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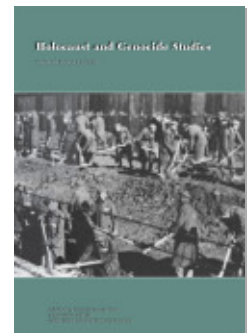
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## *Research Note*

# **Rescued from Oblivion: The Leyb Koniuchowsky Papers and the Holocaust in Provincial Lithuania**

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**Much of our knowledge of the Holocaust in Lithuania is based on experiences in or near Vilnius and Kaunas. In the smaller towns, where tens of thousands of Jews lived before the war, so few survived that first-hand accounts are rare; all the less do official German sources offer a window onto events, recording little more than overall numbers. The present contribution draws attention to a lesser-known collection of survivor testimonies gathered after the war by Leyb Koniuchowsky, primarily in Germany's Feldafing displaced persons camp. Case studies of ritual humiliation of Jews by their small-town and village neighbors, experiences in a minor camp complex, and the pursuit of vengeance by one survivor who gained temporary employment in the postwar Soviet security services, point toward the place of oral testimony in elucidating events in hard-to-document places. They raise questions about whether events in better-known localities were "typical" or not.**

"Stories," wrote Jorge Semprun, "never begin where they seem to have begun."<sup>1</sup> This story begins with an ending, after the Germans surrendered but well before the scope of Hitler's crimes was fully understood. For the first four years following the collapse of Nazi Germany, a Lithuanian Jewish survivor named Leyb Koniuchowsky journeyed across Poland and Germany in search of eyewitnesses willing to testify to their experiences during the near total extermination of their native land's once-vibrant Jewish community. Because many survivors were concentrated in displaced persons camps, Koniuchowsky spent most of his time traveling the ravaged landscape of the country that less than four years earlier had launched a war of annihilation against the Jews of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

As he combed postwar Germany and Poland in search of testimonies, Koniuchowsky gained an unrivaled knowledge concerning the Holocaust in provincial Lithuania. By the time he completed his project, he had amassed 1,682 pages of eyewitness accounts by approximately 150 survivors from 171 towns and villages (some



Postwar ID photo of Leyb Koniuchowsky, Munich. Courtesy of Yad Vashem.



The Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp. USHMM, courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (orig. Bund Archive of the Jewish Labor Movement).

people listed more than one place of origin) in Lithuania, most far removed from the cities of Kaunas and Vilnius. Nearly seven decades later, the Leyb Koniuchowsky Papers constitute a vital—and still largely unexamined—source for historians.

Koniuchowsky was born in 1910 in Alytus, where he practiced as an engineer before Germany's invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, after which he was sent to the Kaunas (Kovno) ghetto. After the war Koniuchowsky began interviewing fellow Lithuanian Jewish survivors to document the fate of Jews outside the country's metropolises. Writing in Yiddish and working with little more than paper and pencils, Koniuchowsky recorded in embittered third-person prose the experiences of fellow survivors. Completing the project in 1949, he emigrated from Germany to the United States. Copies of Koniuchowsky's collection were later deposited at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> and YIVO (the Institute for Jewish Research) in New York,<sup>4</sup> where for many years the documents remained largely untouched. Indeed, as long as the Cold War continued and the archives of Eastern Europe remained closed, depriving historians of access to vital contemporary documents, survivor testimonies by themselves seemed of limited use to historians.

But as the 1980s drew to a close and the 1990s began, a series of unrelated events significantly enhanced the importance of the Koniuchowsky Papers. For one, the collapse of the Soviet Union generated a renewed interest in the history of the German-Soviet War in general, and in the Holocaust as it had unfolded on the occupied Soviet territories in particular. For another, an aging Leyb Koniuchowsky commissioned a young anthropologist and Jewish scholar named Jonathan Boyarin<sup>5</sup> (now Mann Professor of Modern Jewish Studies and Professor of Anthropology at Cornell University) to translate his papers at YIVO. Over the late 1980s and early 1990s Boyarin assiduously translated the more than one thousand folio pages into well-wrought English prose. Thus, due to fortuitous developments, the Koniuchowsky Papers were poised at the close of the twentieth century to occupy a central position among historical investigations of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe.

## **The Testimonies**

Leyb Koniuchowsky wrote in vivid prose that, although expressive, also renders more challenging the historians' task of judging each document's authenticity of voice (i.e., the extent to which Koniuchowsky substituted his own authorial eloquence for the survivors' presumably more simple mode of expression). Further, because Koniuchowsky compiled several individual testimonies into most of the reports, additional questions arise concerning internal consistencies. Put simply: to what extent are individual voices and divergent memories preserved (or effaced) in the testimonies?

First, let us consider the nature of the documents themselves. Organizationally, the testimonies (many of them collective) are simple. Each has several sections, generally beginning with the depositors' memories of their prewar lives (and often, the thorny topic of Jewish-Lithuanian relations), before continuing with segments about the German invasion, initial acts of discrimination, the first mass killings, and the eventual destruction of entire Jewish communities.

A key factor distinguishes the Koniuchowsky Papers from Gentile Polish and Lithuanian narratives, which emphasize the intense suffering of non-Jews during the period of Soviet occupation (1939–1941 and 1940–1941, respectively); Lithuanian narratives often minimize the brutality of the subsequent German occupation. Jewish survivors interviewed by Koniuchowsky tended to gloss over the Soviet period, highlighting the extermination of Lithuanian Jewry under the Nazis. Many of the Koniuchowsky testimonies include accounts of how the witnesses survived, and virtually every single testimony—whether individual or collective—concludes with a description of the reoccupation of Lithuania by the Red Army in summer 1944.

Any seeming uniformity, however, is deceptive. In some cases only one survivor remained to report what happened in a particular village; individual testimonies often constitute the only known sources concerning the extermination of one place's Jewish population.<sup>6</sup> Many situations and experiences were unique, or at least are so to the best of our knowledge. This fact occasionally leaves the historian in the uncomfortable position of having to utilize a single, and uncorroborated, testimony to reconstruct what happened to the entire Jewish population of a particular town during the German occupation.<sup>7</sup> For a profession based heavily on rigorous scrutiny and cross-checking of documents, judging such individual testimonies poses a substantial challenge. However, as Christopher R. Browning has pointed out, this need not stop us from attempting to write the history of the Holocaust in the countryside. Indeed, it would be morally insensitive and intellectually vacuous to avoid using postwar survivor testimonies when the only alternative would be not writing any history at all.<sup>8</sup> Of crucial importance when testimonies cannot be corroborated is our ability to examine them in the light of tendencies and patterns that can be established using multiple sources documenting similar situations elsewhere. They help us to judge how general certain patterns truly were.

In some ways the collective reports are no less problematic than individual accounts. If the central issue concerning individual testimonials is corroboration, then the challenge in using collective testimonies is the extent to which divergent (or contradictory) memories may be purged to establish a smoother narrative. Above all, we must keep in mind that we are reading a source that has been filtered twice: once through the imperfect memories of the survivors themselves,<sup>9</sup> and a second time through the authorial voice of Koniuchowsky, who served not only as compiler, but also narrator and homogenizer.

Consider the following passage, excerpted from the testimony of Yakov Zak, who spoke to Koniuchowsky about a mass shooting of Jewish men, women, and children outside the small town of Kelm (Kelmė):

Yakov heard the shouts and weeping of those brought to the pit, then the report of automatics and wheezing and moaning from the pit.



Hashomer Hatzair group, Jurbarkas, Lithuania, ca. 1930–1931. USHMM, courtesy of Michael Magidowitz, whose sister Chana stands second from right (Michael escaped the Kovno ghetto and joined the partisans in 1943).

Yakov carefully crept on his belly to the edge of the forest. From there he heard the cries of his nine comrades, with whom he had been taken out of the barn. Again automatic rifle fire was heard, and the cries of the last nine Jews at the pit were eternally silenced.

Yakov watched from a distance as the Lithuanians prepared to leave the pit. They gathered the possessions of those who were shot, took down the lamps next to the pit, and returned to Kelm.

For a few hours Yakov continued lying at the edge of the forest. Everything around him was mute, and wrapped in a leaden darkness, soaked with light drops of rain. In the thick, dark air Yakov still heard the echo of those Jews whom he knew and loved, who had been silenced forever, whose bodies filled the pit.<sup>10</sup>

Several features stand out here. First, and perhaps most striking, is Koniuchowsky's use of the third person. Stylistically jarring, this approach raises questions of tone or narrative style: clearly, the testimonies were not transcribed word-for-word. Further, occasional insertions into the text appear to be imaginative rather than strictly documentary. Thus, when Koniuchowsky writes that Yakov "still heard the echo of those Jews whom he knew and loved, who had been silenced forever, whose bodies filled the pit," one is unsure whether the voice is Koniuchowsky's or Zak's. At any rate, the impact of such phrases is clearly emotional. The purpose of Koniuchowsky's ambitious project may very well have been to document the fate of small-town Lithuanian Jewish communities under the Nazi yoke, but when reading the testimonies, one

cannot help but admire the visceral power of the witness—and of Koniuchowsky—as narrators of events.

The above problems notwithstanding, the Koniuchowsky Papers constitute an unusually reliable source. For one thing, if historians strove to use only unproblematic documents devoid of inconsistencies, then we would scarcely be able to write any history at all. Further, although Koniuchowsky's role in shaping the testimonies as the compiler, homogenizer, and chief narrator gives pause, it is important to bear in mind Koniuchowsky's very special background: as he listened to ever more survivor accounts, his own survivor's sense of what had happened in Lithuania between 1941 and 1945 became both more expansive and more sharply refined, suiting him well to edit out any glaring inconsistencies or factual errors. We have more reasons to trust the core narratives found in the Papers than to distrust them, either for the occasional lapses in a particular survivor's memory, or for Koniuchowsky's own limitations as narrator.

Several additional merits of the Papers deserve mention. First, because the Koniuchowsky Papers include only testimonies gathered between 1945 and 1949, the resulting narratives are largely untainted by the political considerations and inhibitions subsequently generated by the Cold War. This preserves an immediacy that testimonies collected later cannot claim. Further, because the testimonies were recorded shortly after the events, there is less risk that memories have faded or changed.<sup>11</sup> The historian has sound reasons to consider this particular cache of testimonies more reliable and accurate than others collected later.

In what particular ways are the Koniuchowsky Papers testimonies most useful? Until recently, Holocaust history was written largely from the perspective of perpetrators. The history of Lithuania, where the first major shootings of Jewish communities east of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line occurred, was no different.<sup>12</sup> Evidence supplied by the killers is helpful, but absent from documents such as the so-called Jäger Report. Cited below are the voices and actions of those targeted by German policy. The Koniuchowsky Papers fill a void and establish a counter-memory to the necrology left by the killers.

In the following, I discuss three specific instances in which the Koniuchowsky Papers prove useful—indeed, essential—to any history of the Holocaust in provincial Lithuania. The first, which highlights the importance of Christian anti-Jewish motifs during the mobilization of Lithuanian Gentiles as participants in the Holocaust, underscores the ways in which the Papers challenge us to rethink (and to qualify) the role of the Judeo-Bolshevism myth as a motivating force in Eastern Europe. The second and third selections trace two divergent experiences following the initial round of mass shootings that ended in December 1941: the story of a little-known Nazi slave-labor camp complex called Heydekrug; and survival in the forests and on the farms of Lithuania. Using both collective and individual witness accounts, I show how the

testimonies gathered by Koniuchowsky rescue obscure events from historical oblivion, and provide rare glimpses into hard-to-document topics such as postwar revenge killings.

### **Christian Antisemitism and Rituals of Humiliation**

We know the basic numbers of the Final Solution because the perpetrators left records of their deeds. Information in documents such as the Einsatzgruppen reports establishes quantitative dimensions and timelines. Supplementing the knowledge gleaned from these and other documents with testimonies from the Koniuchowsky collection sharpens our picture of the Holocaust in provincial Lithuania. The richness of the collection emerges in testimonies pertaining to three counties I have selected as case studies: Raseiniai, Telsiai, and Taurage.

The first incident I wish to discuss was recounted to Leyb Koniuchowsky by a Jewish survivor from the small town of Jurbarkas in the Raseiniai district. Here, as in many other towns and villages of northwestern Lithuania, physical extermination was preceded by “rituals of humiliation.” But if throughout much of Eastern Europe such rituals often centered on victims’ purported allegiance to Stalin,<sup>13</sup> in this town, pre-modern anti-Jewish motifs, in addition to stereotypes of “Judeo-Bolshevism,” fueled the performances.

One week after the Germans crossed the Molotov-Ribbentrop demarcation line into formerly Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe, Lithuanian Gentiles in the village of Jurbarkas forcibly assembled the community’s Jewish men and led them to the banks of the Nieman for what Khane Goldman later likened to a “living” funeral: “All the participants . . . were forced to enter the water. The partisans forced the Jews to drown [i.e., dunk] the ‘living corpse’ [of Yitskhok Kopelevitsh, one of the victims in the spectacle, together with a Torah scroll], deep into the river. . . . The murderers then forced the Jewish men to ‘drown’ each other . . . forcing each other’s heads under the water.”<sup>14</sup> The performance continued well into the evening. Most of the men who suffered through this humiliating spectacle did not live long after: on either July 10 or 11, some 550 were shot by a handful of Lithuanian “bandits” accompanied by “several Germans” outside town.<sup>15</sup>

As recalled by Goldman, the event at the Nieman is unusual: for one thing, the “living funeral,” a grassroots initiative of local non-Jews, apparently involved not one German.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, precise information about the motives makes no appearance in the testimony furnished by Goldman and conveyed by Koniuchowsky. Indeed, one could hardly expect victims of such a traumatic event to make sense of the proceedings in any way other than as an episode of “useless violence.”<sup>17</sup> But the irreducible residuum remains, highlighting the “Jewishness” of the victims in religious terms by mock “baptisms” and the desecration of Jewish religious objects.

Several historians have called attention to the prevalence and importance of the myth of “Judeo-Bolshevism” in enabling mass killings of Jews in Eastern Europe,



most notably Poland.<sup>18</sup> But in provincial Lithuania, which also endured the harsh realities of Stalinist occupation in 1940 and 1941, deeply entrenched, homespun Christian antisemitism appears to have played a more substantial role. In town squares, under the watchful eye of local anticommunist partisans (and sometimes Germans), Lithuanian Jews were forced to perform humiliating spectacles designed to ridicule their faith. By orchestrating such acts in public venues, and often before crowds of onlookers, those responsible for such “ritual degradation” effectively thrust their Jewish neighbors outside the “universe of human obligation,” thereby legitimizing further persecution.<sup>19</sup>

This is not to imply that the “Judeo-Bolshevism” myth played no role in rural Lithuania. In Jurbarkas, shortly after orchestrating the mock funeral procession, local Lithuanians organized a second performance that called for the ritualized destruction of symbols that connoted the period of Soviet occupation, including the burning of photographs of Lenin, Stalin, and Molotov.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere, when the campaign of mass killing commenced in early July, many of the first Jewish victims were shot not necessarily as Jews (although their identity as such figured prominently), but as Jewish *commissars*.<sup>21</sup> However, available evidence suggests that ritual humiliation highlighting the religious Jewishness of the victims provided an autonomous justification.

Viewed in this light, the performance witnessed by Goldman is redolent of traditional Christian anti-Judaism; the trope of baptism and conversion in particular would have been familiar to many European Christians. And for local Lithuanians vacillating on the “Jewish Question,” such a performance—laden with traditional anti-Judaic, rather than modern political, motifs—would have gone some way toward legitimizing the shootings that followed.

The program of mass extermination commenced in northwestern Lithuania in July 1941 with the elimination of Jewish males as “Communist sympathizers,” before escalating in early August to the killing of women and children too.<sup>22</sup> The killing process, which relied on bullets, clubs, and even stones, was anything but “modern,” but the murders proceeded at a near-industrial pace. The first case of mass murder in Lithuania occurred in late June in the town of Garsden (Lithuanian Gargždai), and was followed by shootings in Kaunas, where approximately 416 Jewish men and 47 Jewish women were murdered on July 4 by Lithuanian “partisans” ostensibly acting at the behest of the Einsatzkommando (EK) 3. By late July, Nazi policies of extermination had extended deep into the countryside, and on the 29th Karl Jäger recorded 254 Jewish men and 3 Lithuanian Communists as the first victims of a German *Aktion* in the town of Raseiniai. As summer waned, numbers spiked, and women now figured among the official victims: on August 5, 213 Jewish men and 66 women were shot outside Raseiniai; in Ukmerge, some 620 Jewish men and 82 Jewish women were shot three days later. Between the eighteenth and the twenty-second of August, 466

Jewish men, 400 Jewish women, and 1,609 Jewish children had been shot in the vicinity of Raseiniai.<sup>23</sup>

Even if one were to accept that the first Jewish victims had been shot as “Communists,” a justification strongly reinforced in some of the rituals of humiliation, one would still have to acknowledge that by early August Lithuanian “partisans” were shooting Jews strictly on the basis of their ethnicity. This represented a shift not only in praxis, but in ideology as well. In shooting Jews as members of a “racial” group, Lithuanians seem to have begun to assimilate the ideology of the Nazi occupiers; the motivation of punishing “Communists” who had collaborated with the Soviets was now merely part of the mix.

By early August Lithuanians across the northwestern rim of the country were not only engaging in mass killing actions on behalf of the occupying regime, but were doing so by themselves or merely in the presence of Germans. Finally, by September the numbers became so staggering that their meaning all but blurs. In an entry for the town of Marijampole dated September 1, Jäger notes: “1,763 Jewish men, 1,812 Jewish women, 1,404 Jewish children, 109 lunatics, 1 German woman who was married to a Jew, 1 Russian woman.”<sup>24</sup> On Christmas Eve 1941—six months after the



Woman about to be killed by Germans, Šiauliai ghetto, ca. 1941–1944. USHMM, courtesy of Eliezer Zilberis.

invasion, five after the first mass shootings—most of the Jews of Raseiniai, Taurage, and Telsiai were dead—as was most of Lithuanian Jewry.<sup>25</sup>

The tail end of 1941 was a period of “mopping up” for German and Lithuanian perpetrators, but for those in the crosshairs it was a period of extreme desperation. In Telsiai, where survivors of the first round of shootings were driven into a compound hugging the shores of Lake Mastas, the final action occurred on December 23 and 24, 1941, but the Jewish community did not go quietly. According to the testimony of Malke Gilis and Khane Pelts, “several hundred” women and children escaped the clutches of the killing squad by leaping into the icy waters of Lake Mastas.<sup>26</sup> Many were later caught and gunned down, but at least some survived. Of such final moments of fear and desperate action, of course, reports like Karl Jäger’s make no mention.

After December 1941, when most of Lithuania’s Jewish population had been exterminated, the surviving remnant was for the most part hiding in forests or on farms. In the following, I call attention to two particular cases that would have been lost to historical memory if not for the Koniuchowsky Papers. The first was a little-known slave-labor camp complex located in Heydekrug. Because of a highly detailed account compiled from several eyewitness testimonies by Koniuchowsky at the Feldafing displaced persons camp (near Munich) on July 11, 1948, we have a remarkably preserved picture of a camp system orbiting far beyond better-known camps such as Auschwitz, or ghettos such as Łódź and Warsaw.<sup>27</sup> This particular account is special, too, for its discussion of topics left out of some survivor testimonies, such as intra-Jewish conflict. The second account traces the survival of a single Jewish man, Yakov Zak, from his escape at the rim of an execution pit outside Kelm through his participation in the partisan movement, and then his later involvement in personal acts of revenge against Germans and Lithuanian collaborators. Zak’s account, relayed to Koniuchowsky in Łódź during the summer of 1946,<sup>28</sup> candidly records participation in acts that only a few years later might not have been discussed at all due to the shifting political climate generated by the Cold War.

### **Cooperation and Antagonism: The Heydekrug Collective Testimony**

On the evening of Sunday, June 29, 1941, detachments of the SS transferred a group of approximately seventy men from the Lithuanian countryside across the border of German East Prussia into a town square that had been cordoned off with barbed wire.<sup>29</sup> Until September 1939, when the Germans and the Soviets divided Eastern Europe, the town and its surrounding areas had belonged to Lithuania.<sup>30</sup> Locals referred to the coastal district as Klaipeda, although the large German minority called it Memel. But a small group of Jewish prisoners would later remember the town and its surrounding peat bogs by yet a different name: Heydekrug. And for the seventy Jewish men from Kveidan, Shvekshne, and other towns in Taurage district, that first

night in the central Heydekrug work camp must have been traumatic. They arrived at the central camp in the evening, disoriented by the unfamiliar surroundings and frightened by the cacophony that greeted them upon arrival. SS men used pistol butts and “items of iron” to beat the men “one by one” as they entered the main barrack. The collective postwar report, attested to by the signatures of fourteen survivors, describes in vivid language the squalor that greeted the tired men: forced to sleep “on cots covered by sacks of straw,” the men of Taurage district shared their bunks with bedbugs and fleas.<sup>31</sup>

The testimony provides a rare glimpse into the daily life of an otherwise virtually unknown camp complex. More important, the account recorded by Koniuchowsky resurrects an episode that otherwise might have been lost to history. Because many similar camps were either too obscure to be mentioned in German reports, or were so murderous that few people lived to tell the tale, the information collected by Koniuchowsky is all the more vital.<sup>32</sup> And although some of the events will be familiar even to non-specialists, as when the Heydekrug Jews entered Auschwitz in August 1943, or when those same men were put to work clearing still-smoking ruins in the Warsaw Ghetto, the Koniuchowsky account of these moments yields new images.

Operational units tasked with rounding up Jewish male laborers for Heydekrug began days after the German invasion. Leye Shapiro-Rudnik recalled that in Laukuva, where the SS arrived on June 29, Lithuanian “partisans” assisted them—albeit only after pillaging the homes of the Jews for “gold, silver, and paper securities”—anything that could be stolen. Then, all Jewish males of working age (a malleable category that included young teenagers and the elderly) were dragged from their homes to the town square, where they were forced to perform a variety of calisthenics in order to humiliate them and their families, and possibly also to test the men’s physical stamina. The SS then loaded their victims onto two trucks and sped out of town in the direction of Khveidan.<sup>33</sup> After departing from Laukuva, the convoy would stop at neighboring Khveidan to pick up an additional eighty men before continuing on to Heydekrug.<sup>34</sup>

In late June and July, similar sequences unfolded across the northwestern Lithuanian border areas near Germany, and ultimately hundreds of Jewish men poured into the camp complex. On June 28, 50 men from Verszan and another 120 from Shvekshne entered; the following day, 80 more arrived from Laukuva. Yet another 80 Jews came from Kveidan on June 30. After this date, arrivals ceased for almost a month, resuming only after July 19, when a camp-wide *Selektion* of the weak and the elderly for summary execution significantly depleted the prison population.<sup>35</sup> Although the actual number of prisoners fluctuated due to deaths from disease and starvation, as well as to random and systematic shootings, the total number of men who passed through Heydekrug appears to have been around five hundred.<sup>36</sup>

What does the eyewitness testimony collected by Koniuchowsky tell us about internal camp structure, or the dynamics of Jewish relations? Each of the six camps

that collectively comprised the Heydekrug complex operated in a somewhat improvised manner while nevertheless adhering to certain hierarchical principles. Although no single participant in the Koniuchowsky testimony could have reasonably been expected to understand the Heydekrug command structure, it is possible to assemble a picture based on the survivors' collective insight.

Ultimate responsibility rested on the shoulders of SS Sturmbahnführer Dr. Med. Theodore Werner Scheu, "a murderer and a bitter antisemite."<sup>37</sup> Beneath Dr. Scheu, each of the sub-camps<sup>38</sup> was run by an assemblage of men generically remembered as "sadists" and "murderers."<sup>39</sup> At Matzstubbern for instance, a German commandant referred to only as "Kirsch" (who "promised sadistic punishments" for unsatisfactory work) oversaw life in the camp, while at Schillwen an SS corporal known as "Smailius" presided.<sup>40</sup> Some overseers were remembered with particular anguish. At the Matzstubbern camp (and in fall 1941 at the Schillwen camp) two men known as "Otto and Willy" distinguished themselves by their particularly sadistic punishments, "refined fascists" who "did everything they could to embitter the lives of the Jews at work and after work."<sup>41</sup> A young boy whom Jewish prisoners remembered as a member of the Hitler Youth enjoyed power over some of the prisoners at the Piktaten camp, a role he fulfilled "with a laugh."<sup>42</sup>

Occasionally survivors described instances in which a camp overseer diverged from the norm. In spring 1942, as Heydekrug's prison population shrank, a cohort of prisoners was resettled in the nearby town of Rusne to repair drainage ditches. This man, Jusutis, treated the prisoners well. "He was one of the righteous Gentiles during those tragic years," recalled the surviving witnesses. During Jewish holidays, he told his workers "to hide and not go to work"; when Jewish laborers were caught visiting local peasants (a practice that violated Nazi policy), he protected his workers from the SS; and when a peasant woman allegedly complained to Nazi officials that Jewish men "frequently" worked outside the camp without supervision, Jusutis forbade her entry into the camp.<sup>43</sup>

Such exceptions were rare, however, and for the most part prisoners lived under the near-constant threat of violent punishment. Violence served the purposes of overseers in several ways. First, it sustained an atmosphere of terror in which any suspected or actual resistance, however slight, could be severely punished. Because whippings or beatings might be meted out at any moment for any reason, prisoners seldom rebelled in any way. Second, violence dehumanized the victims. As Primo Levi observed in *The Drowned and the Saved*, "an inhuman regime spreads and extends its inhumanity in all directions, but especially downward. . . . The useless cruelty of violated modesty conditioned the existence" of camp prisoners and established a system in which preserving one's sense of dignity and humanity demanded enormous effort.<sup>44</sup> It is also possible that men such as "Otto and Willy" behaved in a violent manner as a means of self-preservation. As German casualties mounted in the war, their position became increasingly tenuous; indeed, both were ultimately sent to

the front, where they died during the winter of 1941–1942.<sup>45</sup> Brutal treatment of Jewish prisoners, within limits, could increase overseers' standing in the eyes of their superiors.

Concerning intra-Jewish relations, the testimony affords revealing insights into the ways in which camp inmates often leaned on one another in the struggle to survive, maintain their humanity, and preserve a sense of personal agency. At Matzstubbern, daily life was occasionally interrupted by a “utensils roll call” in which overseers inspected prisoners' eating utensils and in which even the slightest speck was reason for a severe beating. Monish Kagan's position as “head of the Jews” occasionally permitted him to learn when such inspections were to take place. Rather than utilize this crucial information for personal advantage, Kagan personally inspected his fellow prisoners' utensils to help them avoid beatings under this extemporized method of intimidation.<sup>46</sup>

Other situations presented greater challenges to Jewish leaders, as when a prisoner named Haushe Dorfman was caught bartering for food with a local ethnic German outside the camp.<sup>47</sup> Camp commandant Kirsch ordered fifty lashes, to be meted out by Monish Kagan. When Kagan “categorically” refused to carry out Kirsch's orders, he was threatened with the same punishment. Still, Kagan, a former reserve officer in the army during the 1930s presidency of Antanas Smetonas, refused. A bemused Kirsch relented, muttering, “I have just learned something.” Dorfman subsequently received fifty lashes—apparently for bartering for food with a local—and, for a time after that, ten more daily. We find no mention of Kagan receiving any punishment.<sup>48</sup>

That such an act of defiance might not result in any form of punishment seems improbable, but the survivors were quite emphatic about the incident, much as in their praise of Jusutis. Kagan's refusal also appears in a 1985 video testimony by Yoysef Aranovitz, a participant in the original 1948 testimony gathered by Koniuchowsky.<sup>49</sup> Although there is no indication of any organized Jewish resistance at Heydekrug, the impact of Kagan's actions on his fellow prisoners must have been considerable.

But alongside mutual support lurks a history of conflict, as exemplified in the case of Yoysef Smilyanski. If men such as Monish Kagan were admired, those like Smilyanski were detested. Resentment of Smilyanski first emerged after his appointment as camp cook, purportedly due to the favoritism of another camp lackey.<sup>50</sup> The survivors took particular pains to mention that other cooks worked at Matzstubbern, but that none of these attracted so much ire.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately we do not learn from the testimonies precisely what Smilyanski did to make himself so hated: in Koniuchowsky's words, “those who provided the collective eyewitness testimony have decided not to publish information on the improper behavior of the Jew Jojzef Smilyanski toward his brother Jews.”<sup>52</sup> We can only make inferences based on the fact that in other camps the position of cook conferred the authority to preferentially

distribute food—more than any other factor the key to survival—forcing some inmates to perform favors, leaving others to go hungry. This case underscores the need for other evidence; potentially relevant information did emerge in a postwar German inquest by the Central Office for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes into the wartime activities of Heydekrug's commandant, Theodor Scheu. According to Germans who were interrogated, one point distinguished Smilyanski from the other inmates: he was a local.<sup>53</sup> Thus, while others might have viewed Heydekrug only as a site of torture, for Smilyanski the district was home, and seeing the faces of former neighbors just outside the camp may have been an especially bitter experience. "He was . . . said to have been seen on the streets of Heydekrug," recalled one German, "and supposedly he . . . asked his former neighbors whether they couldn't help him."<sup>54</sup> Perhaps this contact underlay some advantage that Smilyanski enjoyed over his co-prisoners? Most likely we will never know, but the Koniuchowsky testimonies offer us at least a window onto the sometimes fraught relations among the victims of the camps.

One wonders why some behaved in ways beneficial to their fellow prisoners, while others sought opportunities for personal advantage. As Christopher Browning concludes in his assessment of the Starachowice slave-labor camp, "terrible persecution does not ennoble victims"; severe conditions sometimes meant that action in pursuit of one's own survival might reduce the chances for someone else's. In the zero-sum game of camp survival, even helping one fellow prisoner might disadvantage a third.<sup>55</sup>

If the Koniuchowsky testimonies help bring to light unfamiliar events, they can add detail even when an event is already known, as when the Heydekrug Jews were deported to Auschwitz in summer 1943. They passed Königsberg and Tarnowitz on the way; and although the ultimate destination remained unknown until arrival, when the train at last ground to a halt on the outskirts of Auschwitz the Heydekrug Jews were not especially concerned: to a group who had scarcely ventured beyond their hometowns, the name of Auschwitz "was as innocent as [that of] any other station." But the mood quickly turned macabre. When the train at last arrived (survivors had "lost track of day and night," trapped in their boxcars), it was still dark outside. After a wait of several hours during which the cars were shuttled back and forth near the disembarkation ramp at Birkenau, the doors opened at last onto a terrifying new universe. A blinding white searchlight lit the dusty cars as SS men wearing the death's head insignia and accompanied by fierce dogs greeted the arrivals with a torrent of screams and obscenities. Along the periphery of the ramp a host of skeletal male and female trustees in striped pajamas shouted at the bewildered and now frightened men from Heydekrug: "you can get your bundles later" or "crazy Jews! What are you taking those bundles for? You're being taken to be burned!"<sup>56</sup> It was, as Yoysef Aranovitz recalled forty years later, "a real hell in this world."<sup>57</sup>

Even for Auschwitz, August 1, 1943—the date of arrival of the Heydekrug Jews—was especially busy. From morning until late at night, transports of Polish Jews from the liquidated Będzin and Sosnowiec ghettos arrived for “selection” (i.e., of those capable of work—the rest were consigned to death). That day Auschwitz processed some ten thousand men, women, and children, of whom at least 7,500 were gassed within hours of arrival.<sup>58</sup> For the slave laborers from Heydekrug, selection proved slightly less destructive: of the 292 men, approximately 100 were consigned to gassing. One of those was—perhaps ironically—Heydekrug camp cook Yoysef Smilyanski.<sup>59</sup>

The selection process on the ramps of Birkenau scattered Heydekrug’s former inmates across the Auschwitz camp complex. Subsequently, a handful were transferred to the concentration camp at Warsaw, and thence to Dachau and its sub-camps, where U.S. forces found most still alive. The Koniuchowsky testimony thus also conveys this aspect of the collapse of Hitler’s Germany.

### **Survival, Resistance, and Revenge: The Testimony of Yakov Zak**

Whereas the Heydekrug testimonies help us to shed new light on the history of a lesser-known camp, Yakov Zak’s individual account speaks about prominent issues that soon would be submerged by politically-influenced Cold War narratives. In particular, Zak’s acts of vengeance against German and Lithuanian perpetrators in conjunction with the victorious Red Army and the NKVD, challenge us to reevaluate traditional (or official) liberation and end-of-war narratives.

At the outbreak of the war, some 2,500 Jews lived in Kelm. By war’s end, all but fifteen lay beneath the soil of Lithuania, massacred before they could even be drawn into the world of the camps.<sup>60</sup> On the night of the final Aktion in Kelm, Lithuanian auxiliaries had brought Jewish men, women, and children from Lial and Vaiguva as well.<sup>61</sup> For Yakov Zak, a young engineer living in Kelm, a life on the run began at the rim of a burial pit outside his hometown. From his vantage point, Zak glimpsed the corpses of former neighbors; interspersed among the hundreds of dead were the still-stirring bodies of the wounded whose “wheezing and moaning” lent an especially horrific quality to the scene.<sup>62</sup> It was well after dark on August 22, 1941, and Zak was among the last to be taken to the site. The rest of his family, friends, and neighbors were, almost to a person, already dead.<sup>63</sup>

Zak found himself guarded by a Lithuanian named Mikalauskas, from the neighboring village of Pupsiai. When Mikalauskas momentarily diverted his attention to light a cigarette, Zak lunged forward, grabbed the guard’s automatic weapon, and slammed it onto his head. While Mikalauskas reeled, Zak fled through the adjacent potato field. Lithuanian gunmen fired several shots in his direction but the murky darkness, the rain, and the flood lights shining toward the pit combined to enable Zak’s escape. After a brief but futile search, the guards returned to the gravel pits lest



others, too, escape. Zak listened as the last were murdered. When he was reasonably sure it was safe, he abandoned his hiding place at the edge of the forest for the deeper woods beyond.<sup>64</sup>

At least initially, Zak employed arms strictly for survival. He soon encountered the brothers Kholozin, neighbors and fellow survivors. Dov Levin briefly examines their fascinating partnership in *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941–1945*. He has argued that the men were “highly motivated to carry on an armed fight against the Germans and those who collaborated with them.”<sup>65</sup> But at what point did Zak and the Kholozins switch from using arms for survival (self-defense, forcing peasants to hand over food) to using them to wage war? According to Zak himself, the turning point came on March 17, 1942, when his friend Hirshke Kholozin was discovered and shot by Lithuanian police and German soldiers.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps suspecting that the incident was the result of a denunciation by a local peasant, Zak and the surviving Kholozin brothers committed themselves to intimidating “peasants whom they suspected of betraying Jews”<sup>67</sup>

Elsewhere in Lithuania desperate escapes were taking place. During Operation Barbarossa hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers fell into German encirclements (many of their units melted away into the forests and formed the core of the



Yakov Zak in Kelm, Lithuania, probably prewar. Courtesy of Yad Vashem.

first partisan brigades). In 1941 Soviet POWs were located in hastily erected “camps”—usually little more than exposed fields surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers.<sup>68</sup> The weather deteriorated, food rations remained abysmal, and hundreds of thousands died of exposure, starvation, and disease by spring 1942.<sup>69</sup> Later, however, the Germans seem to have decided to keep at least some of the POWs alive. In 1943, Lithuanian peasants gained permission to “borrow” Soviet POWs for forced labor; not surprisingly, many of these escaped. Zak and the Kholozins encountered some of these escapees in the dense woods of eastern and southern Lithuania, a fortuitous moment Zak described (in third-person narration) as the beginning of a “new period” in his life as an armed survivor: “With the assistance of Red Army prisoners who worked for peasants, Yakov managed to make contact with the partisans themselves. . . . A new period began in the hidden Jews’ difficult struggle for life. They were full of hope that they would live to see the liberation and to take revenge against those who had murdered the Jews.” Thus, Yakov Zak and the Kholozins transitioned from armed self-defense through intimidation of potential collaborators to participation in the major partisan offensive against the Germans in spring 1944. During the last months of the war Zak’s “competence in the geography of the area” proved indispensable, and he “took part in more than one [action against] Lithuanian partisans and Germans.”<sup>70</sup>

Whereas the arrival of the Red Army in late summer 1944 signaled the end of armed resistance for most Jews who had taken up arms, for Zak these events marked another point of transformation. Shortly after the region around Kelm fell back into Soviet hands, Zak was appointed chief of the new militia, or police, operating in and around the town of Vaiguva. Although Zak later testified that “he had full authority to take revenge on the Lithuanians who had participated in the slaughter of Jews,” one encounter suggests that this was not entirely the case:<sup>71</sup>

Yakov and a Russian caught the infamous Jew-murderer Stasys Gedrimas at the home of a peasant, playing with a child. Yakov beat him and took him to the headquarters of the militia. The murderer had taken part in the shooting of Jews in Zhagare, Uzhvent, and Shavl. But the murderer would not confess. While taking the Lithuanian degenerate from Vaiguva to Shavl, Yakov shot him in the back with his revolver. When the Soviet security bureau found out about this, Yakov was arrested and kept in prison for several days.<sup>72</sup>

The salient element of this anecdote is Zak’s decision to exact personal justice rather than turn his prisoner over to the new authorities. The passage also documents the selective character of Zak’s targeting: not once does he imply that he engaged in indiscriminate revenge against the Gentile population. And although he ostensibly joined the Soviets, the episode defines the limits to his subordination.<sup>73</sup> After the war, many Lithuanian Gentiles sustained the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, maintaining that the Jews had collectively cooperated with the Soviet authorities after the Germans

vacated the country. Zak's testimony confutes this, in fact suggesting that Jews aligned themselves with the Soviets for pragmatic reasons and with no particular ideological purpose.

There were limits to such independence: upon release from prison, Zak transferred to the NKVD, exploiting his position to pursue revenge against "Lithuanian Jew-murderers." The price for this Faustian pact was that the survivor was required to carry out other official duties, including the arrest of "Lithuanians who hadn't reported for service in the Red Army." Particularly given his earlier act of insubordination, Zak had little choice but to fulfill his official duties if he was to continue pursuing his personal agenda. But it was only a matter of time before the real Zak would be noticed by the regime. Increasingly he and Shmuel and Yitskhok Kholozin were gaining a reputation among the local peasants, who "sought opportunities to get rid of" them on several occasions.<sup>74</sup> Not long after the end of the war and his posting to the NKVD, Yakov Zak fled west, voting with his feet to abandon both the Soviets and their "new Lithuania."

### **Conclusion: Shattered Memories, Preserved Communities**

What, then, are we to make of the Koniuchowsky testimonies? A recently published anthology edited by the late David Bankier highlights the Papers' documentation of widespread participation by Lithuanians in the Nazis' genocide.<sup>75</sup> But beyond simply verifying the scope of local participation, the Koniuchowsky Papers constitute a vital source for a myriad other significant topics. The resource offers historians a rare window onto the Holocaust as it occurred in hard-to-document places. Collected immediately after the Second World War, when memories were fresh, the testimonies also predated the Cold War, when discussing relations between surviving Jews and the Soviet Union could entail an element of risk. In addition to offering a way around Cold War potholes, the Papers also document uncomfortable topics such as revenge killings or intra-Jewish conflict, allowing historians to reconstruct events with nuance and complexity. In places like the Heydekrug slave-labor camp, or in the forests, survival was often reduced to a zero-sum contest from which few people emerged unscathed.

Although the homogenizing influence of Leyb Koniuchowsky as "chief narrator" must be taken into account, it is worth repeating that Koniuchowsky did gain an unsurpassed knowledge of the Holocaust in provincial Lithuania. This intellectual authority deeply informed the collection. Simply put, his overall picture of the Shoah in rural Lithuania may seem homogeneous, but it is also one of almost infinite subtlety: someone else, for example, might have chosen to end Yakov Zak's narrative with liberation by the Red Army—thereby losing entirely the highly revealing experience of Zak's stint in the Soviet security forces.

In a way, the Koniuchowsky Papers confirm what we already knew about the Holocaust in Lithuania: the Shoah in the Lithuanian provinces was carried out in a primitive way, and the killers (often locals) usually carried out their deeds in close proximity to their victims. But in other ways, the Koniuchowsky testimonies provide new insights. Unlike dominant narratives that privilege local participants' motivation by the "Judeo-Bolshevism" myth and the recent experience of Soviet occupation and repression, the Koniuchowsky Papers reveal a provincial Lithuania in which deeply-held Christian antisemitism motivated participants in the genocide, incited during theatrically-staged anti-Jewish spectacles.

While the overwhelming impression gained from Koniuchowsky Papers remains one of limitless loss, the testimonies also offer something else: a memory radically different from the reports left by the perpetrators, who preferred that their victims' humanity be forgotten. This article began with an ending, a postwar Germany in which Leyb Koniuchowsky searched for survivors willing to bear witness to the recent campaign to exterminate their people. In calling attention to his effort, we are thus ending with a beginning.

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## Notes

1. Jorge Semprun, *The Second Death of Ramon Mercader* (New York: Grove, 1973), 307.
2. On the plight of refugees at the end of World War II, see Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Knopf, 2011).
3. Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), O 71.
4. YIVO, Record Group 1390.
5. Studies include Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, eds., *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, expanded edn. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998 [1983, Schocken]); and Jonathan Boyarin, *Polish Jews in Paris: The Ethnography of Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
6. YIVO, RG 1390, IA/5 (Rivke Furman), 91–94.
7. This problem is compounded (for instance) by the fact that German killing reports, such as the one drafted by Karl Jäger during the summer and autumn of 1941, do not always mention every single town visited by the Einsatzgruppen.

8. Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 8.
9. There is yet another layer of distinction here: survivors of extremely traumatic or violent events may have repressed some (if not all) details of a particularly stressful memory. See: Browning, *Remembering Survival*, 9–12.
10. YIVO, RG 1390, IIA/2–4 (Yakov Zak), 81–82.
11. Consensus concerning the extent to which a person’s memory loses clarity over time has by no means been reached. For a persuasive argument that core memories generally remain stable over time see Browning, *Remembering Survival*, 1–9. Of course, specificity is another matter; closeness to events is advantageous—something Browning certainly acknowledges.
12. Until recently, the Holocaust in Lithuania was largely under-studied. However, this is beginning to change with the publication of a number of regional studies. See: Sara Bender, *The Jews of Bialystok during World War II and the Holocaust* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2008); Karen Sutton, *The Massacre of the Jews of Lithuania: Lithuanian Collaboration in the Final Solution, 1941–1944* (Jerusalem and New York: Gefen, 2008); Dina Porat, “The Holocaust in Lithuania: Some Unique Aspects,” in *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementations*, ed. David Cesarani (London: Routledge, 1994), 159–74; Christoph Dieckmann, “Der Krieg und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden,” in *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939–1945: Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Frankfurt/M: Geschichte Fischer, 1998), 292–329; and most recently, Dieckmann’s 1,600-page *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen, 1941–1944* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011). The late David Bankier also prepared a collection of some of the most vivid testimonies from the Koniuchowsky Papers, albeit with rather thin introductory notes: *Expulsion and Extermination: Holocaust Testimonials from Provincial Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011).
13. See Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (New York: Penguin, 2002) for a particularly striking example of the Judeo-Bolshevik myth as a performance ritual.
14. YIVO, RG 1390, IIA/2–4 (Khane Goldman), 120–21.
15. *Ibid.*, 123–25.
16. The elision is more striking in that we know there was in fact a German presence in Jurbarkas in late June.
17. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 105–26.
18. See Gross, *Neighbors*; and Shimon Redlich, *Together and Apart in Brzezany: Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians, 1919–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).
19. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 4.
20. Goldman testimony, 125–28.
21. Of course, the Koniuchowsky Papers are not without reference to rituals laden with “Judeo-Bolshevik” motifs, e.g., Khane goldman, 127.

22. This chronological sequence (and the significance of August as the moment when systematic, rather than selectively targeted, killing policies were initiated) corresponds precisely with the letters of a forty-year-old Bremen salesperson serving in Reserve Police Battalion 105, then stationed in Lithuania: Christopher R. Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 150–54. See also “Who Killed Lida’s Jewish Intelligentsia? A Case Study of Wehrmacht Involvement in the Holocaust’s ‘First Hour,’” David W. Wildermuth, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 1 (2013): 1–30.
23. K. Jaeger, “Consolidated Report,” in *Jews, Lithuanians and the Holocaust*, ed. Alfonsas Eidintas (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2003), 488–90.
24. *Ibid.*, 491.
25. December 24 was the date of the final shootings in Telsiai. YIVO, RG 1390, IIA/1 (Malke Gilis and Khane Pelts), 35–36.
26. *Ibid.*, 23–36.
27. YIVO, RG 1390, IA/6 (Shimen Shlomovitz, Yoysef Shlomovitz, Yoysef Aranovitz, et al.), 38. Aranovitz reiterated in 1985 a similar version of events in his interview at the Fortunoff Video Archive (FA), T-651.
28. Interestingly, it appears as if Koniuchowsky revisited the Zak testimony prior to officially adding the account to his collection. Although the attestation attached to the end states that Zak initially related his story to Koniuchowsky in Łódź in summer 1946, the same document notes that a “corrected testimony” was recorded between November 7 and 9 at the Möncheburg Camp in Kassel; 103.
29. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 38.
30. For a concise summary of the political overtures by Nazi Germany seeking to obtain Memel, see Karen Sutton, *The Massacre of the Jews of Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2008), 72–76.
31. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 1, 38.
32. See postwar verdict against Walter Allissat, Otto Bastian, Friedrich Jagst, Werner Scheu, and Karl Struve in *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam- University Press, 1977), vol. 20, Lfd. Nr. 579; Naftal Sieff, September 18, 1953, 91378707 #1 and 91378708 #1, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, International Tracing Service, 6.3.3.2—Repository of T/D Cases.Video History Archive, Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, University of Southern California (VHA), interviews 786 (Gershon Young, 1995); 3983 (Naftal Sieff, 1995); and 32923 (Samuel Sharron, 1997). Two secondary sources briefly mention the camp: Ruth Leiserowitz, *Sabbatleuchter und Kriegerverein: Juden in Ostpreußisch-Litauischen Grenzregion 1812–1942* (Osnabrück, Germany: Fibre, 2010), and Rūta Eidukevičienė and Monika Bukantaitė-Klees, eds., *Von Kaunas bis Klaipėda: Deutsch-jüdisch-litauisches Leben entlang der Memel* (Fernwald, Germany: Litblockin, 2007); I will contribute an article on the Heydekrug complex to vol. 5 (forthcoming) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*. During the 1950s the Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen Ludwigsburg investigated Dr. Theodore Werner Scheu (“Schau” to Koniuchowsky’s survivors), Heydekrug’s commandant. Below, I

examine the relevant files to contrast how one Jewish inmate was represented in a Jewish and in a German source; see BA-L, B 162/5394–99, fols. I–IV.

33. YIVO, RG 1390, IA/5 (Leye Shapiro-Rudnik), 78–79.

34. *Ibid.*, 136–39. See also Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 4–5.

35. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al. For the shootings at Matzstubbern, see 9–11; for Wersmeningken, 30, 42; for Schillwen, 24–25; for the city council camp, 36–38; for the central work camp, 41. The shootings in July are noted in the official digest of the postwar juridical investigation. See *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*, vol. 20, Lfd. No. 579, 358.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Further information in BA-L, B 162/5395, fol. II, 16–17.

38. I have chosen not to discuss individual commanders by name; most occupy relatively little space in the postwar testimony, or appear to have played marginal roles in the lives of the prisoners. On Matzstubbern, see Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 6–7; on Schillwen, 20–21; Piktaten, 26–27; Wersmeningken, 30; the work camp at the Heydekrug city council, 33; the Central Heydekrug work camp, 39.

39. *Ibid.*, 16, 20.

40. *Ibid.*, 6–7, 20. Concerning the ethnicity of Smailius, the survivor report provides little insight, commenting only that the man was “a former teacher in a German public school.” As to how this information was acquired, the report does not disclose.

41. *Ibid.*, 12; see also BA-L, B162/5395, fol. II, 2–3, 19–22.

42. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 26.

43. *Ibid.*, 46–48.

44. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 112.

45. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 23. News of the deaths of Otto and Willy reached the Silwen and Mactubern sub-camps sometime that winter: “the Jews in the camps at Schillwen and Mactubern,” Koniuchowsky noted, viewed the deaths as “at least a partial revenge”; p. 23.

46. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

47. Joseph Aranovitz, FA; Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 14–15.

48. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

49. Joseph Aranovitz, FA.

50. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 7.

51. *Ibid.* Not even other Jewish leaders who proved less adept than Monish Kagan at mediating between the SS and Jewish laborers were so stigmatized. For instance, at the Heydekrug City Council camp Mendl Vinik was considered a poor leader who “did not treat the Jews well.” However, survivors later exonerated him, explaining “of course, there was no way he could help them” (p. 33).

52. Ibid., 86.
53. BA-L, B 162/5394, fol. IV, 94.
54. Ibid., 94.
55. Browning, *Remembering Survival*, 297–98.
56. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 54–55.
57. Joseph Aranovitz, FA.
58. Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 452. The Koniuchowsky testimony also mentions the arrival of Jews from Bendin and Sosnowiec. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 55.
59. Shlomovitz, Shlomovitz, Aranovitz, et al., 55–60.
60. Zak, 65, 102. The final figure does not include the “small number . . . who had escaped to the Soviet interior at the beginning of the war.”
61. Ibid., 84.
62. Ibid., 80–81.
63. Ibid., 73–79.
64. Ibid., 80–82. The automatic weapon seems questionable: usually, auxiliaries were given old, inferior rifles of World War I vintage, not automatics. Although it is possible that Mikalauskas was using an automatic or semi-automatic rifle, it is more likely that Zak’s memory was influenced by the tremendous amount of shooting giving the impression of machine guns.
65. Dov Levin, *Fighting Back: Lithuanian Jewry’s Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941–1945* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985 [1974]), 189.
66. Zak, 94–96.
67. Levin, *Fighting Back*, 189.
68. Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 160–66.
69. Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945* (Bonn: JHW Dietz Nachf, 1991).
70. Ibid., 97–98.
71. Ibid., 101.
72. Ibid.
73. Unlike the Heydekrug camp testimony, Zak’s words cannot be directly corroborated. However, a parallel example is documented in the town of Marcinkance; see Christopher R. Browning, “The Holocaust in Marcinkance in the Light of Two Unusual Documents,” in *The Holocaust: The Unique and the Universal. Essays in Honors of Yehuda Bauer*, ed. Shmuel Almog, David Bankier, Daniel Blatman, and Dalia Ofer (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001), 66–83.
74. Ibid., 101–102.



75. David Bankier, *Expulsion and Extermination*, 204–208. For more on local participation as documented in the Koniuchowsky Papers, see T. Fielder Valone, “Preserved Memories, Shattered Communities: Postwar Eyewitness Testimony and the Holocaust in Rural Lithuania, 1941–1944,” senior honors thesis, Department of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011; and “Destroying the Ties that Bind: Rituals of Humiliation and the Holocaust in Provincial Lithuania,” *Traces: The UNC-Chapel Hill Journal of History* 1, no. 1 (2012): 90–114.