and reintegrate the liberated territories.<sup>21</sup> About 16,000 of them, women, children, elderly, wounded and sick, were demobilized and sent home. Almost 42,000 were sent to work in various administrative and party functions in the republic, which meant that the partisans basically took over the state apparatus in Belorussia almost overnight. This would soon prove to be a major source of tension within the administration of Belorussia and

21 Statistics from Musial, *Sowjetische Partisanen 1941-1944*.

Ukraine, not only because the former partisans competed with the pre-war elite but also because those former partisans were constantly suspect in the eyes of the Soviet power, being too independent and too difficult to control. Thus, in Western Ukraine, as Amir Weiner has shown, most former partisans were purged from the local administration in the late 1940s.<sup>22</sup>

The party and state administration was not the only one heavily populated with former partisans in the wake of the war. Forty thousand Belorussian partisans were charged with pacifying and securing the liberated territory, with about 6,000 sent to work in the ranks of the NKVD as of July 1944, almost 5,000 drafted into the *'istrebitel'nye bataliony'* or destruction battalions, while 30,000 partisans had still not disbanded by the end of August 1944 – a few thousand of them were then sent to destruction battalions, others to the NKVD, while the rest gradually returned to civilian duties in the course of 1944. Those 40,000 men bore the brunt of the so-called pacification tasks that were carried out in the weeks after the liberation. The remaining partisans were charged with hunting down stray German soldiers, deserters, former armed collaborators who had gone into hiding, and 'bandits'. The brutality of this continued war cannot be underestimated. For example, one partisan commander reported on 10 July 1944 that two partisan officers had been killed in a fight with a group of 'German soldiers', and that to avenge those deaths, thirty-five traitors and ten Germans who had been taken prisoner in that fight had been slaughtered by the partisans.<sup>23</sup> The partisans of the Zheleznyak brigade, to the north-east of Minsk, were reunited with the Red Army on 29 June; they received their new orders on 1 July: the task of the unit was now to 'hunt down and exterminate retreating enemy groups'; only on 11 July did the commander instruct his men that they were not allowed to kill prisoners on the spot but that all German prisoners had to be escorted to a prisoner camp, although no such instruction was given concerning former collaborators caught by the partisans.<sup>24</sup> That unit was only disbanded in mid-August. The destruction battalions were reported to have arrested almost 90,000 people from July to December 1944 in Belorussia, about 32,000 of whom were German soldiers.<sup>25</sup> Apart from this, the former partisans played an important role in many other security functions, including, for example, clearing the numerous mines that had

22 Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

23 NARB, f.1450, op.2, d.1007, p. 78.

24 NARB, f.1450, op.4, d.166.

25 FSB, ed., *Organy gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti v Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojne. Sbornik dokumentov*, t.5, vol. 2.

been left throughout the territory, in part by the partisans themselves. In the Vitebsk region, about 1,200 minefields had to be cleared; during 1945, 277 civilians were killed and 222 wounded by landmine explosions in that region alone.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet authorities also spent months trying to gather and destroy all the accumulated weapons, which the partisans in particular were loathe to surrender.

In liberated Soviet territories, the former partisans thus acted for months in the shadow of war. A minority of them was actually involved in direct military operations, especially in the so-called 'war against banditry', which primarily targeted national resistance movements – mainly Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian. In Western Ukraine, whole partisan brigades were directly put under the supervision of the NKVD upon liberation during the summer of 1944 and became the first NKVD units charged with the so-called 'war against banditry' against Ukrainian nationalist organizations, a war that partisans had been carrying out since mid-1943.<sup>27</sup> These units were disbanded only months after the liberation of those regions by the Red Army and, even then, hundreds of partisans were drawn as officers in the war against banditry in Western Ukraine. Former partisans were also drafted in the NKVD 'special units', small units that were using guerrilla tactics against the Ukrainian nationalist guerrilla fighters. Former partisans also figured prominently in NKVD structures in Belorussia, where over 6,000 former partisans had joined the NKVD ranks up to July 1944; they were charged with the 'pacification' of the newly liberated territory, mostly fighting against Red Army deserters, former collaborators, and Polish and Lithuanian nationalists. The head of the department for the war against banditry in Lithuania in 1945-1946 was also a former partisan commander. The Kovpak partisan brigade, under the command of Petr Vershigora, one of the most famous Ukrainian units, offers an example of this slow transformation of the partisans from guerrilla fighters into insurgency and then counter-insurgency specialists. During the autumn of 1943, the brigade was assisting the Red Army as it was liberating Ukraine. During the last two months of the year, the partisans were in charge of one of the first key measures implemented by the Soviet state authorities to regain control of the western borderlands that had been conquered and annexed from Poland

26 M.V. Pishchulenok, ed., *Vystojali i pobedili: svidetel'stvujut arkhivy* (Vitebsk: BelNIIDAD, 2005).

27 See Alexander Statiev, 'Was *Smuglianka* a Lunatic or a *Siguranța*'s Agent-Provocateur? Peculiarities of the Soviet Partisan Struggle in the Western Borderlands', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31/5 (October 2008), pp. 743-770; idem, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

in 1939: they were tasked with carrying out – often with violence – the conscription of all young men in the region of Zhitomir and Rivne into the Red Army.<sup>28</sup> In January 1944, the brigade was fighting again, but this time it was in charge of the Soviet counter-insurgency against the Ukrainian UPA nationalists. In February 1944, Vershigora's men took up yet a new role, in Poland, as the Ukrainian partisan brigades were used as the vanguard of the Red Army in Poland and Slovakia. In close collaboration with the Soviet intelligence agencies, the brigades were collecting intelligence and carrying out sabotage missions to facilitate the Red Army's offensive. Moreover, they were supposed to 'help' the locals organize pro-communist insurgencies that were meant to accompany the liberation of those countries and to prepare the ground for the subsequent coming to power of pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe.<sup>29</sup> After carrying out this mission in Poland, the Kovpak brigade was back in Western Ukraine, where it continued working under the orders of Soviet state security. In the summer of 1944,

the bandits [i.e. the Ukrainian nationalists] are blocking the collection of grain taxes [...] and the state agents in the region [...] are asking us [the partisans] to help them collect the taxes, by organizing four groups, each numbering at least 20-25 men, with our guys and 3-4 NKVD agents and tax collectors with this mission: 1. The NKVD agents and our 25 guys are tasked with fighting against the UPA and arresting the nationalists. 2. The tax collectors collect the grain taxes according to the plan.<sup>30</sup>

The partisans had thus become the main counter-insurgency force in those regions: the state security organs did not have enough staff to carry out their missions in all the liberated territories. Finally, in September 1944, the Kovpak division was officially placed under the command of the NKVD in the 'fight against banditry', thus completing its transition from partisan unit to state security auxiliary.<sup>31</sup> There, it was tasked with 'cleansing' the forests, applying the techniques used by the Germans against them shortly before, surrounding the forests and then systematically combing them. The former partisans thus fought the first stage of a protracted war that was to last for another three to eight years in the western borderlands.

28 TsDAGO, f.63, op.1, d.20, pp. 240, 248.

29 TsDAGO, f.63, op.1, d.24, p. 40. Cf. A.V. Kentij and V.C. Lozic'kij, *Vijna Bez Poščadi i Miloserdja: Partizans'kij Front u Tilu Vermahtu v Ukraïni (1941-1944)* (Kiev: Geneza, 2005), pp. 383-384.

30 TsDAGO, f.63, op.1, d.199, order of 26 August 1944.

31 TsDAGO, f.63, op.1, d.24, p. 80.

All in all, the reintegration of former partisans in Soviet post-war society was a lengthy process. As many of them had been drafted into the Red Army, they ended up not being demobilized for years after that. The first demobilization order, concerning soldiers over 30 years old, was issued in June 1945, and it would take months for them to actually come home; the second demobilization wave came a year after that, the last one, for the youngest conscripts, only came in 1948. Within three years, 8.5 million Soviet soldiers had thus been sent back to civilian life.<sup>32</sup> As those men were reintegrated in Soviet society, multiple tensions arose, which have been thoroughly investigated by Mark Edele and Elena Zubkova. Disappointment and individual frustration soon ran high in the ranks of the former 'defenders of the Fatherland', as the high hopes they had held for the post-war years were replaced by the bleak reality of the return to the Stalinist society.

The end of the war in the Soviet Union was an exceptionally complex transition, especially in the former occupied territories, where the departure of the Germans left a landscape of desolation, a society torn by the legacy of the occupation and, in the westernmost regions, wholesale civil war. The reintegration of the former fighters was thus a difficult process. The Soviet state had to rely on them to rebuild its foundations and to restore the power and legitimacy that had been shattered in 1941. Yet the Stalinist regime also risked – or imagined that it risked – losing its position of total control if these newly assertive men, who had witnessed its weakness and failure, were not reined in. The Soviet regime thus had to use them to carry out the punishment of former collaborators and to fight against its adversaries, while also subjecting them to the control and potential sanction of the state. During those complex negotiations between the state apparatus and the former fighters, the voice of the latter was gradually suppressed, as they were either integrated into or excluded from the existing Stalinist system. The return to the status quo ante would prove to be a huge disappointment for many of those who had fought for the Soviet Union, even if a minority of them succeeded in adapting to and advancing within the system.

32 Zubkova, *Russia After the War*; Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War*.

**3**  
Organizing the Peace





# How the Soviet Empire Relied on Diversity

Territorial Expansion and National Borders at the End of World War II in Ruthenia

*Sabine Dullin*

'How far is Russia going to go?' asked Walter Bedell, the new American ambassador while presenting his credentials to Molotov on 4 April 1946.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the westward expansion of the USSR's territory was considerable. During the post-war conferences, in Tehran and Potsdam for instance, and later in the peace treaties with former satellites of Hitler's Germany, the Allies – who had little scope for choice – endorsed the new border delineations. Years before, these had been planned ahead by the Soviets, who were eager to obtain the recognition of the territories they had annexed in 1939 and 1940 (i.e. Eastern Poland, the Baltic States, Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina). By 1941, Stalin had already raised the issue before Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary. At the end of the war, these territorial demands were reasserted once again. Moreover, the Soviets acquired new territories at the expense of the vanquished, particularly Petsamo, a port on the Arctic Ocean, together with the surrounding area taken over from Finland, and Königsberg and its region on the Baltic Sea won from Germany (Eastern Prussia).<sup>2</sup> Stalin also negotiated, with Beneš, the last western Soviet annexation after the war: Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Stalin, Molotov and the Soviet diplomats did their best to improve and redraw the borders of their countries while expanding the Soviet Empire. In spring 1948, a range of agreements, mutual assistance treaties and internal reforms paved the way for the exportation of the Soviet system to Eastern European countries. Rumours spread in East and West predicting a new enlargement of the USSR. Which country would become the next Soviet republic? Romania? Czechoslovakia or Poland?<sup>3</sup>

1 Walter Bedell Smith, *My Three Years in Moscow* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1950), p. 53.

2 See Mikhail Narinski, 'Le gouvernement soviétique et le problème des frontières de l'URSS (1941-1946)', *Frontières du communisme*, ed. Sophie Cœuré and Sabine Dullin (Paris: Découverte, 2007), pp. 198-215.

3 About the rumours that circulated in spring and autumn 1948, see Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères français (AMAEF), Europe 1944-1960, Rumania, vol. 28, p. 117; Hungary, vol.

The traditional Cold War historiography contributed to reinforcing this interpretation. Its main narrative described Soviet expansionism and its motivations in the wake of World War II, though it left in the dark the other prominent features of the post-war situation. Looking back in retrospect to analyse the historical events within Eastern European countries led to an overestimation of the shared destiny of the Ukrainians, the Baltics, the Romanians, the Hungarians and the Poles, all under Red Army control during the post-war period. The prophesy Winston Churchill made about the Iron Curtain in March 1946 was no reality at that time. No barbed wire fences divided the European continent until 1949. The ties and relationships between European countries across the continent remained substantial until 1948. Demarcation lines dividing Austria and Germany along the occupation zones were tightly controlled but permeable. As Mark Mazower wrote: ‘in those critical years from the end of the war until 1948, it was not all clear that Bulgaria and Romania shared more with Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic than they did with, say, Greece or that anything useful was to be gained from placing Prague and Dresden in some putative “Eastern Europe”’.<sup>4</sup>

In 1944-1945, from Moscow’s perspective, Eastern Europe was not an undifferentiated bloc. There were, obviously enough, images based on Bolshevik political culture and experience that helped to unify views of the Soviet occupied zone in Eastern Europe. The geopolitical image of the hostile ‘cordon sanitaire’ was still very strong. Having obsessed the Bolsheviks since the end of World War I, it had been reactivated with the German invasion on 22 June 1941. Soviet strategy was then trying to turn it into a friendly buffer zone, first in 1939, then in 1944.<sup>5</sup> New images emerged from the ‘new deal’ at the end of World War II in the Eastern European countries that had seen the rise of anti-fascist fronts and expectations for

25, p. 241; Czechoslovakia, vol. 58, p. 382, quoted in Emilia Robin-Hivert, *Le thème de l’Europe dans les rapports de la France avec les pays communistes (1943-1958)* (PhD thesis, University of Paris IV, 2008), p. 106; see also Natalia Egorova, ‘La formation du bloc de l’Est comme frontière occidentale du système communiste (1947-1955)’, in *Frontières du communisme*, op. cit., p. 248-271. These rumours came from remarks reported during late-night drinking sprints. Khrushchev’s memoirs bear witness to this fact particularly as they relate a scene in Stalin’s dacha, on the Black Sea, when an intoxicated Gottwald is supposed to have said: ‘I’m asking you, Comrade Stalin, let us sign a treaty to add Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union’: Nikita Khrushchev, *Mémoires inédits* (Paris: Belfond, 1991), p. 167.

4 Mark Mazower, ‘Reconstruction: The Historiographical Issues’, in *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe: International Perspectives, 1945-1949*, ed. Mark Mazower, Jessica Reinisch and David Feldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 20.

5 Vojtech Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

social change. For these countries, Soviet and Hungarian experts invented a new concept: they were labelled the 'countries of the new democracy' and compared with the old bourgeois democracies of the West.<sup>6</sup> Since the beginning of the Cold War, endless debates have taken place among historians on the nature of Stalin's plans for Eastern Europe after the war.<sup>7</sup> After consulting the archival sources, historians tend to think that whilst Stalin succeeded in creating a synthesis for action, both imperialistic and revolutionary, there was no big plan for Central and Eastern Europe. Instead, many little plans were drawn up in order to govern each front and organize each country after the war. This does not mean that everything was different from one territory to another: violence perpetrated by Red Army troops and Stalinist modes of control and government were easily recognizable in every occupied territory. Nevertheless, the main point revealed in the archives was that the Soviets, both in word and deed, took into account the variety of situations. As in other empires,<sup>8</sup> the politics of difference guided Soviet imperial rule in new, conquered territories, a point which deserves to be investigated thoroughly.

In the wake of the war, the modalities of occupation by the Red Army, and the control of the politics of retribution and purges were more varied than it appears at first glance. Local and national realities did have an impact on Soviet policies. Soviet officials enjoyed the full benefit of possessing thorough and up-to-date information on the countries in which they operated thanks to the intelligence gathering carried out by their agents. On the ground, contemporaries were at first preoccupied with territorial and national issues until the Paris Conference brought definite answers that benefited the interests of the Soviets and either satisfied or disappointed their neighbours.

Stalin, both a map lover and a man of borderland territories, effectively proved that he was skilled at designing state and national boundaries. He

6 On the concept of the 'countries of the new democracy', which preceded that of the 'countries of the people's democracy', see notably Lars Haga, 'Imaginer la démocratie populaire: l'Institut de l'économie mondiale et la carte mentale soviétique de l'Europe de l'Est (1944-1948)', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 109 (January-March 2011), pp. 13-30.

7 See, for example, the debate that divided the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Norman Naimark, 'Post-Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5/3 (Summer 2004), pp. 561-580.

8 The study of the USSR and of its expansionism can indeed benefit from approaches developed by the new historiography on empires, see notably Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

had displayed his talent as the People's Commissar for Nationalities at the beginning of the 1920s when he had given shape to the national within the Soviet federation.<sup>9</sup> He had demonstrated his skill in the negotiations conducted with Hitler in 1939, letting himself be guided, unlike his interlocutor, by the Ukrainian, Byelorussian or Lithuanian ethnographic lines that had been trampled by the Treaty of Riga. He had also ratified, through an agreement with the Reich on exchanges of population, the organization of the final departure of German civilians from the annexed zones. All of these decisions favoured the establishment of ethnically homogenous republics.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the war, acting on the strength of his experience and for his own benefit, he championed an uncompromising nation-state, proving himself to be ready to misrepresent some realities in this perspective. In the negotiations between the Allies, in bilateral discussions, when approaching Eastern European interlocutors, and when addressing populations, the ethnographic argument was always present, notably when his own border was at stake, thus providing the crucial argument with a view to establishing a stable, permanent and legitimate border. The consensus on this matter was widely shared by European decision-makers, who were concerned not to reiterate the mistakes made at the end of World War I and wanted to be done with national minorities.

At the level of the eastern and central European states, and despite a few projects for a federation, it was also first and foremost a national view that prevailed. The territorial claims at the end of the war were not solely the prerogative of Soviet imperialism. As in 1918, all the USSR's western neighbours had disputes to settle and objectives to reach in this field. As was the case at the end of World War I, the Allies held the keys to the negotiations. However, behind the Allied Control Commissions and the sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in which the three Allies were involved, Moscow was definitely the only arbiter of the territorial disputes in its sphere of influence and the sole decision-maker when it came to the territorial compensations granted in exchange for its own annexations.

Regarding the negotiations that led to the 1947 peace treaties, in which the territorial and compensation issues were essential, there exists a

9 Among many works on Stalin and the national question in the USSR, see Juliette Cadiot, *Le laboratoire impérial. Russie-URSS, 1860-1940* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2007); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1922-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Iuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review*, 53/2 (1994), pp. 414-452.

10 Catherine Gousseff, 'Des Kresy aux régions frontalières de l'URSS: le rôle du pouvoir stalinien dans la destruction des confins polonais', *Cultures d'Europe centrale*, 5 (2005), pp. 25-46.

historiographical deficit. The analysis of the Cold War and of the satellitization of the Eastern countries has, so to speak, absorbed the history of the national settlements of the post-war period.<sup>11</sup> Between 1944 and 1947, what was at stake for each state was victory or defeat regarding the territorial objectives followed since the Peace Conferences of World War I. The huge body of documentary and research work of the scholars of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences testifies to this fact.<sup>12</sup> The Soviets were kept considerably busy with the national and territorial free-for-all in Eastern Europe. As they were likely to rally a consensus between former far-right legionnaires, liberals, and Communists, the territorial claims which pitted the Romanians against the Hungarians over Transylvania and the Czechs against the Poles over Cieszyn/Těšín and Ratibor/Racibórz guided a great many political choices. To follow Holly Case's analysis in a monograph on Transylvania,<sup>13</sup> the years 1944-1947 saw the culmination of the Hungarian-Romanian dispute in which Romania won the first round in Trianon and lost the second after the Vienna arbitration. Antonescu's overthrow and the Romanian switch in allegiance in 1944 derived for the most part from a concern for the recovery of Transylvania. As Karel Kaplan and Valentina Marina have demonstrated,<sup>14</sup> by handing over Ruthenia, the Czechs aimed at obtaining Moscow's total support in the far more important matter of the expulsion of the Germans and the Hungarians as well as the territorial demands regarding Poland.

Consequently, how are we to grasp Soviet expansionism in its entirety in the context of both the conquests of the Red Army and the consideration devoted to post-war social and national claims?

Studying the construction of the border on different scales can, in my opinion, provide possible answers to these issues. What techniques did the victorious party use? What was needed to ratify a new border right

11 There are, however, recent books that correct this historiographical failing, notably Ignác Romsics, *Parížska mierová zmluva z roku 1947* (Prague: Kalligram, 2008).

12 T.V. Volokitina, ed., *Sovetskyi faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope 1944-1953*, vol. 1, 1944-1948 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999); V.V. Marina, ed., *Natsionalnaia politika v stranakh formiruiushegosia sovetского bloka, 1944-1948* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004); T.M. Islamov, ed., *Transil'vanij Vopros. Vengero-Rumynskij territorial'nyi spor i SSSR 1940-1946. Dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000); T. Volokitina, G. Murashko and A. Noskova, eds, *Moskva i Vostochnaâ Evropa: vlast' i cerkov' v period obshchestvennyh transformacij 40-50-h godov XX veka* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008).

13 Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

14 Karel Kaplan, *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948* (Gordonville: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987); Valentina Marina, *Zakarpatskaia Ukraina v politike Benesha i Stalina* (Moscow: Novyi Khronograf, 2003).

after the war? Were military occupation and/or the consent of the Allies sufficient? In what ways could the border represent a means of national and social emancipation?

To do so, I shall put forward a case study of a little-known Soviet border that was newly set up between Czechoslovakia and the USSR in 1945. It was established between Czechoslovakia and the USSR in the borderland region of Subcarpathian Ruthenia.<sup>15</sup> As it constitutes one of the last Soviet conquests with Kaliningrad and the Kuril Islands, this annexation allows us to query a diplomatic and geopolitical way out of the war other than the major Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. Indeed, this annexation was carried out off the international stage as a result of national claims, political changes on the ground and bilateral friendship.

The sources used are, firstly, the Soviet archives. In addition to the Central Archives of the State and of the Party in Moscow, this chapter draws on the security services' archives at Kiev, notably documents from SMERSH (a Russian acronym meaning 'Death to the spies').<sup>16</sup> This body was created in the Second World War context as a military counter-intelligence service and as a means of political surveillance behind the front line. It was supervised by Abakumov at the level of the USSR. Then, it also makes use of reports and documents of the delegation of the Czech government on site, the best part of which has been published.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, this study relied on the memories of the period collected from the inhabitants of the border cities and villages in Transcarpathia during a series of interviews held during October 2007 and in the course of July 2008.<sup>18</sup>

15 This border region is situated in Ukraine today. It shares a border with Poland in the north, with Slovakia and Hungary in the west and Romania in the south.

16 Архив управління Службы безпеки України, Київ (AUSBU), фонди 13/928, 'Закарпатська Україна, 1945', a 323-page file containing documents of the 2nd SMERSH department of the 4th Ukrainian front.

17 F. Nemeč, V. Moudry, *The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1955); *ČSR A SSSR 1945-1948. Dokumenty mezivládních jednání* (Brno: Doplněk, 1997); *Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1939-1945. Dokumenty*, 2 vols (Prague: Státní ústřední archiv v Praze, 1999); *Zakarpatskaia Ukraina v politike Benesha i Stalina*, op. cit., pp. 184-286.

18 This research work benefited from the financial help of the Institut universitaire de France and was undertaken on the ground in Transcarpathia with the scientific help of Tatiana Zhurhenko, a sociologist and researcher at the Vienna Academy of Sciences.

## The 'Last Piece of Ukraine': Shared Interests in Moscow, Kiev and Prague

On 29 June 1945, the treaty ceding Subcarpathian Ruthenia to the USSR was signed between Stalin and Beneš in Moscow. From then on the border roughly followed the former administrative limit separating Slovakia from Ruthenia.<sup>19</sup>

This borderland region belonged to the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1914. It had been added to Czechoslovakia in the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1919. Officially speaking, the viewpoint shared by the exiled Czech Government and the Soviets was all for the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Czechoslovak Republic within the borders it held prior to 29 September 1938. Ruthenia was therefore to be allotted to Czechoslovakia at the Liberation. The victorious advance of the 4th Ukrainian front in autumn 1944 was accompanied by the arrival on site of a delegation of the exiled Czech government in charge of restoring Czech sovereignty.

Why then proceed to an annexation a few months later? Here, the ethnographic argument was prevalent. After Galicia, Volhynia and Northern Bukovina, it was, to use Soviet words 'the last piece of Ukraine' to return to the bosom of the motherland: in so doing the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine had been considerably enlarged since 1939. Nikita Khrushchev, then at the head of the Ukrainian Communist Party, had been campaigning in favour of annexation since the beginning of 1944. Manuilski, the commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ukraine and a leading member of the disbanded Komintern, argued along the same lines. On 1 February 1944, the chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet stated that 'all the Ukrainians [had] to be reunited'.<sup>20</sup> As it happened, the decision to annex the area was made in Moscow and Kiev during the final months of the war.<sup>21</sup>

19 Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, f. 5446 (Council of People's Commissars), op. 47a, d. 417, p. 6. There is however an important modification: Csop station, in command of both the line serving the main cities in the Carpathians and the one going to Lvov, located until that time on Slovak territory, now part of Ukraine.

20 Quoted in Marina, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

21 The Commission for the Preparation of Peace Agreements and the Organization of the Postwar Period, headed by Litvinov, in a report dated 9 March 1944, considered the possibility of incorporating Ruthenia into the USSR and, by way of compensation, ceding a portion of Upper Silesia to Czechoslovakia. See *SSSR i germanskyi vopros 1941-1949*, note from Litvinov to Molotov, 9 March 1944, in *Dokumenty iz Arkhiva Vneshnei Politiki RF* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1996), p. 438.



**The secession of Subcarpathian Ruthenia to the USSR following the Treaty of 29 June 1945**



Source: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, f. 5446 (Council of People's Commissars), op.47a, d.417, p. 6

However, the Ukrainian national claim was not the only one in an area whose multi-ethnic and multi-religious character is quite noteworthy<sup>22</sup> – a point which explains why, in the course of a session of the Czech Affairs Committee to delineate the borders in May 1919, an Italian delegate had already declared that this was ‘a patch of land that [would] be cause for trouble for everyone’.<sup>23</sup> Each of the communities in the area, whether Hungarian,

22 For a detailed history of the province during the interwar years, see Peter Švorc, *Zakliata krajina. Podkarpatská Rus 1918-1946* (Prešov: Universum, 1996).

23 AMAEF, Europe 1918-1929. Tchécoslovaquie, vol. 48, p. 16.

Czech or Ukrainian, had its own ideal map of the post-war boundaries. The numerous Magyar-speaking communities had harboured Hungarian irredentist claims since the Treaty of Trianon which had provisionally prevailed in Hitler's shadow in two separate phases. First, Hungary received, in addition to a piece of Slovakia, western Ruthenia near Uzhgorod, Mukachevo and Beregovo during the Vienna arbitration on 2 November 1938. Then in March 1939 it occupied the whole province. Moreover, there existed during the interwar period a movement in favour of autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic founded on a Carpatho-Ukrainian, Ruthenian or Carpathian-Rusyn identity that was supported by the Communists.<sup>24</sup> In September, the Karpatorusskii Avtonomnyi Soiuz Natsional'nogo Osvobozhdeniia (KRASNO) – the Carpatho-Russian Autonomous Union – was set up. It maintained contact with both the Slovak resistance movement and the Czechoslovak liberation movement abroad. KRASNO consequently welcomed a declaration by the Slovak National Council in October 1944 which stated that resurrected Czechoslovakia should consist of three equal nations: the Czechs, the Slovaks and the Carpatho-Rusyns.

Ultimately, during the interwar years, the area had seen the development of a national Ukrainian movement oriented towards eastern Galicia which had achieved short-lived success at the outset of 1939 when the Voloshin-Revay Government, that the Germans supported for a while, was established in Khust.

From the autumn of 1939, the geopolitics of wars and annexations gave a boost to the claims for Ukrainian national identity that could not do without the Soviet presence. When the Red Army entered eastern Poland, following the Soviet-German Pact and the annexation of eastern Galicia by the Soviet Republic of Ukraine, Ruthenia was situated right across the border from the Soviet Union for the first time in its history. Conversely, the break-up of Czechoslovakia and the existence of an independent Slovakia as a German Protectorate removed the area from its Czech foothold.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while it was called Ruthenia or Subcarpathian Rus in the interwar years, the name Transcarpathian Ukraine started to prevail in 1939, a clear sign of a change in perspective both on a geographical and on an ethnic level. It had been viewed from the West, and was henceforward envisaged from

24 Although it is not listed in the present Ukrainian censuses, this nationality is claimed by the populations originating from the Carpathians who are differentiated from the Ukrainians by their local language and the practice of the Orthodox religion.

25 However, the plans to unite Slovakia and Ruthenia under German Protectorate in autumn 1940 should be mentioned.

the East. Asserting Ukrainian identity replaced the inaccuracy of the noun 'Rus', which referred to a variety of Slavic peoples. The Hungarian occupation also came into play. The deep animosity felt by the Slavs towards the occupying forces fed a flow of Carpathian-Rusyn migrants towards Slovakia. It also enhanced the attraction felt for the Soviet Union. As the Red Army advanced in Bukovina and in Bessarabia in summer 1940, many Ruthenian villagers were also ready to welcome the Red Army soldiers. However, the latter stopped before the Hungarian border, which was then considered by Soviet diplomacy as 'one of the most stable in Europe'.<sup>26</sup> A great many youngsters, feeling they benefited from the new joint border, then decided to flee Hungarian Ruthenia to reach the USSR, but there were limitations to cross-border fraternity in those times of war and Stalinism. Indeed, they were absolutely not welcomed as expected. When crossing the Uzhok Pass, they were intercepted by the Soviet border guards who had little knowledge of the multinational subtleties in an area that was, from then on, subjugated by Hungary. They therefore arrested the Czech-Ukrainians whom they labelled Hungarian spies and deported them to the Gulag.<sup>27</sup> The prisoners were not liberated in the direct aftermath of the Barbarossa invasion and the signature of the alliance between the USSR and Czechoslovakia on 21 July 1941, as the area truly appeared as Hungarian. Not until spring 1942 did the 3,000 or so Carpathian-Rusyns leave the camps and then join, after a period of physical recovery and military training, the 1st Czechoslovakian Army Corps led by General Svoboda which fought alongside the Red Army, notably during the bloody Battle of Kiev and the difficult liberation of Slovakia.<sup>28</sup>

The converging perspectives of Moscow and Prague regarding Ruthenia – several conversations Beneš participated in during the war<sup>29</sup> bear witness

26 *Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki, 1940-22 iunia 1941*, kniga 1 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1995), document no. 43, conversation between the Soviet Plenipotentiary representative and the Hungarian minister for Foreign Affairs, 13 February 1940, p. 86.

27 Though not as well-known as the epic episode of the Poles of the Anders Army, this story is persistent in collective memory in Transcarpathia today; interview of Petr Ivanovitch in Strazh, 7 July 2008, *Reabilitovani Istorieiu. Zakarpatskaia oblast'*, 2 vols (Uzhgorod: Vidavnistvo 'Zakarpattia', 2003); Françoise Mayer, 'L'URSS, terre de promesses?', in *Déportés en URSS. Récits d'Européens au goulag*, ed. A. Blum, M. Craveri and V. Nivelon (Paris: Autrement/RFI, 2012), pp. 29-47.

28 Svoboda, *Ot Buzuluka do Prahi* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1969).

29 In addition to the Beneš-Maisky conversation in London on 22-23 September 1939, during which the Ruthenian issue was broached, the negotiations for a Friendship and Mutual Aid Agreement mostly provided the subject under discussion, before the decisive meetings on 21 March and 23 March 1945, that led to Beneš's unofficial engagement. See *Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1939-1945*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 86, vol. 2, pp. 171-172, 177-182, and 496-522.

to that fact – were also rooted in the common memory of the Munich crisis. The idea of a common border with the Soviets in this area, characterized by contemporaries as the ‘door to the Danubian Plain’, could indeed be of strategic importance should Hungary or Germany decide on an attack. As early as December 1943, when negotiations for the Friendship and Mutual Aid Agreement were under way, Beneš used the terms Ukrainian Transcarpathia, thereby showing he was not averse to handing over Ruthenia in the long run. From the Czech viewpoint, given the hostility against Hungary and its irredentism, the prevailing feeling was that it was better to have a Ukrainian than a Hungarian Ruthenia. Moreover, the Czechs were not exactly eager to hold a border in common with Romania. However, any potential change as regarded the border delineation was postponed *de facto* until after the war, since it called for a decree of the future Czech parliament. In the meantime, the restoration of the Czechoslovak State as the state of three Slavic peoples was supported by all the anti-fascist political forces, including the Communists. For those opposed to Beneš, meanwhile, and for both the Czech and Slovak anti-Communists, the 1943 Agreement was ‘the instrument of the extension of Soviet imperialism in Central Europe’.

From the autumn of 1944 onward, the one thing that sped up the process of incorporating Ruthenia into the USSR was the growing spontaneous popular movement that was organized in Ruthenia. It was presented in Moscow as an internal Czech affair and officially perceived in Prague as an initiative launched from Kiev, thus becoming a strong argument in the course of the bilateral negotiations. As a result, on 27 December 1944, Vyshinski, like Molotov on the following day, whilst reaffirming Moscow’s fidelity to the previous commitments that were made, observed the necessity of taking into account the strong ongoing popular movement in Transcarpathia.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore the rivalry between Prague and Warsaw also came into play to win over the Kremlin’s good graces, in view to obtaining a favourable arbitration of the territorial disputes between the two countries. The Poles, who had no choice but to accept the loss of eastern Galicia to the USSR, seemed to be ahead of the Czechs when it came to obtaining some compensation from Moscow. Hence, the Czechs feared a favourable arbitration over Cieszyn/Těšín as well as the Ratibor/Racibórz District

30 Telegrams from Fierlinger, the Czech ambassador in Moscow, about his talks with Vyshinski and Molotov, 27 and 28 December 1944, *Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1939-1945*, op. cit. vol. 2, pp. 406-410. The documents, which have been translated into Russian, are also published in Valentina Marina, *Zakarpatskaia Ukraina*, op. cit., pp. 253-257.

then under Polish occupation.<sup>31</sup> The negotiation over Cieszyn/Těšín was to take place in Moscow on 18 June, which quickened the decision on the Czech side. By ceding Ruthenia, the Czechs hoped at least to be placed on an equal footing with the Poles. This was how Gottwald, then at the head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, argued along with Hubert Ripka who militated for a pragmatic approach to the issue.<sup>32</sup> More importantly, Beneš was determined not to alienate the Soviets, whose support was crucial to oust the Germans and the Czech Hungarians, one of a set of priorities for the new government.

### Blurred Boundaries

When the troops led by General Petrov on the 4th Ukrainian front fought off the Germans and the Hungarians in autumn 1944, the future incorporation of the area remained an open-ended issue for most of the administrations and populations involved. The deployment of military operations in the area was carried out in coordination with those on the second front led by General Malinovski, whose target was Debrecen followed by Budapest. Though largely made up of soldiers from the Carpathians, the troops of the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps commanded by General Svoboda followed a more northerly route through the Ducla Pass to enter Slovakia. In addition, from May to October 1944 in Ruthenia, over which the Wehrmacht and the Red Army were fighting, 262 partisans had been sent by the staff of the Ukrainian partisans to set up a partisan movement which numbered about 1,700 fighters in the autumn and created five underground Communist organizations 720 men strong.<sup>33</sup> Such a mobilization, though it was supported by the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist party, admittedly counted a small number of men and was exogenous – the partisan groups were supervised by Soviet officers. It remained no less crucial to provide the network of informers and agents needed at the liberation to maintain control over the territory and the population.

The attitude of the Soviet troops and, behind the front line, of SMERSH under the leadership of General Kovalchuck and its political commissar Lev Mekhlis, bear witness to a kind of ambivalence. Was Ruthenia a hostile

31 AMAEF, Europe 1944-1949, Tchecoslovaquie-URSS, vol. 58.

32 Karel Kaplan, *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia*, op. cit., pp. 19-32.

33 Marina, op. cit., p. 45.

or a friendly territory? On 18 October 1944, when the 4th Ukrainian Army crossed the Carpathians and occupied several Ruthenian villages, Stalin stated that it had penetrated from 20 to 50 kilometres into Czechoslovak territory.<sup>34</sup> This was therefore an allied country. The poor peasants in the Orthodox mountain villages of the Carpathians welcomed the Red Army soldiers as liberators and SMERSH operatives devoted themselves to the recruitment of informers and Communists.<sup>35</sup> However the strong presence of Hungarian communities in the plain of former Pannonia, which stretches to Budapest, implies that the area was also identified with vanquished Hungarian land.<sup>36</sup> In the Magyar-speaking villages and cities, the prevalent mood was one of revenge. The Soviets acted according to the principles of collective responsibility and collective punishment. For instance – and the same thing would happen a few days later in Hungary – the soldiers walked the streets around town saying ‘*Davai chasy*’ – ‘Give [me] your watch’ – words that the people who were children at the time still remember. The phrase stood as a euphemism behind which there lay other memories of plunders and of summary executions of the fathers and older brothers who had collaborated with the Hungarian occupying forces, and the departure of the men aged eighteen to fifty-five on account of a ‘*malenkaia rabota na tri dnia*’ (a little three-day job).<sup>37</sup> In actual fact, they were led to the Svaliava camp, where typhus was rife, before leaving for the Donbass mines as part of disciplinary battalions. Two-thirds of them came back in 1948.<sup>38</sup> There were thus limits between supposed loyalty and unspoken betrayals which crisscrossed the map of Transcarpathia and created dividing lines between localities and districts alike.

34 F. Nemeč, V. Moudry, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

35 AUSB, 13/928, pp. 55-65, 73-76, 229.

36 AUSB, 13/928: list of the towns predominantly populated by Germans or Hungarians, pp. 8-10, on the results of the dismantling of the Hungarian agents on the territory of Transcarpathian Ukraine, pp. 176-191.

37 Interviews carried out in Csop, Kisszelmenc and Kigýos, interviews with the curator of the Berogovo museum, 16-23 October 2007. Since the end of the USSR, and because of the dynamism of the Hungarian memorial projects, 130 villages host monuments that are reminiscent of this episode.

38 A decree of the State Defence Committee had ordered the internment of the whole German population of working-age people (men aged 17-45 and women aged 18-30) for the territories liberated by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Ukrainian fronts, namely Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia, and that they should be sent as part of disciplinary battalions to the Donbass for the reconstruction of the coal industry, *Sovetskii Faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope 1944-1953*, vol. 1: 1944-1948. *Dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999), pp. 116-117. In Transcarpathia, in November and December 1944, nearly 23,000 former conscripts of the Hungarian Army from the area were interned, as well as 8,500 Hungarians and Germans.



At the end of 1944, the only obvious borders, temporary though they proved to be, were the front lines heading west. The capitals of the political liberation of Carpathian and Danubian Europe were located in the eastern periphery of the national territories that were still under occupation. The post-war programmes were thus officially declared by provisional governments in Mukachevo and Khust (in Ruthenia), Banska Bystrica (in eastern Slovakia), and Debrecen (in eastern Hungary).

The demarcation line then divided the rear of the front line, which was under Red Army administration, and the territories handed over to civilian administration. In this area, the limit between the military and the civilian represented at the same time the boundary between Soviet rule and non-Soviet law.

The military administration of the territory by the Soviet High Command was one way of leaving the question of subsequent annexation undecided. In Ruthenia, on 8 May 1944, the Soviet-Czechoslovak Agreement negotiated between the Soviet Plenipotentiary Lebedev and Hubert Ripka provided

first that the Soviet commander in chief [would] possess the supreme authority and responsibility in all matters essential to the conduct of the war in the zone of war operations and, second, that a Czechoslovak Government delegate for the liberated territories [would] be appointed with the task of organizing the administration of the liberated territory, to reconstitute there the Czechoslovak armed forces and to ensure the active cooperation of the country with the Soviet armies.<sup>39</sup>

The battle for a concrete sovereignty over the liberated territories took place in the aftermath of the agreement setting Frantisek Nemeč, appointed delegate to the liberated territories, and the twenty-two members of his delegation,<sup>40</sup> against General Petrov and Mekhlis. Their one obsession was to hold the ground as soon as possible in the immediate vicinity of the front line. By 26 August, the Czech delegation was ready to leave Moscow for Ruthenia. Relying on a successful military insurrection in Banska Bystrica,

39 For the whole passage, see F. Nemeč and V. Moudry, *The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

40 Nemeč was surrounded by experts from the ministries of the government in exile in London and by representatives of the different Czech, Slovak and Ruthenian political parties. Among them there are three Ruthenian Communists: Pavel Tsibere and Ivan Petruschak came from London and Ivan Turyanitsa from Moscow. As for military affairs, two generals, one of them being Nizborski, who was appointed military commandant of the liberated territories, were in charge.

they flew to Slovakia on 7 October 1944 only to discover defeat and the German troops holding the ridgeline. Not until 18 October did the 4th Army break the stranglehold of the Carpathians and enter Ruthenia. Stalin told the Czechs, and Beneš ordered the delegation to make their way there as fast as possible. On 28 October, Petrov, Nemeč and Mekhlis held their first meeting on the road from Lvov to Uzhgorod.

The first encounter immediately, and unsurprisingly, demonstrated Soviet supremacy. The commander in chief had a free hand to define the geographical area of the war operations. Thus, when Nemeč insisted on establishing his staff in the capital, Uzhgorod, Petrov refused, arguing from a military viewpoint that the front line was too close. The demarcation line was then drawn on the map and divided the Ruthenian territory: it would remain unchanged afterwards despite the Czech requests for a modification, even when the front line had moved considerably further away. It stretched from the north to the south and left the main Ruthenian cities of Uzhgorod, Mukachevo and Beregovo under Soviet military rule. It only granted the Czechoslovak authorities the eastern perimeter of the area. Nemeč had to set up his cabinet in Khust.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the Czech delegation remained in a state of complete isolation. It was entirely dependent upon the army-instituted communications system that imposed non-coded messages. Since the beginning of November 1944, contact between Khust and Moscow had been no easy matter. Only a few telegrams were received or forwarded from the Czech embassy in Moscow; others were set aside. When Nemeč came to Moscow at the beginning of December, he discovered a great many copies of telegrams he had never received in Khust. He suspected the Russians as well as Fierlinger, the Czech ambassador, who was close to the Soviets. At the beginning of November, the Czech delegate asked the military authorities to grant him direct radio contact with London and reiterated his request on several occasions in the course of the month but the Russians invariably refused. They explained that such a practice would be dangerous if the Germans came into possession of the Czechoslovak cipher. It can be noted, as an indirect result, that the details on what was happening in Ruthenia in the files of the Quai d'Orsay are of little quality. The latter are exclusively based on information provided by London.<sup>42</sup>

41 For an account of these episodes: Nemeč, *The Soviet Seizure*, op. cit., chapter by Hust, pp. 83-124.

42 AMAEF, Europe series. URSS. Ruthénie subcarpatique. vol. 82, p. 59.



On the ground, the battle for sovereignty took on different forms. The most blatant of these was conscription. Indeed, what was at stake was to ascertain whether the mobilized soldiers belonged to the Czech Army or if they had voluntarily joined the Red Army. The demarcation line laid down by the military and the no-go area status ascribed to their zone made the battle a lopsided affair. The Czechoslovak recruiting agents were not allowed to enter or interfere west of the line while, conversely, Red Army recruitment was organized at the level of the whole of Ruthenia. At the end of 1944, 520 recruiting stations had been established, allowing for the mobilization in the Red Army of 15,000 to 16,000 men. The Czechoslovak delegation proved unable to recruit more than 1,500 to 2,000 men.<sup>43</sup> General Petrov played the ethnic card in the negotiations with the Czech delegation: for him, the Russians and the Ukrainians had the right to serve in the Red Army if they had expressed the wish to do so. It was impossible for Nemeč to agree with this because, from a legal point of view, Czechoslovak citizens could only serve in foreign armies if the President of the Republic had previously given his consent. He sent telegrams to London underlining the political aspect of the question.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the recruitment of volunteers for the Red Army might have led the local population into believing that Ruthenia would be annexed to the USSR. Indeed, to a peasant, the army one fought for gave an indication as to the country one belonged to.

The right to print and post declarations and decisions that had been made was also the subject of hard-fought battles. Many incidents are documented in the SMERSH reports and in the protests emanating from the Czech delegate. The censure upon the declarations issued by the Czechs was exerted by the Khust military commander who is called '*nash kommandant*'<sup>45</sup> (our commandant) in the SMERSH reports. The process of disseminating Czech decisions in the cities and villages was most often blocked. But the Czech officers tried to resist. For example, they systematically seized and tore the leaflets proclaiming the union between Ruthenia and Soviet Ukraine.

In this context of unstable sovereignty in the Ruthenian territory, the campaign in favour of incorporation into Soviet Ukraine aimed at presenting the future annexation of the region as justified on the ground by the plebiscite of its inhabitants.

43 Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 64, p. 190.

44 Nemeč and Moudry, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

45 AUSBUS, collections 13/928, special communiqué on the Khust incidents sent to Kovalchuk, 11 December 1944, pp. 275-284.

## By the Will of the People

If we are to believe the report signed by Captain Safranco, a Ruthenian ex-officer of the Czech Army, and twelve of his soldiers, and then transmitted to Bamborough, the British Consul in Czechoslovakia,<sup>46</sup> the Soviet occupying regime and the threat of the use of firearms led to a forced annexation of Ruthenia:

In September 1944, immediately after the liberation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Soviet Military authorities in Uzhorod summoned the local population to the building of the former 'provincial office' where a Red Army major agitated for the annexation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia by SSSR. After a few minutes the audience hastily left the hall. Two days later a second meeting was summoned, and on leaving the hall, each member of the audience was compelled to attest a 'voluntary' petition for union with SSSR. The military guard in attendance took objectors into arrest. In the villages, the population was summoned to the school buildings and, under the muzzles of automatic weapons, each individual was forced to sign a declaration favouring voluntary union with SSSR. Later the Red Army visited every house and collected signatures by force of arms. In some cases individuals were compelled to write as many as fifteen different names on the petition to bring the signatures up to the required number.

School children from the age of seven years were also compelled to sign. There were instances where children, warned by their parents, avoided signing by escaping through school-room windows on the appearance of the Red Army; they went into hiding for many months (this happened at Maly Berezhny, Zarici, Dubrivic and elsewhere).

The military rights of the strongest (e.g. of the occupying force) and terror would therefore seem to explain everything. However, one question remains unanswered: why did the Red Army, which was by then in total control, need to build up this moment of democratic turmoil?

The Ruthenian plebiscite affair that I shall discuss here should be situated in two different contexts that somewhat put in perspective both its novelty and specificity.

First of all, the 1939-1940 annexations had already given rise to electoral processes characterized by the fact that they were hastily organized in

46 Public Record Office (Kew), FO 371/56738, pp. 56-62.

rural borderland areas that were relatively impervious to what might be termed high politics. Moreover, this was done at a particularly unpropitious time for the dispassionate organization of democratic elections: the Soviet army occupied the area and the situation, in the aftermath of the war, was still chaotic. Jan Gross has depicted such phases in the case of annexed eastern Poland.<sup>47</sup> Besides, from Kiev, the same protagonists, in particular Khrushchev and Grechukha, organized the same kind of seemingly direct democracy that was favourable to Greater Ukraine.

Moreover, the recourse to externally democratic processes was a consensual obligation in the immediate post-war period, a time when political modalities had to endorse the rupture with the preceding Nazi order. By the spring of 1944, the popular will was presented as being at the heart of the recovery of territories by both the Soviets and the East European political leaders who took part in national fronts. The reorganization of political life in Czechoslovakia – that was still under occupation – had to be effected in a similar way to most of the European countries by organizing, in the parishes, districts and provinces, people's committees that were to be the foundation of the new post-war democratic order. It should be noted that in nearby, vanquished Hungary, national committees were being set up and organized elections for a provisional National Assembly as early as December 1944. The elections were marked by Communist voluntarism and the interventionism of the Red Army. Peter Kenez gives the following account of the electoral procedure:

[T]he Soviet Army lent trucks to help the process of elections: these went around the liberated countryside asking people to elect delegates and then immediately took them to Debrecen that was at that time the temporary capital of the government. In a little more than a week, more than a million and a half people participated in the elections at a time when hardly more than half of the country was freed and there existed no system of communication or transportation. The politicians considered it important that the legitimacy of the government should arise not from an interparty agreement but from a National Assembly created by free elections. Since the members of the cabinet had been chosen in Moscow,

47 In eastern Poland, two elections were organized during the first six months of Soviet occupation: in October 1939 and March 1940. The most significant took place on Sunday, 22 October 1939, and produced the National (People's) Assemblies of the Western Ukraine and of Western Belorussia that voted for integration into the Soviet Socialist Republics of Ukraine and Belorussia, Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 71-113.

the election was a mere formality; nevertheless this formality gave the government a greater legitimacy than if it had simply been put together by consultations among various political parties. 230 people were elected and 40 per cent of the delegates were affiliated to the communists. The date chosen for the first meeting was December 21, Stalin's birthday. Officially, the Provisional National Assembly elected the government on December 22, 1944.<sup>48</sup>

The process undergone in Ruthenia is similar but at the same time different. The objective was also present for the Soviets, who relied on the Ruthenian Communists, to establish, through highly varied and more often than not questionable means, instruments of power able to claim some democratic legitimacy. The view taken by the American and British allies carried little weight, unlike in Hungary where their representatives were present even if they had no power within the ACC. The Czechs appealed to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) delegation for a public health mission in Ruthenia: they were still waiting for their visas on 12 March 1945.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the view taken by the Czechs and the Slovaks is vital. The stake of incorporating the USSR had to be endorsed not only by the government but also by Czechoslovak public opinion. The chosen method was to hold a plebiscite in favour of the union with Soviet Ukraine.

The committees were organized on the ground from the spring of 1944 onwards. All collaborators were officially excluded from them, a term which designated, in Ruthenia, not only the German and Hungarian parties, but also the Ukrainian nationalists close to the Ukrainian People's Army (UPA) and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).

On the ground, the coercive measures Captain Safranco and his soldiers described were unquestionably one of the privileged means whereby Soviet law could be forced upon the population, especially in the villages where the liberation by the Red Army brought its share of punishment for collaborators and traitors alike.

However, the people who inhabited the area, as they evoke the aftermath of the war and the agents of the Muscovite regime, summon up memories of manipulations and material incentives against a background of helplessness and disastrous living conditions in terms of food and health. In the

48 See Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 31.

49 AMAEF, vol. 82, pp. 24-27.

Magyar-speaking villages, the inhabitants very often signed the text in favour of the union with the USSR in a language they did not understand and on the basis of a lie: the petition supposedly asked Stalin for the return of the men who had been arrested. Moreover the sheets with the signatures bore absolutely no other text. In other villages, flour was handed out while the signing of the petitions was taking place. For Transcarpathian Ukraine, 250,000 *poods* of wheat – about 4,000 tons – had been provided, which the commanding officers of the Ukrainian front were distributing in trucks and cars in the cities and villages.<sup>50</sup> The disastrous living conditions in terms of food and sanitation must be once again brought to the fore. Associating active propaganda with the retention of information liable to be detrimental to the principle of annexation provided another well-tryed method. It is thus interesting to dwell for a moment upon the affair of the leave of absence granted to the Czechoslovak soldiers who were quartered in Slovakia. After the tough battles of October, General Svoboda allowed the officers and soldiers on leave, the vast majority of whom originated from Transcarpathia, to go back to their villages. The arrival of the officers and soldiers reinforced the propaganda, both in favour of Czechoslovakia and hostile to the Soviet Union, in the villages where people had not forgotten their first encounter with Soviet border guards and their recent experiences as *zek* – a Russian term for a forced labour camp inmate – in the Gulag. The SMERSH documents express worries about this propaganda that could act as a counterweight to the Communist propaganda in Ruthenia and demand that General Petrov forbid soldiers on leave to go back home.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, running parallel to these coercive, manipulative and censure-imposing methods, the mobilization led by the apparatuses of the Red Army and SMERSH to develop a pro-Ukrainian activism of Communist allegiance did remain prevalent. Even though the years of Hungarian occupation had contributed to decimating the ranks of the local Communists, it must nevertheless be remembered that in the 1935 Czechoslovak elections, the Communists did well in the area (around 26.5 per cent of the vote).<sup>52</sup> The mobilization came under several guises and mixed ethnic Ukrainian claims, Sovietophilia and Russophilia, which noticeably characterized the Rusyn Orthodox communities, with increasingly virulent criticisms against the Czechs. Targeted work enabled SMERSH to recruit pro-USSR activists at the

50 Interviews with Arpad Iosifovich (Uzhgorod) and with Sandor Balogh (Csop), 18 October 2007.

51 AUSBU, collections 13/928, pp. 278-280.

52 Marian Tokar, *Proukrajinski polityčni partii Zakarpatta v 1919-1939 rokach*, Uzhgorod, 2001.

smallest local scale.<sup>53</sup> Obviously, the certainty of the German-Hungarian defeat and the victory of the Red Army was a strong incentive to win the population over to the Soviet cause, in particular as far as young people were concerned.

By relying on people's biographic data, SMERSH skilfully exploited ethnic divisions: in the Ruthenian villages, it was all a matter of dissociating the Rusyns from the anti-Soviet Ukrainian partisans. Besides, a past marked by collaboration and a fear of purges, one of its corollaries, were determining individual factors when it came to creating devoted Communists. Finally, the social and religious divisions were widely put to use, all the more so as they often tied in with ethnic differences. The promise to distribute land favourably influenced a great many Rusyns, who hoped to recover the land that was vacant at a time when the Hungarians and the Germans had either fled or been taken prisoner.

Such work, as it was carried out on the ground and spurred on by the victories of the Red Army, ensured the expansion of the groups of Communist activists. The Communist Party appeared rather rapidly as the only national force in the immediate post-war period and the Communists held a dominant position in the People's Committees, which were most often organized as organs of power and which worked in direct contact with the occupying authorities, bypassing the Czech representatives around Nemeč. The pro-Ukrainian and pro-Soviet bent of the Ruthenian Communist Party, at that time, differed from the position in favour of the maintenance of the former borders of Czechoslovakia upheld by the Czech and Slovak Communist representatives in their dealings with the delegation.

The campaign for the union of Ruthenia with Soviet Ukraine was then launched in autumn 1944 on the initiative of the committees in which the Communists held a predominant position. On 4 November, one week after the delegate arrived, meetings were held in the villages. The mobilization reached a peak during the week of 12 to 19 November. The slogans referred to both Ukrainian patriotism and the love of the great Soviet Union: 'We are part and parcel of the great Ukrainian people', 'the land is Soviet land from Uzhgorod to the Kremlin'.<sup>54</sup> The role of the Communist Party of Transcarpathian Ukraine (KPZU), backed up by the military, was essential. Turyanitsa had arrived with the official Czech delegation as the representative

53 For instance, AUSBU, collections 13/928: notes on the Uzhgorod population, pp. 244-247; data collected on the inhabitants of the village of Turian Remeta (2000 inhabitants) by Balakirev, assistant head clerk of the 1st department of SMERSH, 9 November 1944, pp. 161-175.

54 Marian Tokar, *Proukrajinski politični partii Zakarpatta v 1919-1939 rokach*, Užgorod, 2001.

of the Ruthenian Communist Party and, as early as 16 November, had settled at his mother's home in Mukachevo in the military zone, where he became assistant chairman of the city's National Committee. On 19 November, he organized a conference of the Communist Party during which twenty-four members of the new Central Committee of the KPZU were elected. The circulation of the Communist newspaper *Zakarpatskaia Pravda* increased at the same time from 4,000 to 8,000 copies. When a delegation of the Czech Communist Party office abroad went to Uzhgorod at the end of November, they were struck by the political weight of the KPZU and by the scope of the unofficial plebiscite that was taking place.<sup>55</sup> The religious aspect of the mobilization is also quite interesting. On 18 November 1944, a congress brought together twenty-three Orthodox priests who asked Stalin that the Carpatho-Russian Republic be incorporated to the Soviet Union and that their church, which depended upon the Serbian Church, should join the Moscow patriarchate.<sup>56</sup> Basically, the Communist schoolteachers and the Orthodox priests happened to be, in numerous villages, the agents for change whether they perceived it as being Russian, Ukrainian or Soviet.

Conversely, Nemeč unsuccessfully tried to measure up to his opponents. The conference of the delegates of the National Committees of the five districts of his zone, which he meant to organize on 21 November, could not be held for lack of an agreement with the staff officers of the 4th front. The measures taken against the pro-Soviet agitators in the districts supervised by the Czechs immediately gave rise to meetings and protest demonstrations which challenged Czech law and influence, thus compelling the delegation to back down.<sup>57</sup>

The movement in favour of the incorporation to the USSR took the form of a series of meetings and of petitions sent to Stalin. The collected petitions stemmed from varied collectives such as the People's Council in the village of Zolotarevo (on 12 November 1944, 60 signatures), a meeting in the town of Volova (19 November, 70 signatures), a meeting of peasants from the village of Senevir in the Volovski District (226 signatures), a petition by the citizens of Goriana (17 November, 48 signatures), in the village of Korolevo

55 Georgi Dimitrov, *Dnevnik* (Sofia: Universitetsko izd-vo 'Sv. Kliment Okhridski', 1997), p. 449. Out of 4,715 members of the KPZU in October 1945, 2,553 had joined the Party since the autumn of 1944. Report from Khrushchev to Molotov on the situation in Transcarpathian Ukraine, 12 November 1945, RGASPI, 82/2/154, p. 209.

56 A chapter is devoted to this issue in T. Volokitina, G. Murashko and A. Noskova, eds, *Moskva i Vostochnaâ Evropa: vlast' i cerkov' v period obshchestvennykh transformacij 40-50-h godov XX veka*, op. cit., pp. 374-415.

57 Nemeč and Moudry, op. cit., p. 111.



on the river Tisza (25 November, 147 signatures), delegates of the People's Committee of the Tiatchev District (November, 366 signatures), inhabitants of Golubino in the Svaliava District (19 November, 371 signatures) and so on.<sup>58</sup> Some of the petitions took the form of entreaties to Stalin. Thus the publication in the *Zakarpatskaia Pravda* on 17 November of the plea of V. Dianicha, who was at the head of a group of partisans, addressed to Stalin:

Listen to us and understand Iosif Vissarionovitch! Welcome us as one of your family. [...] You have given us a new lease of life, for up until now we were almost dead. This is why we appeal to You as to our father. [...] Take our poor little mountainous and farming countryside into your indestructible Union of free Republics. We shall level out the Carpathians, if they are an obstacle, we shall overcome every obstacle if only we hear your paternal [answer]: Yes!<sup>59</sup>

The plebiscite display in Transcarpathia was a cause of mobilization, division, and disgust. In his memoirs, Frantisek Nemeč remembers his surprise at the speed at which the events unfolded – two weeks – and the swing of the population in favour of Czechoslovakia to the pro-Soviet side.<sup>60</sup> Vasyl Markus, a historian and a witness of these events, has devoted a book to the subject in which he strives to find out what derived from true aspirations and what emerged out of Soviet manipulation procedures.<sup>61</sup> The present-day inhabitants who were then adolescents often remember this period with accuracy. On 25 and 26 September 1944, after collecting petitions for several weeks, 663 delegates who supposedly represented 80 per cent of the cities and villages gathered in Mukachevo in the military-controlled zone. The political bodies of the Soviet army, since they issued the passes and the logistical aid to transport the delegates, were the true organizers of this congress. This assembly, which was labelled the first National Congress of the People's Committees and was presided by Turyanitsa, unanimously voted for the return to the soil of the Ukrainian homeland and incorporation into the Soviet Union. It elected a popular Rada comprising seventeen members, ten of whom were Communists. The manifesto of the congress was then addressed to Stalin and Khrushchev and brought to the knowledge

58 *Arkhiva Vneshnei Politiki RF*, o6/6/56/765, pp. 11-27, quoted in Marina, p. 79.

59 Quoted in Marina, op. cit., p. 78.

60 Nemeč and Moudry, op. cit., p. 107.

61 Vasyl Markus, *L'incorporation de l'Ukraine subcarpatique à l'Ukraine soviétique, 1944-45* (Louvain: Centre ukrainien d'études en Belgique, 1956).



of the Transcarpathian adult population: 4 million people signed it before 1 January 1945. The number stood in lieu of democratic debate: 20,000 people had volunteered in the Red Army, 300,000 had voted, and 4 million had signed.

Thus there was a clear desire to have the whole body of the nation participate in the plebiscite in favour of the USSR and thereby to give it a constitutional value. Ruthenia had never been part of the tsarist empire and there were strong bonds of friendship between the Czechs and the Soviets at the end of the war. There had never been a border where one was delineated in the wake of 29 June 1945. All these elements entailed the necessary public legitimation of the change in allegiance. On 26 November 1944, a copy of all the petitions that had been collected was thus addressed by the Department of External Affairs of the People's Commissariat of Defence to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs then in charge of preparing the negotiations with the Czech authorities for the transfer of Ruthenia.

The narrative that got the upper hand for foreign public opinion was that of an irredentist movement supported by the Ukrainian Communists which expanded spontaneously, and that the Czech and Soviet governments had from then on no other choice but to take into account.

### **The Border: A National and Social Means of Emancipation?**

However, this Ukrainian narrative, while being the most understandable on the European stage at the time, masks more than reveals when it comes to the real motives behind the relative success of the plebiscite. There is a consensus among historians who consider that one-third of the inhabitants were possibly in favour of the change in allegiance, especially in the east and in the south of the country, whereas another third remained in a state of uncertainty. The inhabitants of these borderland areas that were formerly Austro-Hungarian proved, on the ground, to be more Russophile or pro-Soviet than pro-Ukrainian. The true Ukrainian nationalists were indeed in the anti-Soviet camp and in the extreme north of the area, where they fought alongside the Galician UPA.<sup>62</sup> The people's militias that emerged as early as December 1944 to defend the population against the enemy, whether internal or external, were most often supervised by former partisans such as Tkanko, a hero of the Soviet Union, whose reputation was derived from his

62 Note on the activities of the OUN and the UPA in Transcarpathia, 14 November 1944, AUSBU, 13/928, p. 242.

commitment to Moscow, not to Kiev.<sup>63</sup> The horizon of the agrarian reform was a crucial medium in the rallying of the people to the law of the Red Army soldiers. Between December 1944 and March 1945, by decision of the Rada and according to the record transmitted to Molotov by Khrushchev, it entailed the confiscation and the sharing out of the land taken from the Hungarians and the Germans as well as from the Kulaks whose property was limited to 70 acres in the mountains and to 55 acres in the plains. A little more than 40,000 families profited by it and gained an additional 2 to 5 acres. 1,600 families in the mountain villages were relocated to the plains within this context.<sup>64</sup>

In autumn 1945, at the moment when commissars came to mark out the new border, it is interesting to note the agency of the Communist activists in the border villages, who in some cases played a part in the choice of the border line depending on their agrarian concerns. Along the new border, the partition of the common soil could benefit the handful of poor inhabitants that had taken sides with the victorious party.<sup>65</sup>

The importance of the Orthodox religion is another essential way of supporting the expansion of the Russophile feeling. In a recapitulative report to Molotov dated 12 November 1945, Khrushchev specified that he had advised Turyanitsa, the president of the Rada, to support the Orthodox priests in their fight against the Uniates.<sup>66</sup> As early as 1946, the Greek Catholic Church in the area was submitted to intense campaigns of repression.<sup>67</sup>

63 Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 45; on the formation of the militias, AUSBU, 13/928, pp. 249-250.

64 Report from Khrushchev to Molotov on the situation in Transcarpathian Ukraine, 12 November 1945, RGASPI, 82/2/154, pp. 204-205.

65 In this way Kisszelmenc, a Hungarian village, was divided in two by the new boundary. Seemingly, this division is due less to the arbitrariness of the demarcation commissars than to the interested motives of some poor peasants who had become influential since the arrival of the Red Army: the houses of the rich peasants located in the western part of the village stayed on the Czechoslovakian side whereas their lands located in the eastern part became soviet. Interviews carried out in the village of Kisszelmenc, October 2007; Miklos Zelei, 'Et le rideau de fer tomba le 23 décembre 2005... Réunification aux confins de l'Union européenne', *Courrier international*, 799 (23 February-1 March 2006).

66 Report from Khrushchev to Molotov on the situation in Transcarpathian Ukraine, 12 November 1945, RGASPI, 82/2/154, p. 212.

67 As from 1945, the NKGB had organized, in western Ukraine, a pro-Soviet Greek Catholic movement and an assembly that met in Lvov on 8-10 March 1946 staged a rupture with Rome. The Greek Catholic priests were then hunted as they refused this manipulation that also spread in Transcarpathia. Khrushchev was particularly involved in this fight which led to the assassination of Romzha, the bishop of the diocese of Mukachevo. See Iuri Shapoval, 'The Ukrainian Years, 1894-1949', in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. W. Taubman, S. Khrushchev and A. Gleason (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 8-43.

Such social and religious motives for preferring the Soviet Union also rested on complex identity claims. Indeed, Ukrainian identity was less vivid than in the north, in Galicia, and the sense of belonging to a specific Carpatho-Ukrainian culture most often induced the inhabitants to describe themselves as Rusyns. The Soviets played that Rusyn card to establish their power in the area. At the same time, the space where this regional identity spread was not restricted to Ruthenia but rather extended to eastern Slovakia. This fact was noticeable during the campaign for incorporation into the USSR, which also developed within the National Committees and peasants' meetings in Slovakia in the Prešov area at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945. During the Mukachevo congress, several delegates who originated from Slovakia were present. Such a gradual expansion of the popular plebiscite, a potential cause for challenging the territorial integrity of Slovakia, alarmed Prague, Bratislava and Moscow. The subject was brought up several times: on 23 January 1945, during the six-hour discussion between Gottwald, Stalin and Molotov about Czech internal affairs, and in March 1945, when Beneš came to Moscow. Since January 1945, the Slovak National Council had been calling for the immediate recognition of the principle of self-determination for Ruthenia.<sup>68</sup> There remained, in the background, a concern for the interruption of mobilization on the ground that, in the long run, could possibly threaten the integrity of the Slovak territory.<sup>69</sup> In Prešov, for instance, the president of the local council did not acknowledge the authority of the Czech provisional government, whose headquarters were in Kosice, and deemed himself bound by the decisions taken at the Rada's seat in Mukachevo.<sup>70</sup> Yet it was an established fact at the level of the governments that the development of the scenario in Ruthenia was in no way to be re-enacted in Slovakia. The directives of the 4th Ukrainian front requested that no volunteers for the Red Army be recruited on Slovak territory. Besides, as early as 21 March 1945, the solution consisted of establishing the right to opt out for the inhabitants. To Beneš, it was a matter of giving a guarantee to the Ruthenian Czech and Slovak inhabitants who did not want to find themselves subjected to Soviet law and, at the same time, of putting

68 Letter to Beneš, 24 January 1945. Among the four members that signed the letter, there were two Communists, a former Agrarian and later a prominent leader of the Slovak Democratic Party and Dr Srobar, who was not affiliated to any specific party but was always considered a liberal and a non-communist (Moudry and Nemeč, *op. cit.*, p. 162).

69 At the end of the war, the influential Carpathian-Ukrainian emigrant community in the United States and in Canada was in favour of the incorporation into Soviet Ukraine of a territory larger than Ruthenia and including the Prešov area.

70 Marina, *op. cit.*, p. 150

an end to Carpatho-Ukrainian irredentism in Slovakia. The right to opt out before January 1946 was included in the 29 June Agreement.<sup>71</sup> The latter was based on strictly ethnic criteria and did not take into account individuals' choices. Thus, a great many Ruthenian inhabitants who wished to remain in Czechoslovakia because they had fought in the Czech Army were not granted the right to do so. The departure of the Czechs and the Slovaks from Ruthenia emptied out some villages like Strazh, an outpost of Czech settlers facing the Hungarian plain since the 1920s. In all, the opting commission in Uzhgorod registered 1,551 families, that is to say 5,000 persons, who left, but the figures in Prague and Bratislava point to a number of 15,000 to 20,000 people from Transcarpathia who really opted out.<sup>72</sup> As far as the Slovaks are concerned, a certain number of families of poor peasants decided to leave, attracted by Communist agitation in favour of annexation and by the way in which the Communists had painted the rich land available in their true Soviet homeland in glowing colours. The Bovalik family were among them and regretted it. They thought they would be able to settle near the Slovak border in familiar surroundings; they were sent to the Rovno region where, due to collectivization, they lost everything they had brought along, particularly their cattle. Thanks to their tenacity and the help of a former Communist partisan they managed, when the *kolkhoz* was set up in 1950, to settle in Huta, a village on the border of Slovakia. Another villager from Huta called Maria, who also came as a little girl from Slovakia in 1945, was still filled with wonder as she recollected her first ever train journey.<sup>73</sup>

The question of the expansion of the plebiscite to eastern Slovakia is rather symptomatic of the agency of the Communists on the ground and of the local populations whose national and social aspirations grew owing to imperial and national strategies.

71 The right to opt out was then prolonged until the end of 1946. Besides, a new law on the right to opt out was signed on 10 July 1946. It extended this right to the Czechs from Volhynia (GARF, 5446, 47/66, pp. 3-4, 48/50, pp. 5-15, 48a/219, pp. 3-11).

72 Ivan I. Vovkanič, *Čehoslovaččina v 1945-1948 rokovah* (Uzhgorod: Vidavnistvo V. Padiaka, 2000), p. 260.

73 Interviews carried out in Huta, 6 July 2008. The destination of the Slovaks who opted out was generally speaking Volhynia, so as to replace the Czechs who had left. Few managed to settle in Transcarpathia right away (less than 2,000 people). Many later tried to go back to Slovakia (Vovkanič, *ibid.*, pp. 262-263).

## Conclusion

The new border established between the USSR and Czechoslovakia in these borderland areas, which were formerly Austro-Hungarian and subsequently Ukrainian, emerged out of different dynamics. As the Red Army advanced to liberate Czech territory, the preliminary condition for Soviet expansionism was most obviously met. However this is far from providing an explanation. Indeed, most of the other East European territories liberated by the USSR kept their sovereignty. It can be noted that Soviet imperialism was guided less by success earned in armed action than by national limits whose ethnographic representation had existed since the First World War. In this instance it concerned the Ukrainian border. The westward expansion of the territory was not limitless. In 1949, Malenkov congratulated himself on the stable, permanent borders acquired by the USSR.<sup>74</sup> At the end of World War II, the national issues that had remained unresolved at the end of World War I were settled.

Moreover, the annexation of Ruthenia fell within the scope of a dynamic of bilateral friendship built between Moscow and Prague in the wake of the Munich crisis and given a new impulse by the December 1943 Mutual Aid Agreement. The dissymmetry in the relationship is blatant. However, while Beneš needed Stalin in the context of his anti-German and anti-Hungarian priorities, Stalin also needed the Czech ally for his European policy both in the East and in the West. The issue of Ruthenia and its borders had been dealt with by the countries of the Entente at the end of the First World War within the framework of the proceedings of the Saint-Germain-en-Laye Conference. In 1945, it only resulted in a negotiation which was quickly conducted against the background of an organized plebiscite and without the involvement of the other Allies. While the Ruthenian borders were partly ratified by the peace treaties signed with Hungary and Romania in 1947, the section of the border stretching from Ukraine to Slovakia was only validated by the ratification of the provisional Czechoslovakian Assembly and the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union on 22 and 27 November 1945. This was done following a delineation renegotiated several times in the course of the autumn.<sup>75</sup> The dissymmetry is even more blatant, however,

74 Malenkov, *32-ia godovshina Velikoj Oktiabr'skoj socialisticeskoj revolucii* (Moscow, 1949), p. 5.

75 GARF, 5446/47a/437. There is notably a dispute over six villages located on the border, *ČSR A SSSR 1945-1948. Dokumenty mezivládních jednání*, op. cit., document 64, pp. 142-143.

if we examine the concurrent actions of the Soviet and Czech authorities on the ground.

Moving the border also brought into play strategies of social and national emancipation supported by the Russian and Ukrainian conquerors as well as by part of the local population, both among the elites and the common people. The cultural, national and religious diversity of these borderland regions was not unknown to the agents of the new Soviet order, who made use of the information. It was admittedly absent in the simple rhetoric of the return of Ruthenia into the bosom of the Ukrainian homeland but it was taken into account in the mobilization and incitement techniques of the populations in support of adherence to the Soviet Union. To Jan Gross, the Soviet construction of a sham democracy in eastern Poland in autumn 1939 aimed at achieving a form of legitimacy on the international stage; it also proceeded from the Soviet manner of making the population aid and abet what was going on:

from the October elections on, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia were tainted. By submitting to the authorities and casting a ballot, they had lost their innocence. They had made a contribution; they were implicated. For the only interpretation that makes sense of the otherwise absurd herding of the people into pre-election meetings and then voting booths lies in the recognition that the Soviet authorities have never sought engagement from the population in their custody, only complicity.<sup>76</sup>

In Ruthenia, the plebiscite, the annexation and the implementation of the new border appear as so many moments when, for motives of a national, social, religious, but at the same time (and above all) of an individual nature, some people can make choices and affirm their commitment for what lies ahead: collaborating or standing back, fleeing or staying. The ideological preoccupations of the new occupying force led to the emergence of local interests that effectively found therein the possibility for both expression and action.

All things considered, when compared with eastern Galicia where the Ukrainian resistance movement against the Soviets held the forces of the Soviet order in check for several years, the annexation was relatively easy and the Soviet regime got settled quite rapidly due to the ability of the

<sup>76</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 113.

Soviets to handle a diversity that proved beneficial for them. Herein lies the entire paradox of the Stalinist regime. Its contribution to the ethnicization of the border areas and to the affirmation of national identities should not make us forget the fact that, to Stalin as well as to a great many leaders of empires, diversity policies remained the best method to rule over territories and, in the Soviet case, were the most effective lever to export his model of society.

*Translated by Isabelle Vallée*

# Social Security and the End of the Second World War in France, the Netherlands and Belgium

Social Peace, Organizational Power and the State

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## Introduction

A comprehensive and compulsory Social Security system was one of the innovations brought by the Liberation in Belgium and France in 1944 and 1945. In Belgium, the Decree-Law of 28 December 1944 introduced a Social Security system for salaried workers in the private sector. In France the Ordinance on Social Security, introducing a system covering sickness, child benefits, old age pensions and industrial accidents, was passed on 4 October 1945. In the Netherlands, the Van Rhijn commission, installed by the government in exile in London, had introduced the concept of Social Security and drawn up a detailed plan for a Social Security system, which was to replace the existing social insurance schemes.<sup>1</sup> Changes proved to be less far-reaching at the Liberation, however, than in France and Belgium. In 1947 the pension system was changed and would include more people, which made the pension system a 'people's insurance'. In 1949, compulsory unemployment insurance was introduced which replaced the temporary measures taken at the Liberation. In contrast to France and Belgium, the shift from social insurances to Social Security was a more gradual process, which was only completed in the 1950s, leading to a system that included more citizens than only the salaried workers of the private sector as in Belgium and France.<sup>2</sup>

Social Security had been part of the manifestos for social renewal written during the war and proclaimed at the Liberation, in which a new social

1 Ton Kappelhof, "Omdat het historisch gegroeid is". De Londense Commissie Van Rhijn en de ontwikkeling van de sociale verzekeringen in Nederland (1937-1952)', *Tijdschrift voor sociaal-economische geschiedenis*, 1/2 (2004), pp. 71-91.

2 Joop M. Roebroek and Mirjam Hertogh, *De beschavende invloed des tijds. Twee eeuwen sociale politiek, verzorgingsstaat en sociale zekerheid in Nederland* (Den Haag: VUGA, 1998), pp. 173-191.



and economic regime for the post-war period was designed. In April 1944 leaders of the Belgian pre-war employers' organizations and trade unions, together with high-ranking civil servants, had reached an agreement, the Social Pact, in which a Social Security system for salaried workers in the private sector was drawn up in detail. In the French 'Programme commun de la résistance', the programme of the Resistance for the post-war period, Social Security was mentioned as one of the building blocks of a new France after the Liberation but, unlike in Belgium, it was not developed in detail. Social Security was a general formula but it would, in contrast to the Social Pact, include all citizens. In the Dutch 'Stichting van de arbeid' (Foundation of Labour), leaders of the trade unions and employers' organizations made a blueprint for social policy in the immediate post-war period. Full employment was one of the main aims of social and economic policy during the post-war years.<sup>3</sup>

Social Security was an element of a new beginning and part of a broader reform of the social and economic regime that would come with the Liberation. It was presented as a fundamental innovation, a response to and a solution for the social gap between labour and business, and a means of preventing class struggle at the Liberation. The implicit or explicit objective of a Social Security system, or alternatively a system of full employment as in the Netherlands, was to maintain social peace and avoid social unrest at the end of the war.

This article looks critically both at the thesis that Social Security was a fundamental innovation, as it was presented by those who had created it, and at Social Security's promise to bridge the gap between labour and capital. The significance of Social Security at the Liberation will be assessed in the short and medium term in the three countries, starting from the idea that Social Security specifically (and social policy in general) is not only an answer to social needs, but is also an instrument of power over social groups.<sup>4</sup> Social policy can be used to attain political aims and can result in the redistribution of power among the actors in social policy – different competing elites, political parties, the Resistance – which wanted to (re)

3 Dirk Luyten, 'Op zoek naar de nationale sociaal-economische consensus. Sociale pacten bij de bevrijding van België, Frankrijk en Nederland', in *Thuisfront. Oorlog en economie in de twintigste eeuw. Veertiende jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*, ed. Hein A.M. Klemann and Dirk Luyten, with Pascal Deloge (Zutphen: Walbug Pers, 2003), pp. 192-205; P.J. Hesse and J.P. Le Crom, eds, *La protection sociale sous le régime de Vichy* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001), p. 337.

4 Marcel Hoogenboom, *Standenstrijd en zekerheid. Een geschiedenis van de oude orde en de sociale zorg in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004), p. 32.

establish power after the war. Special attention will be given to the tensions between, on the one hand, those organizations that had long been involved in social insurance and, on the other hand, the state. One of the innovations of Social Security was its compulsory character, making the state a central actor, resulting in a recasting of the relationship between the state and the organizations.

### Between Old and New

The Social Pact designed a detailed plan for an all-embracing compulsory Social Security system for the salaried workers of the private sector, financed primarily through a contribution from workers and employers calculated on the basis of individual salaries. The percentages of the contribution were set out for the different sectors of Social Security.<sup>5</sup> The system was considered as a provisional solution in the sense that, eventually, Social Security should ideally include all citizens.<sup>6</sup>

The French Social Security of 1945 introduced a compulsory system for wage earners, with the prospect of later being extended to the whole population.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to Belgium, unemployment was not part of Social Security: unemployment insurance was only integrated into the French Social Security in 1959, although industrial accidents became a component of Social Security in 1945, while in Belgium this sector remained with private insurance companies, as it had been since 1903.

As already pointed out, Social Security was absent in the manifesto of the Foundation of Labour: the priority was full employment, which was an alternative to unemployment insurance. The Social Security system designed by the Van Rhijn commission also gave priority to employment policy over a compulsory unemployment insurance to cope with the problem of unemployment, which had been a source of social and political instability in the 1930s. As in France and Belgium, the Van Rhijn commission advocated an integrated system of social insurances and a more rational organization. This Social Security would cover all citizens, while social insurances had

5 'Ontwerp van overeenkomst tot sociale solidariteit', *Arbeidsblad* (January-March 1945), pp. 9-19.

6 Guy Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren van de sociale zekerheid in België, 1944-1963* (Brussels: VUB Press, 1994), p. 112.

7 Michel Dreyfus, Michèle Ruffat, Vincent Viet and Danièle Voldmann with the collaboration of Bruno Valat, *Se protéger, être protégé. Une histoire des assurances sociales en France* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), p. 257.

been a matter between employers and employees. Social Security implied a more important role for the state, which was the emanation of the national community.<sup>8</sup> The work of this commission had been inspired by the Beveridge report. The publication of the report had been the reason that the Dutch government in exile installed the Van Rhijn commission.<sup>9</sup>

Even if a new social system should emerge during, or some years after, the Liberation, there were differences between the three countries, which can be explained by the impact of the occupation on social insurances and social relations, by the situation of the pre-war systems of social insurance, by the unachieved political initiatives for reform and political debates on social protection and, finally, by the aims of the architects of the reform plans and the political and social balance of power at the Liberation. Underlying all this was the involvement of organizations, representing social groups, which were competing over the control and form of the system of social insurances. The Liberation also brought a new vision of the economy: classic economic liberalism was considered obsolete; the time had come, it was claimed, to replace it with a more interventionist policy, aiming at economic modernization. The extent to which this modernization materialized differed from country to country. The question is, to what extent Social Security was part of this modernization.

## Social insurances before and during the Second World War

Social insurances dated back to the late nineteenth century and were further developed during or in the aftermath of the First World War and in the interwar period. In the Netherlands, social insurances had been modernized during the Second World War under German influence. Health insurance became compulsory in 1941 for wage earners with a modest salary but mutual-aid societies, one of the pillars of the health insurance system before the war, remained in charge of the organization of the health insurance system and paid the cost of medical care.<sup>10</sup> A voluntary unemployment

8 Ton Kappelhof, 'Omdat het historisch gegroeid is', in *De beschavende invloed des tijds*, ed. J.M. Roobroek and M. Hertogh, pp. 226-228.

9 Kappelhof, 'Omdat het historisch gegroeid is. De Londense Commissie...'

10 Karel-Peter R. Companje and Danièle Rigter, 'Ontwerp der wet regelende de ziekenverzorging, of de spanning tussen de overheidsfinanciën en volksgezondheid, 1918-1944', in *Tussen volksverzekering en vrije markt. Verzekering van zorg op het snijvlak van sociale verzekering en gezondheidszorg, 1880-2006*, ed. Karel-Peter R. Companje (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), pp. 399-476.

insurance, with a central role for the trade unions, was created during the First World War. The Germans abolished this system in 1942. After the Liberation, a special programme was set up for unemployment relief work and those who could not find a job in this system were only entitled to unemployment benefit for a few weeks. After that, the unemployed had to make an appeal for assistance provided by the local authority. Compulsory unemployment insurance started in 1949 with a central role for the trade unions, as before the war.<sup>11</sup>

The pre-war Dutch system of social insurance was complicated.<sup>12</sup> The question of how to organize social insurance had been debated since the introduction of insurance against industrial accidents in 1901. The key issue was whether the state, bipartite (employers-workers) councils (*Raden van Arbeid*) or the private sector would be in charge of the organization of insurance once it was made compulsory. The labour movement, developing its own organizations, especially the trade unions, also had an interest in the organization of social insurance. Dutch society was a 'pillarized' society, meaning that Catholics and Protestants had developed a network of organizations for the different social groups within their religious community (workers, farmers, employers, self-employed). Especially in the Catholic world, the organizational networks of both workers and employers were well developed. The socialist movement also had its own social organizations but only for workers.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the traditional economic elite – mainly bankers, commercial entrepreneurs and industrialists connected with colonial and international trade – had established ideologically neutral organizations as an employers' association in order to be associated with the implementation of social insurances and to avoid social insurances being organized by the state exclusively. This economic elite could mobilize political support from the liberal as well as the Protestant political parties since this elite was less affected by pillarization. The motivation to build organizations to implement social insurances and avoid a state-controlled system was not, in the first place, financial but rather political: the old economic elite had a social policy for some of their employees to continue the relations of patronage which were part of a class-ridden society and the political domination of the old economic elite, which was rooted in the Dutch Republic.

11 Roebroek, Hertogh, *De beschavende invloed des tijds*, p. 186.

12 Hoogenboom, *Standenstrijd en zekerheid*.

The position of this old economic elite was called into question by the democratization of suffrage and the growth of the labour movement. Another factor was the emergence of a group of Catholic entrepreneurs in the south of the Netherlands. This group differed in two respects from the old economic elite: they produced for the internal market (e.g. textiles) and therefore advocated protectionism rather than free trade. Secondly, they were often self-made men in contrast to the long-established families of the old economic elite. This new Catholic industrial elite was excluded from the political and organizational networks of the old economic elite. They developed their own organizations, and after a period of bitter conflict, cooperated with the Catholic trade unions. The Catholic industrialists had their own organizations for social insurances and preferred a system in which joint organizations of employers and trade unions could implement social insurances.

The First World War changed the balance of power between these different groups dramatically. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1917 put an end to the political dominance of the old economic elite, even if the Socialist Party did not participate in government until 1939. The continental blockade in the First World War was a window of opportunity for the Catholic industrialists, who acquired a quasi monopoly over the Dutch market and could improve their economic position. The old economic elite, on the other hand, suffered from the revolutionary situation in Russia and Eastern Europe and from the economic crisis of the 1930s in central Europe: many of their investments were lost.

Since unemployment grew dramatically during the First World War, an unemployment insurance system was created. The existing insurance schemes of industrialists and trade unions were not called into question: the role of the state was limited to granting a subvention.

In 1928 a law on the implementation of social insurances was passed, a question on the political agenda since 1913. The question was still about which organizations would be entitled to implement the social insurances. This was the last confrontation between the old economic elite, the Catholic employers and the labour movement, a confrontation lost by the old elite: joint organizations, as favoured by the Catholics, would prevail for the organization of social insurances.

The crisis of the 1930s brought a temporary standstill in the development of social insurances. The governments of the Protestant prime minister H. Colijn, a political representative of the old economic elite, pursued an orthodox economic and financial policy involving cuts in social expenditure and a rationalization of social aid by reducing the autonomy of local authorities,

which led to a transfer of power and control to the central state. As a result, specialized departments increased in size and expertise, and the role of the state in the social insurance system grew, a development that the old economic elite had always wanted to avoid. Moreover, the massive unemployment of the 1930s was considered proof that voluntary unemployment insurance was insufficient. In 1939 an unemployment insurance scheme was designed, but it was not passed by parliament before the war. The old economic elite and their ideas on social policy were marginalized. Since different groups had made their mark on the social insurance system, it had become complex: different types of organization were involved, but joint organizations dominated.

The Foundation of Labour proposed a system in which trade unions and employers' organizations were the core of social welfare, in order to avoid state socialism and a planned economy as advocated by the planists in the Socialist Party. This opposition against direct state intervention was to a certain extent comparable to the position of the old economic elite at the end of the nineteenth century but, as a consequence of the democratization of society, a coalition with the confessional and socialist trade unions was necessary in 1945 to avert state intervention. The alternative was in line with the model favoured by the Catholic employers and guaranteed the employers an equal representation alongside the trade unions. A compulsory Social Security system, as developed by the Van Rhijn commission would give more power to the state and would possibly threaten the social insurances controlled by joint organizations of trade unions and employers.

In Belgium, social insurances had been based on 'subsidized liberty' since the end of the nineteenth century, with a strong involvement of organized labour. Catholic, socialist or liberal mutual-aid societies organized health insurance. To be entitled to health benefits, one had to be a member of a mutual-aid society that was subsidized by the state. The same system was applied to unemployment benefits after the First World War: unemployment insurance was primarily in the hands of the socialist and Catholic trade unions. Both social insurances were voluntary, unlike child benefits, which were created and organized by the employers. Child benefits had been compulsory since 1930 in the private sector. Benefits were paid by special funds, directly linked to the employers' organizations. Old-age pensions, compulsory for salaried workers since 1924, were the only insurance organized exclusively by the state. Employers and workers financed the pension jointly: a percentage of the salary was paid by employer and worker, which was collected and transferred to the state by the employer.<sup>13</sup>

13 Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren van de sociale zekerheid*, pp. 14-44.

Since the Belgian social insurances were less developed than in Germany, the occupier wanted to introduce a compulsory health insurance system. The socialist federation of mutual-aid societies supported this attempt. In contrast to the Netherlands, the Germans failed, mainly due to the opposition of the Catholics, who feared that their own organizations could lose their grip on health insurance. The Ministry of Labour, where Catholics held leading positions, was not inclined to favour a compulsory health insurance system either.<sup>14</sup>

The question of the compulsory character of the social insurances had already been debated in the 1930s and was focused on unemployment insurance. Unemployment increased dramatically during the crisis and a compulsory unemployment insurance, which would protect all blue-collar workers, was put on the political agenda. The government appointed a Royal commissioner, the socialist social technocrat Henri Fuss (1882-1964) who was working for the International Labour Organization at that time and would become one of the architects of the Social Pact.<sup>15</sup>

Fuss studied the problem and prepared a compulsory unemployment insurance scheme. In 1938, the government submitted a project to parliament, but it was never passed following the opposition of the employers, who feared the financial cost. Another issue was the position of the trade unions. A compulsory system, organized by the state, would question the central role of the trade unions in the unemployment insurance system. This was unacceptable for the Catholic trade union for practical as well as for ideological reasons. Payment of unemployment benefits had allowed the unions to attract new members. From an ideological perspective, the Christian Democrats could not accept a system in which the state held the monopoly of social protection. This was in contradiction with the principle of subsidiarity and, in the end, the state would overrule social organizations. This was difficult to accept for the Catholic labour movement, since Catholic social organizations were necessary to promote the Catholic religion among the workers. Involvement in unemployment insurance was an instrument to integrate the workers in a Catholic organization. The socialist trade union was more divided on this issue: part of the trade union leadership, especially those on the left, accepted an unemployment insurance organized by the state. The administration of unemployment insurance was seen as burden for the trade unions, hampering labour militancy at the workplace, the

14 Karel Vanacker, *Kroniek van een overleving. De Belgische ziekenfondsen tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Ghent: AMSAB-ISG, 2010).

15 Guy Vanthemsche, *De werkloosheid in België, 1929-1940* (Berchem: EPO, 1989).



core business of any trade union according to these left-wing unionists. Other socialist trade union leaders wanted the continued involvement of the trade unions in unemployment insurance. As a consequence of those divisions, unemployment insurance remained as it was on the eve of the Second World War. When the Germans forced the trade unions to stop their activities, unemployment insurance was replaced by a system of assistance by the local authorities.<sup>16</sup>

While, in Belgium, organized labour held a key position in social insurances, in France the employers dominated. Between 1930 and 1932 social insurance became compulsory for health, old age pensions, maternity and child benefits. The system was controlled by the elite: the local elite in the case of health insurance and the employers in the case of child benefits.<sup>17</sup> Under the Vichy regime Labour minister René Belin and Pierre Laroque, at that time a civil servant, developed a compulsory Social Security scheme, which was part of a corporatist reform. Compared to the pre-war system, this Social Security system would have given more power to the trade unions and to users, and given the state a central role. This reform was aborted, but more people were incorporated into the insurance scheme.<sup>18</sup>

Under the Vichy regime the state played a more prominent role and initiated changes in the social insurance system. The old age pension system was reformed in order to give people a higher allowance. The age at which one was entitled to an old age pension was lowered to take people out of the labour market. In 1942, the maximum wage level was suppressed, implying that all workers and also those older than sixty were entitled to social insurance.<sup>19</sup> Even though the introduction of compulsory Social Security failed, new ideas were launched: the unification of social insurances and the financing of the system by a single contribution covering all the sectors of social protection.<sup>20</sup>

Major differences can be seen in the organization of social insurances before the war, and the occupation did not have the same impact in the three

16 Rik Hemmerijckx, *Van verzet tot Koude Oorlog 1940-1949. Machtsstrijd om het ABVV* (Brussels/Ghent: VUB Press/AMSAB, 2003), p. 38.

17 Michel Dreyfus, 'L'émergence tardive des assurances sociales en France', in *Les assurances sociales en Europe*, ed. M. Dreyfus (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), pp. 79-126.

18 Paul V. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: The Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 189-196.

19 Bruno Valat, *Histoire de la Sécurité Sociale. L'Etat, l'institution sociale, la santé* (Paris: Economica, 2001), p. 15.

20 Michel Dreyfus, 'L'émergence tardive', p. 119; P.J. Hesse and J.P. Le Crom, eds, *La protection sociale sous le régime de Vichy*, p. 354.



countries. However, the relationship between the state and the organizations was a key issue in all the three countries. Moreover, social insurances were, as a result of their financial cost, a source of conflict between employers and organized labour. The social and political significance of the introduction of Social Security at the Liberation differed in the three countries, but the state came more into the foreground, an evolution already initiated during the war.

### **Social Security at the Liberation**

Compared to the pre-1940 social insurances, Social Security involved two innovations. Social Security had a direct, compulsory character: all the workers or citizens, depending on the type of Social Security system (following Bismarck or Beveridge), were subject to Social Security. The second innovation was unification: all the social insurances were to be incorporated in one comprehensive system and financed by a single contribution from employers and worker, often collected by the employer. Social Security provides a general protection against a set of social risks, starting with wage earners in the private sector. Later, all citizens would be covered, implying that, at the Liberation, the social cleavage was seen as primarily a problem for the working class. Even if the war was presented as a breaking point, what existed before the war in the field of social insurances was to a large extent integrated into the new Social Security systems. But since the state played a more prominent role, the position of organizations was called into question: what role could the organizations play in a state system and, alternatively, to what extent could the state use the organizations to build the system and to facilitate its acceptance?

Social Security in Belgium was organized by the state from 1945 onwards, but the labour movement and the employers' organizations continued to pay the benefits. These organizations acted as subcontractors of the state. Unemployment benefits were paid by the trade unions; mutual-aid societies, which were also part of organized labour, paid the allowances for health care; child benefits were paid by organizations directly linked with the employers' organizations, as were the holiday allowances of blue-collar workers. When it came to financing these schemes, the system for the old age pensions was extended to the whole system of Social Security: the employers collected contributions from the worker and the employer. The Social Security administration received these contributions and distributed them over the different sectors. This Social Security administration was a

state office, but its first director was a former official of the central employers' organization, who had been one of the negotiators of the Social Pact.<sup>21</sup>

At the organizational level, the Decree-Law of 28 December 1944 was not a 'big bang' for the Belgian system of social protection: the trade unions and federations of mutual-aid societies which had long been involved in social protection, wanted to maintain their position so they could continue, after the Liberation, to play the political role they had acquired through their implication in social insurances.<sup>22</sup>

It is often argued that the significance of French Social Security was primarily a political one. The management of Social Security shifted from the employers to the users, in practice mainly through the CGT acting as their representative. The Social Security system of 1945 led to a dramatic loss of influence for the employers, who had been the central players in the pre-war system of social insurances, especially child benefits. Not only was the involvement of the users in the management of the system new, but workers' representatives actually outnumbered employers representatives by two to one (even three to one in 1946). In the French case, Social Security therefore represented a democratization of the previous system: before the war, social insurances were managed by an elite, the system was paternalistic and was used by the employers as a means of maintaining social peace and controlling the workers. In his defence of the new Social Security system, its architect Pierre Laroque stressed this democratization: Social Security was, he argued, more than a technical operation aimed at a better social protection; it was a matter of making a new social and democratic order.<sup>23</sup> This democratization implied participation: the management of Social Security was in the first place a matter of workers and employers, through their organizations. There was a link with the funding of the system: financing through a wage-based contribution implied that employers and workers were themselves responsible for the funding of Social Security. This democratization served other purposes too. Laroque sought a stabilization of social relations after the war, through close cooperation between the state and organized interests.<sup>24</sup>

In Belgium the principle of parity – equal representation of employers and workers – had made its way for the management of industrial relations

21 Claudine Marissal, 'Centraliser la protection sociale, la création de l'ONSS', *Les Cahiers de la Fonderie*, 45 (2011), pp. 30-36.

22 Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren*, pp. 45-77.

23 Valat, *Histoire de la sécurité sociale*, p. 82.

24 Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 167-169.

and social policy in the interwar period, even if this principle was never legally defined. The principles of parity and representativeness were laid down and defined for the first time in the Social Pact and were even among the founding principles of the pact. In the Social Pact, representatives of the pre-war trade unions and employers' organizations gave themselves the monopoly of representation based on the number of workers organized (in the case of the trade unions) or employed (in the case of the employers) and their national reach: only organizations which were active on the whole Belgian territory could be labelled as representative.<sup>25</sup> The implicit idea was that those organizations could control their members and guarantee the enforcement of the agreements they had made. This was how the system of social consultation at sector level had worked in the interwar period: neither the joint commissions nor the collective labour agreements had a legal status, but the collective agreements were nevertheless applied by the employers of the sector, since their organizations played a disciplinary role and most firms were members of the sector organization. The same was true for the trade unions, which tried to avoid strikes or convinced their members to accept a lower wage if this was the consequence of the mechanism of the indexation of the wages.<sup>26</sup> The last criterion for being considered a representative organization was the acceptance of the idea of class collaboration, the ideological foundation of the Social Pact.

This definition of representativeness in the Social Pact also served as an instrument of exclusion since the pre-war social organizations determined the criteria of participation in social policy-making. During the occupation, left-wing trade unions had emerged as an alternative to the pre-war unions and the collaborationist Union of Manual and Intellectual Workers. These radical unions, part of the Resistance, challenged the pre-war unions. The radical unions did not meet the criteria for representativeness defined in the Social Pact (no national reach and favouring class struggle) and were, as a consequence, excluded from decision-making on post-war social policy. Social Security was not a priority for those radical unions, which emphasized labour militancy at the workplace. After the Liberation, Social Security was used by the social democrats as one of the instruments for competing with the political and social challengers on the left. The architect of the Decree-Law on Social Security was the socialist Labour minister Achille Van Acker, presented in Belgium and abroad as the originator of Social

25 'Ontwerp van overeenkomst', p. 19.

26 Dirk Luyten, *Sociaal-economisch overleg in België sinds 1918* (Brussels: VUB Press, 1996), pp. 15-52.

Security.<sup>27</sup> Van Acker had started his career as a trade union leader and had been involved in the negotiations on the Social Pact. The introduction of Social Security was the first important legislative measure in the social field after the Liberation. Although, in the Social Pact, no decision was taken to involve the trade unions in the payment of social benefits, Van Acker preferred to do so: this decision gave the heirs of the pre-war socialist unions a competitive advantage over the more leftist unions. Another reason to confirm the role of social organizations in the new Social Security system was to avoid the opposition of the Christian Democrats, who had been less involved in the negotiations on the Social Pact. Some Christian Democratic leaders and organizations even openly opposed the Social Security system outlined in the Pact.<sup>28</sup> The strategy of the Belgian socialists shows the impact of state involvement: a political family could use the state to reinforce its position towards the other organizations.

The position of the employers differed in Belgium and France: while in Belgium they were put on the same footing as organized labour, the French employers lost their key position in Social Security. This difference can be explained by the political position of the French '*patronat*' after the war, which in its turn was related to their policy during the war.

The legitimacy of the French *patronat* was called into question dramatically at the Liberation: economic collaboration, the participation of French business in the economic organization of the Vichy regime and the social policy of the employers were the main sources of the loss of its legitimacy. French business had cooperated closely with the *comités d'organisation*, created by the Vichy government to organize the economy as an alternative to economic liberalism.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, the interest representation of French business was to a large extent taken over by the state. The general strike of 1936 had been a traumatic experience for many French employers and some saw in the war an opportunity to challenge social achievements, a policy which did not make them popular with the

27 Arthur Doucy, *La sécurité sociale en Belgique. Le Plan Van Acker* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1946).

28 Dirk Luyten with the collaboration of Rik Hemmerijckx, 'Achiel Van Acker, architect van de Belgische welvaartsstaat?', in *Facetten van 100 jaar politieke, economische en sociale geschiedenis. Herdenking geboorte Achiel Van Acker, 1898-1998*, ed. Marc Galle and Sylvain Loccufier (Brussels: VUB Press, 2000), pp. 19-46.

29 Marc Bergère, ed., *L'épuration économique en France à la Libération* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008); Hervé Joly, ed., *Les comités d'organisation et l'économie dirigée du régime de Vichy* (Caen: Centre de recherche d'histoire quantitative, 2004).

workers.<sup>30</sup> At the Liberation the French *patronat* was not in a position to make its mark on the new Social Security system. Moreover capitalism and liberalism were contested after the war, while in the 1930s plans to develop social insurances further had been opposed by a widely shared liberal opinion in the leading political and economic circles arguing that more generous social insurances implied higher contributions, which was unacceptable from an economic point of view.<sup>31</sup> One of the main political innovations of the Liberation was that proponents of state intervention and planning in order to modernize the economy could hold key positions. The employers were not entirely marginalized however. Due to the opposition of the employers, supported by the pro-natalist movement and General de Gaulle himself, child benefits were not fully integrated in the Social Security system. The employers wanted to keep control over the *caisses*, but Laroque succeeded in putting these funds under the joint management ('parity') of employers and workers.<sup>32</sup>

Labour relations in Belgian industry had been discordant in 1940 and 1941, with high strike activity, notwithstanding the German ban on strikes. Many employers saw an opportunity to cut wages or to no longer grant certain arrangements of the collective labour agreements. A social policy at the level of the firm and factory councils, in which the workers' representatives were mostly not democratically elected, served as an alternative to the pre-war trade unions. Contacts between employers and trade unions were broken. Relations were restored after the May 1941 strike, during which about 70,000 miners and metalworkers went on strike for ten days. Wages were raised by 8 per cent, the only official pay rise under the occupation.<sup>33</sup> Later, many employers, especially in the key sectors of the economy directly useful for the German war effort, agreed to increase wages even if this was illegal: wages and prices had been fixed by the Germans after the invasion.<sup>34</sup> This policy contributed to pacification between employers and workers.

In October 1941, negotiations began between leaders of employers' organizations, trade unions and civil servants over what would become the

30 Alain Beltran, Robert Frank and Henry Rousso, *La vie des entreprises sous l'Occupation: une enquête à l'échelle locale* (Paris: Belin, 1994).

31 Valat, *Histoire de la sécurité sociale*, pp. 26 and 29.

32 Nord, *France's New Deal*, pp. 169-170.

33 Dirk Luyten, 'Stakingen in België en Nederland, 1940-1941', *Cahiers d'Histoire du Temps Présent*, 15 (2005), pp. 149-176.

34 Peter Scholliers, 'Strijd rond de koopkracht, 1939-1945', in *1940 = België, een maatschappij in crisis en oorlog, 1940 = Belgique, une société en crise, un pays en guerre* (Brussels: SOMA/CEGES, 1993), pp. 245-276.

April 1944 Social Pact. The first issue on which an agreement was reached in 1942 was industrial relations. The pre-1940 social consultation was to be re-established immediately after the Liberation and the principle of parity applied in the whole field of social policy.<sup>35</sup> The central position of the organizations in social policy was confirmed.

This pact was not, however, the consecration of a general social consensus. The actors involved in the negotiations on the Social Pact represented some but not of all the tendencies of the pre-war trade unions and employers' organizations. The participants were mainly socialists and modernist leaders of employers' organizations, who were open to what would become Fordism: a model of economic growth based on a permanent increase of purchasing power financed by productivity gains. More traditionalist employers did not accept the new ideas.<sup>36</sup>

Although Belgian business held different views on post-war social policy, the Belgian employers remained united in a national organization: the Comité Central Industriel (CCI). This organization was the umbrella of the organizations at sector level, the federations. Even if they had cooperated closely with Nazi corporatism, introduced in 1940 and 1941 in occupied Belgium, the private employers' organizations continued their activities and could, at the Liberation, take up again their role as employers' representatives once again. The CCI represented the employers at the National Labour Conference (which brought together employers, trade unions and the government) convened by the government in September 1944, the start of a three-year tradition. The CCI could even improve its representative position, since the Vlaams Economisch Verbond (Flemish Economic League), which had challenged the CCI since the late 1930s and called into question its monopoly of representation in the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, had lost legitimacy as a consequence of the collaboration of its main leaders and was no longer recognized by the government as a legitimate partner. In 1944, by way of the National Labour Conference, the CCI could speak for the whole of Belgian business. The National Labour Conference initiated a close cooperation of the state, the trade unions and employers and was one of the instruments for avoiding social unrest at the Liberation.<sup>37</sup>

35 Rik Hemmerijckx, 'De CMB in de klandestiniteit: een vakbond tussen kontestatie en integriteit, 1940-1944', in *Roodgloeiend. Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Centrale der Metaalbewerkers van België* (Ghent/Brussels: AMSAB, 1990), pp. 365-423, here p. 409.

36 Dirk Luyten, *Ideologie en praktijk van het corporatisme tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog in België* (Brussels: VUB Press, 1997), pp. 270-277.

37 Luyten, *Sociaal-economisch overleg*, pp. 125-146.

Belgian business had, as in France, produced for the German war economy but had done so within certain limits, outlined by the Galopin Committee, a shadow government of leaders of holdings, banks and big industry. Working for Germany was acceptable – except producing weapons and ammunition – to be able to import food, to protect workers from deportation to Germany, to maintain control over Belgian firms and to preserve the competitive position of the Belgian economy for the post-war period. Decisions on whether to produce for Germany were not to be taken on an individual basis, but rather collectively at sector level, to avoid an order being accepted in order to obtain a competitive advantage. These mechanisms, implemented by the federations at sector level, created solidarity among employers: since they had adopted the same policy, it would be more difficult to punish an individual entrepreneur for economic collaboration. Solidarity was also created between entrepreneurs and workers by paying higher wages, which can be labelled as the distribution of the benefits of collaboration. As a result, Belgian industrialists had not lost all legitimacy at the Liberation – some socialist trade unionists took up their defence in public – even if their position was debated and called into question by the judiciary, for which punishment of economic collaboration was a priority.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, the Belgian employers were less politically marginalized than French businessmen. By concluding the Social Pact, the employers and the trade unions would be put on the same footing for the management of Social Security, confirming and codifying the principle of parity, which had emerged before the war.

Following the marginalization of the *patronat* in France, Social Security was more easily accepted. This consensus was also based on the weaknesses of the pre-war social insurances, identified over the years. The allocations were low, restrictive measures excluded many people from the system, there were too many organizations involved, the users had no say in the management, the percentage of contributions for child benefits differed greatly from one fund to another and, since industrial accident insurance was not compulsory, some workers who fell victim to an accident had difficulty obtaining the allowance to which they were entitled.<sup>39</sup> Insofar as

38 Dirk Luyten, 'The Belgian Economic Elite and the Punishment of Economic Collaboration after the Second World War: Power and Legitimacy (1944-1952)', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte/Economic History Yearbook*, 2 (2010), pp. 95-105; Ginette Kurgan-Van Hentenryk, *Max-Léo Gérard. Un ingénieur dans la cité (1879-1955)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2010), pp. 235-239.

39 Valat, *Histoire de la sécurité sociale*, pp. 15-19.



Social Security put an end to these problems, which had proved impossible to solve in the 1930s, the new system gained support.

This acceptance is visible in the debates of the advisory commission, involving representatives of the different groups concerned and the Commission for Labour and Social Affairs of the provisional assembly. The discussion focused on aspects of the organization of Social Security, but not on the principles. One of the main innovations brought by Social Security was centralization: a '*caisse unique*' (central fund) would organize and manage health insurance, old age pensions, child benefits and industrial accident insurance and take over the other funds. Employers opposed this plan in the case of child benefits, since they had to give up the exclusive control. The '*caisse unique*' would lead to the suppression of the so-called '*caisses d'affinité*', funds with a religious or political profile. This was opposed by Catholics and by representatives of the mutual-aid societies, who argued that the *caisses d'affinité* should be maintained since they symbolized liberty. In his defence of the *caisse unique*, Laroque argued that his plan made solidarity prevail over liberty and that the involvement of the users in the management of the system was more important. Moreover, the market share of the *caisses d'affinité* had been limited before the war. Even if democratization was the central aim of Social Security, the administrators should not be elected but appointed according to the representativeness of the different organizations, a system comparable with the Belgian Social Pact. Elections were more democratic, the argument ran, but there was a risk of absenteeism and the non-representation of certain tendencies.<sup>40</sup>

In Belgium, Social Security was criticized not only by traditionalist employers, but also by a part of the Catholic world. The latter feared that as a consequence of the central role of the state and the compulsory character of Social Security, the sense of providence of the individual would be undermined. The system of 'subsidized liberty', the organizing principle of the Belgian social insurance system since the end of the nineteenth century, offered more guarantees in that respect. Moreover, if the state organized Social Security, the umbrella organization of the Catholic mutual-aid societies feared that the role of the social organizations would be belittled.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast to France, such opposition had no direct political impact, since on 14 December 1944 the parliament had granted full powers to the

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-73.

<sup>41</sup> Patrick Pasture, 'Liefde na datum. De christelijke arbeidersbeweging en het Sociaal Pact', in *Het Sociaal Pact van 1944. Oorsprong, betekenis en gevolgen*, ed. Dirk Luyten and Guy Vanthemsche (Brussels: VUB Press, 1995), pp. 305-324, here p. 312; Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren*, p. 82.



government to change the legislation on social insurances in order to create 'Social Security'.<sup>42</sup> Two weeks later, the Decree-Law of 28 December 1944 was promulgated. Since the parliament played no role in the decision-making process, the socialist minister Achille Van Acker and his administration had their hands free to lay down the principles of the Social Security system. The head of the administration was the aforementioned socialist technocrat Henri Fuss, one of the architects of the Social Pact. It was easier for him to reach a consensus since he was acquainted with the problems and the different views on Social Security, could rely on the Social Pact and could have direct consultation with leaders of employers' organizations and trade unions.<sup>43</sup>

The Belgian case shows that the administration had a key position in the construction of the Social Security system. The same goes for France. The architect of the French Social Security was Pierre Laroque. He was a high-ranking civil servant, but lost his position following the anti-Jewish legislation and joined the Resistance in London. In October 1944 he was appointed director-general of social insurances and was in charge of the preparation of Social Security. Laroque could make an appeal to the staff of the office, which was helpful in solving the technical problems involved in the introduction of Social Security. Laroque relied on civil servants with a socialist or trade union past who had been active in the Resistance. In France, the project was a product of the administration without prior consultation with social organizations, as had been the case in Belgium.<sup>44</sup>

This procedure was a deliberate choice: Laroque wanted to present a coherent plan, which would have been much more difficult if the organizations with different views had had a say in drawing up the project. Consultation was organized on the basis of a coherent text produced by the administration. This procedure was in line with the technocratic ideas of the 1930s: an administrative elite should play a leading role in political decision-making, using the latest scientific insights. As far as Laroque is concerned, this administrative-elitist vision was somewhat mitigated, since he favoured a close cooperation between the state and organized interests. A comparison between Fuss and Laroque reveals the differences in the social position of the two civil servants who initiated Social Security. Although

42 Loi complétant la loi du 7 septembre 1939 donnant au Roi des pouvoirs extraordinaires' *Moniteur belge*, 16 December 1944.

43 Luyten with Hemmerijckx, 'Achiël Van Acker, architect van de Belgische welvaartsstaat?', p. 28.

44 Valat, *Histoire de la Sécurité Sociale*, pp. 43-46 and 59.

Laroque had defended nonconformist ideas in *L'Homme Nouveau* in the 1930s, he was first and foremost a technocratic civil servant. He wrote an (aborted) project of Social Security under Vichy. He was involved in the Resistance, not via the Left, but via the Comité Général d'Études, a group of technocratic reformers initiated by de Gaulle and Jean Moulin. The CGE was close to Vichy's techno-corporatism and composed of civil servants and academics. Even if Fuss was also a specialist in social problems and was a high-ranking civil servant in 1940, he had a clear socialist profile. This was the reason why the Germans dismissed him in 1940. Fuss set up the committee to prepare for Social Security, in which the social organizations dominated. The Social Pact was a fine-tuned project for Social Security: the state only had to transpose into law the project developed by the social organizations. Laroque did not have the same direct link with an organization. His Social Security plan was not meant to serve the interests of one particular group (the workers) but took into account other interest and was conceived by the administration.<sup>45</sup>

In the Netherlands, civil servants also brought the new ideas and concepts on Social Security: the Van Rhijn commission was composed exclusively of civil servants.<sup>46</sup> During the introduction of compulsory health insurance in the Netherlands in 1941, civil servants played an important role and used the threat of a system following the German model to bring the mutual-aid societies under one umbrella organization. The German intervention ended the deadlock between different actors in the health insurance system before the war and this also served the plans of the specialized civil servants.<sup>47</sup>

The Liberation brought the state in as a prominent actor in social and economic policy, more prominent than in the interwar period. Social Security was, through its scope, cost and impact, one of the main instruments of this intervention. It was clear for most actors involved that Social Security would have far-reaching and long-lasting economic effects. This was especially true for the employers. It does not imply, however, that all advocates of Social Security had always considered the system to be part of a global vision of the growing economic role of the state.

45 Nord, *France's New Deal*, pp. 25 and 169.

46 Kappelhof, "Omdat het historisch gegroeid is". De Londense Commissie'.

47 K.R. Companje, 'Het ziekenfondsenbesluit en de gevolgen voor de verzekering van zorg, 1940-1986', in *Tussen Volksverzekering en vrije markt*, ed. K.R. Companje, pp. 477-535, here p. 524.

## State and Economy

For the mainstream Belgian socialists, Social Security was not a building brick of a more ambitious economic reform. Belgian socialists traditionally gave priority to pragmatic reform with an immediate social return. The socialist ministers favoured a policy of wage moderation and struggle against inflation, which also contained the growth of the total wage cost. The socialists claimed and defended Social Security, using official publications such as the review of the Labour Ministry: in the January-March 1945 issue, the text of the Social Pact was published and revealed as the foundation of the Social Security Act, implicitly underlining its consensual character.<sup>48</sup> This indicates the strong identification of the Belgian socialists with the state at the Liberation, especially with its social functions.<sup>49</sup> Belgian socialists did not aim at a fundamental change of Belgian capitalism – nationalizations never were a serious option – and the democratization of enterprises, which was also on the political agenda, was not the first priority of Belgian socialists. This can be explained by the pragmatist tradition and by competition with the leftist current in the labour movement. The leftist socialist union *Mouvement Syndical Unifié* founded by André Renard and the communists, who had both built their power base in the factories during the war, aimed to continue by giving priority to the introduction of works councils, with social and economic powers. Introducing a Social Security system with a strong implication of the organizations of the traditional labour movement would give them a competitive advantage over the leftist challengers.<sup>50</sup> Opting for Social Security and a policy of wage moderation and the containment of inflation can be interpreted as a defensive choice, which put the burden of the cost of the war primarily with the workers. Indeed, the 60 per cent wage increase decided on by the National Labour Conference, convened shortly after the Liberation, was only the sum of all the wage increases during the war. It was only in 1946 that real wages reached their pre-war level again. The policy of wage moderation, including a ban on strikes in the key sectors of the economy, did not change this situation: it was only at the end of the 1940s that real wages increased more rapidly than in other European

48 'Ontwerp-akkoord', as in note 5.

49 This was also perceived as such by conservatives: Kurgan-Van Hentenryk, *Max-Léo Gérard*, p. 284.

50 Luyten with Hemmerijckx, 'Achiël Van Acker, architect van de Belgische welvaartsstaat?', p. 40.

countries.<sup>51</sup> In that perspective, the introduction of Social Security was an alternative wage increase, which was 'bought' at the price of a giving less priority to economic democracy or a more offensive wage struggle, making workers pay the highest price for the war.<sup>52</sup> This is a valid interpretation, but leaves the economic and long-term effects of the post-1944 social reforms somewhat in the shadow.

Belgian capitalism had been export oriented since the nineteenth century and its competitive strategy was based on low prices and low wages since the key sectors of the Belgian economy (coal, steel, textiles, engineering) were labour-intensive. Keeping wages low had been one of the cornerstones of economic policy. This not only involved the containment of the wages, but also avoiding mechanisms leading to automatic and general wage increases for large groups of workers. This is the reason why the employers in the 1930s strongly opposed legal instruments to make collective labour agreements binding for all employers (and their employees) in one sector.<sup>53</sup>

Social Security was another mechanism leading to an increase of the wage cost for all the workers. Its compulsory character, guaranteed by the state, made it in principle impossible to escape from it. Since Social Security was organized by the state, it was subject to regulation by government and parliament. Social Security was not only an extra cost for the employers; they also lost the direct and exclusive control over the distribution of benefits. Fears of the political impact of the Social Security system being prepared at the end of the occupation were expressed in an internal memo of the Société Générale, the main Belgian holding company controlling much of the country's industry, written in July 1944 on the position of the trade unions. It was not the radical trade unions in big industry that were considered the main challenge for the post-war period, but the group of trade unionists (such as Van Acker) who were preparing a Social Security system. The fact that it was organized by the state and had a compulsory character was seen as a fundamental threat to the policy of low wage costs that had to be continued

51 Isabelle Cassiers and Peter Scholliers, 'Le pacte social belge de 1944, les salaires et la croissance économique en perspective internationale', in *Het Sociaal Pact van 1944*, ed. Luyten and Vanthemsche, pp. 161-190, here p. 174.

52 Martin Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction, 1944-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

53 Dirk Luyten, 'Ontstaansvoorwaarden voor het corporatisme. Het model van het neo-corporatisme in het licht van de Belgische ervaring uit de jaren dertig', in *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis*, 19 (1993), pp. 316-338, here pp. 326-327.

after the war.<sup>54</sup> As long as there was no agreement on the maximum wage level, the argument ran, the employers should not accept Social Security, since this would lead to an automatic increase in the wage cost, which would be a threat to the economy. The Comité Central Industriel rejected the Social Pact that was discussed by the organization in June 1944. The strongest opposition against the Social Pact and its implementation came from the federation of the coal industry, while the federation of engineering favoured the new social model laid down in the Social Pact. The latter was aware of the need to modernize the productive apparatus and had made steps in that direction during the occupation, aiming at standardization, which was facilitated by production for Germany. The coal mines had become obsolete: exploitation was difficult for geological reasons, especially in the southern part of the country. This made an increase in productivity, necessary to compensate for the higher wage cost, difficult in the coal mines, while this was on the agenda of the engineering sector, a sector that moreover could profit directly from a higher wage level, since a part of its production consisted of consumer goods.<sup>55</sup> Although their power was in decline in the second half of the 1940s, the traditionalist employers still dominated the central employers' organization<sup>56</sup> and were critical to the new social model that was emerging, with Social Security as one of its key components. Taking into account the strong opposition of the dominant fraction of Belgian business, the introduction of a Social Security system could be presented by the Belgian labour movement as a political conquest. It was only in the 1950s, when the modernist fraction of the employers started to dominate the central employers' organizations, that Fordism was more accepted. These modernists had an alternative political strategy aiming at the generalization of the principle of management of social policy on the basis of parity. This would take away the administration of social policy from parliament and government and give it to employers and trade unions. This had two advantages for the employers: social costs were more predictable and more coordinated and the employers could not be overruled by labour as could happen in parliamentary decision-making.<sup>57</sup>

54 Note 'Informations', 13 juillet 1944, Archives Générales du Royaume Bruxelles, Archives Société Générale (4<sup>e</sup> versement). Papiers Nokin, p. 96.

55 Dirk Luyten, *Ideologie en praktijk van het corporatisme*, pp. 274-277.

56 Guy Vanthemsche, 'De reorganisatie van het Belgisch patronaat: van Centraal Nijverheidscomité naar Verbond der Belgische nijverheid (1946)', in *Tussen restauratie en vernieuwing. Aspecten van de naoorlogse Belgische politiek (1944-1950)*, ed. Els Witte, J.C. Burgelman and P. Stouthuysen (Brussels: VUB Press, 1989), pp. 109-147.

57 Luyten, *Sociaal-economisch overleg*, pp. 161-164.

The assessment of the impact of the war can also be made regarding the medium and long term. It may be true that, in the short term, wages did not increase as fast as many workers expected.<sup>58</sup> This is made clear by the high strike activity, which could only be contained to a certain extent by social consultation and systematic implication of the trade unions in social decision-making, both informally and via the National Labour Conferences. A ban on strikes in the key sectors of the economy was a more repressive instrument to limit the social unrest.

Even if the workers were not compensated for material losses during the war, the pre-war social regulation was changed in a fundamental way, offering a much higher level of collective protection, with stronger guarantees for more workers than before the war. Social Security was one of the new mechanisms of social regulation: the state guaranteed social welfare to *all* the workers. Since unemployment was included, there was also an effect on wage formation. The national labour conferences, which were the key institution for wage policy, made wage setting a national matter. The decisions of the national labour conferences concerned all the workers in the private sector and enabled the trade unions to improve the wages of all workers rather than only in certain sectors or categories of workers. Another social innovation was the legal status for the collective labour agreement, which could be made binding for a whole sector from 1945.<sup>59</sup> As a consequence, social policy had become a political issue, to be handled by the state, albeit in close cooperation with social organizations.

That these social changes would have economic effects was immediately clear for business, but not for the labour movement. The traditionalist Belgian socialists, such as Van Acker, were focused on social reform and did not have an integrated vision of economic and social policy. It was the leftist leader of the new FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique, the new socialist union, a merger of the pre-war socialist union, the Mouvement Syndical Unifié and the communist unions), André Renard, who partly inspired by Hendrik De Man's planism, focused more on economic reform, including economic democracy at the workplace, at the Liberation.<sup>60</sup> Renard was also aware of the fact that the Belgian economy was ill-prepared for a Fordist model of economic growth based on a permanent rise of purchasing

58 Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium*, pp. 336-337.

59 Luyten, *Sociaal-economisch overleg*, p. 126.

60 Rik Hemmerijckx, 'Les syndicats unifiés et leur doctrine syndicale', in *L'occupation en France et en Belgique 1940-1944. Actes du colloque de Lille - 26-28 avril 1985*, ed. Etienne Dejonghe (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Revue du Nord, 1987-1988), vol. 2, pp. 787-808.

power. He put this theme on the agenda in the socialist trade union in the 1950s. In order to modernize the Belgian economy, planning and nationalizations were needed.<sup>61</sup> After the Liberation, economic modernization was not high on the political agenda. Planning was not an issue and the system of social and economic consultation introduced in 1948 focused primarily on trade union participation in general rather than on the modernization of the Belgian economy, which seemed to be doing well by that time. The main economic issue was coal production, but in this sector there were no structural changes calling into question the position of the owners. To compensate the cost of Social Security, the state gave a subsidy.<sup>62</sup>

In France, economic modernization was a key issue and was taken up by the state in a systematic way. Social Security was seen as a part of a global economic reform, of which works councils and nationalizations were the other components. There were two issues: workers' participation and economic modernization. The idea that the French economy should be modernized and that the state had to play a prominent role in this process was part of the 'Programme commun de la résistance',<sup>63</sup> while in Belgium the Social Pact did not address economic reform. The only new idea was that economic growth should lead to social progress.

The French Resistance was not the only group convinced of the need for economic reform. The idea that the French economy needed structural change and modernization was widely shared. It was part of a political project, tracing back to the ideological crisis of the Third Republic in the 1930s. This crisis was primarily a crisis of liberalism: parliamentarianism and party politics were criticized, as well as economic liberalism, especially during the economic crisis of the 1930s. This criticism came, as in Belgium, from planist socialists, but it also came from nonconformist Catholics and, more importantly, from technocrats, many of whom were graduates of the *École Polytechnique* (the 'X-Crise' group). Even if the solutions to the crisis of liberalism differed – some were socialist, others corporatist – they had some points in common: the free market was considered a source of economic instability and the economy viewed as needing coordination, with a central role for the state. For this purpose, a reform of the obsolete political system of the Third Republic was deemed necessary, with the executive power playing a major role. The administration had to be professionalized, using

61 Luyten, *Sociaal-economisch overleg*, p. 153.

62 Luyten with Hemmerijckx, 'Achiël Van Acker, architect', pp. 33 and 36-37

63 Claire Andrieu, *Le programme commun de la résistance. Des idées dans la guerre* (Paris: Editions de l'Erudit, 1984).



modern statistical and econometric techniques as well as social sciences. Pierre Laroque was involved in this reform movement and advocated close cooperation between the state and social organizations in social policy.<sup>64</sup>

The role of the state was, at the same time, a contested issue, focused on the relationship between the state and social organizations. In France, one of the results of Social Security was democratization and participation.<sup>65</sup> In Belgium, social organizations maintained a key position in the system, but there was a permanent tension between the socialists who, given their identification with the state after the Liberation, favoured the primacy of the state, and the Christian Democrats, who traditionally gave priority to the social organizations. The gap between these two views became clear in 1949, when *two* commissioners, one socialist and one Christian Democrat, were appointed to make an inventory of the (financial) problems of Social Security and propose alternatives.<sup>66</sup> The conflict between socialists and Christian Democrats over the relationship between the state and the organizations would dominate the debate on social policy in the 1950s.<sup>67</sup> The question was resolved in 1963 with a law on the joint management of the Social Security system on the basis of parity,<sup>68</sup> an option that was in line with the Social Pact.

In the Netherlands, the objective of the Foundation of Labour was precisely to prevent the state from playing a key role in the economy. Making the state the central actor in a planned economy was one of the innovations of the programme of the Socialist Party. This party reorganized itself, open to all, for Catholics as well as Protestants, putting an end to pillarization. A planning office was established. For the employers involved in the Foundation of Labour, the objective of the Foundation was to avoid state intervention in the economy. The state and the economy should be separated and, if some regulation was necessary, this was the prerogative of the community of business and labour, of which the Foundation of Labour was the emanation. Dutch employers could more easily create such a consensual structure, since the antagonism between employers and workers had been less overt during the occupation than it had been in Belgium and France. But the tension between the organizations and the state were also visible in the Foundation of Labour. The initiative

64 Nord, *France's New Deal*, pp. 25-45.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

66 Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren*, pp. 112-113.

67 Patrick Pasture, *Kerk, politiek en sociale actie: de unieke positie van de Christelijke Arbeidersbeweging in België 1944-1973* (Leuven/Apeldoorn: HIVA Reeks no. 14, 1992), pp. 101-135.

68 Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren*, p. 103.



grouped together several employers' organizations (Catholic, Protestant and neutral) and the Catholic, Protestant and socialist trade unions and, as such, respected the notion of pillarization. Pillarization, which also reflected the internal divide within the business elite, was to be continued after the Liberation, precisely to have a countervailing power against the state: pillarized organizations could claim political legitimacy since they organized a part of the population. This legitimacy could be used as an alternative type of political legitimacy to the parliament and government. This was the aim of the employers, who wanted to use the Foundation of Labour to prevent the state from playing a key role in the economy, as the Socialist Party advocated. The Foundation of Labour was an instrument for the Dutch employers against the economic ambitions of the state.<sup>69</sup> As far as Social Security is concerned, the Foundation rejected the plan of the Dutch government to introduce a Beveridge-like 'people's insurance' inspired by the project of the Van Rhijn commission. Social insurances for moderate incomes had to be continued and the implementation was to be in the hands of organizations (employers' and workers'), which were the emanation of trade and industry. In 1947, a mixed commission was installed (civil servants and the Foundation of Labour) and made proposals that were no longer in line with the ideas of Beveridge but that aimed rather at the continuation of the system that had developed over the years.<sup>70</sup>

This conflict over the role of the state was inevitable considering the compulsory character of the system and the participation of the state in the financing of Social Security. The public service character became an issue following the deficits of the system in the late 1940s. As a consequence, an appeal was made to the state to contribute to its financing. The implication of the state also had consequences for the management of the system. The question of whether the state or social partners should dominate the management of Social Security was the subject of debate in Belgium after 1949, triggered by the financial problems of the system. The evolution of the management of the French security system went in the opposite direction, which can be explained by the marginalization of the '*caisses d'affinité*'. As such, the state would obtain the upper hand in the French system.<sup>71</sup>

69 Luyten, 'Op zoek naar de sociaal-economische consensus'.

70 Kappelhof, "Omdat het historisch gegroeid is". De Londense Commissie', pp. 88-89.

71 Valat, *Histoire de la sécurité sociale*, pp. 62-63.

## Social Effects

Workers were most directly concerned by Social Security and, in principle, profited the most. The effects, however, were more nuanced. The contribution of the employee was an extra cost, without direct return, since Social Security was based on the insurance principle. The introduction of the system needed some 'education' and explanation, a role that was taken on by the labour movement. The new system and its advantages were explained to the workers and were claimed as a social conquest of organized labour. Employers who tried to avoid Social Security contributions by paying a part of the salary unofficially were blamed. It was explained that this could lead to a loss of entitlements in the future.<sup>72</sup>

Social Security implies income redistribution within the group of employees, meaning that certain groups will lose. This was used by the Catholic mutual-aid societies in Belgium as an argument against the compulsory system. The better-paid workers (especially white-collar workers) were forced to pay for (blue-collar) workers who were not able to see beyond their day-to-day needs.<sup>73</sup> In Belgium, this group was integrated in the Social Security system on the same footing as the blue-collar workers. In France, white-collar workers and cadres also opposed their incorporation in the Social Security system. Christian Democrats, whose political weight grew after the Liberation, supported them. The result was that cadres were subjected to Social Security, but obtained a specific and more advantageous system. Miners and railway-workers, who had a tradition of labour militancy, could maintain their special regimes, which were more generous and were not merged with the new 'general' system to avoid those groups losing certain advantages.<sup>74</sup> The same was true in Belgium, where miners and seamen had a specific regime. A study commission of the Belgian government in exile in London made a proposal for a national and public Social Security system for all citizens, sweeping away the old social insurances. This plan never had a serious chance and was even not generally accepted by all the members of the study commission.<sup>75</sup> It would call into question the role of the social organizations in social policy.

72 Steven Devuyt, *De betekenis van het Sociaal Pact meer bepaald het luik van sociale bescherming voor de basisleden van de sociale organisaties in België, 1944-1950* (MA thesis, Ghent University, 2009-2010).

73 Pasture, *Kerk, politiek en sociale actie*, pp. 109-110.

74 Nord, *France's New Deal*, p. 172.

75 Vanthemsche, *De beginjaren*, p. 51.

This nuances the idea that Social Security was an element of social unification, as it was presented in 1944-1945. But since the state was the organizer of Social Security, opposition could be overruled more easily (if necessary using fines or other means of administrative coercion). Since the system was unified and rationalized by the state, Social Security gave the state a more social face, which could contribute to easing social tensions after the Liberation. In the official journal of the Belgian Ministry of Labour, Social Security was presented as one of the foundations of the social renewal that came with the Liberation.<sup>76</sup> The same goes for France: Social Security was part of the modernized French state built after the Liberation and an instrument of social pacification and stabilization.<sup>77</sup>

Philip Nord has argued that the modernization of the French state at the Liberation was not only a 'social-democratic moment', since many other forces especially Christian Democrats and technocrats were able to make their mark on the social and economic reforms.<sup>78</sup> For Belgium, it can be argued that the first post-war years were indeed a social-democratic moment for social policy. Social democrats made their mark on social policy in the first post-war years in the field of Social Security and industrial relations. In both cases pragmatism prevailed. They succeeded in doing so basically because the Belgian administration was much weaker than the French, which left much more room for the ministers and their direct collaborators such as Fuss. The parliament could not act as a countervailing power since the government had full powers. Socialists identified themselves in a relatively unrestricted way with the state, an evolution that had already begun in the interwar period but was intensified after 1944. The scope of social interventionism had expanded and the link between state and social organizations was institutionalized, as described in the Social Pact. Social Security and the national labour conferences were the key institutions. This led to a strong identification of the socialists and the state, leading to a statesman-like attitude among socialist politicians, for which Van Acker was the model. The economy was much less affected by social-democratic reforms. The Department of the Economy remained in the hands of Liberal or Catholic ministers. Immediately after the Liberation, they could avoid trade union participation in the economic councils that decided on the distribution of raw materials, they were able to postpone the institutionalization of economic consultation and quickly put an end

76 *Revue du Travail* (1945).

77 Nord, *France's New Deal*, p. 169.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

to economic dirigisme and price control. In contrast to Social Security, the immediate post-war period did not entail a fundamental change in the management of the Belgian economy; pre-war liberalism returned, albeit with social adjustments.<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

Social Security was one of the innovations brought by the Liberation. Social Security was not entirely new: it extended the pre-war social insurances or incorporated certain innovations initiated by the occupier. What was new was the unified and compulsory character of Social Security. This meant that the state played a prominent role. Social Security could be (and indeed was) presented by the state as progress for the workers and could, as such, be used as an instrument to maintain social peace and to enhance post-war reconstruction. This was more effective insofar as social organizations were able to play a role in the Security System. The organizations acted as intermediaries between state and workers and employers. Another reason for the continued involvement of social organizations was that they had been at the origin of social insurances and were not prepared to give up the political power they had built on these insurances. The fact that the state cooperated closely with these organizations was also a matter of avoiding political conflicts. Social Security contributed to the modernization and democratization of the state: the state became a social state and the participation of the social organizations was a form of democratization and participation. The transformation of the relationship between the state and these organizations was part of a process of reform by which the state became more interventionist. In the Netherlands, a coalition between employers and trade unions, initiated by the employers, was a means of tempering the interventionist ambitions of the state and of opposing a global, fundamental reform of social insurances through a Beveridge-like 'people's insurance'. But in this case, the war brought a political change too: while, for a long time, the old economic elite had been able to avoid state control over social insurances, after 1945 a coalition with the trade unions was needed and the result was the joint management of social questions by trade unions and employers' organizations. This also shows the central position of social organizations in the reconfiguration of the social role of the state, of which Social Security was a key component.

79 Luyten with Hemmerijckx, 'Achille Van Acker, architect', pp. 35-37.



# The Politics of Reconstruction

Foreign Aid and State Authority in Greece, 1945-1947

*Polymeris Voglis*

As the Second World War drew to a close, it was evident that Greece would have to rely on foreign aid for its survival. Already during the Nazi occupation, the city dwellers were dependent on International Red Cross food imports. After a disastrous famine in the winter of 1941-1942 that claimed the lives of 45,000 people in Athens and Piraeus, the Allies lifted the naval blockade and, from September 1942 until the liberation of the country, 15,000 tons of grain and 3,000 tons of other foodstuffs were unloaded in Greek ports every month. In November 1943, the governor of the Bank of Greece, Kyriakos Varvaressos, prepared a memorandum on behalf of the Greek government in exile for the newly established United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), in which he outlined the structural economic problems of Greece and the havoc that Nazi occupation had wrought. He foresaw that 'a large section of the Greek population would have to rely entirely on imports for the satisfaction of its needs'.<sup>1</sup> This is what exactly happened with UNRRA aid in the immediate post-war years. In fact, it was not only the population that was dependent on foreign relief aid, but also the state that was dependent on foreign economic assistance. Greece was among the major recipients of foreign aid after the end of the Second World War. In 1952, Varvaressos submitted another report to the Greek government, in which he estimated that post-war economic aid to Greece had reached \$2 billion. Despite this enormous amount, he concluded that Greece 'is and will remain a poor country with limited economic potentialities' and singled out the economic dependence of Greece on US economic aid as a major source of concern.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, I will examine the economic and social problems that Greece faced after the end of the war in order to address two questions. The first concerns the relation between relief aid and the reconstitution of government authority, i.e. to what extent did the distribution of relief

<sup>1</sup> UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/4.1.9, Historian subject files, Memorandum of the Greek Delegation to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, November 1943.

<sup>2</sup> Kyriakos Varvaressos, *Ekthesis epi tou oikonomikou provlimatos tis Elladas* (Athens: Savallas, 2002), pp. 87-92.

correspond to the needs of the population or to the 'politics of food' that the government pursued? While there is a large body of literature on the Marshall Plan, much less has been written about UNRRA. Despite the humanitarian character of UNRRA operations, its political dimensions were equally important and Greece is a case in point. The second question concerns the relation between economic aid and foreign intervention. In the post-war period, the British and the Americans provided substantial economic aid to the Greek government to avoid an economic collapse and to defeat the communists on the battlefields of the civil war. At the same time, with the encouragement of the Greek government, they got heavily involved in rebuilding the Greek state and in domestic politics. The intervention of major powers in less developed countries is usually explained in terms such as 'imperialism' or 'dependence'. However, I will argue that the American intervention in Greece, despite its unique breadth, was part of a larger, transnational reconfiguration of power relations and the emergence of the United States as a global, hegemonic power and a new kind of empire.

## UNRRA

After the Battle of Stalingrad, which marked a decisive turn in the Second World War, the Allies began to draw up plans for liberated Europe. There were serious concerns that the end of hostilities would be the beginning of a new period of instability due to the devastation wrought by war and occupation: famine and disease, homeless and displaced persons, poverty and unemployment, ethnic conflicts and civil strife – all presented immediate dangers and intractable problems. After winning the war, 'freedom from want' was of utmost importance to winning the peace. The talks on establishing an international relief organization began in March 1943 and a few months later, in November 1943, forty-four countries signed the treaty for the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). From the outset, it was an international organization funded and led by the United States. The three directors of UNRRA were Americans (Herbert Lehman, Fiorello La Guardia and Lowell W. Rooks), as were most of its staff; the United States covered two-thirds of UNRRA's operating expenses; 90 per cent of the food and other supplies which were distributed by UNRRA came from the United States.<sup>3</sup> Despite

3 John C. Campbell, *The United States in World Affairs, 1945-1947* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 321.

its relatively early establishment, UNRRA was very slow in getting started. The war was still raging and the Allies wanted to ensure that the available supplies (especially food and transport) would first serve the troops on the front line. Moreover, not all countries occupied or devastated by the war were to receive aid. UNRRA's charter stipulated that, in order to be eligible, countries had to fulfil two criteria: first, to have been occupied by the Axis powers during the war and, second, not to have sufficient financial means after the war to purchase supplies on the market. This left Western Europe as well as Germany and Italy outside the scope of UNRRA aid.<sup>4</sup> This policy soon changed, but then a new problem appeared. The requirements of the countries exceeded UNRRA's financial capacity, meaning 'the programmes had gradually to be scaled down until they came within the limits of budgetary resources'.<sup>5</sup> All these are indicative of the great improvisation that the UNRRA experiment entailed and explain the delays in commencing the relief operations that, finally, began in the spring of 1945. Thus, in the winter of 1944, the situation in the newly liberated countries of Western Europe was tragic. People were in desperate need of food, clothing and shelter, but UNRRA was absent. In a debate in the British House of Lords, speakers demanded to know what was going on with UNRRA. The government spokesman admitted that in December 1944, only two countries received UNRRA aid – Greece and Italy.<sup>6</sup> This was inaccurate – only Italy received relief aid at the time. In Greece, UNRRA operations had, to a large extent, ceased.

In September 1944 Greece's application to UNRRA was approved and on 23 October 1944 (two weeks after the withdrawal of German troops from Athens) the first UNRRA members arrived in the country. After three and a half years of German, Italian and Bulgarian occupation, Greece was in ruins. More than 1,200,000 people were homeless, grain production had fallen by 40 per cent, three-quarters of the merchant fleet was destroyed, most of the facilities at the port of Piraeus were severely damaged, and not a single railway line was left intact.<sup>7</sup> Alongside economic havoc and human misery came a violent political conflict, as bitter fighting between

4 William Hitchcock, *Liberation: The Bitter Road to Freedom, Europe, 1944-1945* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp. 218-219.

5 League of Nations, *Food, Famine and Relief, 1940-1946* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1946), p. 93.

6 Ben Shephard, "Becoming Planning Minded": The Theory and Practice of Relief, 1940-1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43/3 (2008), p. 414.

7 Konstantinos Doxiadis, *Oi thysies tis Ellados ston Deftero Pagkosmio Polemo* (Athens: Yfypourgeion Anoikodomiseos, 1946), pp. 8, 17, 22, 31, passim.



the communist-led resistance (National Liberation Front, EAM) and Nazi collaborators spread to many parts of the country. The government in exile returned to Greece in mid-October 1944, accompanied by British troops. Following an agreement between the Greek and British governments, the British military commander was given control of the import and distribution of relief to Greece. On 3 December 1944, a civil war between EAM, on the one hand, and government forces (National Guard) supported by the British troops, on the other, broke out in the capital. On 10 December, Laird Archer, chief of the UNRRA mission to Greece, stated in a memorandum sent to the British military that 'we recognize that there is an armed insurrection against the Greek government by a political group; AFHQ [Allied Force Headquarters], for whom we are acting as an agent, is taking steps to quell this insurrection by force. We, therefore, as UNRRA are unavoidably associated with a regime of force and discrimination'. He concluded by asking the mission to be 'dissociated from the British military'.<sup>8</sup> The British response was to evacuate most of the staff to Cairo, and UNRRA operations came to a standstill. The distribution of relief aid to the Athenians stopped, but at the same time 140,000 rations were brought into Athens in order to feed the police, the National Guard and the Greek personnel that worked for the British military in Athens. The excuse for the cessation of relief aid was that the lives of UNRRA staff might be in danger because of the hostilities. However, the distribution of relief stopped even in provinces where no fighting occurred. Again there was an exception: the British-controlled areas continued to receive relief. While the population desperately needed UNRRA food and clothing, the distribution depended on who was in control in a particular area. EAM accused the British and the government of using relief aid for political ends. The delays in distribution, it claimed, were due to the British, who hoped in this way to turn the people against the Left.<sup>9</sup>

The distribution of relief resumed only after the defeat of the communists in Athens. On 1 March 1945, an agreement was signed between the Greek government and UNRRA, according to which the government (and not the administration) would assume full responsibility for relief aid on 1 April 1945. This was in line with the general policy of UNRRA throughout Europe at the time, because it did not want to be accused of interfering in domestic affairs. While, nominally, UNRRA only had an advisory role, it

8 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/4.1.9, Historian subject files, Chief of UNRRA Greece Mission to General Hughes and General Sadler, 10 December 1944.

9 Angeliki Laiou-Thomadakis, 'The Politics of Hunger: Economic Aid to Greece, 1943-1945', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 7/2 (1980), pp. 27-42.

at the same time assumed an active role, owing to the failings of the Greek government. As George Woodbridge, the chief historian of UNRRA, later wrote, 'the mission prepared and wrote bills to be enacted into law by the government; it arranged for the appointment and selection of Government officials; it planned and prepared, in cooperation with the Government, the import programs; it determined where ships should be unloaded; in these and in many other respects it acted for the Government'.<sup>10</sup> A joint policy committee was formed on 1 April 1945, comprising representatives of the Greek government, UNRRA and the British embassy. It is noteworthy that the United States, despite repeated calls from the British and UNRRA, refused to participate in the committee because, as Roosevelt reminded Churchill, that would violate the Yalta agreement on tripartite action in the liberated countries.<sup>11</sup> The Joint Policy Committee had four subcommittees (for wages and prices, transport, rationing, and welfare), while UNRRA personnel participated in committees that covered a broad range of relief activities, such as the distribution of food, clothing, and medicine, the import of fuel, fertilizers and machinery, and the repair of roads, bridges and schools. Thus, the UNRRA mission in Greece 'grew into something approaching a parallel government'.<sup>12</sup> One of the major problems that the UNRRA mission addressed concerned refugees and displaced persons (DPs). When the war ended, UNRRA officials estimated that there were 85,000 Greek DPs in Germany, the Middle East and elsewhere, who had to return to Greece, and 243,000 internal refugees who had to be repatriated. By October 1945, 44,715 DPs had been repatriated, but the problem of internal refugees remained pressing as 120,000 persons were still awaiting repatriation to their hometowns and villages. UNRRA operated twelve assembly centres and transit camps and the repatriation programme was one of its major achievements in Greece.<sup>13</sup>

The aid that Greece received was, by any standards, massive and the government relied exclusively on this aid to meet the most immediate and urgent needs. From this viewpoint, Greece was more lucky than other

10 George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), vol. 2, p. 103.

11 President Roosevelt to the Prime Minister (Churchill), Washington, undated, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 207.

12 Hitchcock, *Liberation*, op. cit., p. 229.

13 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/3.0.12.2.1, File 453.3 Displaced Persons – Refugee Movements, Supplementary information on DP and refugee moves, 25 July 1945, PAG 4/3.0.12.2.1, File 455.6 Ministry of Repatriation, Miss Eccless to Mr. H.B. White, 27 December 1945.

devastated countries; by March 1946, UNRRA had shipped 1.3 million tons of foodstuffs to Greece, whereas Yugoslavia had received 944,000 tons and Poland 278,000 tons.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, UNRRA provided Greece with 1,452 tractors, 5,888 trucks and cars, 20,789 livestock animals, and 91,974 tons of fertilizer, among others.<sup>15</sup> However, in other areas the accomplishments of UNRRA were less impressive. The aid helped the population to survive in the first critical months after the war, but the improvement of living standards was not equivalent to the amount of aid provided. In March 1946, Buell Maben, the mission chief, acknowledged that 'the degree of improvement in the economic situation of the country and the living conditions of the people is less that might have logically been expected'.<sup>16</sup>

The government became the target of attacks in the press regarding the way it was handling the relief effort, while the offices of the UNRRA mission in Athens were flooded with reports and letters about the deteriorating living conditions in the countryside. Even the nutritional needs of the population were, in some regions, hardly covered. Despite the thousands of tons of wheat that UNRRA imported every month and the rapid recovery of wheat production, the mission asked for an increase in wheat imports into Greece. A report from a field trip to the villages in the region of Drama in northern Greece highlighted several problems: the large numbers of indigents, high cost of rations, unfair distribution of clothing, skin diseases among schoolchildren, many orphans without any special care, no shelters for families whose houses were burnt during the war. One of the officers concluded that, unless the ration cost was lowered, 'immediately starvation will result in this area'.<sup>17</sup>

Partly the problem was due to the general handicaps of the relief organization itself: poor planning and incompetent personnel. For instance, on the islands of the Cyclades the welfare procedures took several months because of delays in supplying the necessary administrative material and the lack of the necessary employees.<sup>18</sup> However, the main problem was the general economic policy of the government regarding relief supplies. Instead

14 League of Nations, *Food, Famine and Relief*, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

15 United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, *UNRRA at Work in Greece* (Athens: Stephanopoulos, 1946), pp. 28-29.

16 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/3.0.12.0.2.1, File Policy General, Buell Maben to E. Tsouderos, Deputy Prime Minister, 1 March 1946.

17 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/3.0.12.1.6: 9, File Region EG, T.B. Cuninghame to Russel C. Singleton, 15 March 1946.

18 Flora Tsilaga, "'The Mountain Labourled and Brought Forth a Mouse': UNRRA's Operations in the Cyclades Islands, c. 1945-1946', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43/3 (2008), pp. 527-545.

of introducing price controls and rationing, the government followed a double-standard policy: imported wheat was sold at very low, fixed prices, while domestic produce was sold on the free market. The result was that the peasants had to sell their produce to merchants at very low prices, something that turned them against the government and UNRRA. This economic policy had a beneficiary, and that was the urban population who had access to food supplies free of charge or at very low prices. On the other hand, those who were less favoured were the inhabitants of mountain villages who had to pay in advance for their rations and also for the cost of transporting them. The result of this policy, as one member of the UNRRA mission noted, was that 'the peasant population, which on the whole is poorer than the urban, is paying for the ration a considerable higher price than the inhabitants of larger towns'.<sup>19</sup>

So far, we have seen two aspects of discrimination in the relief distribution policy. First, the urban population was prioritized over the peasants, and, second, the towns in the plains were prioritized over the mountain villages. In this way the government sought to gain the support of the urban population, and to secure the loyalty of civil servants, and the state apparatus in general, in a period of growing political tension. The third aspect of discrimination was explicitly political. Families or even whole villages that during the occupation supported the leftist guerrillas in their fight against the Nazis were simply excluded from the distribution of relief. The same happened with the Slav Macedonians, an ethnic minority in northern Greece that, to a large extent, had sided with the Left. Already in April 1945, when the government assumed responsibility for the distribution of aid, there were complaints that the local authorities were 'using UNRRA supplies as a political weapon'.<sup>20</sup> The political discrimination in the distribution of relief supplies was part of a broader campaign on the part of the government and paramilitary bands against the leftist resistance and the Communist Party (KKE). Between February 1945 and February 1946, more than 50,000 people were arrested and 1,200 people were killed in a wave of so-called 'white terror'. In 1945, there were about 150-200 paramilitary bands in the countryside that terrorized civilians, raped women, looted villages and, as a consequence, many leftists took to the mountains. In the spring of 1946, the first armed leftist bands were formed in the mountains

19 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/3.0.12.1.4:1, File Food division – Food supplies, Regional Director E Region to Chief of Mission, 24 September 1945.

20 UNRRA Archives, PAG 4/3.0.12.1.6:9, File Region EG, Field Correspondence, Regional Director to Chief of Mission, 17 April 1945.

of central Greece. The activities of leftist guerrillas became an excuse for the government to stop the distribution of relief in entire areas due to 'security reasons' – the guerrillas might raid the villages in order to seize relief supplies. The halting of relief distribution was a way to put pressure on the populations in the mountain areas to leave their villages so that the leftist guerrillas would lose their networks of supplies and sources of recruitment.<sup>21</sup> Eventually, in the autumn of 1946, many villagers moved to the cities in the plains in order to have access to the supplies, thereby constituting a new wave of internal refugees that grew to several hundred thousand people in the civil war years.

By that time, UNRRA operations in Greece, as in the rest of the world, had been curtailed. Despite the global food crisis in 1946, which required the increase of food aid to Europe, the United States government in November 1946 announced that it had decided to stop financing the organization. As the Cold War was beginning, the priorities of the United States were changing. American officials had realized that the authorities in the receiving countries were using the relief to gain political power and popular support, something that in countries like Yugoslavia, Poland or Czechoslovakia might be to the advantage of communists and the Soviets. Moreover, the next task, the reconstruction of Europe, was too important to be left to an international organization. In 1947, while they were making plans for what would later be the Marshall Plan, American officials referred to UNRRA in terms of a negative experiment: 'We must avoid getting into another UNRRA. The United States must run this show', one wrote.<sup>22</sup>

### **In Search of Foreign Aid, Part One: The British**

UNRRA aid helped the population to survive, but little was done in the other direction, that of the economic reconstruction of the country. As the American Economic Mission to Greece pointed out in 1947, 'in spite of \$700 million in foreign assistance, Greece during the past two years has merely managed to survive. [...] Economic conditions have improved but little over those prevailing at the time when the Nazi forces were expelled from the

21 Angeliki Laiou, 'Population Movements in the Greek Countryside during the Greek Civil War', in *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949*, ed. L. Bærentzen, J.O. Iatrides and O. Smith (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1987), pp. 55-104.

22 Cited in Hitchcock, *Liberation*, op. cit., p. 247.

country.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the economic situation had deteriorated since the liberation as a result of the combination of huge public deficits and monetary instability. The government was unable to balance a budget of growing expenditure and very low receipts and unwilling to impose a high income tax or a tax on wartime profits. On the other hand, gold remained the main medium of exchange and savings, leading to the continuous devaluation of the drachma. The printing of the drachma led to an increase of note circulation and inflation, which pushed prices and wages upwards. The economy and the people remained, to a large extent, dependent on external relief and the government on foreign economic aid.<sup>24</sup> The only serious effort, in terms of economic policy, came from Kyriakos Varvaressos, who was appointed deputy prime minister and minister for supplies in June 1945. Varvaressos embraced an interventionist policy which aimed at tightening government control over the economy. His measures included the prohibition of transactions in gold and foreign currency, the improvement of the rationing system and a more socially just utilization of UNRRA supplies, the control of wages and prices, and heavy direct taxation of businesses. The new tax provoked the immediate reaction of industrialists and merchants. Olive oil disappeared from the market and other basic goods, such as soap, butter, cheese and sugar, were in short supply and, as a consequence, their prices soared. The tide of inflation caused a series of strikes and demands from civil servants and professional groups for salary increases. Faced with the reaction of the economic elites and the suspicion of the Left, Varvaressos resigned in September 1945.<sup>25</sup>

Grigorios Kasimatis, the new minister for the national economy, abandoned the interventionist policy in favour of free market principles: the controls on prices were lifted, indirect taxes were increased to cover the deficit, restrictions on the sale of gold were lifted and the government sought loans.<sup>26</sup> The economic situation deteriorated rapidly. In the autumn of 1945, revenues covered just half of expenditure, prices increased sixfold and the price of gold sovereigns went up twelvefold within five months. Buell

23 Report of the American Economic Mission to Greece, *Department of State Bulletin*, 4 May 1947, Supplement, p. 898.

24 Athanasios Lykogiannis, *Britain and the Greek Economic Crisis, 1944-1947: From Liberation to the Truman Doctrine* (Columbia/London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), pp. 102-103.

25 Athanasios Lykogiannis, 'Why Did the "Varvaressos Experiment" Fail?', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 19 (2001), pp. 117-140; Kostas Kostis, 'Introduction', in Kyriakos Varvaressos, *Ekthesis*, op. cit., pp. 49-53.

26 Christos Hadziiossif, 'I politiki oikonomia tis anasygkrotisis kai tou emfyliou', in *Istoria tis Elladas tou 200u aiona*, ed. Christos Hadziiossif (Athens: Vivliorama, v. D1, 2009), p. 20.

Maben, chief of the UNRRA mission to Greece, was alarmed by the danger of a general breakdown of the state machinery. He believed that swift action on the part of the government was more than necessary to control wages and prices, increase taxes, and reduce expenses (by cutting the number of civil servants) together with other measures such as the establishment of a system of allocation of supplies, the requisition by the government of finished products, etc.<sup>27</sup> Greek politicians thought differently: the delegation that visited London in January 1946 claimed that a tax increase would impair the recovery of production, that the problems of the budget deficit and currency stability could be solved within the broader perspective of the economic reconstruction of the country, and that any effort in that direction depended on foreign economic assistance. British hesitations were overcome because the danger of economic collapse was evident and the Left eventually capitalized on popular discontent as a wave of strikes spread in October 1945. On the other hand, the British government was willing to help Greece financially. The geographical position of Greece was important for the communications of the British Empire, especially since the other Balkan countries had fallen into the Soviet sphere of influence. Moreover, the victory of the pro-British political forces in the March 1946 elections, to a large extent, depended on the improvement of the financial situation and the stabilization of the economy. A pro-British Greek government was a guarantee for British imperial interests in the broader region. Thus, the question was not whether the British would help Greece financially, but the conditions of that aid.<sup>28</sup>

On 24 January 1946, the British and Greek governments signed an agreement in London. The London Agreement provided a British stabilization loan of £10 million and the waiving of the £46 million war debt. The Greek government agreed to reduce the deficit by increasing revenue (through higher taxation and the sale of UNRRA supplies), controlling wages and devaluing the drachma. Moreover, perhaps equally important was the establishment of two new institutions: the British Economic Mission (BEM) and the Currency Committee. The former was designed to supervise the policy of the Greek government in matters of finance, industry, agriculture, transport and labour relations. The agreement made clear that the BEM

27 National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 868.50/1-1046, American Embassy, London to Secretary of State, 10 January 1946.

28 Heinz Richter, *I epemvasi ton Agglon stin Ellada. Apo ti Varkiza ston emfylio polemo (Fevrouarios 1945-Avgoustos 1946)* (Athens: Vivlipoleion tis Estias, 1997), pp. 430-437; Thanasis Sfikas, *Oi Aggloi Ergatikoi kai o emfylios polemos stin Ellada. O imperialismos tis 'mi-epemvasis'* (Athens: Filistor, 1997), pp. 143-147.



had only an advisory role and no authority to oversee the implementation of its suggestions. This was not the case with the Currency Committee, a five-member body in which one British and one American participated with the right to veto the decisions of the three Greek members.<sup>29</sup>

Following the London Agreement, the drachma was drastically devalued, gold could be sold freely on the market, the prices of UNRRA goods rose, and import restrictions were lifted. In the first half of 1946, the Greek economy seemed to be in much better shape: inflation diminished, normal trade resumed and the recovery of production was steady. However, the sale of gold and unrestricted imports drained the country's foreign exchange (sterling and dollars) and gold reserves.<sup>30</sup> As one scholar has argued, 'by using irreplaceable foreign exchange and bullion holdings to subsidize its current deficits, the government was sparing itself the painful task of balancing the budget by imposing heavier taxation and reducing expenditures'.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the government could no longer rely on relief aid, since the US government had decided to stop financing UNRRA. In the summer of 1946, the Greek government was searching for a new loan – but this time in a different location, on the other side of the Atlantic.

The inability or reluctance of Greek ministers to work out a viable plan for the economy was, to a large extent, based on the assumption that there would be foreign economic aid. It is true that, until the elections of March 1946, successive governments lacked political legitimacy and power and that the state apparatus was in disarray due to the occupation. However, the economic situation did not improve after the elections, when the Right won and Konstantinos Tsaldaris became prime minister. The real problem behind the lack of any viable economic policy was the decision not to clash with the economic elites. Despite the increasing needs of the government and the mounting budget deficit, the government was unwilling to pass the necessary economic reforms and tax the upper classes; the deficit was to be covered with foreign economic assistance. In other words, foreign economic aid was used in order to leave intact the interests of the economic elites; as one scholar has argued, 'the indispensable underpinning of the strategy that manifested itself as speculative behaviour was the institutionalization of a mechanism of foreign aid'.<sup>32</sup>

29 Lykogiannis, *Britain and the Greek Economic Crisis*, op. cit., pp. 156-160.

30 Giorgos Stathakis, *To dogma Truman kai to shedio Marshall. I istoria tis amerikanikis voitheias stin Ellada* (Athens: Vivliorama, 2004), pp. 87-97.

31 Lykogiannis, *Britain and the Greek Economic Crisis*, op. cit., p. 187.

32 Stavros Thomadakis, 'Stabilization, Development, and Government Economic Authority in the 1940s', in *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and Its Legacy*, ed. John O. Iatrides and



## In Search of Foreign Aid, Part Two: The Americans

A Greek delegation visited Washington in August 1946. Greece by that time had already received from the United States a \$25 million loan from the Export-Import Bank in January 1946, and another \$10 million surplus property credit in May 1946. In July 1946, Tsaldaris met with James Byrnes, the Secretary of State, in Paris and asked for \$6 billion in economic assistance. The astronomical sum clearly made Byrnes furious, who confided a month later to the journalist C.L. Sulzberger that he was 'a little fed up with the Greeks'.<sup>33</sup> Requesting \$175 million in economic aid, the Greek delegation to Washington portrayed Greece as a country defending 'democratic freedom' and 'free trade' surrounded by 'hostile and undemocratic states dominated by Russia'; the country, they added, was in such a precarious position that the 'social order' was at stake.<sup>34</sup> American officials found the memorandum of the Greek delegation to be 'poorly conceived and inadequate, containing many inconsistencies [...] as well as [the] surprising statement [that] increased taxation would produce inflation'.<sup>35</sup> However, the problem was not that the memorandum was badly prepared. The Truman administration was reluctant to give additional economic aid to Greece because it considered the Greek government unreliable and incompetent and that 'no attempt has been made to put its economy on a sound basis'.<sup>36</sup> Gardner Patterson, who knew the Greek government's economic policy from the inside on account of being a member of the Greek Currency Committee, was more to the point: 'much of the various governments' failure to take appropriate, be they unpopular, financial measures has been due in large part to their conviction that Greece is in such a strategic military and political situation that the U.K. and/or the U.S. cannot afford to permit another serious financial and economic catastrophe'.<sup>37</sup>

The Truman administration was unwilling to provide any further economic aid, except perhaps for financing specific projects. The main reason for the reluctance of the United States was that it saw no reason to support the Greek government since Greece had no particular significance

Linda Wrigley (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 225.

33 Lawrence S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 51.

34 NARA 868.50/8-746, Henderson to Baxter, 7 August 1946.

35 The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Greece, 14 August 1946, *FRUS*, 1946, vol. 7, 190-191.

36 NARA 868.51/8-2046, Lincoln and Nortman to Ness and Sumner, 20 August 1946.

37 NARA 868.51/8-1246, Athens to Secretary of State, 12 August 1946.

for it from a geopolitical point of view. It is ironic that at almost the same time (early September 1946), other circles in Washington drew the exact opposite conclusion. A War Department committee drafted a memorandum to the State Department that concluded as follows: 'It is in the interest of U.S. security that Greece be supported. [...] In addition to political support, there should be economic assistance in the form of liberal and unfettered credits, and direct relief to supplant UNRRA assistance.'<sup>38</sup> The reversal of US policy towards Greece was based on geopolitical considerations. The US military was convinced that Soviet aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean was reaching its peak, and for this reason, some historians have suggested that the Cold War started in Iran and Turkey, rather than in Europe.<sup>39</sup> The Greek civil war, American officials argued, was instigated by the neighbouring communist countries in the Balkans with the view to overthrowing the right-wing government and establishing a communist puppet regime. In August 1946, the Soviet Union requested from Turkey a revision of the Montreux Convention to allow the joint Russian-Turkish defence of the Dardanelles. Also, in the summer of 1946, the conflict between the Soviet Union and Iran, concerning the control of the latter's northern provinces, escalated. For the State Department, the civil war 'may result in [an] early major crisis which may be a deciding factor in [the] future orientation of Near and Middle Eastern countries'.<sup>40</sup> For American policymakers, the Greek civil war was not simply a case of Soviet expansionism in the Balkans but rather a part of a Soviet plan to gain access to the oil reserves of the Middle East; the US government and the American oil companies were particularly anxious about their economy and security interests regarding oil, which were already threatened by Soviet policy in Iran.<sup>41</sup> The British, who until the Second World War played a dominant role in the area, were no longer capable of securing Western interests in the region *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. In fact, the British themselves had to rely on American economic assistance, the so-called British Loan of \$3.75 billion granted after the US-UK agreement of 5 December 1945. It was up to the USA to 'rescue' Greece from communism. Thus, in the autumn of 1946 the question again was not

38 NARA 868.20/9-646, War Department memorandum. U.S. Security Interests in Greece, 6 September 1946.

39 Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 35.

40 NARA 868.00/10-1546, Department of State to Athens, 15 October 1945.

41 Howard Jones, *'A New Kind of War': America's Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 32-35, 57-60; Wittner, *American Intervention*, op. cit., pp. 60-63.

whether Greece would receive economic aid (from the Americans this time) but the conditions attached to that aid.

The Truman administration sent the American Economic Mission to Greece, which spent two months in the country (18 January–22 March 1947), in order to investigate Greece's economic problems and make suggestions. The recommendations of the mission head, Paul Porter, stemmed not only from the grave situation of the Greek economy but also from his very low opinion of the political and economic elites of the country.<sup>42</sup> The mission advocated the active intervention of the Greek government in the economy, the urgent reparation of public works and a programme of agricultural and industrial development that could make Greece a self-sufficient country. The report concluded that the Greek government would need not only vast sums of financial aid but also 'the assistance of experienced American administrators, economists and technicians to insure that American aid and Greece's own resources are used effectively in creating a stable, self-sustaining economy'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it suggested that an American mission should be sent to Greece to supervise the aid and advise the Greek government. In April 1947, a month after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, Porter sent a memorandum to the Undersecretary of State, Dean Acheson, in which he acknowledged that his proposals 'constitute a departure in established relationships between sovereign states'. 'Yet,' he continued, 'the Greek state has asked for assistance and supervision which is in itself a limitation of her sovereignty'.<sup>44</sup>

The Greek government was already fully aware of the new reality. On 21 February 1947, the British government officially informed the State Department that, from 31 March 1947, it would be unable to provide any further financial assistance to Greece. The Truman administration moved swiftly. The State Department prepared, for the Greek government, a draft of a request for economic aid from the American government; the Greek government accepted it and presented it as its official request.<sup>45</sup> On 12 March

42 In his diary, Paul Porter wrote after a dinner with Greek industrialists: 'I imagine that most of the individuals with whom I talked are past masters at getting their profits converted into gold or foreign exchange and hedging them abroad. I raised the question with this group that a stranger to the country gathers the impression that the businessmen of Greece are selling their country short'. Harry Truman Library, Paul Porter Papers, American Economic Mission to Greece Diary, Tuesday, 4 February 1947.

43 Report of the American Economic Mission to Greece, *Department of State Bulletin*, 4 May 1947, Supplement, p. 906.

44 NARA 868.20/4-2247, Paul A. Porter to the Acting Secretary of State, 22 April 1947.

45 Wittner, *American Intervention*, op. cit., p. 73.

1947 Truman spoke before Congress, asking for the approval of economic aid of \$300 million for Greece and \$100 million for Turkey. As soon as the bill passed, the first priority of the State Department was to start preparing an agreement between the American and Greek governments concerning the supervision of the aid.

The agreement for American aid to Greece was entirely different from that of UNRRA (in which the Greek government had the responsibility for the distribution of relief aid) and the British (in which the British Economic Mission played an advisory role only). The agreement provided that the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG) would have extensive powers and responsibilities and that the Greek government had to comply with the mission's recommendations, otherwise the economic aid would be withdrawn. The note that accompanied the agreement was more specific. The AMAG would 'participate in the development of revenue and expenditure policies, approve government expenditures which directly or indirectly involve the use of American aid, take part in the planning of the import program, and approve the use of foreign exchange'. The note concluded that 'in general the Greek government will wish to consult with the Mission before taking any economic steps which might affect the success of the American aid program'.<sup>46</sup> The AMAG's activities, however, were not restricted to the economy. Secretary of State George Marshall instructed the chief of the AMAG, Dwight Griswold that, if he thought it was necessary, he could also be involved directly in Greek politics and bring about the 'reorganization' of the Greek government.<sup>47</sup> And so it happened. Shortly after the arrival of the AMAG, the Greek government was 'reorganized' under American pressure. On 7 September 1947, a new coalition government of the Populist and Liberal parties was formed under the premiership of the more moderate Themistoklis Sofoulis (whose party had polled only 14 per cent in the 1946 elections), after he was interviewed by State Department officials regarding his stance towards the Greek communists and the Soviet Union.

The AMAG acquired the character of a shadow government. It was organized in 'divisions' which corresponded to the ministries of the Greek government, that is finance, public policy, commerce, public health, aid distribution, agriculture, industry, reconstruction, labour, welfare, legislation,

46 Cited in A.A. Fatouros, 'Building Formal Structure of Penetration: The United States in Greece, 1947-1948', in *Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis*, ed. John. O. Iatridesq (Hanover/London: University Press of New England, 2001), p. 246.

47 Harry Truman Library, Papers of Dwight P. Griswold, Correspondence File, 1947-1948. AMAG Correspondence, Marshall to Griswold, 11 July 1947.

and, of course, defence. Moreover, Americans were appointed to two committees: the Currency Committee (which was a leftover from the British Economic Mission) and the Foreign Trade Administration. Not surprisingly, Griswold was described as 'the most powerful man in Greece'.<sup>48</sup> Eventually, from 1947, Greece became a country of restricted sovereignty. The Greek government acquiesced in the restriction of sovereignty and acted duly. As Konstantinos Tsaldaris, minister of Foreign Affairs, said in late November 1947, in the beginning he was worried that Griswold might become a sort of 'High Commissioner' of Greece, 'but after thinking [the] matter over had reached the conclusion that only thus could the situation be saved'.<sup>49</sup>

Within this context and during the Greek Civil War, American economic aid poured into Greece – it is estimated that between 1947 and 1951 this amounted to approximately \$1 billion. Half of this aid was directed to the military, at least until 1949 when the civil war ended. A large part of the remainder was used for the relief of war refugees, whose number reached 700,000 in 1948-1949. The financing of economic reconstruction, especially in industry, was very limited. The priorities of the American mission were the stabilization of the currency and the balancing of the budget without introducing the necessary economic reforms (for instance, the increase in direct taxation) that would affect the interests of the economic elites; on the contrary, by allowing the free sale of gold this enabled them to continue their speculative behaviour and convert their wealth into gold instead of investing it in production. Moreover, the four-year plan (1948-1952) that was submitted by the Greek government and the Economic Cooperation Administration/Greece set as priorities the development of specific industries (metallurgy, chemicals, oil refining, etc.) and the increase in electricity production – mainly through hydroelectric power projects. The four-year plan was met with scepticism in the ECA headquarters in Paris, and, eventually, it was abandoned.<sup>50</sup> The ambitious plans for reconstruction and the transformation of Greece into a self-sufficient country were replaced by more 'realistic' approaches. In 1949, several policymakers and experts in the State Department argued that the future of Greece depended on the

48 *The New York Times*, 21 November 1947.

49 Harry Truman Library, President's Secretary's Files, Athens to Secretary of State, 29 November 1947.

50 Stathakis, *To Dogma Truman*, op. cit., pp. 265-291; Economic Cooperation Administration, *Greece. Country Study*, Washington, DC, February 1949, pp. 28-35.

development of agriculture and small industry and, also, on emigration, since it was an 'overpopulated' country.<sup>51</sup>

## A Broader Perspective

The United States had emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful country in a world which was volatile and could easily be destabilized. Although the United States was not threatened by any country, US policymakers began to redefine national security interests in broader and more expansive terms. Security interests were identified with economic interests and, thus, the United States was determined not to allow any hostile power to gain access to vital resources or to control strategic positions.<sup>52</sup> The expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe alarmed and galvanized both the State Department and the Pentagon. The decline of European imperial powers and the devastation of war allowed the United States to strive for world hegemony in a double sense: to defend the economic interests of capitalism and to protect militarily countries from Soviet 'aggression' worldwide. In departing, however, from the tradition of European imperialism, US world hegemony was to be based on a different idea on empire. The post-war American empire was based, on the one hand, on the indirect control of the world economy via international institutions that were controlled by the United States and, on the other, on the consent of countries to American intervention – it was a new kind of world hegemony, which has been aptly described as 'empire by invitation'.<sup>53</sup> The new post-war world was characterized by multilateralism, supranationalism and interdependence – but under the guidance of the United States.

Already before the end of the Second World War, a number of international economic agreements and financial institutions were established to design the post-war reconstruction of the world economy. A world of free trade could open the way for economic prosperity and political stability. Following the Bretton Woods conference in July 1944, a new post-war world

51 NARA 868.48/4-2549, Hollis W. Peter to John D. Jernegan, 25 April 1949; NARA 868.50/8-1249, Department of State. Memorandum of Conversation on Greek Financial and Economic Policy, 12 August 1949.

52 David Reynolds, *One World Divisible: A Global History since 1945* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 2001), p. 21.

53 Geir Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952', *The Cold War in Europe: Era of a Divided Continent*, ed. Charles Maier (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), pp. 143-168.

system came into being through a series of agreements between the forty-four countries that set up the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In 1947, however, the Americans thought that the Bretton Woods system was unsuitable to deal with the new problems of Europe. On the one hand, the IMF and the World Bank were not yet operational and had insufficient credit to finance the reconstruction of Europe and, on the other, the expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, and the political instability and the power of the communist parties in France and Italy, had changed the priorities of American foreign policy in Europe. The post-war recovery of the European economy had been steady but slow; UNRRA aid was due to expire in March 1947 and the question of Germany's future had already divided the four occupying powers. The latter (involving issues regarding German production, reparations, the relations between the different zones, etc.) was a source of friction not only between the Americans and the Soviets but also between the Western powers themselves, that is between the French, British and Americans.<sup>54</sup>

In the spring of 1947, the idea of providing US economic assistance to Europe not on a bilateral basis but in the direction of integrating the European economies was gaining ground among American policymakers. On 5 June 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall, addressing the graduating class of Harvard University, announced the government's decision to help the reconstruction of Europe financially. Three months earlier, Truman, seeking approval for American economic aid to Greece and Turkey, had declared the determination of the United States to assist any country that was threatened by 'totalitarian' regimes. Thus, the reconstruction of the capitalist economy and the containment of communism were intertwined and became the foundations of United States policy in Europe. However, the two were not always compatible or did not always have equal importance for United States policymakers.

The American priority for Western Europe was the reconstruction of the economy, whereas for Greece it was the military defeat of the Left. Greece was a small agrarian country in the Balkans, and therefore of secondary importance for the recovery of the European economy. Successive Greek

54 David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction* (London/New York, Longman, 1992), pp. 79-86; John S. Hill, 'American Efforts to Aid French Reconstruction between Lend-Lease and the Marshall Plan', *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), pp. 500-524; Michael Hogan, *America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 29-53.

governments were unwilling to introduce the necessary social and economic reforms that would bring about a self-sustaining economy because that would entail a clash with the elites that supported the regime. The financial crisis destabilized a government that already faced the challenge of the Left. In this way, foreign economic aid became the precondition for the preservation of a government which guaranteed the regional geopolitical interests, first, of Britain and, later, of the United States. From the global perspective of the United States, Greece was at the frontiers of the empire, an outpost of strategic rather than economic significance. The strategic interests of the United States coincided with the interests of the Greek economic and political elites in defeating the Greek Communist Party in the civil war. For this reason, American intervention was welcomed by the Greek government, despite the fact that it entailed the signing over of state sovereignty. The rise of the United States to the status of a global power in the post-war years created new power relations that led to the emergence of new forms of sovereignty, which not only concerned Greece but the rest of Western Europe as well.





# Organizing World Peace

The International Labour Organisation from the Second World War to the Cold War

*Sandrine Kott*

At the end of October 1941, representatives from twenty-five states converged on New York to attend an international conference organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO). According to the American economist Carter Goodrich, also chairman of the governing body of the ILO, the 1941 conference was an act of faith and the expression of a desire to reaffirm the values of democracy and justice. At a moment when nationalisms were reaching their peak, the conference bore witness to the vitality of internationalism in wartime. The conference was motivated by the need to mobilize populations to fight together against Nazism, but it also sought to lay the foundations for a lasting peace based on global economic and social stability.<sup>1</sup>

In the eyes of many observers, the Great Depression, unemployment and poverty had been the principal causes of the rise of Nazism and the outburst of violence that it unleashed. The 'Four Freedoms' speech, delivered by Roosevelt in January 1941, was shaped by two concerns: while aimed first and foremost at American citizens, it also formulated global objectives. In addition to political freedoms, it promised a social policy that would ensure freedom from want. On 14 August 1941, the eight articles of the Atlantic Charter co-signed by Roosevelt and Churchill took these broad aims further, particularly Article Five which proclaimed a 'desire to bring about the fullest cooperation between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security'. It promised, in a sense, a 'New Deal for the world'.<sup>2</sup>

It was within this context that the extraordinary session of the ILO was convened in New York. In accordance with the tripartite rules particular to this organization, government delegates were joined by representatives of employers and workers; the conference was therefore a platform capable

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Plesch, *America, Hitler and the UN: How the Allies Won World War II and Forged a Peace* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 14-86.

of mobilizing public opinion. When the conference came to an end in November 1941 the ILO was presented as a 'war making and peace planning organization'.<sup>3</sup>

In December 1941, the United States entered the war. On 1 January 1942, President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, the Soviet plenipotentiary Maxim Litvinov and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tse-Ven Soong, together with representatives from twenty-two other governments, founded the United Nations. A brief founding statement defined the terms and limits of the military alliance against the Axis powers. In its preamble, it reaffirmed the validity of the principles of the Atlantic Charter, including their social dimension.<sup>4</sup>

The ILO, however, was not invited to the major UN conferences which, from 1943 onwards, set about planning for peace. It was not even mentioned in the resolutions of the Dumbarton Oaks conference in August 1944, where the United Nations discussed the establishment of an economic and social council, and it was only represented informally at the conference in San Francisco in May 1945, at which the founding charter of the United Nations was discussed.<sup>5</sup>

The gradual disappearance of the ILO in international post-war planning has often been interpreted as a logical consequence of the replacement of Geneva system by that of 'New York' and as an expression of the shifting centre of gravity of global power from Europe to the United States. However, unlike the League of Nations, the ILO survived the war. It became one specialized agency of the UN system in March 1946 and in 1969 its director general, the American David Morse, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

This article seeks to engage with this paradoxical history in order to examine the role of actors from the world of labour and the evolution of approaches to social issues in plans for the organization of the post-war world. It is based on two methodological premises. Firstly, international organizations can be 'used' as observatories, as sites for the exchange of ideas and expertise. The ILO thus offers a lens through which the circulation of social ideas during the war and post-war can be examined and a

3 Plesch. *America, Hitler and the UN*, p. 2.

4 Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), p. 37.

5 On the marginalization of the representatives of the Geneva institutions in San Francisco, see Victor-Yves Ghebali, 'La transition de la Société des Nations à l'organisation des Nations Unies', in *The League of Nations in Retrospect: Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by the United Nations Library and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 6-9 November 1980* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), pp. 72-92.

means of denationalizing our understanding of social policies.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the ‘internationalist utopia’ put forward during the Second World War must also be resituated within a longer-term project and set of experiences forged in the crucible of the inter-war international organizations.<sup>7</sup> The war was certainly a rupture, but it must also be seen as a moment when plans formulated during the inter-war period could be put into practice.

Based on these two premises, and through the lens of the ILO, this article examines the evolution of the relationship between political and social forces in the Allied world between 1941 and 1947 and assesses how this evolution led to a reformulation of the questions of inequality and social justice on a global level.

### Post-War Planning: An International Undertaking

From 1939 onwards, the political powers hostile to Nazism had become convinced that international coordination was essential both from the conduct of the war and for the preparation of the peace. Many US politicians believed that the failure of the Versailles system was essentially the consequence of a lack of international planning and an inability to handle the global problems that resulted from the conflict.<sup>8</sup> While various national governments had appointed officials to take charge of reconstruction – in May 1940, Arthur Greenwood was put in charge of coordinating reconstruction plans in Churchill’s War Cabinet – international coordination also seemed necessary. The League of Nations and the ILO, which continued to operate with reduced budgets, were able to provide the staff and expertise to this planning process.<sup>9</sup> Some of the Geneva agencies, now installed on the American continent, managed to establish themselves as major players.

6 See Sandrine Kott, ‘International Organizations: A Field of Research for a Global History’, in *Zeithistorische Forschungen. Studies in Contemporary History*, 3 (2011), pp. 445–453.

7 On this point, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), especially pp. 14–18.

8 Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World*, pp. 14–44.

9 The Geneva organizations faced a reduction in their budget. Under the leadership of its acting director, the Irishman Sean Lester, the budget of the League of Nations fell to one-third of the previous level, and it employed only 100 staff compared to 700. The ILO retained 63 staff of the 316 it had employed in 1939. The United States, Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries contributed two-thirds of the budget of the ILO during the war. Victor-Yves Ghebali, *Organisation internationale et guerre mondiale: le cas de la Société des Nations et de l’Organisation Internationale du Travail pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Grenoble: Institut d’études politiques, 1975).

This was the case of the ILO. Its new director, the American John Winant, a personal friend of Roosevelt and former member of the Social Security Board,<sup>10</sup> managed to negotiate with the Canadian government for the provisional installation of the organization's secretariat (International Labour Office), reduced to around forty staff, on the campus of McGill University in Montreal. Some officials, under the direction of Marius Viple, stayed in Geneva, which remained the official seat of the organization.<sup>11</sup> The League of Nations' Headquarter also stayed in Geneva but two of its technical sections found refuge in the United States: the Opium Board (responsible for regulating the drug trade) moved to Washington and its Economic and Financial Organisation (EFO) was hosted by Princeton University, where its work was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. However because it failed to negotiate its move to the United States, the dynamic health section (League of Nations Health Organization, LNHO) dwindled during the war.<sup>12</sup>

The logistical and financial support offered to the Geneva organizations by Britain, the United States and the Commonwealth during the war stemmed from a series of motivations. The technical expertise that these organizations were able to offer the warring states undoubtedly played an important role. Since 1919 the International Labour Office, as well as the League of Nations through its various technical sections (especially the EFO and LNHO), had accumulated considerable expertise, from which American actors had themselves greatly benefited. For this reason, the US government declared its strong support for the development of the technical dimension of the Geneva organizations. The accession of the United States to the ILO in 1934 bore witness to that interest. In 1939 the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, had supported the guidelines of the Bruce Report (named after the Australian politician Stanley Bruce) which provided for the further development and institutionalization of the economic, social and humanitarian

10 Stephen Hughes and Nigel Haworth, 'A Shift in the Centre of Gravity: The ILO under Harold Butler and John Winant', in *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organisation and its Impact on the World during the Twentieth Century*, ed. J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez-Garcia and M. Van der Linden (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 291-311.

11 On all these matters, see Antony Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), pp. 160-163; Ghebali, *Organisation internationale*, pp. 239-246.

12 On the EFO, see Patricia Clavin and Jens-Wilhelm Wessels, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Yann Decorzant, 'La Société des Nations et l'apparition d'un nouveau réseau d'expertise économique et financière (1914-1923)', *Critique internationale*, 52/3 (2011). On the LNHO, see Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921-1946* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 430.

activities of the League.<sup>13</sup> In 1940, the various international agencies of the Geneva system therefore had considerable technical expertise in the field of international planning, accumulated since the 1920s, and were therefore valuable assistants in the preparations for peace.<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, the ILO had a double advantage: its mission was in harmony with the objectives of the American New Deal, in which its director John Winant, had been a key figure. On 6 November 1941, speaking to the assembled delegates of the labour conference, President Roosevelt underlined this fact: 'In the planning of such international action, the International Labour Organization, with its representation of labour and management, its technical knowledge and experience, will be an invaluable instrument for peace. Your organization will have an essential part to play in building up a stable international system of social justice for all peoples everywhere.'<sup>15</sup>

The specific role assigned to the ILO in planning for the post-war period can thus be explained by the support of the Roosevelt administration, though this was also an outcome of the role attributed to trade unions for war mobilization. Since its foundation in 1919, the ILO had gradually established itself as a kind of international parliament of labour and a forum for the trade unions. In 1939 its survival had greatly depended on their unconditional support. The increase in funding for the ILO by the British authorities, crucial to the survival of the organization, was secured by Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).<sup>16</sup> Union leaders believed that, through the ILO, they would be able to participate in peace negotiations and bring about the triumph of their long-standing social demands.<sup>17</sup> In 1939, at the Inter-American Conference in Havana, the US workers' representative James B. Carey underlined that 'It is imperative that organized labour should have a determining voice in fixing the terms of

13 On the Bruce Report, see Ghebali, *Organisation internationale*, pp. 18-24; Victor-Yves Ghebali, *La Société des Nations et la Réforme Bruce, Cinquante ans de la Société des Nations* (Geneva: Centre européen de la dotation Carnegie, 1970); Martin D. Dubin, 'Toward the Bruce Report: The Economic and Social Programs of the League of Nations in the Avenol Era', in *The League of Nations in Retrospect/La Société Des Nations: Rétrospective: Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by the United Nations Library and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 6-9 November 1980* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), pp. 42-72.

14 Peter J. Beck, 'The League of Nations and the Great Powers, 1936-1940', *World Affairs*, 157/4 (1 April 1995), pp. 175-189.

15 *Proceedings of the International Labour Conference (1941)* (henceforth ILC 1941), p. 158.

16 Ghebali, *Organisation internationals*, pp. 213-214.

17 See, in general, Geert Van Goethem, 'Labor's Second Front: The Foreign Policy of the American and British Trade Union Movements During the Second World War', *Diplomatic History*, 34/4 (2010), pp. 663-680.

the peace settlement which follows the present war. Only by giving labour such a voice can we ensure that the peace settlement, unlike that of 1919, is based upon justice for all people of all nations.' The president of the conference, the Argentinian union leader Jorge José Domenech, recalled meanwhile that 'we agree with the statement that "it is imperative that organized labour should have a determining voice in fixing the terms of the peace settlement which follows the present war", and we are trying to do our share in preparing the way for the transition from wartime to peace-time economy'.<sup>18</sup>

In preparation for the New York conference, the heads of section of the International Labour Office met several times between April and May to try to establish the core framework for a social programme of post-war planning. Beyond their differences, they agreed on the need to hear the voices of workers (i.e. the unions) when planning for the post-war period. They saw this, moreover, as a political signal, directed particularly towards public opinion in Latin America, and as a way of reaffirming the democratic vitality of the Allied countries.<sup>19</sup>

During the New York conference in 1941, the workers' representatives managed to secure recognition of the need for tripartite representation, which was put in place by the ILO in the institutions for post-war planning and peace negotiations.<sup>20</sup> The ILO was also responsible for organizing reconstruction policies and ensuring 'the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field'.<sup>21</sup> Its mandate was therefore clearly extended to the economic sphere. This expansion of its field of expertise was founded on two main arguments. Fundamentally, as Jaromir Necas, former president of the administrative council and delegate of the Czechoslovak government, stated, all these social questions were 'closely linked to economic life'. Social policy, without which there would be no lasting peace, required international economic cooperation.<sup>22</sup> Such economic cooperation was

18 International Labour Office, and Conference of American States Members of the International Labour Organisation. *Record of proceedings*, Report I (Montreal: ILO, 1941), p. 157.

19 ILO-Archives, PWR 1/01, The ILO and Post-War Policy and Reorganization.

20 See the speeches by trade unionists, particularly those from Britain and the United States, in ILC 1941.

21 'Resolution on Post-War Emergency and Reconstruction Measures', ILC 1941, p. 163.

22 See in this respect the resolution submitted by Mr Jan Masaryk and Mr Jaromir Necas, government delegates, Mr Richard Morawetz, employers' delegate and Mr Joseph Kosina, worker's delegate, Czechoslovakia, ILC 1941, p. 167, and Necas's speech, p. 27. On the importance of this issue for the ILO, see the minutes of the 1941 conference. 'The Social Objective in Wartime and World Reconstruction: The New York Conference of the International Labour Organisation', *International Labour Review* (January 1942), pp. 1-24.

also necessitated by reconstruction itself. Governments in exile accepted economic planning all the more readily for the fact that they were in urgent need of international assistance. They were also the first to send reports to the Office in which they outlined their needs in the course of 1942.<sup>23</sup> Closely tied to longer-term planning, and thought of as a 'New Deal for the world', this type of reconstruction project would also gain the support of the US Secretary of Labour Frances Perkins.<sup>24</sup>

## Social Security for All

In 1941 in New York, Edward Phelan, the newly designated acting director of the organization, stressed the importance of ensuring 'economic and social security' for everyone in the world after the war.<sup>25</sup> In so doing, he was explicitly echoing the Atlantic Charter and the statements of US and British governments, as well as those of the two powerful British and American trade union confederations.

The ILO was already able to offer Allied countries its expertise in the field of social security.<sup>26</sup> In this respect, ILO officials continued to act in the framework of a long-standing collaboration with American partners.<sup>27</sup> The Office had been responding to requests from the country since the 1920s, but relations took a more formal turn with the launch of the New Deal in 1933. They were further strengthened by the entry of the United States into the ILO in August 1934, the implementation of the Social Security Plan and the establishment of the Social Security Board (SSB) which, under the leadership of John Winant, brought officials with a strong international outlook.<sup>28</sup> During the early years of the Second World War, these ties intensified. Oswald Stein, director of the social security section and deputy director

23 ILO-Archives, PWR 1/17, PWR 1/31

24 ILO-Archives, Z1/61/1/3, Correspondence between Phelan and Perkins in December 1941.

25 ILC 1941, pp. 88-95.

26 Sandrine Kott, 'Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period' in *ILO Histories*, ed. J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez-Garcia and M. Van der Linden (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 173-195.

27 See, in particular, Jill Jensen, 'US New Deal Social Policy Experts and the ILO, 1948-1954', in *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organization and Beyond*, ed. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Droux (London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 172-189.

28 Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 441.



of the ILO in 1942 and 1943, played an essential role in this process.<sup>29</sup> In an article published in September 1941, probably written before the Atlantic Charter, he sketched out the broad lines of this new social security system.<sup>30</sup> This article was the short version of the long report published in 1942 which set out the details for new era of planning a comprehensive social security system.<sup>31</sup> In June 1943 Oswald Stein argued, with a touch of humour, in a letter to one of his aides that 'just like the Catholic Church, social security should be universal, and [it is] therefore necessary for all nations to get social security into their heads'.<sup>32</sup> It was precisely on this question of universality that he worked during the war.

He regularly went to Washington where he provided very effective technical assistance on social security to various members of the Department of Labour.<sup>33</sup> Given his international knowledge, he was also invited to participate in the spring of 1942 in the work of the Beveridge committee. In 1943, while the report was causing controversy in Britain, Oswald Stein insisted, in opposition to Edward Phelan the acting Director General, that a conference of experts be organized around Beveridge.<sup>34</sup> He wanted to make the most of Beveridge's visit to the American continent and, with the support of Carter Goodrich<sup>35</sup>, intended to continue publicizing the report around the United States.<sup>36</sup> The meeting in Montreal in July 1943 was clearly

29 On Oswald Stein, see his personnel file in ILO-Archives, P 1289, and 'Oswald Stein', *International Labour Review* (February 1944), pp. 139-144.

30 Oswald Stein, 'Building Social Security', *International Labour Review*, 64 (September 1941), pp. 248-274.

31 ILO, *Approaches to Social Security*, Studies and Reports, M, 18, Montreal, 1942. This report formed the basis of a 76-page memorandum written in April 1942 which Stein submitted to the Beveridge Committee. ILO-Archives, SI 2/0/25/2.

32 ILO-Archives, SI 23/3.

33 ILO-Archives, MI 3/0. On the Americanization of Social Security under the New Deal, see Jill Jensen, 'From Geneva to the Americas: The International Labor Organization and Inter-American Social Security Standards, 1936-1948', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 80 (1 October 2011), pp. 215-240.

34 See the following correspondence in the ILO-Archives, SI 23/0; Phelan's cable of 23 May 1943: 'Essential meeting should not be built around individual but convene on basis independent technical agenda'; and Stein's letter to Rogers, 25/5/1943: 'The London Offices won over a far superior authority in Washington and at the same time won over Beveridge, whose reputation today is global, rightly or wrongly (I believe rightly)'. Various correspondence in the ILO-Archives, SI 23/3, reveal that Phelan wanted to avoid all publicity around the Montreal meeting, fearing difficulties with the British authorities.

35 ILO-Archives, SI 23/0, Cable from Stein to Phelan, 21 May 1943.

36 The visit of Beveridge to the United States was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and was a great triumph.

intended as a means of internationalizing the social security model.<sup>37</sup> He invited representatives of the American continent to the meeting, and would have liked to have added experts from the Commonwealth states of South Africa and Australia, 'countries engaged in the comprehensive reform of social security'.<sup>38</sup>

Alongside the provision of expertise to developed countries, war years also saw an increase in technical missions to the countries of Latin America; which had explicitly requested such assistance at the conferences in Havana in 1939 and New York in 1941. Once again, the ILO officials could mobilize expertise expressed in the 1930s. Adrien Tixier, former head of the social insurance section, led specialist missions during the war for the Mexican and Peruvian governments on social security and the labour code.<sup>39</sup> The Czechoslovak expert Emil Schönbaum, who had conducted numerous missions in the Balkans on behalf of the ILO in the 1930s, wrote a social security code for Ecuador and helped the Mexican and Chilean governments establish systems of social insurance. He was also active in Paraguay and Venezuela and set up a miners' pension scheme in Bolivia.<sup>40</sup> The dissemination of social security, the centrepiece of the Atlantic Charter and the foundation on which to construct a stable world, formed the heart of the work of the International Labour Office during the Second World War. However, despite the resolutions that had been enthusiastically passed at the conference in 1941, its activity in the field of economic planning remained extremely modest and almost seems to have been suspended from the middle of 1943, at the very moment that plans for peacetime were given a new boost by the foundation of the United Relief and Rehabilitation Agency.

## A Peace without Workers

From 1943 onwards, the role of the international organizations in Geneva, and particularly that of the ILO in major international post-war conferences, waned considerably. Neither the ILO nor the LNHO was invited to the conference organized by the United Nations on food and agriculture in Hot Springs in May 1943, even though the LNHO had been contacted in January 1942 by the British Government to provide information in the

37 ILO-Archives, SI 23/3, Note de Stein à Stack, 19-6-1943.

38 Letter from Stein to Rogers, 25/5/1943, ILO-Archives, SI 23/0.

39 ILO-Archives, Z 1/1/1/9, Correspondence between Phelan and Tixier, 1940-1944.

40 ILO-Archives, P 3926.

field of nutrition.<sup>41</sup> In 1945, neither the League of Nations nor the ILO was invited to San Francisco.

The sidelining of the ILO was first severely felt by the global trade union movement, which interpreted it as a sign of its own marginalization. In a telegram written in September 1943, following the Emergency Council of the International Federation of Trade Unions, and sent to Edward Phelan and to the governments of the United Nations, the representatives of the International Federation of Trade Unions

express[ed] strongest disappointment regarding position forced by allied governments particularly big powers upon ILO deliberately kept away from practical preparatory work regarding post-war reconstruction. Nearly 2 years ago at the NY conference over 30 governments unani- mously and solemnly undertook great number of commitments. Since then responsible governments had several occasions to implement their pledges but they just ignored them. International organized labour bit- terly deplores this state of affairs indicating that spirit of Atlantic Charter only in speeches of responsible statesmen not in deeds.

Like the ILO in San Francisco, the trade unions were not invited to the peace negotiations.

The disappearance of organized labour in the peace settlement and the decline of the ILO resulted from a wide array of causes. A desire to forget the Geneva system, which was remembered in association with the crisis of the 1930s and the failure of the Versailles system, clearly played a role.<sup>42</sup> More fundamentally, however, the disappearance of the ILO reflects the transformation of social power relations both globally and within different nation-states, as well as the declining role of the labour movement as early as 1942. This decline was accompanied by a broader calling into question of the notion, developed in the 1930s, that economic planning and social welfare should be closely associated in order to ensure political stability in the world.

From a strictly diplomatic point of view, the ILO gradually lost the privileged support that it had previously enjoyed from the great pow- ers. In 1941, John Winant was appointed US ambassador in the UK and

41 Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921-1946* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 435.

42 Ghebali, 'La transition de la Société des Nations à l'organisation des Nations Unies', pp. 73-76.

an Irishman, Edward Phelan, became Acting Director. He secured the support of the US government but the British were suspicious. Unlike Winant, Phelan never had direct links with the Roosevelt administration.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941 and the United Nations Declaration in January 1942 led to a triple rupture. Firstly, need to conduct war operations gave back a preponderant influence to national policy makers and global leadership clearly passed to the United States and the Soviet Union, further reducing the role of international organizations.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, within the state apparatus of the USA, the role of the State Department and the military authorities in the organization of production and the setting of labour standards increased at the expense of the influence of the Department of Labour.<sup>45</sup> Thirdly, the United Nations Declaration ushered the Soviet Union into world diplomacy, from which it had been excluded, with the exception of its brief admittance to the League of Nations between 1934 and 1939, since 1917. Soviet officials were suspicious of the League; their distrust was fuelled by their exit in 1939. In the case of the ILO, a fundamental ideological antagonism also added to this hostility: the organization was founded in 1919 specifically to promote reformist solutions and bring the revolutionary movement to a halt. Tripartism, which carefully distinguished between governments, trade unions and employers' representatives, reflected a vision that contradicted the centrally planned command economy that existed in the USSR.<sup>46</sup> In return, trade unions of communist persuasion, and the Soviet authorities themselves, manifested a marked hostility to the organization until 1954, the date of the entry of the Soviets into the ILO.<sup>47</sup> For its part, the organization was also clearly influenced by political and

43 Van Goethem (2009), pp. 315-317. The mysterious death of Oswald Stein, deputy director of the ILO in 1943 and very close to the American administration, constituted a significant loss for the organisation in this respect.

44 Stephen Hughes and Nigel Haworth, 'A Shift in the Centre of Gravity: The ILO under Harold Butler and John Winant', in *ILO Histories*, ed. J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez and M. Van der Linden (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 291-311, here p. 294.

45 Geert Van Goethem, 'Labor's Second Front: The Foreign Policy of the American and British Trade Union Movements during the Second World War', *Diplomatic History* 34/4 (2010), pp. 663-680, here pp. 668-669.

46 On this point, see Harold Karan Jacobson, 'The USSR and ILO', *International Organization*, 14/3 (June 1960), pp. 402-428.

47 The Soviet Union first joined the ILO in 1934 as an automatic result of its admittance to the League of Nations, but it was barely active within the organization. In 1939 the USSR withdrew from the League and the ILO. It entered the UN from the moment of its foundation but did not re-join the ILO. Meanwhile, Czechoslovak actors in particular, as well as some Poles, were very active in the ILO from 1919 onwards.

trade union forces hostile to the communists. The American Federation of Labour (AFL), which monopolized American representation at the ILO, fought in the national sphere against the development of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which was more open to communist influences, and opposed all the projects for rapprochement with the Soviet Union supported by Walter Citrine. Hostile to the communist model, this British trade unionist nevertheless wanted to ensure a place for organized labour in the negotiations and plans for peace; to do so inevitably implied an engagement with Soviet trade unionism. The TUC therefore decided in September 1943 to organize a major international conference, to which the communist unions and the CIO were also invited. Held in February 1945, it was the founding moment of the World Federation of Trade Unions, of which Citrine, moreover, became president. However, the AFL, which did not join the new global trade union federation, was already preparing, with the assistance of the Office of Strategic Services, for the global trade union scission that would occur in 1949.<sup>48</sup> This trade union 'cold war', launched in 1943 by the AFL, clearly weakened the position of organized labour in post-war projects. This conflict weighed all the more heavily for the fact that, during the war, the global social-democratic trade union movement, organized within the 'International Federation of Trade Unions', had been greatly weakened.

In the United States itself, the rivalry between the AFL and the CIO helped to weaken the position of organized labour in an ambiguous context. On the one hand, the role of trade unionism in the war was institutionalized through the War Labour Board, but on the other hand, it came under the control of a state bureaucracy and lost its autonomy. Finally, and most importantly, the war was a moment when the power of both military and private interests within the state apparatus and American society were reinforced at the expense of the New Deal planners and trade unions.<sup>49</sup>

48 On this issue, see Van Goethem, 'Labor's Second Front'. On the necessity of rethinking the place of global trade unionism see Karl Pribram, 'The ILO: Present Functions and Future Tasks', *Foreign Affairs*, 21/1 (1 October 1942), pp. 158-167.

49 Nelson Lichtenstein, 'Class Politics and the State during World War Two', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 58 (1 October 2000), pp. 261-274, and Brian Waddell, 'Economic Mobilization for World War II and the Transformation of the State', *Politics & Society*, 22/2 (6 January 1994), pp. 165-194.

## Reconstructing or Planning the World of Tomorrow

While both political leaders and the officials of international organizations agreed on the need to develop plans for the post-war world, they were divided over the nature of such plans. Between April and May 1941, during meetings organized at the International Labour Office between heads of sections, two visions were put forward. Some, like the French Socialist Adrien Tixier (a specialist in social insurance) or the Belgian Pierre Waelbroeck (responsible for questions of unemployment) supported large coordinated economic projects to reduce unemployment. To do so they drew on the idea, developed by Albert Thomas in the early 1930s, of implementing international plans for major construction projects financed by the Bank for International Settlements.<sup>50</sup> But they were also continuing a trend for planning that had been very dynamic during the 1930s. Advocates of this trend stressed the need to invent a democratic form of planning in response to the models implemented by fascist and communist states. During the war these states continued indeed to exert a strong effect of attraction on public opinion in Latin America in particular.<sup>51</sup> However, other actors in the ILO, including Phelan himself and Carter Goodrich, felt that the Office should not over-extend its purview beyond its social responsibilities and felt that any long-term economic planning should be avoided. Frederick Leggett, British government delegate to the ILO, shared this opinion. It was also the position of the employers group, which was increasingly reticent towards any form of interventionism from 1943 onwards. This hostility toward state regulation prevailed in the both global arena and the United States at the very moment that economic planning and the organization of social dialogue were gaining ground in national resistance movements in Europe. In August 1943, the US Congress decided by a narrow majority not to renew funding for the National Resources Planning Board, thereby excluding the pro-planning New Dealers from the US administration.<sup>52</sup> In November 1943, the launch of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) made rehabilitation a priority over economic planning. The year 1943 therefore seems to mark a clear shift away from interventionism. This is evidenced by the growing influence exerted by the

50 On this point, see the file dedicated to this policy in ILO-Archives, CAT 6B-7-4 and L1/14/3.

51 See David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 58-65.

52 Kenneth Bertrams, 'Une inspiration tout en contrastes', *Genèses*, 71/2 (3 September 2008), pp. 64-83.

classical economists of the Economic and Financial Organisation of the League of Nations, which had taken up residence in Princeton. Under the direction of the British economist Alexander Loveday, this section made plans for the transition to peace that favoured the liberalization of world trade, seen as a solution to the unemployment that demobilization would inevitably entail.<sup>53</sup> It is on this model that the Bretton Woods System was later developed.<sup>54</sup>

## From Reconstruction to Development

In November 1942, the New Dealers, losing influence in the US administration, had entered organizations dedicated to the reconstruction of Europe such as the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFRRO), created to provide relief to victims of war in areas reoccupied by Allied forces. The office was headed by one of Roosevelt's close associates, the former governor of New York Herbert Lehman. From November 1943, Lehman also ran the United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, which internationalized the activities of OFRRO. The agency gathered together the forty-four 'united nations' and was in fact the first organization of the UN system. Employing 20,000 people between November 1943 and its disappearance in 1947 (far more than the United Nations until the 1970s) it set itself the task of taking care of liberated populations and organizing the return of refugees.<sup>55</sup> The creation of UNRRA fitted clearly within an American liberal tradition initiated by Hoover after the First World War. Throughout its existence, the United States provided 70 per cent of UNRRA's funding; the vast majority of its staff was American, including many experts from the New Deal. Despite being largely an American undertaking, UNRRA nevertheless greatly benefited from the technical expertise developed by the organizations of the Geneva system. Leading personalities among the staff of the LNHO joined UNRRA, including its founder and former director

53 See the publications of the Economic and Financial Section and its director, Alexander Loveday, 'The Economics of Transition', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 87/2 (16 August 1943), pp. 189-193.

54 Alacevich, Michele, *The Political Economy of the World Bank: The Early Years* (Stanford University Press, 2009); Sarah Babb, 'Embeddedness, Inflation, and International Regimes: The IMF in the Early Postwar Period', *American Journal of Sociology*, 113/1 (1 July 2007), pp. 128-164.

55 National Planning Association, 'UNRRA: Gateway to Recovery', *Planning Pamphlets* no. 30-31 (1944), p. 62. On UNRRA, see also Jessica Reinisch, 'Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA', *Past & Present*, 210, special number 6 (24 January 2011), pp. 258-289.



Ludwik Rajchman, bringing to it his skills in the field of epidemiology.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the organization only maintained very weak relations with the ILO.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the declared hostility of the USSR, the personnel and goals of the two organizations were fundamentally different. UNRRA performed an essentially humanitarian function; its purpose was not to provide social and economic security for all but to get the economy working again in order to avoid chaos and revolution.

However, the New Dealers involved in UNRRA progressively widened its reconstruction mission, transforming the organization into a development agency, especially in Central Europe and the Balkans. The US Congress, opposed to giving aid to the communists in power in these countries, did not prolong its mandate, and the Economic Recovery Program, or the Marshall Plan, took over from UNRRA in 1947. This project turned its back on the New Deal and its implementation marked the beginning of the Cold War.<sup>58</sup>

The progressivists and New Dealers channelled their humanitarian messianism into serving a project of global development,<sup>59</sup> among them David Morse, who became director general of the ILO in 1948.<sup>60</sup> Development policies implemented in the framework of international programmes after the Second World War actually took on an age-old question: the political consequences that inevitably result from the increasing economic and social inequalities between the different countries of the world.<sup>61</sup> Global social inequalities, not only those existing within a single country, were widely

56 Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921-1946* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 436.

57 See the failures of collaboration between UNRRA and ILO in ILO-Archives, Z 6/3/16.

58 Diane B. Kunz, *Butter and Guns: America's Cold War Economic Diplomacy* (New York: Free Press, 1997), and, more specifically, Diane B. Kunz, 'The Marshall Plan Reconsidered: A Complex of Motives', *Foreign Affairs*, 76/3 (1 May 1997), pp. 162-170. See also David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America, and Postwar Reconstruction* (London/New York: Longman, 1992).

59 On the beginning of international technical aid after the Second World War, see David Webster, 'Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization: The United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950-59', *Journal of Global History*, 6/2 (2011), pp. 249-272.

60 On David Morse, see Daniel Maul, 'The Morse Years: The ILO, 1948-1970' in *ILO Histories*, ed. J. Van Daele, M. Rodriguez-Garcia, Geert van Goethem and M. Van der Linden (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 365-400.

61 On these questions and for a critical discourse analysis on development, see the classic works of Gilbert Rist, *Le développement: histoire d'une croyance occidentale* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1996), and Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Frederick Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, 8/1 (15 April 2010), pp. 5-23.



discussed in various international forums during the war, and developing the economies of the poorest countries in order to ensure post-war global stability seemed to be a necessity. This concern was closely linked to debates on the future status of colonies, their underdevelopment being used as a justification for their lack of independence.

The colonial question re-emerged at the ILO in 1943, at the very moment when the organization was gradually being marginalized in European reconstruction plans.<sup>62</sup> In an article published in the *International Labour Review* in February 1943, Wilfrid Benson, the official in charge of colonial questions, outlined a reform plan for the colonies which, cautiously, stressed the need to implement a policy of economic and social development and encouraged the internationalization of these issues. Once again, the ILO was able to draw on expertise accumulated during the inter-war period. In the late 1930s, the organization had prepared a convention (29) which sought to regulate the use of 'native labour'.<sup>63</sup> By recommending the abolition of forced colonial labour, which should eventually be replaced by wage labour, Convention 29 and the discussions that preceded it implicitly provided a model for an acceptable and rational exploitation of 'dependent territories'. It was on this ambiguous heritage that the ILO's understanding of the economic and social improvement of the people of 'dependent territories' was developed from 1943 onwards. It opened the door to a series of conventions and recommendations discussed and adopted between 1944 and 1947 at international conferences in Philadelphia (1944), Paris (1945) and Geneva (1947) which aimed to develop dependent territories as a means of ensuring world peace. Appropriated by local elites, these early development projects constituted an argument in favour of independence claims: all the more so given that the Atlantic Charter had promised equal rights to all people.<sup>64</sup>

62 See Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development, and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940-70* (New York/Geneva: Palgrave Macmillan/International Labour Office, 2012; a translation of Daniel Maul, *Menschenrechte, Sozialpolitik und Dekolonisation: Die Internationale Arbeitsorganisation (IAO) 1940-1970* (Essen: Klartext, 2007)), pp. 89-121.

63 On this point see Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development, and Decolonization*, pp. 39-43, and Luis Rodríguez-Piñero, *Indigenous Peoples, Postcolonialism, and International Law: The ILO regime, 1919-1989* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially pp. 30-35; Susan Zimmermann, "'Special Circumstances in Geneva': The ILO and the World of Non-Metropolitan Labour in the Interwar Period", *ILO Histories*, ed. Jasmien Van Daele et al. (Bern/New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 221-250; James P. Daughton, 'ILO Expertise and Colonial Violence in the Interwar Years', in *Globalizing*, ed. Sandrine Kott and Joëlle Droux, pp. 85-97.

64 On this subject, see Frederick Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays*

This universalist discourse, strongly reaffirmed at the International Labour Conference in Philadelphia in 1944, stood in contradiction to the continued existence of dependent states, a contradiction that was amply highlighted by presence of representatives of colonized peoples at international labour conferences, particularly the representatives of Indian workers and, soon after, African experts. All claimed the right to choose their own routes to modernity. As such, they added their voices to claims made in the 1930s by actors in the Balkans, the Middle East, Latin America and China.<sup>65</sup>

In order to meet these demands, the League of Nations and the ILO had implemented the first international technical assistance programmes. During the war, as we have seen, the ILO extended this technical assistance to the countries of Latin America.<sup>66</sup> In order to do so, Oswald Stein was able to count on the support of the USA and especially the Inter-American Office, largely funded by Nelson Rockefeller. This was, in a certain sense, the first international development agency in the United States, and it would go on to inspire American international development policy from 1949 onwards.<sup>67</sup> In the fight against global inequality, the ILO thus found its place in the peace plans. Meanwhile, in this process, the parliament of labour of the interwar years was transformed into an agency of experts.

## Conclusion

To conclude, I wish to summarize the ways in which our understanding of the period 1943-1947 and the post-war world is enhanced through using the ILO as a point of entry. International organizations, in particular the ILO, did not constitute particularly powerful autonomous actors in the period between 1943 and 1947. However, the organization had expertise at its disposal, acquired in the period between the two world wars, which would be important in the development of the policies that accompanied the end of the Second World War. The role of the ILO is bound up with

*on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 64-93.

65 On the actions of the ILO, see Antony Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), pp. 134-148. See also the specific case of China in Margherita Zanasi, 'Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 49/1 (2007), pp. 143-169.

66 ILO-Archives, MI 3/0.

67 See Craig Murphy, *The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way?* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 34-37.

this expertise: it functioned as a space for the circulation, distribution and amplification of ideas and models promoted first in the United States and in Great Britain, and later elsewhere. The ILO was thus able to develop and promote models of intervention in the fields of social security and development. The organization would help to establish these models as dominant paradigms on a global level. In this way, the organization was able to retain an important role in the post-world war era.

In so doing, the ILO undoubtedly participated in a movement to universalize forms of social redistribution. Social security universalized the social insurance schemes developed as models by the ILO in the period between the two world wars. Activities of technical assistance, and later development, transformed the question of inequality, previously thought of as a problem of redistribution within the national space, into a global issue. But this process of universalization also reflected a change in the balance of forces on a global level: the unions lost the international role that the ILO had allowed them to play in the inter-war period. Conversely, the power of international experts increased. In this respect, the period 1943-1947 constituted a critical turning point, during which a disjuncture between non-interventionist global models and the interventionist economic and social policies of post-war European governments increased sharply.

# Conclusion

*Philip Nord*

There has been a shift in the historiography dealing with the mid-1940s. The transition from war to Cold War has long been a staple of work on the period, the debate centring on how to apportion responsibility for the breakdown of the Allied coalition into hostile blocs, East and West. The Cold War is now over, which has taken some of the urgency out of the argument. Soviet archives have also become available, prompting a raft of reassessments, which purport to settle the question of who was to blame once and for all. These developments have created space for a fresh look at the mid-forties move from war to 'peace' focused less on the old Cold War conundrum and more on other matters.<sup>1</sup> But what other matters?

The present volume prompts three sorts of reflections in this connection. The first has to do with seeing the period in its own right, as a moment apart. The Germans capitulated on 8-9 May 1945, bringing an end to major military operations, but this did not mean that all fighting ceased or that the culture of war, bred of many years of the most appalling violence, dissipated at a stroke. Civil war erupted in Greece in 1946, and the Soviets continued to battle nationalist partisans in the Baltic, so-called Forest Brothers, well into the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> The Nazis had undertaken massive and brutal programmes of population engineering during the war, decapitating Polish society, exterminating Jews, and promoting German settlement as they went. Nothing so extreme was perpetrated after the war, but that does not mean that large-scale demographic transfers came to a halt. Twelve million German nationals and ethnic Germans were driven westward, in part during the war as they fled before the advancing Red army, but in part afterward as they were forced out by angry locals and renascent East European states, Czechoslovakia foremost among them, intent on creating more homogenous populations.<sup>3</sup> The pursuit of ethnic and religious purity remained powerful motivators in the liberated East. Some of this was a matter of persistent

1 Frank Biess, 'Histories of the Aftermath', in *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, ed. Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller (New York: Berghahn, 2010), p. 1.

2 Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Viking, 2012), chs. 24 and 27.

3 Matěj Spurný, 'Migration and Cleansing: Building a New Society in the Czech Borderlands after 1945', *supra*. See also Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century*

popular prejudice as was the case in Poland where pogroms, grassroots in character though abetted by authorities willing to look the other way, made the reconstitution of Jewish life all but impossible.<sup>4</sup> But some of it was also a matter of high policy. Edvard Beneš's Czech government in exile had already begun formulating plans in wartime London for the forcible removal of German minorities whose philo-Nazi sympathies had made life so complicated for Czech authorities in the thirties. Once back in office after the war, Beneš negotiated a border settlement with the USSR, in the event favourable to Soviet interests, the better to win Stalin over on the matter of expelling Germans. Stalin, all too conscious of ethnic matters himself, embraced the deal because the new populations acquired were Ukrainian and judged suitable for integration into the Soviet state.<sup>5</sup>

The ongoing violence and ethnic cleansing of the post-war moment went hand in hand with urgent efforts to reconstruct and reassert state authority. The Nazi Occupation had generated resistance movements everywhere in Europe, partisan bands which battled behind enemy lines in the East, maquis fighters who engaged in intelligence work, sabotage, and armed struggle in the West. At the Liberation, there was an explosion of score-settling, an *épuration sauvage* as the French called it, which targeted quislings and sell-outs. Authorities returning from abroad – General de Gaulle, for example, or Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands – confronted upwellings of popular feeling, both organized and spontaneous, that they did not control. The state's prerogatives were reasserted notwithstanding. Maquis units were pressured into blending themselves into the regular armed forces in the name of carrying on a more effective fight against the Germans. Wild retribution gave way to official purge commissions in the name of carrying out justice in a more non-partisan spirit. This happened in the Soviet East as well. Soviet authorities, of course, grasped the military value of partisan formations but worried that such units enjoyed an autonomy that might turn political, and so care was taken to subject them to regular military authority when the opportunity presented itself and to vet the political reliability of all partisan veterans in the process. The result of such reassertions of constituted authority? The resistance surge

*Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), ch. 4; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 220.

4 Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Audrey Kichelewski, 'To Stay or to Go? Reconfigurations of Jewish Life in Post-War Poland, 1944-1947', *supra*.

5 Sabine Dullin, 'How the Soviet Empire Relied on Diversity: Territorial Expansion and National Borders at the End of World War II in Ruthenia', *supra*.

was blunted, partisan autonomy contained, and established institutions like the army and the judiciary bolstered.<sup>6</sup> By such means, ‘the continuity of the state’ was assured, but a price had to be paid for such an outcome.<sup>7</sup> It’s not just that, from a certain Left perspective, a revolutionary opportunity had been missed but that the soldiers and judges whose authority was reaffirmed did not always boast unblemished wartime records and ended up overseeing a return to order that allowed many deserving of punishment to escape.

It should not be underestimated, however, just how powerful the yearning for a return to ‘normal’ was. The war left tens of millions dead and displaced, housing stock destroyed, and entire cities, like Warsaw, levelled. In the most extreme cases, among Poles in Poland and among Jews everywhere, entire populations were traumatized. The Germans, so arrogant in victory, were now reduced to an obsequious submissiveness before Allied occupation forces. One figure summed up the depth of misery and sense of emasculation among the defeated, the *Trümmerfrau*, who shouldered for lack of stronger shoulders the task of clearing away the rubble of the Reich’s bombed-out towns.<sup>8</sup> But ongoing misery – food shortages, rationing, black-market manipulations – was just one face of the post-war scene. Allied armed forces were very much present, as victors, liberators and occupiers. In the East, the Red Army soldier was an object of fear, in German eyes a Mongol with the barbarian’s impulse to rape. In the West, there were abuses too, but the Americans and British also came with money to spend and a lot less resentment towards the Germans than their Soviet counterparts. Fraternization, at first forbidden, was allowed, and what resulted was a freewheeling encounter that upset many older Germans who worried about the decline of morals. Indeed, there was plenty of evidence, and not just in Germany, that the war had frayed the social fabric. Homicide rates, delinquency, the incidence of divorce, all were on the rise. There was plenty of talk too about how to set things straight, and the debate was sometimes frank, dealing head-on with the problems, sexual as well as affective, the war had caused between men and women. At the

6 Gabriella Gribaudi, Olivier Wieviorka and Julie Le Gac, ‘Two Paths to the Same End? The Challenges of the Liberation in France and Italy’; Masha Cerovic, ‘Fighters like No Others: The Soviet Partisans in the Wake of War’: both in *supra*. See also István Deák, Jan Gross and Tony Judt, eds, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

7 Mazower, *Dark Continent*, p. 237.

8 Marcin Zaremba, ‘The “War Syndrome”: World War II and Polish Society’; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ‘Germans into Allies: Writing a Diary in 1945’: both in *supra*.

German cinema, it was even possible to see movies – rubble films – that raised troubling questions about who bore responsibility for the nation's current predicament.<sup>9</sup>

These features – the persistence of violence and racism, the state's efforts to reassert its prerogatives, a widespread yearning for normalization amidst a backdrop of hardship and devastation – were pervasive across the continent. They did not recognize the East/West divide that was soon to impose itself, and taken together define a moment that was in-between. The world war was over, and the Cold War, though already simmering, had not yet come to a full boil.

Now, it is tempting to understand this moment in-between as a moment of restoration. The violence of the war spilled over, yes, but then petered out as attentions turned to Cold War politics. The state reconsolidated itself and in due course closed the books on the wartime era, issuing amnesties to all but a handful of collaborators and war criminals. And the social dysfunctions (and liberties) born of the war, receded before a conservative tide fuelled by an exhausted public's desire to get on with the business of life. Rationing came to an end; camps for displaced persons closed; and a pall of moral order descended, muffling the sharp contrasts of late forties life and clearing the way for the homogenized, money-making bustle of the 1950s.

There's a lot to be said for this way of looking at things. France and Italy did indeed return to bad old parliamentarist habits. Civil war era Greek elites exploited the Allied West's anti-communist anxieties to wring out military and financial aid that allowed them, however unreconstructed, to come out on top.<sup>10</sup> But three additional points need making.

First, in Eastern and Central Europe, the war's effects were levelling in ways that altered the political balance of forces.<sup>11</sup> Aristocratic elites and

9 Peter Romijn, "Liberators and Patriots": Military Interim Rule and the Politics of Transition in the Netherlands, 1944-1945', *supra*; Moeller, 'Winning the Peace at the Movies: Suffering, Loss, and Redemption in Postwar German Cinema', in *Histories of the Aftermath*, ed. Biess and Moeller, pp. 141-142; Dagmar Herzog, 'Desperately Seeking Normality: Sex and Marriage in the Wake of the War', in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 161-192. For a discussion of the Japanese experience under occupation, see John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).

10 See the essays above by Gribaudi, Wiewiorka and Le Gac, 'Two Paths to the Same End?' and Polymeris Voglis, 'The Politics of Reconstruction: Foreign Aid and State Authority in Greece, 1945-1947', *supra*.

11 See the seminal essay on this point by Jan T. Gross, 'The Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3/2 (1989), pp. 198-214.

the landowning order that had sustained them were swept aside, marking a definitive end at long last to Europe's ancien régime. Monarchy did not disappear as an institution, but it suffered yet one more round of setbacks, a tide, it might be added, that did not spare the Greek and Italian ruling houses. A continent once ruled by kings and queens became a continent of republics.

Second, there was a reshuffling in the cast of players who dominated political life. In the first decades of the twentieth century, liberal parties had played a preeminent role. France's Parti radical or England's Liberal Party may be cited as prime examples. In the post-war, however, they had been demoted to the second rank, with the labour Left – socialists and communists – stepping in to take their place. It would not be right to call Christian Democracy an altogether new phenomenon. It had bumped along on the fringes of European politics in the twenties and thirties and, in Italy, even managed a momentary breakthrough in the aftermath of the Great War. After the Second World War, however, Christian Democracy moved to the very centre of public life in country after country, achieving near hegemonic status in a number of them. It was not just the Allies who won the war but the Catholic Church, whatever compromises it had made with Hitler's European order. Traumatized populations found solace in the unchanging verities of religious life.<sup>12</sup> It helped that women were now enfranchised almost everywhere and that the family and its stabilization, an issue near and dear to the Church, had become such a governing preoccupation for the secular as well as for the observant.<sup>13</sup> Not least of all, the Church's newfound stature owed much to the exceptional position enjoyed by organized interests in the emergent post-war order. What better way to stabilize public life than to include trade unionists and others in the policy-making process? Bring them into the state, draw on their discipline and grassroots organization, and public policy would gain that much more in effectiveness and legitimacy. Socialists, of course, felt this way, but even more so Christian democrats. Christian-democratic parties were anchored in a network of Catholic Action associations that included labour but were yet wider-ranging. They were comfortable with the language and practice of corporatism and, indeed, looked on subsidiarity as not just a handy tool but

12 A theme developed in Zaremba, "The "War Syndrome", *supra*. See also Damian van Melis, "Strengthened and Purified through Ordeal by Fire": Ecclesiastical Triumphalism in the Ruins of Europe', in *Life after Death*, ed. Bessel and Schumann, pp. 231-233.

13 A preoccupation that carried weight even in the Soviet Union. See Juliette Denis, 'The Latvian Orphans Released from the Siberian Special Settlements (1946-1947): The Story of an Unusual Rescue in the Post-War USSR', *supra*.



a matter of principle. Even in Belgium, where welfare-state construction was overseen by a socialist minister, Achille Van Acker, the form of corporatist engagement devised was very much shaped by Christian democrats whose support had to be cultivated to counter more radical left-wing alternatives.<sup>14</sup>

The word 'welfare-state' has now been uttered, which highlights a third way that the post-war order struck out in new directions. State institutions were not just reconstituted at the Liberation but strengthened and extended. In the victor nations – the United States, the USSR, and Great Britain –, the extraordinary military build-up of the war years was not reversed. The 'warfare-state', the military-industrial complex invoked by Dwight Eisenhower in his farewell presidential address of 1961, was a creature of the war and did not slink to the sidelines at its ending.<sup>15</sup> As for welfare, European governments had been moving towards the provision of cradle-to-grave services for many decades, but the expectations of war-weary publics and the urgency of rebuilding state legitimacy placed the issue front and centre everywhere. The organization and generosity of welfare provision varied from country to country. In some instances, as in the Netherlands, unemployment insurance was not at first part of the package; in some, as in France, family allowances were highlighted. Benefits might be paid out of state tax revenues or out of funds financed by beneficiary contributions. Bureaucrats might run the show or representatives of the beneficiaries themselves. Yet whatever the particular scheme, the fact remained that Europeans now enjoyed a measure of security from the vicissitudes of modern life that they had never known before. And however impressive the scale of this accomplishment, that still doesn't tell the whole story. The state also became a major player in housing construction, in the subvention of cultural institutions, and in the organization of land use. Land reform was indeed a major feature of the post-war moment in Eastern Europe, though it figured in France too.<sup>16</sup> A ballooning state apparatus required manpower to make it work, civil servants to shuffle all the paper, of course, but also higher ups trained in public administration who took a wider view of things. Experts, or technocrats as they were sometimes called, were not an invention of the post-war era, but this was their moment. They came

14 Dirk Luyten, 'Social Security and the End of the Second World War in France, the Netherlands and Belgium: Social Peace, Organizational Power and the State', *supra*.

15 David Edgerton, 'War, Reconstruction, and the Nationalization of Britain, 1939-1951', in *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe: International Perspectives, 1945-1949*, ed. Mark Mazower, Jessica Reinisch, and David Feldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): pp. 29-46.

16 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York, 2005), ch. 3.

into their own, taking charge and, in some cases, like that of Jean Monnet, achieving legendary status.

There is much to debate here. It's possible first of all to think of the massive state build-up in a longer temporal frame. From this angle, the post-war moment would represent less of a new departure than a lurch forward in a process that had roots in earlier times. Corporatist schemes and family policy, for example, were not new phenomena but ones that had been experimented with before, in the aftermath of the Great War or as a response to the Depression.<sup>17</sup> And why not include the war experience itself among the post-war state's progenitors? It is worth taking a moment to think through what such a proposition might entail. It might mean nothing more anodyne than that the state-led mobilizations undertaken to win the war continued on even after victory, but this is to look at the problem just from the Allied side. What about fascist Italy and Nazi Germany; what about states, like France and the Netherlands, subjected to German occupation? Here too, it might be (and has been) argued that policies and programmes were embarked on that did not vanish with defeat or liberation but persisted, leaving an authoritarian legacy that post-war regimes, for whatever reason, did not find expedient to reject out of hand.

This possibility raises the question of how to assess the political valence of post-war reform. In the fall of 1941, after meeting off the Newfoundland coast, Roosevelt and Churchill promulgated a joint declaration of principle, the Atlantic Charter, which outlined their hopes for a future European order once the fighting was over. It has been characterized as the blueprint for a kind of international New Deal.<sup>18</sup> The French Resistance gestated plans of its own, summed up in a manifesto of March 1944 that sketched out a programme of reform – including nationalizations, social security provision, and economic planning – which might best be characterized as social democratic in character. So, is that what Europe got in the post-war era, some mix of New Deal liberalism and social democracy?

Such a conclusion is too hasty for a couple of reasons. Keep in mind that Christian democrats and a new class of technocrats were major participants in the crafting of the post-war order. Keep in mind too that authoritarian and occupation regimes did not always disappear, leaving no trace behind.

17 Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 4.

18 Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

On the contrary, persons, policies and institutions endured. The mix of influences that went into the making of post-war Europe turns out to be a complicated brew, and the *rappports de force* among them did not always favour the Left, far from it. The post-war moment might best be understood as one of intense political manoeuvring as actors from multiple political families, left and right, jockeyed to get their schemes for reconstruction advanced. I would be inclined to argue that left-wing variants got the short end in the competition, not everywhere but on the whole, with the emergent Cold War and a security-minded America abetting more conservative outcomes.<sup>19</sup> But, as noted earlier, this is material for debate. What is clear is that the state exited the war and the post-war moment reinforced, its range of activities broadened, its reach extending deeper than ever into the lives of its citizens. This is the second major reflection the present volume prompts, and it points to a trend that has lost little of its momentum since.

It was not just the state, however, that came in for an overhaul in the post-war years, but – and this is my third point – the nation. It has already been noted how Europe's populations were reshuffled and its borders redrawn, the better to buttress national homogeneity, understood in the most elementary ethnic terms. The war itself was glossed from one nation to the next as a narrative of national heroism or victimization. Britain had stood alone, a small island nation against the concentrated might of Germany's industrial machine. France had gone down to defeat but then resurrected itself as a nation of Resisters. For the Russians, it had been the Great Patriotic War. Even the vanquished had stories to tell. The Austrians were Hitler's first victims, and the Germans too found a way to cast themselves as victims, first bullied by a small band of Nazi fanatics and then brutalized by the Soviet Union's Asiatic hordes.<sup>20</sup> Not least of all, a number of post-war states made the promotion of a unified, national consciousness a matter of policy-making priority, investing in culture – theatre, cinema, music – as a means of fashioning a deep, common past that would help to melt away the dross of class and regional difference. This is not to say that such efforts achieved their desired end, just that the project of nation-making had become more than ever an institutionalized feature of state activity.<sup>21</sup>

19 See Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

20 On the German case, see Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001).

21 Nord, *France's New Deal*, part II.

A couple of objections to this line of thinking come straightaway to mind, the first having to do with the proliferation of international institutions in the post-war era, the second with empire. There were plenty of Europeans and Americans who spent the war years – and beyond – wondering how to prevent such a cataclysm from happening again. French policy-makers concluded that France needed modernizing, their German counterparts that Germany needed democratizing, and well nigh everyone that the Versailles system needed an overhaul. Versailles's flaws were many and varied: it had proclaimed the principle of national self-determination but then not followed through on its promises; it had created a League of Nations but a League that lacked teeth and that a self-absorbed US had spurned; and it had failed altogether to find a way to resolve the fiscal imbalances created by the Great War, leaving such momentous matters to the catch-as-catch-can of bankers' diplomacy. Policy-makers were determined not to repeat these errors. The USA stepped up, assuming the mantle of international leadership it had shunned after the First World War. The League gave way in 1942 to an altogether new institution, the United Nations. As for managing the world's financial affairs, the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 put an end to the era of bankers' diplomacy. It created a currency stabilization mechanism, the International Monetary Fund, and a Bank for Reconstruction and Development (later the World Bank) to help prostrate member states get back on their feet. The Bank made a slow start, so the USA acted on its own initiative to furnish Europe the reconstruction financing it needed, launching the Marshall Plan in 1947.

This was internationalism with a vengeance, but a number of additional points need to be kept in mind. First of all, internationalism comes in more than one variety. The International Labour Organization, an agency of the old League of Nations, had practiced a social-democratic variant, according organized labour a critical role in its operations.<sup>22</sup> This was not how the new internationalism was meant to work. Take the case of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). It performed extraordinary, praiseworthy service in the post-war years, supplying to millions of displaced persons and concentration camp survivors desperately needed material and moral support. But, though a UN organism, it was in the firm control of Americans who provided the key personnel and financing to make it work. As the example of Greece attests, moreover, UNRRA operations were not always exclusively humanitarian in character. As the Greek civil war raged,

22 Sandrine Kott, 'Organizing World Peace: The ILO from the Second World War to the Cold War', *supra*.

the anti-communist side, in control of the machinery of distribution, steered UNRRA monies away from their enemies and towards themselves.<sup>23</sup> Or take the Marshall Plan. It funnelled huge sums into recovering European economies. It also served America's interests, shoring up non-communist states and easing them into a world economic order, based on free capital and trade flows, that was congenial to the American way of doing business. And while recipients had to learn to play by American rules, these were not so stringent as to obstruct participants from carving out national models very different from America's own. France, for example, a major beneficiary of the Marshall programme, deployed American funding to build up a planned economy with a substantial nationalized sector, a far cry from the kind of economy American policy-makers wanted for the US. So, internationalism there was, but of a particular, enlightened sort: one that favoured America's national interests first but in a way flexible enough to permit associated states to explore distinctive national paths. It was an internationalism, in a word, very well suited to an era of national rebirth.

Yet what about imperial policy? European states wanted to recover properties lost during the war and seemed as intent as ever on projecting power beyond the continent's borders through the exertion of formal, imperial rule. War-time Japan's own expansionist ambitions had overturned the imperial order in the Far East, but a concerted effort was made after Japan's defeat to resurrect the status quo ante. The French went to war to get back Indochina. The British did the same in Malaysia as did the Dutch in Indonesia. Not just that, imperial powers took great care when negotiating international agreements to guarantee non-interference with their own reassertions of imperial control. Conventions on warfare were rethought in the light of Nazi crimes but in such a way as not to delegitimize counter-insurgency tactics. The UN itself was structured so that its operations would not impinge on imperial prerogatives provided they were exercised with the developmental interests of subjects in mind. The post-war world was supposed to be one safe for empire.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, it didn't work out that way. It proved impossible to cram the genie of Third-World nationalism back into the bottle. The British retreated from

23 William I. Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2008), ch. 6; Jessica Reinisch, 'Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA', in *Post-War Reconstruction in Europe*, ed. Mazower, Reinisch and Feldman, pp. 258-289; Voglis, 'The Politics of Reconstruction', *supra*.

24 Pieter Lagrou, '1945-1955: The Age of Total War', in *Histories of the Aftermath*, ed. Biess and Moeller, pp. 287-296; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

India in 1947 and from Palestine the next year. The Dutch after prolonged fighting conceded defeat, and Indonesia became independent in 1949. The proliferation of independent, ex-imperial states altered the character of the UN, which became less of a victor's club (with major imperial powers counted among the victors) and more of a society of nations. Even where empire persisted, an effort was made to give it more of a national look.<sup>25</sup> France had maintained a separate legal code for indigenous peoples, which was abolished in the war's immediate aftermath. Native populations were also accorded voting rights and representation in France's national parliament, though not on a one person, one vote basis. The idea was to portray inhabitants of the empire as citizens like any other and France as a nation, not just bounded by the hexagon, but made up of a hundred million men, women and children scattered across the globe. Such schemes foundered, to be sure. Policy-makers hesitated to pursue the citizenship option to its logical conclusion, to extend full welfare benefits and an equal vote to Third World peoples; 'colons' did not want imperial reform at all, except in the most watered-down form; and the imperial peoples themselves, in the end, chose independence over the halfway houses proposed and made increasing use of international bodies like the UN to rally world opinion. Europe overall did not want to abandon its imperial vocation, trying hard to squash national liberation movements or to put forward alternatives that promised imperial subjects a more equal citizenship, but Europe failed. What resulted was a world more nation-based in design than ever before in human history.

How much of this was foreordained? There were certain clear trends in the post-war years. National reconstruction was the order of the day with the state taking the lead, and both state and nation were sure to emerge the stronger for it. People talked, not just about reviving democratic institutions but about building a new kind of democratic order. New players were also on the scene who were not about to go away: organized interests, women, experts. And whatever else got decided, it was a near certainty that housing and welfare provision would receive top priority. But how all these pieces would end up getting put together was a good deal less clear. What kind of state, what kind of nation, what kind of welfare, what kind of internationalism: these were questions subject to intense political debate and manoeuvre, and it was hard to predict who the winners would be. Was

25 Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Frederick Cooper, 'Reconstructing Empire in British and French Africa', in *Post-War Reconstruction*, ed. Mazower, Reinisch and Feldman, pp. 196-210.

it a matter of self-evidence that Christian Democracy, rather than social democracy or communism, would turn out to be the dominant force in much of continental Western Europe in the 1950s? There were powerful voices calling for a moralization of public life and the reinforcement of family values, but there were countervailing voices too, engaged in sex-talk or petitioning for a deeper look into the abyss of Europe's recent past. No doubt, Cold War tensions had already started to heat up. Winston Churchill as early as 1946 could foresee a Europe divided down the middle, but who could tell that Germany itself would end up split in two? It was clear as well that European empire was in serious trouble, but who knew that it would all go by the boards, Britain's white commonwealth excepted, in the next decade and a half? That in fact is the point about the post-war moment. It was a period when politics mattered, when momentous issues were at stake and outcomes uncertain. The fifties would bring answers and prosperity too. It was a cocktail potent enough to close the parenthesis on that mixture of war-born misery and open-ended aspiration that gave the post-war years their particular savour.

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