INTRODUCTION TO THE TESTIMONY OF

Esther Fox

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Introduction

Dr. Esther Fox was born Chaja Estera Niesenhaus[1] on August 16, 1908 in Lodz,[2] a major industrial city in what was then the Kingdom of Poland, or Congress Poland. On October 9, 1991, at the age of 83, she recorded an interview for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies.[3] In her testimony, she recalls memories from before, during, and after the Holocaust. Esther tells, for example, how she grew up in a traditional religious household in a Jewish neighborhood and attended a secular Jewish school. Consequently, she had few encounters with antisemitism in her youth. When Esther was a young adult aspiring to be a physician, however, she had to confront antisemitism in the form of the *numerus clausus*. This cap on the number of Jewish students able to pursue medical education in Poland, combined with limits on women's enrollment in Polish medical schools, forced her to turn elsewhere for her professional

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[1] Esther Fox, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (hereafter USC SF-VHA), Interview 766 (1995), Seg. 2. Her first name is spelled here according to the common Polish spelling. The spelling of her last name comes from her own partially obscured handwriting on the handwritten account she deposited at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; see Esther Fox, "A Memoir Relating to Experiences in the Łódź Ghetto, Auschwitz, Guben, and Bergen-Belsen" (hereafter: "Memoir"), undated (c. 1990s), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (hereafter USHMM), Acc. 1995.A.0532, p. 1. This spelling also appears in Esther's USC SF-VHA interviewer's report; Miryam Rabner, "Post-Interview Summary," January 30, 1995, USC SF-VHA, Associated Materials, Int. 766, no fols. (pp. 19, 21 of collected papers). Her pre-interview forms for the Fortunoff Video Archive and for the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive – both of which were completed during a telephone conversation – present different spellings: Nisenhaus and Nysenhauz, respectively; see Miryam Rabner, "Telephone Pre-Interview Questionnaire," January 24, 1995, USC SF-VHA, Associated Materials, Int. 766, no fols. (pp. 3, 5 of collected papers); Author unknown, Pre-interview questionnaire, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies (hereafter FVAHT), HVT-2033, p. 1. Many thanks to Becky Erbelding at USHMM, Badema Pitic at the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, and Christy Tomacek at FVAHT for providing scans of the documents from their respective institutions.

[2] Pol: Łódź, Ger: Lodsch or Litzmannstadt (1939-1945), Yid: Lodzh. For further information about the city, see Esther's testimony and the annotated transcript.

[3] Esther F., FVAHT, HVT-2033 (1991). Unless otherwise indicated, all cited time stamps refer to this testimony.

education: France. Upon her return to Lodz in 1933, she embarked on her medical career in pediatrics and then as a doctor for a union health scheme. This period of her life included marriage and further confrontations with antisemitism.

Esther's narrative soon turns to the period subsequent to the German invasion of Poland, and it is with her wartime experiences that this essay will chiefly engage. Esther's testimony is an especially valuable and intriguing source, as it provides an entry point into several important discussions and illuminates critical subjects that have hitherto received minimal attention from Holocaust scholars. This piece will, for example, address the oft-overlooked centrality of Esther's geographical region to the history of the Holocaust, and it will engage with the challenging topic of (the judgment of) Jewish functionaries, who, in one way or another and to varying degrees, facilitated the Nazis' achievement of their goals to exploit and to murder European Jewry.

Other topics and threads, however, are not immediately self-evident from her words. As a result, one of the functions of this introductory essay is to serve as a guide for how to read Esther's testimony between the lines and as a corrective to several historiographical tropes she and interviewer Jaschael Pery voice about the Holocaust. Because Esther's opinions emerge from her extrapolation from, and reasoning based on, her own experience, the conclusions she reaches emerge from a relatively small window of insight – an individual's perspective. In contrast, this introduction builds upon a new body of archive- and testimony-based research that challenges some of those commonly held historiographical positions.

The Warthegau

After the German army invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, the Third Reich annexed several formerly Polish territories, including what became known as the Reichsgau Wartheland, or the Warthegau.[4] About a month after the October 1939 annexation, the borders of the Warthegau were redrawn in order to bring into the Reich a hub of industry: Lodz, subsequently renamed Litzmannstadt.[5] As Esther records, the ghetto established in her city was massive in size (the second largest after the Warsaw Ghetto) and existed from her forced relocation there in early 1940 through her deportation to Auschwitz in August 1944. The Lodz location of the Nazis' first large and longest-lasting ghetto contributed to the

[4] For a concise overview of the history of the Holocaust in the Warthegau, see Ingo Loose, "Wartheland," in *The Greater German Reich and the Jews: Nazi Persecution Policies in the Annexed Territories, 1935–1945*, ed. Wolf Gruner and Jörg Osterloh, trans. Bernard Heise (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 189–218.

[5] For information on this territorial annexation and the bureaucratic changes that followed, see, for example, Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134–38.

Warthegau's function as a "training ground"[6] for the Nazi regime's colonial and (*avant la lettre*) genocidal endeavors.[7]

As Henry Friedlander convincingly demonstrates in *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, Nazi Germany's murder of physically and mentally disabled people – carried out under the euphemism "euthanasia" – was a precursor to the Final Solution.[8] The Warthegau, in turn, was where the connections between these two murderous campaigns were most apparent.[9] For example, Fort VII, an old military facility on the outskirts of the capital city Posen (Poznań), was the location of the first mass gassings of "life unworthy of life" (*lebensunswertes Leben*) in October 1939.[10] These early killings, in turn, served as a model for the gas chambers in the first two of the Reich's six "euthanasia" centers, which were under construction by the end of the following month.[11] It was thus the Warthegau where German officials established a critical mechanism of the Final Solution: stationary gas chambers to which victims were transported and subsequently killed by asphyxiation. The parallels are not limited to mechanics, however, as the Warthegau also saw the transfer of personnel; namely, SS Captain Herbert Lange's commando pioneered the use of a gas van for the murder of Warthegau hospital patients in January 1940,[12] and Lange and

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[6] For a discussion of the origin of the "training ground" analogy for the Warthegau and for the use of a similar formulation, see, respectively Michael Alberti, "'Exerzierplatz des Nationalsozialismus': Der Reichsgau Wartheland 1939-1941," in *Genesis des Genozids: Polen 1939-1941*, ed. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Bogdan Musial (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 124n20 (111-126); Karsten Linne, "Die deutsche Arbeitsverwaltung zwischen 'Volkstumspolitik' und Arbeiterrekrutierung – das Beispiel Warthegau," in *Pflicht, Zwang und Gewalt: Arbeitsverwaltungen und Arbeitskräftepolitik im deutsch besetzten Polen und Serbien 1939-1944*, ed. Florian Dierl et al. (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013), 50.

[7] For a discussion of the direct, partially causative, connection between the regime's ethnic German (*Volksdeutsche*) resettlement and population transfer schemes and the Final Solution, see Götz Aly, *"Final Solution": Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews*, trans. Belinda Cooper and Allison Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a concise article exploring the Warthegau's importance in the development of the Final Solution, see Ian Kershaw, "Improvised Genocide? The Emergence of the 'Final Solution' in the 'Warthegau,'" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 2 (1992): 51–78.

[8] Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[9] Several scholars have also made this observation. See, for example, Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 180; Andrea Löw, *Juden in Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 183.

[10] Michael Alberti, *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Juden im Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1945* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag), 326–27; Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 188. For a more detailed discussion of these early mass gassings in annexed Poland, see Volker Rieß, *Die Anfänge der Vernichtung "lebensunwerten Lebens" in den Reichsgauen Danzig-Westpreußen und Wartheland 1939/40* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 290–300.

[11] Browning, *Origins*, 188.

[12] Ibid., 188–89; Friedlander, *Origins*, 138–39.

some of the original commando staff subsequently developed and, beginning on December 7-8, 1941, directed the Final Solution's first extermination facility: Chelmno.[13]

Unbeknownst to Esther, the murderous work of the Lange commando sits on the periphery of her testimony. For instance, when Esther recalls that "in the beginning, [German officials]… took out people whom they wanted from the hospitals,"[14] she is likely referring to one or both of the "euthanasia" operations that occurred in March 1940 and July 1941 and saw approximately 40 and 60 patients, respectively, removed from the ghetto's Hospital for the Mentally Ill and murdered in Lange's gas van.[15] The Lange commando, through its subsequent operation of Chelmno from December 1941, continued its murderous work, as this killing installation was the destination of those selected during several large round-ups in the ghetto. Esther describes, for example, the major hospital *Aktion*, or roundup, of September 1-2, 1942, when German authorities "took out [in] the middle of the night whoever was [in the hospital]."[16] The *Sperre*[17] followed less than a week later, on September 5-12. With the ghetto's children as the roundup's main targets, Esther and her fellow doctors were inundated with requests from parents "to give a certificate… to make [the children] older…. So we did."[18] Regardless of the doctors' actions, however, German officials sent over 15,000 Jews – mostly children and the elderly – from the Lodz Ghetto to be murdered in Chelmno.

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[13] Browning, *Origins*, 365–66, 416–18; Friedlander, *Origins*, 139, 288, 296. The Polish and German names for the camp and the town in which it was located are Chełmno and Kulmhof, respectively. For scholarship on Chelmno, known in Polish as Chełmno and in German as Kulmhof, see Shmuel Krakowski, *Chełmno: A Small Village in Europe: The First Nazi Mass Extermination Camp* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Patrick Montague, *Chelmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

[14] Segment 5 (Tape 1), 27:26-27:33.

[15] Löw, *Juden*, 183–84.

[16] Segment 5 (Tape 1), 27:55-27:58. The round-up began in the pre-dawn hours of September 1, 1942 and continued through the following day. German authorities demanded that all patients in the ghetto's four hospitals be turned over to them. For descriptions of these terrifying days, see relevant entries in Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 248–50, hereafter Dobroszycki *Chronicle*. For personal accounts, see, for example, Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto* (hereafter *Sierakowiak Diary*), ed. Alan Adelson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 212, 214 (also excerpted in Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Siege* (New York: Viking, 1989), 319–20); Josef Zelkowicz, "In Those Nightmarish Days," in *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, ed. Samuel D. Kassow, 188–94 (also excerpted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 320–28).

[17] For an explanation of the term and information on the event the word denotes here, see footnote 95 in the annotated transcript.

[18] Segment 5 (Tape 1), 28:38-28:47.

Ghetto Functionaries and Judgment

In presenting several examples of Jewish functionaries, namely the Elder of the Jews (*Judenälteste*), Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, and the Jewish ghetto police (*Ordnungsdienst*, literally "order service"), Esther's testimony also promotes the examination of the "gray zone," which survivor and author Primo Levi characterizes as a "poorly defined [space], where the two camps of masters and servants both diverge and converge."[19] While Levi presents the gray zone as the territory of the "hybrid class of the prisoner-functionary [which] constitutes [a concentration camp's] armature and at the same time its most disquieting feature," he extends his discussion beyond the barbed wire to include Rumkowski, who had already garnered the attention of numerous scholars.[20] In contrast to a general lack of scholarship about Jewish functionaries,[21] which arises largely from scholars' hesitation to engage with the inherent moral complexity of functionaries' actions and circumstances,[22] Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) chairmen and Jewish Elders have a presence in scholarly works,[23] with Rumkowski generating the most scholarly interest.[24]

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[19] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 42.

[20] Ibid., 60–69. See, for example, Philip Friedman, "Pseudo-Saviors in the Polish Ghettos: Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski of Lodz" (originally published in 1954), in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ada June Friedman (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1980), 333–52.

[21] For instance, the scholarship on Jewish Kapos and Sonderkommando members is rare. Notable exceptions are, respectively, Tuvia Frilling, *A Jewish Kapo in Auschwitz: History, Memory, and the Politics of Survival*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014); Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz*, trans. Naftali Greenwood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

[22] Eminent Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer, for example, revealed in a conversation with the author (January 23, 2013, Los Angeles, CA) that his landmark monograph *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*, vol. 2 (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) does not contain much material on Jewish functionaries because the gray zone would have presented readers with a more complicated narrative.

[23] Scholarly attention to these figures is largely the legacy of two works: Raul Hilberg's foundational work in Holocaust historiography and Hannah Arendt's inflammatory writing in response to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. See, respectively, Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), esp. 123; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), esp. 104, 111. For a contrast to Hilberg's and Arendt's depictions of, and conclusions about, the Jewish Councils, see Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1996 [1972]).

[24] For discussions of Rumkowski's portrayal in scholarship, see, for example, Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

In discussions of Jewish functionaries, the question of judgment is particularly challenging.[25] Writing about Jewish Councils, historian Isaiah Trunk was aware of the temptation to judge these historical actors and consequently sought to refrain from "pronounc[ing] judgment either way on these institutions."[26] Also promoting caution, Levi writes, "This gray zone possesses an incredibly complicated internal structure and contains within itself enough to confuse our need to judge."[27] Esther approaches her assessment of Rumkowski aware of the problematic nature of the task and thus refrains from sitting in judgment. She states:

> I don't know how right [Rumkowski] was, how wrong he was, because he obeyed the German[s]. And maybe [if] he would not obey, would nobody remained in the ghetto. But if you want to be honorable, and stand like to say, die on your feet and not to—to live on your knees,…we shouldn't have had this….So the history will judge him how right or how wrong he was….But was a lot of abuses and a lot of things which shouldn't have happened. But…it is self-preservation. … I don't want to even be the judge of all this.[28]

Because Rumkowski's case was quite complex, Esther's hesitation to judge is hardly surprising. As Esther begins to explain, Rumkowski's strategy, summed up as "our only way is work,"[29] translated to the production of goods for their German captors in order to stave off the ghetto's liquidation on account of its importance to the German economy and supply chain, which made the ghetto too valuable to eradicate. At a previous point in her testimony, Esther raises the possibility that Jews' work in the factories, or *Ressorts*,[30] amounted to "collaboration" because they "supplied… uniforms for soldiers, boots, shoes…. It means we supplied the army."[31] In both locations in her testimony, however, she points to the crux of the matter: self-preservation, which, in turn, obviates her desire to judge people engaged in what she perceives to be collaboration.

When Esther speaks of the Jewish police force in the ghetto she brings to light a group of functionaries that has received substantially less attention from scholars.[32] Their tasks included confiscating individuals'

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[25] For further discussion on the judgment of Jewish functionaries, often also known as "privileged Jews," particularly regarding the representation of these figures, see Adam Brown, *Judging "Privileged" Jews: Holocaust Ethics, Representation, and the "Grey Zone"* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

[26] Trunk, *Judenrat*, xxix.

[27] Levi, *Drowned*, 42.

[28] Segment 6 (Tape 1), 32:40-34:01

[29] This ubiquitous ghetto slogan was communicated in German and in Yiddish (transliterated here): "Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit"; "Unzer eyntsiger veg iz arbayt."

[30] For information on this term and the entities it describes, see note 99 in the transcript.

[31] Segment 5 (Tape 1), 31:57-32:11.

[32] The limited scholarship focused on ghetto police includes Aharon Weiss, "The Relations between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police," in *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933–1945*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia J. Haft (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), 201–17; Andrea Löw, "Ordnungsdienst im Getto Litzmannstadt," in *Fenomen Getta Łódzkiego, 1940-1944*, ed. Pawła Samusia and Wiesława Pusia (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersystetu Łódzkiego, 2006), 155–67.

property, apprehending people recruited for forced labor, and facilitating deportations – sometimes with the use of violence.[33] As a result, they faced condemnation, and sometimes even physical retribution, during the Holocaust and in the decades since.[34] Interviewer Jaschael Pery is referring to this animosity when he observes that "there are some people blaming the behavior of the Jewish police in the ghetto," and subsequently asks Esther whether she "ha[s] some opinion about it."[35] Echoing her earlier reluctance to judge Rumkowski, Esther provides a nuanced answer:

> [I]f I say that I prefer to die and not do these things [that the police were ordered to do]. But others say that this is self-preservation. So this is a question of—I have to think of it much more, because I wasn't in this position that I was to do—I would call it dirty things….Let's say [the police] collected the people to the gathering places to be deported. No, this was an order from Rumkowski, and then Rumkowski got the order from the German [officials]. So if you were a policeman, you could have said, "I don't want to do it." So you would have gone [to your death], and you had a family.[36]

Esther thus identifies the key dynamic of coercion; the policemen engaged in "dirty things" not because they wanted to do them, but because they believed that their failure to follow orders would have lethal consequences and would also place their families at risk. Recognizing that she never faced dilemmas of this nature, Esther concludes that the case of the ghetto police is "too complicated," making it "too hard to accuse."[37]

Jewish Doctors in the Ghetto

Like the ghetto police, physicians in ghettos have received minimal scholarly attention.[38] Having worked as a doctor in the Lodz Ghetto, Esther, through her recollections of her own experiences, provides unique insight into this profoundly under-researched topic. For example, she reveals:

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[33] For further information about ghetto police forces, see Trunk, *Judenrat*, 475–526.

[34] Trunk, *Judenrat*, 552–64.

[35] Segment 7 (Tape 1), 43:30-43:37. It should be noted that, in asking Esther to pass judgment on the ghetto police, Pery went against the Fortunoff Video Archive's instructions to interviewers. See Dana Kline, "Syllabus for Volunteer Interviewers," undated (pp. 2–3 of document entitled "Interviewer training packet, 1984-1997"), http://fortunoff.library.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/interviewer.training_redacted.pdf, accessed November 15, 2019.

[36] Segment 7 (Tape 1), 43:43-44:30

[37] Segment 7 (Tape 1), 44:33-44:36.

[38] The chief exception is the work of Miriam Offer; see, for example, Miriam Offer, "Ethical Dilemmas in the Work of Doctors and Nurses in the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Polin: Jews in the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania since 1772*, vol. 25, ed. Šarūnas Liekis et al. (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 467–92; idem, "Coping with the Impossible: The Developmental Roots of the Jewish Medical System in the Ghettos," in *Jewish Medicine and Healthcare in Central Eastern Europe: Shared Identities, Entangled Histories*, ed. Marcin Moskalewicz et al. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019), 261–77. A translation into English of her Hebrew-language book *White Coats Inside the Ghetto: Jewish Medicine in Poland during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2015) is forthcoming. Offer and several other

[W]e were running day and nights, too. And the younger doctors, to whom I belonged at that time, were assigned to work, besides in the daytime, making house calls and the ambulatory visits to make, to run, the emergency thing—service. So also, everything on a *dorożka*[39] and we were going from call to another.[40]

Just before the interview comes to a close, Pery returns to the theme of judgment. This time, however, he solicits Esther's opinion of a group to which she belonged. He asks:

> How would you, looking backward [at] what you experienced there as a doctor with your colleagues in the circumstances you had there in the ghetto, how would you judge the action there of the doctors in the ghetto?...How did they behave, and how did they act there in these circumstances?[41]

In light of the hard work she and her colleagues performed during their daytime hospital or clinic assignments and their house-calls at night, Esther's reply to Pery's request for her assessment of the doctors' conduct makes sense. She does not equivocate; she simply portrays the doctors' behavior as "very decent." She continues:

> And everybody tried [to help]. You see, it's hard to say to try and to do, because they are two difficult things. …We had paralyzed hands [with] what we did. But nobody abused anything…, as far as I know, and I am sure there wasn't…abuse, in any way, [of] patients or neglect [of] patients, or to collaborate [with] the German[s]. Not at all. Not at all. None of them…. I never heard anything wrong about anybody; [nobody] said that they did something undecent, wherever it was.[42]

Perhaps Esther was not aware of the full range of orders and responsibilities that ghetto doctors had. While Esther's efforts were mostly, if not entirely, in the service of her patients' well-being, other doctors engaged in additional duties. For instance, by November 1940 one of the tasks of the doctors in the Lodz Ghetto was to determine whether volunteers or recruits were fit to be sent to camps for forced labor.[43]

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scholars also contributed chapters on ghetto physicians to Michael A. Grodin, ed., *Jewish Medical Resistance in the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

[39] This is an open, horse-drawn carriage that typically carries passengers. The English translation is "droshky."

[40] Segment 4 (Tape 1), 24:58-25:23. Further insight can be found in a ten-page, Polish-language account she deposited at the Museum of Jewish Heritage: Esther Fox, "Jewish Doctors and Medical Work in the Lodz Ghetto" [Zydzi lekarze oraz praca lekarska w ghecie lodzkim], undated, Folder Esther Fox, Collections & Exhibitions Department Donor Files, Museum of Jewish Heritage.

[41] Segment 18 (Tape 2), 48:20-48:41.

[42] Segment 18 (Tape 2), 48:43-49:29.

[43] See, for example, the entry from April 11, 1941 in Dobroszycki *Chronicle*, 46. The protocol for a double examination – by Jewish doctors and then by Ghetto Administration-appointed German doctors – of prospective workers was established no later than November 19, 1940; see Chaim Rumkowski,

The advent of the Final Solution added another possible responsibility for the ghetto's Jewish doctors. The physical examinations prior to Jewish transports from the ghetto ceased to be solely a determination of fitness for work in a labor camp. When those transports were destined for Chelmno, the doctors' decisions – rendered in a state of powerful coercion – meant either life (for at least a little while longer in the ghetto) or immediate death in the mass murder facility.[44]

Esther's testimony gives the impression that, from the perspective of the German Ghetto Administration (*Gettoverwaltung*) officials, Jewish doctors served only one purpose in the ghetto: to prevent the spread of infection beyond the ghetto's inhabitants.[45] Explaining a measure that officials initiated after perimeter guards shot and killed doctors, she states:

> So later we even got a special hat with a red band around, so the soldiers should know [not to shoot us], not because they loved [doctors] more than others, but [because] they needed a doctor; there were not so many [ghetto doctors], and [German officials] were afraid of epidemics, which could catch them too. So this what they gave us as the protection, the hat, [so] that the Germans should at least not shoot at us.[46]

She is, in large part, correct. German officials were highly concerned about epidemics, especially typhus, whose vector of infection – the louse – made the disease transmissible across boundaries.[47] It is unclear, however, to what extent the Ghetto Administration viewed the presence of Jewish medical practitioners as a means to ameliorate their anxiety about the spread of contagion.

What becomes clear through Esther's testimony, though, is the German authorities' interest in the presence of a Jewish medical staff. When she mentions Rumkowski's recruitment of doctors from the Warsaw Ghetto to bolster a depleted medical staff in Lodz, Esther reveals that German officials went beyond establishing a measure to preserve the lives of Jewish doctors; they actually embraced the

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Announcement No. 166 ("Concerning work outside of the ghetto"), November 19, 1940, reprinted in English translation in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 96.

[44] For a personal account of a doctor who faced this unenviable predicament, see Arnold Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star and a Red Cross: A Doctor in the Łódź Ghetto*, trans. Henia and Nochem Reinhartz (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 98–107. The Fortunoff Video Archive contains a testimony from Mostowicz in Polish; see Arnold M., FVAHT, HVT-3163 (1994). See also Dawid Sierakowiak's description of his mother's fate: entry from September 5, 1942, *Sierakowiak Diary*, reprinted in English translation in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 333. For scholarly discussion of these selection-related ethical dilemmas as they transpired in the Warsaw Ghetto, see Offer, "Ethical Dilemmas," 476–84.

[45] For further information on the Litzmannstadt Ghetto Administration, the most thorough treatment of the topic can be found in Peter Klein, *Die Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt" 1940 bis 1944: Eine Dienststelle im Spannungsfeld von Kommunalbürokratie und staatlicher Verfolgungspolitik* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

[46] Segment 4 (Tape 1), 24:33– 24:57.

[47] Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 26. German officials' concern about epidemics even predated the ghetto's establishment; see Friedrich Übelhoer, "Establishment of a Ghetto in the City of Lodz" memo, December 10, 1939, reprinted in English translation in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 23–26, here 25.

expansion of the Jewish medical staff.[48] After all, the success of the Jewish Elder's endeavor depended on the accession of German officials. Without their support, Rumkowski would not have otherwise been able to travel to the former Polish capital with this announced goal, enter and exit the Warsaw Ghetto, and bring 12 medical recruits from Warsaw to Lodz in May 1941, after both ghettos had been sealed and unauthorized movement across ghetto boundaries had thus been prohibited.[49]

Further reading between the lines, in combination with new research findings, is required to gain insight into German officials' motivations behind their attentiveness – limited as it was – to medical matters in the Lodz Ghetto. As noted above, Esther believed that any interest on the part of German ghetto authorities stemmed from their fear that the proliferation of epidemics in the ghetto could pose a threat to their own health and the health of others on the "Aryan" side. Yet Esther's own words elsewhere in her testimony challenge her assumption and therefore communicate that another factor contributed to at least some German officials' attention to Jewish doctors in the ghetto. The key indication is her recollection that, when Jewish doctors were transporting patients in a droshky to a hospital in a different sector of the ghetto, officials lifted the prohibition on Jews crossing between different parts of the ghetto at street level. She says: "the gate they opened for the *dorożka*… we had to pass and in a quickie."[50] In all other circumstances, Jews had to use bridges over the "Aryan" streets in order to cross from one section of the ghetto to another without encountering the population outside the barbed wire. The inconsistency between this allowance and her belief that German officials acted entirely out of concern for their own health emerges from the fact that the transport of potentially contagious patients through the midst of non-Jews and in close proximity to those manning the ghetto's gates actually placed those people at risk. This exception undermined the German authorities' efforts to contain epidemics within the ghetto and its inhabitants. Esther's description of the patient transport thus reveals that official policy was not always focused on the prevention of disease transmission; the practice appears to have been geared towards facilitating Jewish doctors' treatment of ghetto inhabitants in need of medical care, regardless of the nature of the patients' conditions.

With that said, however, the practice's exceptional nature must be emphasized. As Esther clearly communicates, German officials typically thwarted – not facilitated – Jewish doctors' provision of care for ghetto inhabitants. The most glaring factor was their failure to provide adequate medical resources to the ghetto doctors, leaving the physicians with a "very poor" supply of medicines, just the "minimum thing[s]," [51] in the face of overwhelming medical need stemming from horrendous living and working

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[48] Segment 7 (Tape 1), 39:49-39:56.

[49] Teenage ghetto diarist Dawid Sierakowiak noted Rumkowski's departure for this specific purpose in his entry from May 13, 1941 and recorded the number of recruited doctors in his May 21, 1941 entry; see *Sierakowiak Diary*, 89, 93. There were Jews who travelled between the two ghettos, but they had to bribe the Gestapo in order to gain the ability to do so; see, for example, Yankl Nirenberg, *Memoirs of the Lodz Ghetto*, trans. Vivian Felsen (Toronto: Lugus Libros, 2003), 33, 54.

[50] Segment 4 (Tape 1), 25:49-26:10.

[51] Segment 6 (Tape 1), 36:14-36:16.

conditions. Nevertheless, it is important to consider what may have led to this exception, which actually supported Jewish doctors' efforts to treat patients.

New research regarding Jewish doctors in the Warthegau's forced labor camps provides critical insight into this contradiction within Esther's testimony. It reveals that officials within the Litzmannstadt Ghetto Administration, who had a direct interest in the system of forced labor camps for Jews, considered Jewish camp physicians' medical work in an economic context, not just in the context of public health. More specifically, German officials recognized the value of these medical professionals with respect to the goal of authorities to exploit the Jewish labor force for monetary gain, as well as military necessity at times. While the Jewish doctors typically lacked sufficient therapeutic resources, their medical knowledge and skills could nevertheless translate into some improvement in the Jews' labor capacity, which the ghetto officials viewed as critical to the ghetto's economic viability, and perhaps even profitability.[52] Given that the Warthegau's forced labor camps for Jews and the Lodz Ghetto's factories and workshops both relied on Jewish labor capacity to serve the same ends, it stands to reason that the Ghetto Administration came to view Esther and her medical colleagues in terms of their ability not only to limit the spread of epidemics beyond the ghetto but also to support workers' productivity, which, in turn, served financial and military ends.

A Jewish Prisoner-Physician in Guben

Although Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production Albert Speer argued for the continuation of the exploitation of the Lodz Ghetto inhabitants' labor capacity for the benefit of the German military, SS Reich Leader Heinrich Himmler's dedication to the Final Solution led to his insistence that the ghetto be liquidated – a process that saw the deportation of over 60,000 Jews to Auschwitz in August 1944;[53] Esther, her mother, and her brother among them. Upon their arrival at the camp, the SS condemned Esther's mother to the gas chamber but presumably deemed the siblings (relatively) fit for labor and thus sent them to become Auschwitz-Birkenau camp inmates. Esther spent approximately five harrowing days there, likely in sector BIIc, which served as a transit camp for Jewish women waiting to be sent to work in factories and other labor sites within Germany to aid the war effort.[54] When Esther heard an announcement for doctors to step forward she identified herself and subsequently received a transfer to

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[52] Sari J. Siegel, "Between Coercion and Resistance: Jewish Prisoner-Physicians in Nazi Camps, 1940-1945" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2018), 64–72.

[53] Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Deportation of Jews from the Łódź Ghetto to KL Auschwitz and Their Extermination: A Description of the Events and the Presentation of Historical Sources*, trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum), 24–25, 33–34, 36.

[54] Ibid., 73. For information on Birkenau's two transit camp sections (BIIc and BIII, or "Mexico"), see Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, trans. William Brand, vol. 1: *The Establishment and Organization of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 98–100.

Guben, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen, where she "was supposed to be the physician"[55] for an inmate population totaling between 900 and 1,000 women – most of whom were from Hungary.[56]

Esther's recollections of her imprisonment in Guben add further importance to her testimony as a scholarly resource. First, they shed light on an otherwise obscure, or "unknown"[57] camp and, in turn, draw attention to the Gross-Rosen camp network, which, despite its comprising over 100 subcamps, has minimal presence in historiography.[58] Moreover, information she provides with respect to her recruitment for, and descriptions of, her role as a prisoner-physician is particularly valuable, as it serves to modify misconceptions on both micro and macro levels of history.

Her description of her initial encounter with the camp overseer, for instance, corrects the misleading notion that "in the camp there were no medicines and no medical care whatsoever" – a statement that appears in what is typically deemed to be an authoritative encyclopedia of Nazi camps.[59] Esther recalls that this uniformed staff member asked her to produce a "list of things [she] need[s] for the medical services."[60] Likely due to the shock of the previous few days, Esther struggled to remember her own name and had difficulty recalling the supplies she would need in the course of her medical work.[61] When Esther finally presented the camp official with a very short list that included pain medications, cotton, alcohol, and iodine, the overseer subsequently inquired, "That's all what you ask right now?"[62] Esther's testimony

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[55] Segment 9 (Tape 1), 54:24-54:26.

[56] Geoffrey Megargee, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA)*, vol. 1 (hereafter *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1), Part A (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 743.

[57] Andreas Peter, the author of seemingly the only detailed historical work on Guben, calls it the "unknown camp" (*unbekannte Lager*) in his work's title; see Peter, "Ein Versuch über das 'unbekannte Lager' Guben," in *Die Ausnutzung der Zwangsarbeit der Häftlinge des KL Groß-Rosen durch das Dritte Reich*, ed. Alfred Konieczny (Wałbrzych: Muzeum Gross-Rosen, 2004), 90–106. For a list of other studies – either in German or Polish – that mention the camp, see *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Part A, 744. There is an entry for the camp in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 6, 333–37.

[58] Historian Bella Gutterman refers to the subcamps as "almost anonymous"; see Bella Gutterman, *A Narrow Bridge to Life: Jewish Forced Labor and Survival in the Gross-Rosen Camp System, 1940–1945,* trans. IBRT (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 2. For the number of subcamps, see ibid., 96. See also *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, part A, 699. Gutterman's study, itself a translation from Hebrew, is an important exception to the near absence of the subject from English-language scholarship. Much of the extant scholarship on the Gross-Rosen camp network is in German or Polish. See, for example, Alfred Konieczny, *Frauen im Konzentrationslager Gross-Rosen in den Jahren 1944-1945* (Wałbrzych: Państwowe Muzeum Gross-Rosen, 1994).

[59] The original text reads, "Im Lager gab es keine Medikamente und keinerlei ärztliche Versorgung." See Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, ed., *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 6 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), 334.

[60] Segment 10 (Tape 2), 4:31-4:40.

[61] Segment 10 (Tape 2), 4:42-4:58.

[62] Segment 10 (Tape 2), 5:54-6:28.

thus not only communicates that the camp official was ready to provide supplies, but it also provides a clue that the overseer was willing to provide more, had Esther requested additional materials. It is important to note that the nature of the supplies Esther requested, combined with the overseer's invitation for the doctor to request additional materials of her choosing, demonstrates that Esther's presence in the camp was not solely to protect the health of Germans whom the inmates encountered in the camp and at work. To arrive at this conclusion, though, one must read between the lines of the testimony, because Esther voices the opinion that camp officials took sanitary and health-related measures only "for their own safety."[63]

Esther's recruitment for medical duties in Guben and her initial exchange with the overseer also yield insights that go beyond the micro-level context of the camp itself. Namely, they challenge the "extermination through labor" (*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*) narrative as a component of the Final Solution.[64] According to this theory, one approach in the Nazi authorities' pursuit of the annihilation of European Jewry was purposely working Jews to death; they sent Jews to work, especially in slave labor assignments in German factories in 1944, with the goal of furthering the Final Solution.[65] Esther's testimony reveals that the historical reality, as it played out during the her time in Guben (between August 1944 and February 1945), was much more nuanced and complex than the "extermination through labor" formula might suggest. These two elements of her testimony establish that there was at least *some* investment in the medical care of Guben inmates, which, in turn, demonstrates that there was no monolithic application of an exterminatory strategy. Instead, the orientation of individual camp commandants could dictate the inmates' conditions, which typically varied from one subcamp to the next.[66] Esther may have had few resources with which to work, but she nonetheless was not entirely lacking materials, and those allocated to her indicate that she was there to treat prisoners, not just to prevent disease transmission from inmates to German guards and factory workers.

Esther's transfer from Auschwitz to Guben also undermines the notion that genocidal aims undergirded slave labor initiatives. After all, it is highly unlikely that officials with murderous intent would have invested the time and manpower to recruit Esther and assign a rifle-toting chaperone to escort her on a train and deliver her to Guben for the express purpose of serving as the physician for the camp's inmates.[67] When it later became clear that Esther alone was not enough to meet the Guben inmates' need for medical attention, especially when "there was a lot of sickness," German authorities "assigned another

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[63] Segment 11 (Tape 2), 14:13-14:15.

[64] For insight into the origins of this term, see David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews, 1933-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 523–24.

[65] For discussions addressing the primacy of economic needs versus racist ideology, see, for example, Jens-Christian Wagner, "Work and Extermination in the Concentration Camps," in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*, ed. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann (London: Routledge, 2010), 127–48; Marc Buggeln, "Building to Death: Prisoner Forced Labour in the German War Economy – The Neuengamme Subcamps, 1942-1945," *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2009): 606-32.

[66] Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 109.

[67] Segment 9 (Tape 1), 53:58-54:26.

doctor."[68] Their efforts, in turn, further demonstrate that at least some German officials pursued a priority aside from the Final Solution: maintaining Jewish labor capacity. In the case of the Guben subcamp, Jewish laborers comprised a third of the workforce in the Guben factory, which was producing electronic equipment, especially radios, for German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*) planes.[69] Their health largely influenced their ability to work, which, in turn, had a possible macro-level impact: contributing to a German war effort in desperate need of labor and supplies in the second half of 1944 and the start of 1945.[70]

New findings regarding the recruitment of Jewish prisoner-physicians for work in at least 17 industrial subcamps in the Auschwitz network bolster the hypothesis that camp officials recruited Esther and her Yugoslavian colleague to support labor capacity, not just to protect the health of camp guards and factory workers who came into contact with the Jewish inmates. The research reveals that camp authorities transferred dozens of Jewish doctors to and between these camps and in some way enabled, or at least permitted, the physicians to keep ailing and injured inmates alive and (relatively) productive – all in the geographical and bureaucratic vicinity of the very epicenter of the Nazi exterminatory endeavor.[71] Esther's account thus joins a growing body of source material that challenges the "extermination through labor" narrative utilizing the case of Jewish prisoner-physicians – individuals, who, on account of their specialized knowledge and skillsets, could also play a role in the macro contexts of the German labor economy and war effort.

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[68] Segment 11 (Tape 2), 10:45-10:50. The cases of Esther's and her Guben colleague's transfers were not unique. For example, on August 30, 1944, a female French Jewish prisoner-physician was transferred from Birkenau to Buchenwald, presumably for subsequent transfer to a particular Buchenwald subcamp. See Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 700. See also ibid., 704, 706, 751.

[69] Hans Brenner, *Todesmärsche und Todestransporte: Konzentrationslager Groß-Rosen und die Nebenlager* (Chemnitz: Verlag Klaus Gumnior, 2015), 100. For further information about the factory, see *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Part A, 743.

[70] For insight into the relationship between the war and the widespread development of satellite camps, see, for example, Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 445–58, 464–74.

[71] See Siegel, "Between Coercion and Resistance," 228–34, 247–65.

"Collaboration"[72] and Resistance in the Clinic

Through Esther's role as a prisoner-physician treating women producing equipment for the German military, her testimony problematizes the concepts of collaboration and resistance during the Holocaust and thus challenges the common practice of categorizing Jews' behavior as one or the other of these presumed polar opposites. By serving her assigned purpose as a doctor for Guben inmates and thereby helping, to the limited extent that she could, the sick recover and return to their work on devices for the *Luftwaffe*, Esther was not only adhering to a doctors' responsibility to heal, she was also, at least to a small extent, contributing to the Third Reich initiative to exploit Jewish labor, especially its capacity to aid the war effort. Doing so meant that she was also assisting in the perpetuation of the regime that was simultaneously pursuing another initiative: the Final Solution. In other words, some of the medical work she was able to perform helped her fellow inmates *and* amounted to her following orders that furthered a central macro-level project of her captors – behavior that would typically be condemned as "collaboration" or "cooperation" with the Nazis. As a result, Esther's testimony also points to the importance of the simultaneous consideration of micro and macro contexts when approaching Holocaust history.

Furthermore, although she does not offer much detail in her testimony, her work in the Guben clinic yields some insight into the connectedness between the pursuits of the Final Solution and the exploitation of Jewish labor capacity. The clinic itself was a point at which both initiatives coexisted and intersected. It was where Esther worked with whatever minimal supplies she had to return Guben inmates to at least a partially functional state so they could contribute to the German war effort in the factory. Iren Leibowitz, for example, recalls that the Guben inmate medical team, whom she names as Esther, Ruth, and Sonja,[73] performed surgery on her to remove, presumably, the source of an infection that had caused her dangerously high fever.[74] Yet, the clinic was also the site of sporadic selections carried out by a uniformed German official, likely a doctor sent from Gross-Rosen,[75] to weed out inmates who were unlikely to recover from their illness or injury within a short amount of time – such as those with tuberculosis.[76] Esther states in a different testimony that this official "would take them out right away, back to Auschwitz," where these debilitated inmates were likely murdered.[77] Although she does not discuss these

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[72] Given this word's common usage in describing the activities of prisoner-functionaries, it appears here as a shorthand; but it is set in quotation marks to convey that its use is inappropriate. For one, the weight of its negative connotations is problematic. Moreover, its implication that an inmate willfully decided to assist the Nazis, often at the expense of fellow prisoners, renders the word an unsuitable descriptor of what transpired in the camps, where coercive forces, not personal will, typically motivated decisions.

[73] Iren Leibowitz, USC SF-VHA, Int. 37166 (1997), Seg. 55. Sonja was likely a nurse.

[74] Ibid., Seg. 63. Her pronunciations of the ailment and the excised part are not clear.

[75] Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 101.

[76] Segment 11 (Tape 2), 11:47- 12:09. For a short description of this visitor, see Esther Fox, USC SF-VHA, Int. 766, Seg. 115.

[77] Esther Fox, USC SF-VHA, Int. 766, Seg. 116. See Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 104–5. Other Guben survivors recall that those who entered the hospital with severe illnesses were unlikely to return: Helene

selections in her accounts, Esther not only knew about the practice, but she also employed tactics to protect patients from that fate. One such approach was sending patients away from the hospital before the "cleaning out."[78] Another life-saving strategy was changing the names of patients who required a longer recovery period, as she did in the case of the aforementioned Iren Leibowitz, who states that hospital stays exceeding five days to a week would result in a transfer to Auschwitz.[79] Since her convalescence required additional time, the Guben prisoner-physicians changed her name to avoid her detection by the German official performing the selection according to information on Esther's medical charts.[80]

The cursory nature of the German medical officer's visits offered Esther the possibility of a third tactic to thwart his attempt to cull the hospital's patient population to serve the Final Solution. Of her preparations for his sporadic visits to the camp, she reports, "I kept, a little bit, a double bookkeeping. For him, I showed the temperature and everything a little bit on the normal side. And the real, I didn't show them because the majority had TB, and I didn't want he should know it. He didn't examine [the patients]; he only took [a look at the books]."[81] Esther's testimony thus offers a clear example of her engaging in an act of resistance within a clinical setting. This is particularly noteworthy, because, while other modes and categories of resistance during the Holocaust have received much scholarly attention,[82] Jewish doctors' efforts in this sphere are largely absent from historiography.[83]

Postwar Medical Career

As the Soviet front drew closer to Guben in February 1945, Nazi officials decided to liquidate the camp and send Esther and her fellow inmates away from the front towards Germany's interior. Their destination was Bergen-Belsen, whose inmates were starving and in the throes of a typhus epidemic. Esther recalls, "People died like flies. Absolutely like flies. And [there] were stack[s] of cadavers and

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H., FVAHT, HVT-4396 (2007), Segment 13 (Tape 2), 14:36-14:53; Helen Glass, USHMM, RG-50.583.0071 (1990), 58:20-58.31.

[78] Paula Ganis, USC SF-VHA, Int. 21415 (1996), Seg. 78–79.

[79] Leibowitz, USC SF-VHA, Int. 37166 (1997), Seg. 55.

[80] Ibid., Seg. 56.

[81] Segment 11 (Tape 2), 11:46-12:09.

[82] For a concise examination of the evolution of historiography on Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, see Robert Rozett, "Jewish Resistance," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 341–63. For a study that has since expanded the discussion further, namely by drawing attention to individual acts of resistance, see Wolf Gruner, "Defiance and Protest: A Comparative Microhistorical Reevaluation of Individual Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution," in *Microhistories of the Holocaust*, ed. Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttmann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 209–26.

[83] Exceptions are to be found in Grodin, *Jewish Medical Resistance*. For a study that partially sets a Jewish prisoner-physician's activities within a framework of resistance, see Sari J. Siegel, "Treating an Auschwitz Prisoner-Physician: The Case of Dr. Maximilian Samuel," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 28, no. 3 (Winter 2014): 450–81.

everything."[84] Again, she identified herself as a doctor – this time to a leading prisoner-physician in the camp who subsequently assigned her to medical duty in a particular block. After about two weeks, however, she fell ill with typhus and did not recover until after British and Canadian soldiers liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945.

Once she regained her health, Esther served as a doctor in a former German military hospital, which the British had requisitioned for the survivors of Bergen-Belsen. While the British military's response to the unprecedented medical crisis presented by tens of thousands of starving and disease-ridden survivors has received attention from historians,[85] Esther's medical work with fellow displaced persons (DPs) reveals one aspect of this postwar healthcare landscape that scholars have not yet explored: DP-physicians.[86] Her service as a physician to this population did not end with her departure for Sweden in July 1945; she worked for about a year in a DP camp in Nykvarn,[87] about "an hour from Stockholm… where there were still sick, weak refugees."[88] After a hiatus due to restrictions on her practicing medicine beyond DP camps in Sweden and to her need for requalification as a doctor in the English language after she arrived in America in May 1947, Esther resumed her work as a physician. She returned to her specialization in pediatrics, first with a "job with the city in a well-baby clinic" and then through her own private practice.[89]

Through these recollections of her postwar experiences, Esther's testimony provides material for a few topics gaining increased scholarly attention and for some that historians have yet to examine deeply. For example, Esther's account yields insight into an individual's DP experience – a topic that, until recently, has been accorded secondary status behind the examination of Jewish displaced persons in the political sphere.[90] Furthermore, with this single voice being that of a woman, Esther's testimony brings to the fore a perspective that often got lost among the men's voices upon which those political studies typically drew.[91] Importantly, while presenting a female perspective on the DP experience, Esther's account is

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[84] Segment 13 (Tape 2), 20:51-20:57.

[85] See, for example, Paul Weindling, "'Belsenitis': Liberating Belsen, Its Hospitals, UNRRA, and Selection for Re-emigration, 1945–1948," *Science in Context* 19, no. 3 (2006): 402–7; Ben Shephard, "The Medical Relief Effort at Belsen," in *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 31–50.

[86] My new project, tentatively titled "Healing after the Holocaust: Jewish DP-Physicians and the Provision of Medical Care to Fellow Survivors in Germany, 1945-1950," will address this gap in the scholarship.

[87] The location is named in Fox, "Memoir," 8.

[88] Segment 14 (Tape 2), 30:24-30:30.

[89] Segment 17 (Tape 2), 45:13-45:27.

[90] Among these politically oriented works are Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989); Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[91] Regarding the marginalization of the female voice among DP studies, see, for example, Margarete L. Meyers, "Hannah's Prayer: Jewish Women as Displaced Persons, 1945-1948," in *Women in the*

rather rare, as hers does not offer the typical narrative of "motherhood and mothering [which] characterized the role of the woman survivor"[92] in the early postwar years. Instead, hers is a story of a professional calling upon her medical training to help and heal fellow survivors.

As such, given the absence of scholarship regarding DP-physicians, Esther's testimony is important for demonstrating that Jewish doctors did, in fact, provide medical care to DPs, and it thus points to a topic that merits investigation. Esther's discussion of her experiences as a Jewish DP in Sweden also reveals a gaping hole in historiography, as information on the Swedish government's treatment of DPs is woefully lacking.[93]

Conclusion

Given the relative lack of scholarship about Jewish doctors' provision of medical aid to fellow Jews in the contexts of ghettos, concentration camps, and DP camps, Esther's recollections of her medical career are of great value to scholars and students alike. Furthermore, when approached in a particular way, her testimony can yield even more insight, as her work as a physician can serve as a lens through which to examine the Holocaust and its aftermath – not only her own experience but also the micro and macro contexts in which she worked. In turn, the combination of absorbing her words and reading between the lines reveals the immense value of ghetto doctors' and prisoner-physicians' accounts, as these sources present rich insights. For instance, they enable the tracing of a professional practice, its successes and challenges, across a number of sites. They shed light on attempts to adhere to the Hippocratic Oath in dire circumstances, often at the intersection of two major goals of the Holocaust's numerous perpetrators: the exploitation of the Jewish workforce and the extermination of European Jewry. With the pursuit of healing as a constant across the survivors' Holocaust and postwar experiences, these doctors' accounts provide a unique mode of comparison between different places and stages of persecution and imprisonment, and, in turn, they can offer a perspective on the continuities and ruptures across both sides of liberation.

Holocaust: Responses, Insights and Perspectives, ed. Marcia Sachs Littell (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 2001), 173.

[92] Meyers, "Hannah's Prayer," 173. The centrality of mothering and motherhood in the lives of Jewish DPs becomes apparent in light of the fact that, "for six months in 1946, the Jewish DP birth rate was the highest of any country or population" (ibid., 176).

[93] Swedish scholar Malin Thor Tureby is currently researching this topic.

Transcript

[00:01:19.68] CREW: Speed. Speed and cut mic.

[00:01:33.71] JASCHAEL PERY: Good day to you, Dr. [CLEARS THROAT] Esther Fox. My name is Jaschael Pery. I have the honor to interview you today, October 9, 1991, in New York, in the name of the Museum of Jewish Heritage. We would like you to tell us your pre-war story about life in Poland, family, community. And then, of course, how you experienced the war, the Holocaust time, and post-war adjustment. Please start your pre-war story.

[00:02:14.46] ESTHER FOX: So I was born in Lodz, Poland,[1] and I attended a private Jewish gymnasium.[2] So personally, I didn't have too much contact-- eh, too much, uh, occasions to-- to-- to mingle with the Gentiles,[3] but I knew what was going on. And, uh, finally when I finished

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[1] Lodz, Poland: Pol: Łódź, Ger: Lodsch or Litzmannstadt (1939-1945), Yid: Lodzh. In 1908, the year of Esther's birth, Łódź was a diverse city in which one could hear Yiddish, Russian, German, Polish, and Czech on the street (Paweł Spodenkiewicz, *The Missing District: People and Places of Jewish Łódź* (Wydawn: Hobo, 2007), 13). It was located in what was then known as the Polish Kingdom or Congress Poland, so named because the Congress of Vienna in 1815 placed this region in central Poland under the administration of the Russian Tsar. The city was a hub of industry and was particularly known for textile manufacturing. For a concise history of the city between 1820 and 1939, see Wiesław Puś, "The Development of the City of Łódź (1820-1939)," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (1991): 3–19. For a history of Jews in Lodz from 1820 and into the early twenty-first century, see the city's entry in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (hereafter *YIVO Encyclopedia*): http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/%C5%81odz.

[2] "private Jewish gymnasium": "Gymnasium" is a German word denoting secondary school. The fact that hers was a private school placed Esther in the minority of Polish Jewry overall and of those Jews living in Lodz. Overall, the majority of Jews in the interwar period (when Esther attended secondary school) attended public schools. In figures gathered in 1937, only twenty percent of Jewish children in Lodz attended private school, whereas eighty percent of their Jewish peers in the city attended public school. See Table 2 in Gershon Bacon, "National Revival, Ongoing Acculturation - Jewish Education in Interwar Poland," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 71-92, 76. For further insight into the wide variety of Jewish schools, including their respective ideological foundations and pedagogical approaches, in the interwar period, see Shimon Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression: Jewish Education in Interwar Poland* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998).

[3] "to mingle with Gentiles": Her lack of interaction with non-Jews was a product of her schooling and the neighborhood in which she lived.

gymnasium, I wanted to go to study. And I wanted to study medi-- medicine, as I am a physician. But being Jewish,[4] and a woman especial too,[5] it was impossible.

[00:02:47.94] So for one year, I went to Cracow,[6] a university[7] in Poland, to study science with the idea that maybe I next year will go abroad to study,[8] because I wasn't a citizen officially. My

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[4] "being Jewish…it was impossible": The challenge stemmed from the so-called *numerus clausus* – a quota established in 1923 to limit admissions of certain categories of students – that resulted from Polish nationalist pressure. Various parties, including Christian students' associations and medical school faculty, "decried the disproportionate numbers of Jews in medical schools. As a result of their efforts, medical schools were the first [institutions of higher learning] to adopt the policy of *numerus clausus* to limit the number of Jewish students" (Natalia Aleksiun, "Jewish Students and Christian Corpses in Interwar Poland: Playing with the Language of Blood Libel," *Jewish History* 26, no. 3–4 (2012): 333). Since careers in medicine offered a route to higher social standing, the desire to limit Jewish enrollment in medical schools was also a matter of preventing Jews' upward social mobility. Furthermore, a limit on Jewish enrollment in medical schools meant, to some extent, fewer Jewish doctors and a rectification of the lack of proportionality in the Polish medical profession as evidenced by 1931 figures that reveal that Jews accounted for 46 percent of all doctors in the country and for 55 percent of all practicing physicians; see: Katrin Steffen, "Contested Jewish Polishness: Language and Health as Markers for the Position of Jews in Polish Culture and Society in the Interwar Period," in *New Directions in the History of the Jews in the Polish Lands.*, ed. Antony Polonsky, Hanna Wegrzynek, and Andrzej Zbikowski (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 378. The *numerus clausus* yielded substantial results. Prior to the implementation of the policy, the proportion of Jews among medical students stood at 34 percent, but the enactment of the rule brought that number down to 18.5 percent by the early 1930s, and the figure fell "precipitously" in the following years (Aleksiun, "Jewish Students," 334). See also Szymon Rudnicki, "From 'Numerus Clausus' to 'Numerus Nullus,'" in *From Shtetl to Socialism: Studies from Polin*, ed. Antony Polonsky (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993).

[5] "a woman especial too, it was impossible": According to historian Natalia Aleksiun, medical schools had a separate *numerus clausus* to reduce the number of female medical students. As a result, Esther confronted two barriers to receiving a medical education in Poland. For insight into how Esther's gender and Jewishness affected her and other young Jewish women, see, for example, Gershon Bacon, "Woman? Youth? Jew? - The Search for Identity of Jewish Young Women in Interwar Poland," in *Gender, Place, and Memory in the Modern Jewish Experience: Re-Placing Ourselves*, ed. Judith Tydor Baumel and Tova Cohen (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 3–28. For a more general article on the topic of women in interwar Poland, see Bacon's essay in the Jewish Women's Archive's *Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*: https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/Poland-interwar.

[6] "Cracow": Pol: Kraków, Yid: Kroke. In 1921 (a few years before Esther attended classes there), Cracow was home to approximately 45,000 Jews, who accounted for about 25 percent of the city's population – a proportion that did not vary significantly throughout the interwar period (Czesław Brzoza, "Jewish Participation in the Elections to Kraków City Council during the Inter-War Period," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 23 (2011): 213-40, 213). For a brief summary of the history of Jews in Cracow after 1795, see *YIVO Encyclopedia*: http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Krakow/Krakow_after_1795; and for a more in-depth discussion of Jews in this city during the interwar period, see Sean Martin, *Jewish Life in Cracow: 1918-1939* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004).

[7] "Cracow, a university": She is referring to the Jagiellonian University, which is sometimes referred to as the "Kraków University."

[8] "go abroad to study": In light of the *numerus clausus*, this was a common route for Polish Jews interested in careers in medicine. Fred O.[renstein], for instance, pursued a similar strategy and studied

parents came from Russia,[9] and I was considered still a minor by 17-and-a-half, so I waited. So I want to mention that being in Cracow, I studied science so-- over there, where, uh, one of the subject was botany for the studied students for agriculture.[10] And they were big agricultural owners in the-- from the nobility to say, and they studied the same subject.

[00:03:30.81] So we Jews were forced to sit on one side to the left, and they were sitting to the right.[11] They, I mean the Gentiles. So we Jews as a matter of protest, uh, passive protest, we didn't sit, we were standing. And all these subjects where we were considered to be rather sta-- sitting on the right side, all this a whole year, we were standing. So this was my time until I left for-- uh, a year later, I became, uh, a Polish citizen, and as such I had the right to travel abroad, and I was admitted to the, uh, medical, uh, faculty in Paris where the--

[00:04:13.28] JASCHAEL PERY: OK. Now before we continue about Paris and France, I would like if you could describe a little bit more about the family life, community life in Lodz, while you were there living and learning in this Jewish school. Can you tell me some, a little bit--

[00:04:31.51] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:04:31.58] JASCHAEL PERY: --more about it?

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medicine in Montpellier, France. For his Fortunoff Video Archive testimony (HVT-943), see https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/tm71v5br9j (Segment 3).

[9] "parents came from Russia": Lodz was a destination for Jews escaping pogroms in Russia. The first wave of Russian Jews arrived in response to the violence of 1881-1884 (Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935-1939* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997), 71–80). Subsequent waves between 1885 and 1914 brought approximately 40,000 Jews from Russia to Lodz. Poor financial circumstances also motivated Jewish emigration (Helene Sinnreich, introduction to *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942-1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 15–16).

[10] "agriculture": Esther's course would have been offered by the relatively new Faculty of Agriculture, which was established at Jagiellonian University in 1923 – approximately two years before the 17-year-old Esther attended classes. For the history of the university, see https://en.uj.edu.pl/en_GB/about-university/history.

[11] Segregation between Jews and non-Jews in the classroom: The classroom, and the university overall, was "the hotbed of anti-Semitism"; see Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews in Poland between the Two World Wars* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 119-25, especially 122–23 for discussion of the so-called "ghetto benches" and Jewish students' passive protests in response. See also Melzer, *No Way Out*, 71–80.

[00:04:32.47] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. I was in the gymnasium, which was a secular,[12] understood. Nothing with religious, uh, brainwashing, or bringing up. But I come, myself, from a traditional Jewish home. Not the orthodox, but religious, with kosher, and so, and so.[13]

[00:04:48.34] And the family was more or less the same. And my personal family, all the children had higher education. Some studied, one cousin in France, one studied in-- in, uh, in Gdańsk in Poland, uh, chemistry. And, uh, we had friends same background, more or less. And we were very much Jewish minded in the sense of belonging, and Jewish pride. I wasn't affiliated politically to no organization at that time.[14]

[00:05:27.42] JASCHAEL PERY: I see. You had brothers, sisters in your family?

[00:05:30.56] ESTHER FOX: I had three brothers.[15] One lived in France, we went together. When I came back to that time, he went to study in France and he studied and remained over there. And home, I had two brothers. One of them studied and finished in Prague, Czechoslovakia, but he came a few years before the war back to Poland. So he was, and another brother. And in the ghetto when the war-- the war broke out, we were together, my mother-- my father died before the war-- and the two brothers and I.

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[12] "the gymnasium, which was a secular": Lodz offered many options for education. Most of the political parties and social movements (discussed below) had their own schools. The same was generally true for "youth organizations, cultural institutions, charity societies, libraries [and] athletic clubs" (Spodenkiewicz, *The Missing District*, 15). For a discussion of the variety of schools in Lodz (along with the recollections of former students), see ibid., 41–57.

[13] "a traditional Jewish home…not…orthodox, but religious": Many Jews in interwar Poland identified as Orthodox and led their lives according to religious prescriptions. Others pursued assimilation. Families like Esther's sought a middle ground that incorporated different measures of acculturation and secularization. For a discussion of various aspects of this intermediate territory, see Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 211–47.

[14] "wasn't affiliated politically": Her lack of a political affiliation was relatively rare in a time and place characterized by widespread engagement in youth movements of myriad political parties (Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 22). For insight into the centrality of politics in the lives of interwar Jewish youth, see also Michael C. Steinlauf, "Jewish Politics and Youth Culture in Interwar Poland: Preliminary Evidence from the YIVO Autobiographies" and Zvi Gitelman, "A Century of Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Legacy of the Bund and the Zionist Movement," both in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 95–104 and 3–19. For an overview of the complex landscape of Jewish politics in Poland between the world wars, see Ezra Mendelsohn, "Jewish Politics in Interwar Poland: An Overview," in *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman et al. (New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 1991), 9–19.

[15] "three brothers": In other sources, she specifies that she had only two brothers, both older than she: Michał/Michael (b. 1899) and Isaak/Isak (b. 1903). See "Memoir," 1; Esther Fox, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (hereafter: USC SF-VHA), Int. 766 (1995), e.g., Seg. 31–33; Miryam Rabner, "Telephone Pre-Interview Questionnaire," 24 January 1995, USC SF-VHA, p. 7.

[00:06:02.02] JASCHAEL PERY: Was-- what was your father's occupation, pre-war?

[00:06:04.93] ESTHER FOX: He was a businessman, a merchant.

[00:06:06.42] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:06:06.71] ESTHER FOX: I was a middle, uh, class.[16]

[00:06:08.75] JASCHAEL PERY: Mm-hmm.

[00:06:09.53] ESTHER FOX: Not rich and not poor.

[00:06:11.82] JASCHAEL PERY: And do you remember the Jewish community life in Lodz, pre-war? What kind of life was it? How could you describe it?

[00:06:21.47] ESTHER FOX: Not the-- the Lodz was a big Jewish city,[17] like I can quite compare it in this respect to-- to New York. The German who were there, it was a German, uh,

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[16] "middle class": For a discussion and numerical breakdown of socioeconomic status (e.g., profession, district population density, district literacy rates) for Jews in Lodz in 1921 and/or 1931, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Between the Social and the National – The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918-1939," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 55–70.

[17] "a big Jewish city": Polish Jews, in general, lived in cities, with about 76 percent of the Poland's Jewish population living in cities according to the census of 1931. The Jewish populations of five major urban centers – Warsaw, Lodz, Vilno, Cracow, and Lvov – accounted for nearly a quarter of Polish Jewry according to this census. Census data also revealed that, while Jews accounted for ten percent of Poland's population, Jewish residents of the aforementioned five cities comprised around one-third to one-fourth of their respective city's overall population (Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 72). In Lodz, Jews accounted for 30 percent of the city's population at the turn of the century. The number increased to 36 percent at the outbreak of World War I, making it the second largest Jewish population in Poland (after Warsaw). The census of 1931 counted over 182,000 Jews in Lodz (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 13–14). For a wider and deeper discussion of demographics in Lodz based on the 1931 census, see the following articles in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (1991): Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Jews in Łódź in 1931 According to Statistics" (173-20); and over a broader period, Julian K. Janczak, "The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820-1939" (20–26); and for a demographic study focused specifically on the city's industrialists, Stefan Pytlas, "The National Composition of Łódź Industrialists Before 1914" (37–56). Jewish migrants came from small communities in central Poland and Galicia and from Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the interior of the Russian Empire (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 14). By the beginning of the 20th century, the city contained four impressive synagogues and hundreds of prayer halls. In addition, Jewish aid organizations played an important role in the city. The Jewish Charity Society of Lodz, for example, ran a mental hospital and a home for the aged and infirm (ibid., 15). For a discussion of the extent to which individual Jews and Jews as a collective influenced the Lodz's cityscape, see, also in volume 6 of *Polin*, Stanisław Liszewski, "The Role of the Jewish Community in the Organization of Urban Space in Łódź" (27–36).

textile specialty.[18] All the German[19] knew Jewish.[20] And because there were so many Jews, there was a lot of anti-Semitism,[21] which I personally didn't, eh, see it, because I didn't mingle with them. I was in the Jewish gymnasium, I lived in the section where there are not, uh, many Poles.[22] There were, but they didn't bother me. But I knew what's going on.[23]

[00:06:57.40] JASCHAEL PERY: Lodz as a wall wasn't, uh, all a reli-- a religious community. There was also Zionist activity--

[00:07:04.81] ESTHER FOX: Ah.

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[18] "textile specialty": As a center for textile manufacturing dating back to the 1820s, Lodz came to be known as the "Manchester of Poland." For a discussion of the city's burgeoning textile industry, see Puś, "The Development," 8–11, 15-16.

[19] "All the German": Germans accounted for a sizable percentage of Lodz's population over several decades of the city's history; for precise figures, see the Janczak and Pytlas studies cited above. For insight into the political, social, cultural, and economic lives of Germans in Lodz between 1900 and 1933, see Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115–58.

[20] "Jewish": "Jewish" indicates the Yiddish language. The word "Yiddish" in Yiddish not only indicates the language but also translates to "Jewish," thus explaining Esther's use of the word.

[21] "because there were so many Jews, there was a lot of anti-Semitism": The presence of antisemitism in Lodz stemmed mostly from Polish nationalists aligned with the National Democratic Party (Narodowa Demokracja), or the "Endeks," who alternated with Socialists as the municipal government's ruling party (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 15). As historian Daniel Kupfert Heller succinctly puts it, their brand of antisemitism "insisted that Jews posed an existential threat to the Polish nation. Their claims that Jews unjustly dominated the economic life of the country, polluted its national culture, and were plotting to overthrow the state were not only condoned but promoted by the clergy in interwar Poland's powerful Catholic Church" (Heller, *Jabotinsky's Children*, 14). The illegal fascist party Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (National-Radical Party) also had a presence in Lodz – albeit a relatively small one (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 39).

[22] Lived in a predominantly Jewish section: Jews from particular regions sometimes lived in closed communities with their own houses of worship (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 14). An actual Jewish District was established in 1822. The Jews who lived there could "live, purchase land, and raise houses." Jews who were wealthy enough to construct a brick house or to possess at least 20,000 zlotys in cash, however, were exempt. The regulation ceased in 1862, allowing for the settlement of Jews throughout the city, including in the industrial areas and the more affordable outskirts (ibid., 21–23). For additional discussion of the development of the Jewish district(s), see Stanisław Liszewski, "The Role of the Jewish Community in the Organization of Urban Space in Łódź," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (1991): 29–30. A census from 1918 revealed that even in the neighborhood with the greatest proportion of Jews – Sector III, the Old Town – Jews accounted for 89 percent of the population. Sector V, or Pomorska Street, was next, at 78 percent (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 23). For figures based on the 1931 census, see the table "Population of Łódź City According to Religion and District of the City in 1931" in Liszewski, "The Role of the Jewish Community," 29–30.

[23] "But I knew what's going on": This is presumably a reference to widespread conflicts (discussed in a note above) between non-Jewish Poles and Polish Jews.

[00:07:05.08] JASCHAEL PERY: --going on.

[00:07:05.79] ESTHER FOX: Absolutely.[24] There were Zionists,[25] was Bundism,[26] were Communists.[27] My gymnasium was more on Bundist,[28] but they didn't brainwash us.[29] They never talked about anything to us. After I finished gymnasium, I found out that the whole personnel, that the director, that all they're Bundist, but they did never tell us what to do and where to belong.

[00:07:27.59] JASCHAEL PERY: So they lan-- the language they used in the school was Yiddish?[30]

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[24] "Absolutely": Jewish political life in Lodz was vibrant, with the presence of numerous parties that espoused a variety of positions related to political systems (e.g., socialism) and the concept of Jewish nationhood. For insight into the politics of Lodz Jewry in the interwar period as expressed through the result of municipal elections, see Barbara Wachowska, "The Jewish Electorate of Interwar Łódź in the Light of the Local Government Elections (1919-1938)," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 6 (1991): 155–72. For discussions of Jewish political life in Poland overall during the interwar period, see, for example, Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 261–436.

[25] "Zionists": Zionism was attractive to many Jewish residents of Lodz and manifested in a number of distinct political parties and movements, including the socialist Zionists (Poalei Tsiyon), religious Zionists (Mizrachi), and Revisionist Zionists. For further information, see, for example, Marcus, *Social and Political History*, 264–80; and for a more sustained engagement with the development of Zionism in Poland overall, Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915-1926* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

[26] "Bundism": The shorthand name describing those who adhered to a "Marxist, social-democratic movement that advocated Jewish cultural autonomy based on Yiddish" (Gitelman, "A Century," 4). The word is derived from the Yiddish *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund*, or the General Jewish Workers' Union, which took root not only in Poland but also in Lithuania and Russia. The movement's presence in Lodz dated back to 1897 (Sinnreich, introduction to *Hidden Diary*, 16). Speeches of Bund activists drew hundreds of attendees to Philharmonic Hall, the same venue where Jabotinsky spoke (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 12).

[27] "Communists": For information about Communist politics in Poland during the interwar period, including the strong antisemitism Jews encountered within the party, see Moshe Mishkinsky, "The Communist Party of Poland and the Jews," in *The Jews of Poland*, 56–74.

[28] "My gymnasium was more on [the] Bundist [side]": Jewish schools tended to be aligned with political and/or religious movements. For further discussion of this general trend, see Frost, *Schooling*, esp. 27–69.

[29] "but they didn't brainwash us": The comment about brainwashing presumably stems from the fact that schools tended to devote great attention to inculcating their founders' respective ideologies through particular approaches to curricular structure and content. See ibid., esp. 70–133. For example, one of the Bundist founders of the Central Yiddish School Organization of the Polish Republic declared: "It was an attempt to create a new secular form of Jewish life. It was an aspiration to integrate [Jewish] national creativity with the great international redemptive idea of socialism" (ibid., 140).

[30] "the language they used in the school was Yiddish?": In light of the Bundists' declaration that Yiddish was to be "the vehicle for their political and cultural activities" and their contribution to the rise in

[00:07:30.62] ESTHER FOX: Polish,[31] no.

[00:07:31.17] JASCHAEL PERY: Polish.

[00:07:32.56] ESTHER FOX: I knew too-- uh, I speak Yiddish.

[00:07:34.93] JASCHAEL PERY: At home you spoke Yiddish?

[00:07:36.19] ESTHER FOX: Yes, and Polish.[32]

[00:07:37.63] JASCHAEL PERY: Mm-hmm. OK, so let's go-- go on with your story. You went to study to France.

--SEGMENT 2--

[00:07:44.08] ESTHER FOX: Yes.

[00:07:44.77] JASCHAEL PERY: So let's hear what's-- what went on.

Yiddish-language schools, the interviewer's assumption that Esther's Bundist Gymnasium would have instruction in Yiddish makes sense (ibid., 36–37). Frost also reports that "the Bund undeniably maintained the leading and dominant role in the Yiddish language school system" (ibid., 66). However, given that interwar Poland was home to a "variety of Jewish educational institutions, the like of which was never seen before or since either in the Diaspora or the Land of Israel," his assumption was hardly a safe one (Bacon, "National Revival," 76).

[31] "Polish": In sending Esther to a Jewish school with Polish as the language of instruction, Esther's parents may have had her future in mind, as she would need the language to progress to secondary and higher education in Poland (ibid., 75). Educational scholar Shimon Frost communicates that Polish acculturation, which accompanied a Polish-language education, was a "sine-qua-non for a university education and social mobility" (Frost, *Schooling*, 67). Yet, despite Esther's parents' concern for such practical matters, their decision to send their daughter to a Jewish school was "an expression of Jewish commitment" (ibid., 145). That combination led them to choose a school that, according to Frost, would have "offer[ed] the full Polish state curriculum including a course in Jewish religion as required by Polish law with an occasional smattering of Hebrew reading for prayers" (ibid., 34).

[32] "Yes, and Polish": In 1931, 94.7 percent of the Lodz's Jewish population identified Yiddish as their first language (Spodenkiewicz, *Missing District*, 62). In Poland overall, 79 percent of Jews stated that their mother tongue was Yiddish, while 12 percent named Polish (Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, 68; note that Heller urges caution when analyzing these figures). It is important to note that the 1931 census did not account for bilingualism. In the absence of data, sociologist Celia S. Heller calls upon an array of recollections to declare that "the number of Jews who were bilingual far exceeded those whose native tongue was only Polish" (ibid., 68). During the interwar period, the prevalence of Polish as a second language increased. The Jewish intelligentsia, in particular, came to use Polish in their conversations, but the language also gained a foothold among less educated Jews. While there were practical reasons for speaking Polish (i.e., educational) as mentioned above, Katrin Steffen suggests that there were also "idealistic and romantic" elements (Steffen, "Contested Jewish Polishness," 372).

[00:07:46.53] ESTHER FOX: No. And France was-- uh, I didn't, uh, experience in France anything antisemitism. Maybe because the students, they didn't know about too much. And it was never mentioned anything about Jewishness, and it wasn't necessary to defend myself, because there was never attacked.

[00:08:06.25] And I never mingled the Jewish community either, because they somehow-- especially in those years was a long time ago, a girl who came to study in the beginning, they thought I'm an outcast, because which parent let go a girl alone and study and to France. But they didn't understand it, later. So we didn't mingle with the Jewish community at all--

[00:08:28.34] JASCHAEL PERY: Mm-hmm.

[00:08:28.87] ESTHER FOX: --I.

[00:08:29.61] JASCHAEL PERY: I see. So you stayed in France, how long?

[00:08:33.44] ESTHER FOX: I sta-- came in 1926, and I finished medicine in 1933. And I--

[00:08:39.34] JASCHAEL PERY: In Paris?

[00:08:40.00] ESTHER FOX: In Paris.[33] And I went back to Poland.

[00:08:42.68] JASCHAEL PERY: In '33?

[00:08:44.29] ESTHER FOX: In '33.

[00:08:46.29] JASCHAEL PERY: So being in '33 in Paris, or '32, in the '30s in Paris, you heard what's going on in Germany at that time? You knew about Hitler, about anti-Jewish activities in [UNCLEAR]

[00:09:01.80] ESTHER FOX: I knew. But, uh, first of all, I didn't have to time to-- to proceed. In '33, I was already in Poland, so it's different. And I didn't believe, and I didn't concentrate. But when I came home, I knew. So now I want to come back to-- to, uh, to this part. When I came back to Poland, I was admitted right away, because it was a long waiting list. But I was lucky to be admitted in the first group, that right away I was admitted to pass my state board in Poland.

[00:09:32.59] And over there, I was studying together with two other doctors who finished in Vienna. And one of them went during the studies-- it took me a year and a half to pass my state board in Poland, which I will come back, that here already experience bad things. She went to

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[33] "in Paris": According to her USC SF-VHA testimony, she did not spend her entire time studying in Paris. She began in Nancy, switched to Rouen for a year, and then spent the next years (1927-1933) in Paris; see Esther Fox, USC SF-VHA), Int. 766 (1995), Seg. 29–30.

Vienna, because she finished in Vienna, and she had the acquaintance, and she came back and told us in '33 or beginning '34 what was going on in Vienna, uh, uh, the-- the, uh, outbreaks against Jews in the street, beating up.[34]

[00:10:07.72] And so I listened, but we did-- we didn't believe it. But she was a witness to that. So I knew what's going on.

[00:10:14.65] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:10:15.41] ESTHER FOX: So now if I may start with this when I start my state board, which I passed luckily, but I had bad experience. I came to one subject to pass, the professor, he didn't ask me a question, we haven't started. But he saw my name and my face, so he right away attacked me, said, uh, she has a, uh, flies high in her head, because she studied abroad. So right away was an attack, why did I studied abroad? Because I had to study. It was financially a big burden for my parents.[35]

[00:10:48.61] But this was the first attack. But nevertheless, I passed, he passed me. And so I finished the state board. And I don't know whether it's important to say, I worked as it was necessary, one year in a hospital in a-- in Lodz in Poland. And later, I started practicing medicine.

[00:11:06.82] JASCHAEL PERY: Did you practice in Lodz also?

[00:11:08.43] ESTHER FOX: Yes, yes, until the outbreak of the war, and later in the ghetto. So I want to mention one of many incidents. I worked for the workman's union to say, for insured workers in a section, because the workers were, uh, in factories where no Jews, they wouldn't be admitted. It-- but the factories belonged mostly to German textile. And I was a doctor to-- in the one section in the periphery, so over there were no Jews, all, uh, patients were

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[34] "the outbreaks against Jews in the street, beating up": Esther's medical colleagues' exposure to violence was not especially surprising given the strength and popularity of antisemitic politics in interwar Vienna and its violent expression in institutions of higher education, particularly in medical schools, where the proportion of Jewish students far exceeded the proportion of Jews in the population overall. See Bruce F. Pauley, "Political Antisemitism in Interwar Vienna," in *Jews, Antisemitism, and Culture in Vienna*, ed. Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak, and Gerhard Botz (London: Routledge, 1987), 152–73. Students ascribing to Nazi ideology "frequently brutally attacked their fellow students of the Jewish tradition, [as they] were especially eager to limit the number of Jewish students who would soon be competing with them for employment" (ibid., 165–66).

[35] "It was financially a big burden for my parents": For the parents of Polish-Jewish doctor Arnold Mostowicz, who subsequently worked as a physician in the Lodz Ghetto, medical school in Paris was too great a financial burden, so they sent him to Rouen instead (Antony Polonsky, foreword to Arnold Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star and a Red Cross: A Doctor in the Łódź Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1988), xiv). For the video testimony of Arnold Mostowicz (in Polish), see HVT-3163 (1994).

Polacks or German.[36] And they knew from the looks, they recognize who is Jewish.[37] And my name was Estera, so they knew this too, probably.

[00:11:48.76] So when they asked me, for instance, to give them, uh, a leave of absence to be paid, like sick, and I couldn't do it. So they once said to me, I give you once a stick with a knife in the back[38] so you will remember me. This was like, in a friendly way, a patient. This was [UNCLEAR] little, but one was a bigger. I was making house calls in a *droshka*,[39] because at the time there were no cars, and they wouldn't give us even if there would be. And there was the driver.

[00:12:16.82] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:12:17.19] ESTHER FOX: And he was nice. He-- he is every day from whenever it was, the ambulatory hours were over, I went to make house calls. It was long rides, it was out of town, big distances. And he did it normally.

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[36] "all patients were Polack or German": Evidently she did not work for the Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population (*Towarszystwo Ochrony Zdrowia*, abbreviated TOZ) – the central Jewish healthcare organization in Poland, which, by 1939, managed 368 medical facilities in 72 locations, where approximately one thousand doctors, nurses, and social workers attended to the medical needs of Polish Jewry (Katrin Steffen, "Contested Jewish Polishness: Language and Health as Markers for the Position of Jews in Polish Culture and Society in the Interwar Period," in *New Directions*, 379). For a brief history of this organization, see, for example, Leon Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians in Poland* (New York: Exposition Press, 1963), 118–21.

[37] "they knew from the looks, they recognize who is Jewish": Drawing on her training as a sociologist, Heller identifies among the interwar population of Poland a "distinctive nonverbal language [with] typical gestures, facial expressions, body movements, etc., different from those of Poles" and even "estimate[s] that at least 80 percent of the Jews were recognizable to Poles." In other words, "the basis of Jewish visibility was mostly in sociocultural characteristics, only occasionally in phenotypical traits" (Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction*, 69–70). For scholarly engagement with the concept of a Jewish look and, more generally, a Jewish body, beyond just Poland, see Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge, 1991); Melvin Konner, *The Jewish Body* (New York: Schocken, 2009).

[38] "a stick with a knife in the back": Presuming that this threat of interpersonal antisemitic violence came during or after the second half of 1935, the situation she describes took place within the context of a sharp rise in antisemitism, which also brought an increase in violence against Jews. See Emanuel Melzer, "Antisemitism in the Last Years of the Second Polish Republic," in *The Jews of Poland*, 126–37, particularly 129, 130, 134. Targeted violence against Jews tended to be the province of the radical fringes of groups like the National Democrats (Endeks). For a brief summary of antisemitism in interwar Poland, see Yisrael Gutman, "Polish Antisemitism Between the Wars: An Overview," in *The Jews of Poland*, 97–108. For a discussion of Polish antisemitic violence, including pogroms, during the interwar period, see Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 109–30.

[39] "droshka": Eng: droshky, Pol: dorożka. An open, horse-drawn carriage that typically carries passengers.

[00:12:29.90] But once he was a little bit drunk all of a sudden, and he got off his seat and tried to sit on my seat and whatever. And I was scared, so understood, I ran, uh, from the *droshka*, and I started running. Were a lot of fields because there were not too many houses.

[00:12:48.08] And finally, when I reached the house and I knocked on the one door and this were my patient, my, uh, part of my practice. And I knocked the door and I said, let me in, the driver wants to attack me. But they didn't let me in.

[00:13:02.63] And so I was running and running, and maybe three or four houses, nobody let me in. But at the time, the driver sobered a little bit, and he was originally nice man, he never did anything before. So finally I said, let's go back. I didn't make the house calls and I came straight back to the, uh, the place.

[00:13:25.22] And I worked with another Polish physician, a non-Jewish, and I came and they recognized, and I said what happened. So she said, you know what? You take over my patients here, we start the afternoon session, and I will make your house calls. And so we did. So I give you a little example how it was. I worked there for a couple years, and they were my patient and they saw what's going on, they didn't open the door.

[00:13:51.24] JASCHAEL PERY: This was pre-war, before the war started.

[00:13:52.93] ESTHER FOX: Pre-war, b-, sure.

--SEGMENT 3--

[00:13:55.79] JASCHAEL PERY: So this life went on. You practiced in Lodz, this way you told us. Is there something else you would like to add about before the war started, some episodes you recall?

[00:14:06.16] ESTHER FOX: No, there were already rumors that there is going on a war, what will be, and there was Zbąszyń[40] and the--

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[40] "Zbąszyń": Ger: Bentschen. This Polish town, which stood on the interwar border between Germany and Poland, was the destination of approximately 8,000-9,000 Polish Jews expelled from Germany in late October 1938; see Jerzy Tomaszewski's entry in *YIVO Encyclopedia*: http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Zbaszyn. They were stranded there – unable to return to Germany or to proceed to Poland – without adequate housing, food, and other crucial resources. Eventually a refugee camp was established. For insight into the conditions through the expellees' own writings, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Letters from Zbaszyn," *Yad Vashem Studies* 19 (1988): 296–311. Among those stuck in Zbąszyń was the family of Herschel Grynszpan, who was living in Paris at the time. When Grynszpan learned of his family's circumstances and the overall misery of the Jewish exiles, he sought revenge and shot the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath, whose subsequent death served as the so-called catalyst for the November Pogrom (also known as *Kristallnacht*) on November 9-10, 1938; see Trude Maurer, "The Background for Kristallnacht: The Expulsion of Polish Jews," in *November 1938:*

[00:14:12.86] JASCHAEL PERY: What do you remember about Zbąszyń?

[00:14:14.74] ESTHER FOX: They came, the Jews from Germany, which were like, a Polish origin.[41] And we collected food and clothes, and-- and people went there to-- to help.[42] I couldn't, I was on the post, I couldn't.[43] But anything I could do, I did, and so did my family.

[00:14:31.49] But not too much. I was still-- I-- I couldn't be [UNCLEAR], I have to watch my--

[00:14:36.63] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:14:37.15] ESTHER FOX: I had obligations. Until now, I want to, but go a little on the personal way. The two months before the war, exactly, I married, uh, a young man who was a principal of a school. A Jewish, uh, half secular, half religious, he was the principal of the secular, uh, part of the school. And right after we got married, it's two months, broke out the war and he was mobilized and he left.

From "Reichskristallnacht" to Genocide, ed. Walter H. Pehle (Oxford: Berg, 1991), 68–69. For the Grynszpan family correspondence, see Karol Jonca, "The Expulsion of Polish Jews from the Third Reich in 1938," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 8 (2004): 277–78.

[41] "Jews from Germany…[of] Polish origin": Occurring October 27-29, 1938, the forced exile of Polish Jews from Germany, also known as the *Polenaktion* (Polish Action), involved 17,000-20,000 Jews. For the figures, see, respectively, Maurer, "The Background for Kristallnacht," 45; Uta Larkey, "Fear and Terror: The Expulsion of Polish Jews from Saxony/Germany in October 1938," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 31, no. 3 (2017): 243. The precipitating factor was the Polish government's announcement on October 6, 1938 that Jews of Polish nationality living outside Poland would require a stamp on their passports to reenter Poland. German officials recognized that such a policy would preclude the return of Polish Jews living in Germany. Seeking to avoid being "stuck" with a large "undesirable" population, officials acted just before the policy went into effect on October 30 and transported Polish Jews living in all parts of Germany across the Polish border. For information on diplomatic, economic, and other precursors to this event, see Jonca, "Expulsion of Polish Jews," 255–64; Larkey, "Fear and Terror," 245–47; Maurer, "The Background for Kristallnacht," 49–56. The largest percentage of deportees went to Zbąszyń, but another major destination was Bytom (Beuthen), which is the subject of Larkey's article. Larkey (243) importantly notes that the *Polenaktion* held larger significance, as it "served as a 'paradigm' for later deportations with respect to coordination among the police forces, railway administration, the SS and the SD, municipal agencies, and financial authorities on the national and regional levels." See also Maurer, "The Background for Kristallnacht," 70–71.

[42] "we collected food and clothes, and-- and people went there to-- to help": Locals supplied food, water, shelter, and other resources to the deportees; see, for example, Tomaszewski, "Letters from Zbaszyn," 291; Larkey, "Fear and Terror," 257. In addition, the newly established General Jewish Aid Committee for Jewish Refugees from Germany in Poland and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee were heavily engaged in relief efforts to help the refugees. See Larkey, "Fear and Terror," 244, 255–57; Maurer, "The Background for Kristallnacht," 62–63; Tomaszewski, "Letters from Zbaszyn," 292.

[43] "I couldn't": Esther provides a contradictory statement in her USC SF-VHA testimony: "I even went there to help out as a doctor" (Seg. 48).

[00:15:13.58] JASCHAEL PERY: To the Polish army?

[00:15:14.35] ESTHER FOX: To the Polish army as an officer, because with higher education, wasn't a plain soldier, but an officer like anybody else. And now I already will say this, he left and I made a pledge that I will wait for you as long as it will take. Who knew what will ha-- happen. It didn't take three days I was out from this apartment where I was, because the German came in and there was finished.[44] And now I will-- he never came back.

[00:15:42.74] JASCHAEL PERY: You find out what happened to him?

[00:15:44.67] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. People after the war told me who-- I knew that he was arrested in the-- as a, a military soldier.[45]

[00:15:52.58] JASCHAEL PERY: As a POW--

[00:15:52.85] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:15:53.63] JASCHAEL PERY: --by the German.

[00:15:54.23] ESTHER FOX: And later he was rel-- sent to the east part of Poland, and somebody notified me he jumped out of the train-- but not, not my husband-- and told me that they go to Wlodawa.[46] And I found out that in the ghetto,[47] by accident or somehow, somebody

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[44] "the German came in and there was finished": The German army took the city of Lodz on September 8-9, 1939. See Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 165.

[45] "arrested…as a military soldier": Esther's husband was one of approximately 61,000 Jewish Polish POWs. They experienced harsher treatment – more strenuous labor and physical abuse, less food – than their non-Jewish comrades in POW camps; see Shmuel Krakowski, "The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign," *Yad Vashem Studies* 12 (1977): 299–313. It appears that, despite being from Lodz, he was grouped with Jewish POWs from territories annexed to the Soviet Union, as the S.S. took a portion of them to (the vicinity of) Wlodawa, where most of them were killed; see ibid., 316.

[46] "Wlodawa": Pol: Włodawa, Ger: Wlodawa, Yid: Vlodave. This Polish border town, which was adjacent to the wartime border between the General Government and the Reich Commissariat Ukraine and now stands at the border between Poland and Belarus, had 5,650 or 6,500 Jewish inhabitants, who accounted for approximately two-thirds of the overall population, at the start of the Second World War. For the sources of the disparate figures, see, respectively, Martin Dean, ed., *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012; hereafter *USHMM Ghettos Encyclopedia*), Part A, 730; Guy Miron and Shlomit Shulhani, eds., *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009; hereafter *YV Ghettos Encyclopedia*), vol. 2 (N-Z), 935–36.

[47] "the ghetto": Interestingly, there is a lack of consensus between the two main encyclopedias that provide information on ghettos established by the Nazis. The encyclopedia produced by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum asserts that, prior to the fall of 1942, Wlodawa did not have a ghetto known as such; Jews were concentrated instead in a "Jewish quarter" (*USHMM Ghettos*

told me he has a sister in Wlodawa, and the husband is a doctor. So I made with her a deal, let them help him and I will help her here.

[00:16:20.94] And so from people around, I found out that he was sent to Sobibor.[48] And somebody wrote me a letter in Polish, which is was said, he went to a place where you don't come back from.[49] So I knew that he is no more to expect him.

[00:16:39.13] JASCHAEL PERY: So you-- the war broke-- broke out, as you told already. And what-- what do you remember from this time in Lodz while--

[00:16:46.92] ESTHER FOX: Ah, yeah.

[00:16:47.06] JASCHAEL PERY: --the war broke out?

[00:16:47.92] ESTHER FOX: No, this I can talk a lot, because this came like a shock. First of all, all of a sudden the bombardments[50] and the hiding in the-- in the cellars, which I, right away my reaction, I was living there alone because I got married, so I wasn't with my mother and brother, [INAUDIBLE]. So I didn't even want to go to the shelters, so they came and dragged me, because I said, what will be, will be. It was below my-- my, uh, self-respect.

[00:17:17.52] I said, what will be, will be. But I survived the period of bombardment. And later, were different persecution. They killed at night. Was one night, they took all the intelligentsia and all who were on higher position in the Jewish institutions, and they arrested,

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Encyclopedia, Part A, 731). In contrast, the encyclopedia of Yad Vashem states that the ghetto was formed in January 1941. The town served as a *Judenstadt*, a collection point to which Jews from multiple locations were sent. Esther's husband may have arrived in the ghetto among the 1,014 deportees dispatched from numerous locations in Poland in March 1941 (*YV Ghettos Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 936).

[48] "he was sent to Sobibor": The Sobibor death camp was located only about five miles south of the Wlodawa ghetto and stood near the Polish town of Sobibór and close to the eastern border of the General-Government. For information about the construction and layout of the camp, see Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), 30–36. Deportations of Jews from Wlodawa to Sobibor began in the spring of 1942 and carried on through a variety of *Aktions* until April 30, 1943, when the ghetto's last 2,000 inhabitants reached Sobibor (ibid., 256). See also *USHMM Ghetto Encyclopedia*, Part A, 732; *YV Ghettos Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 936.

[49] "a place where you don't come back from": Esther's first husband was one of a least 170,000 Jews murdered in the gas chambers of Sobibor; see USHMM *Holocaust Encyclopedia* entry on Sobibor: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/sobibor (April 12, 2019). For more detailed information about the death camp, including the commencement of regular killing operations, see Arad, *Belzec*, 75–80.

[50] "bombardments": According to the diary of Dawid Sierakowiak, the first bombs fell on Lodz on September 2, and the first air raid occurred the following night. See Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Alan Adelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; hereafter *Sierakowiak Diary*), 31–33.

they-- they killed them.[51] And I wasn't in-- in-- in this category of people, I was young too, younger I mean.

[00:17:43.95] And later, later came-- and this now was winter clothes there, was cold, and was a little bit hunger. And I stopped working immediately, because everything was dissolved, was finished. And they start organizing, first of all, doctors. We were, like to mobilize for the local things, to against outbreak ep-- epidemics and sickness.[52] And so we were very, very busy, because many doctors and others ran away from the city.[53]

[00:18:11.46] So the remaining, they-- we were right away occupied, to say we had a lot to do. And later started to read the rumors about the ghetto.

[00:18:22.70] JASCHAEL PERY: Before we go onto the ghetto, I would like to ask you, before the Germans occupied, or shortly after the occupation, you told me that some people ran away, escaped.

[00:18:35.11] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:18:36.20] JASCHAEL PERY: Did you have some thought about escaping, about leaving Lodz--

[00:18:39.41] ESTHER FOX: No, no.

[00:18:39.83] JASCHAEL PERY: --and not being under the German--

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[51] "all the intelligentsia…they killed them": These measures were part of Operation Tannenberg, a project initiated at the behest of Hitler prior to the German invasion of Poland. Under the command of Himmler and Heydrich, *Einsatzgruppen* – "task forces" or "operational groups" consisting of members of the Gestapo, Security Service of the SS (*Sicherheitsdienst*, or SD), Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*, or Sipo), Criminal Police (*Kriminalpolizei*, or Kripo), and Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*, or Orpo) – targeted for arrest and murder "Polish intelligentsia, clergy, nobility, military elite, and certain leading elements of Polish-Jewish society" for the purpose of "neutraliz[ing] centers of potential resistance in occupied Poland and to destroy the classes of society thought to be carriers of Polish nationalism"(Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, 12, 14, 22). For further insight into the treatment of Jews following the invasion, see ibid., 90–120.

[52] "they start…epidemics and sickness": On October 20, 1939, the Lodz Jewish community's administration established a health department, and one of its first actions was to organize a hospital for infectious diseases. See Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* [Jews in the Litmannstadt Ghetto: Living conditions, self-awareness, behavior], (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 176–77.

[53] "many doctors and others ran away from the city": For personal accounts regarding the widespread flight from Lodz, see, for example, *Sierakowiak Diary*, 34–35; Edward Reicher, *Country of Ash: A Jewish Doctor in Poland, 1939-1945* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2013), 23–30.

[00:18:41.03] ESTHER FOX: My uncle with his children, and others, uh, ran away. But we didn't have financial means to run.

[00:18:49.39] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:18:50.16] ESTHER FOX: Re-- regardless, my mother wouldn't be able. But even if she would be able, we didn't have financial means to run. Just to run, where, what? So we said, what-- what will be, will be. We were not the only one--

[00:19:03.02] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:19:03.15] ESTHER FOX: --who stayed, so we stayed.

[00:19:05.12] JASCHAEL PERY: So you stayed. And let-- let's go on with your story under the occupation.

[00:19:10.25] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. So now--

[00:19:12.17] JASCHAEL PERY: What you remember from before the ghetto, did they put in effect some, uh, anti-Jewish laws, restrictions, you recall?

[00:19:23.62] ESTHER FOX: No, no, yeah. In Lodz, there was antisemitism, there were signs that Jews are not allowed to enter the store.[54] And in other cities, not in our city, dogs and Jews not allowed. But I don't recall myself to see such a sign.

[00:19:39.71] But when it started--so you--all the Polish and non-Polish German elements, I remember they said that when there was the bombardment, the German became probably, uh, *Volksdeutsche*,[55] and they were, uh, putting out flags, German, to give sign to the bombarding, to the pilots where they are, because there was, uh, uh, no lights. How do you call it, uh--

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[54] "signs that Jews are not allowed to enter the store": While it does not appear that the mounting of such signs were the result of an official order, an order dated November 11, 1939 informed Lodz residents that "all shops in the City of Lodz [were] to immediately place a sign in their windows, at eye level, indicating whether the shopkeeper is German, Polish, or Jewish" (reprinted in Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Lodz Ghetto: Inside a Community Under Siege* (London: Penguin, 1991), 23).

[55] "Volksdeutsche": *Volksdeutsche* identified "ethnic Germans," or "members of German national minorities and citizens of non-German states," of whom there were approximately 10 million at the start of the Second World War. They are of particular historical importance, as they "not only became vital considerations in the formal relations between the Reich and these states but also were important players in the day-to-day intercourse of the people of the region" (Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 10–11). For information on the approximately 200,000 *Volksdeutsche* in Lodz and the role many played in the persecution of the city's Jews during the Third Reich, see Chu, *The German Minority*, 250–70, especially 262–65. For a more general discussion of the motivations behind the engagement of *Volksdeutsche* in persecution of, and violence against, Jews

[00:20:04.13] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:20:04.76] ESTHER FOX: Blackout.

[00:20:05.20] JASCHAEL PERY: Blackout.

[00:20:05.57] ESTHER FOX: So they gave sign, they collaborated, but we didn't-- they were Polish citizens, but they were, uh, *Volksdeutsche*, probably.

[00:20:12.70] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:20:13.61] ESTHER FOX: So we felt it all over, all the time.

[00:20:18.01] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah. So how did you manage

--SEGMENT 4--

…to live, uh, under the Germans before the ghetto, until the ghetto opened?

[00:20:26.98] ESTHER FOX: It wasn't a long time, it was only three months.[56] I was very busy working, going from one patient to another, climbing up stairs. And it was cold, and it was hungry. The people were hungry and I was hungry. Everything together was mixed.

[00:20:40.85] So not only that I felt good, I felt about them. And my specialty was mostly pediatrics, children. So it was very painful, understood.

[00:20:51.49] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah, now--

[00:20:52.32] ESTHER FOX: So fa--

[00:20:52.85] JASCHAEL PERY: --they come the day, they open the ghetto. What do you remember from this period? Did you have to move in, or you lived in the place with the ghetto?

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in Eastern Europe, see Doris L. Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (1994): 569–82.

[56] "it was only three months": Exactly five months elapsed between the German occupation of Lodz and February 8, 1940, when the decree ordering the formation of the ghetto appeared. The idea for the ghetto came earlier, however. On December 10, 1939, Friedrich Übelhoer (also spelled Uebelhoer and Übelhör), the president of the Lodz (originally Kalisch) administrative district (*Regierungspräsident*) issued a confidential memorandum discussing the establishment of a ghetto. For the text of the order and the memorandum that preceded it by two months, see Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 31–32, 23–26.

[00:21:01.64] ESTHER FOX: No, I didn't live in the ghetto. I lived far away from the ghetto.[57] But we had to move, there was a date given.[58]

[00:21:08.42] But my brother, the one who studied in Prague, uh, he came back before the war. He was an engineer, because that's what he studied, and he was used-- he changed the buildings, he built up-- with others, not only-- only one-- for a hospital.[59] And so he had some access more than I. I was, uh, completely helpless. He found a room where to move,[60] and we moved some, uh, a bed and such things, and we moved to the ghetto with my mother.

[00:21:38.54] And we moved, and people were moving. Others, you know, pushing themself a wagon. Nobody had a horse, and uh, there was no car, so they pushed around the back. Took a blanket or, uh, something to keep warm, a couple pots, and we moved. Everybody was going cold with children on the hand. It is not to describe in a few words.[61] This was tragic. A movie couldn't show it, because the picture and the crying and the tears, the-- a movie will never show that.

[00:22:11.74] JASCHAEL PERY: Now being a doctor in Lodz, and later, probably, you practiced as doctor in the ghetto.

[00:22:18.20] ESTHER FOX: Absolutely.

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[57] "I lived far away from the ghetto": Evidently, she was not among the many Jews residing in Baluty or the Old Town – the two densely populated, dilapidated sections of the city designated to house the ghetto. Note that this is her marital home, not the home in which she grew up.

[58] "there was a date given": The order of February 8, 1940 stipulated: "The whole relocation will be implemented by streets and areas, according to the pertinent regulations stating on which day and to which new residential section the inhabitants of each block of apartments will be obliged to move" (Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 32). For subsequent orders that shaped the moving process, see documents reprinted in Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006), 21–28.

[59] "built up…for a hospital": It appears that she is referring to the construction project executed around the beginning of 1940 to convert a former factory into a hospital – specifically the hospital for infectious diseases on Wesola Street. See Gordon J. Horowitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 40.

[60] "He found a room where to move": Because of Esther's brother's position, he was able to exert some influence and secure for his family a room that had rare luxuries in the ghetto: a gas stove and running water. See Esther Fox, USC SF-VHA, Int. 766 (1995), Segment 58. Most people simply had to make do with what the Housing Office of the Jewish Community assigned to them, and some were not even assigned accommodations before the moving deadline. See, for example, Sara Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window of my Home: Recollections from the Lodz Ghetto* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 39–40.

[61] "It is not to describe in a few words": For others' attempts to describe their emotionally and physically trying experiences of moving to the ghetto, see, for example, the accounts of Jakub Poznanski and Irena Liebman reprinted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 33–35; Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 2–11 (note that Mostowicz is referring to himself in the third person); Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 37–38.

[00:22:19.00] JASCHAEL PERY: From the beginning.

[00:22:19.87] ESTHER FOX: Yes.

[00:22:20.77] JASCHAEL PERY: So could you describe, how did organize the ghetto, and the *Judenrat*, and all this hier-- hierarchy there--

[00:22:30.55] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:22:31.24] JASCHAEL PERY: --while the ghetto was established?

[00:22:33.64] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. I know the episodes. That first of all, they start organizing, which, uh, we didn't have-- I don't say we, I wasn't involved in these things--

[00:22:41.47] JASCHAEL PERY: [UNCLEAR]

[00:22:42.25] ESTHER FOX: --practice how to run a government. But they started, they were smart people, intelligent, and there were some from the elite, the Jewish elite, which did not run away, because the majority ran away who had the means, and had the energy, or had the relatives, or whatever.[62] So they started organizing a *Judenrat*[63] and their *Älteste der Juden*,[64] which not at once maybe, I don't know exactly, the German assigned who has to be the Älteste.

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[62] "the majority ran away…": Some elites fled from the city; others were under arrest or keeping a low profile to avoid arrest. As the official ghetto archives staff reports: "The Jewish Community Board [of the pre-war Lodz Jewish Community] was decimated, and few members of the Council of Elders remained in the city" (reprinted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 19). Recording his thoughts on March 21, 1941, Jakub Szulman adds: "Right away [after the German invasion], almost everyone fled: the very rich, the community leaders, the intelligentsia, even the important government officials. Whatever the individual motivations, from the community's point of view it looked like desertion. Then others who had remained at their posts began leaving, one after another" (ibid., 87).

[63] "Judenrat": German word meaning Jewish Council. For the premier study, although limited in geographical scope, of Jewish Councils, see Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972). The term *Judenrat* was not used in the case of the Lodz Ghetto, however; *Ältestenrat* – Council of Elders – was to be the title.

[64] "Älteste der Juden": Also *Judenälteste*. German title meaning "Eldest of the Jews." On October 13, 1939, Lodz City Commissioner Leister named Chaim Rumkowski as *Älteste der Juden* in Lodz and thus made him responsible for "implement[ing] all orders by the German Civil Administration of the city of Lodz concerning persons of Jewish race" (Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 19). Leister's announcement charged Rumkowski with forming the Council of Elders with whom he was to confer regarding matters of the Jewish community. The circumstances surrounding Rumkowski's appointment as the Eldest of the Jews is the subject of great conjecture. For different interpretations, see, for example, Yankl Nirenberg, *Memoirs of the Lodz Ghetto*, trans. Vivian Felsen (Toronto: Lugus Libros, 2003), 23; Sinnreich, introduction to *Hidden Diary*, 30–31.

[00:23:09.40] Before there was a committee of 10 or something,[65] and the German called them, they arrested them, they killed them one night,[66] they arre-- so later was another, and they assigned-- I wouldn't say with complete certainty, but this was the first step or the next—Chaim Rumkowski[67] which was the *Älteste of the Juden*, he was the *Älteste* by age too,[68] because he was a grey old man. And so they called it *Älteste* by the office, but at the same time he by age was the *Älteste* too.

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[65] "a committee of 10 or something": The initial Council of Elders, also known as the Advisory Council (*Beirat*), comprised 31 men.

[66] "they killed them one night": For unknown reasons, on November 7, 1939, the Gestapo summoned the whole council to its headquarters in Lodz, and "with the exception of Rumkowski and two others, all were sent to prison and from there into a nearby penal camp in Radogoszcz (Ger: Radegast), where some were murdered by shooting and torture and five members were deported to Kraków in December" (Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 34). By early February 1940, Rumkowski had formed a second *Beirat* with 21 men.

[67] "Chaim Rumkowski": Chaim Rumkowski remains one of the most controversial Jewish figures of the Holocaust. Perceptions of him differ among survivors and historians. Lodz ghetto survivors tend to characterize the "Chairman" as a savior (for maintaining the Lodz Ghetto until August 1944, well after all other ghettos had been totally liquidated), a traitor (for allocating Jewish workers to German businesses; sending children, the elderly, and his personal enemies to their deaths in extermination camps; and for ruling over the ghetto in an autocratic and often cruel manner), or a combination thereof. For a book conveying a survivor's opinion (a deeply negative one) of Rumkowski, see Lucille Eichengreen with Rebecca Camhi Fromer, *Rumkowski and the Orphans of Lodz* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2002). Likewise, scholars and thinkers have presented Rumkowski in a variety of ways, but the majority address his combination of various characteristics. In fact, many utilize the words "ambiguous" and "ambiguity" in their discussions; see, for example, Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, 61; Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 226. For an insightful study of Rumkowski and scholars' portrayal of him, see Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

[68] "he was the eldest by age too": Born in 1877, Rumkowski was not, in fact, the oldest person in the ghetto; he was 63 years old when the ghetto was established. Several survivors remark that he behaved as if he were much younger. Lodz Ghetto survivor Yankl Nirenberg, for example, recalls that Rumkowski was "unusually energetic and active during his tenure," surmising that "power and the opportunity of ruling over 200,000 Jews gave him such satisfaction that he became reinvigorated and rejuvenated" (Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 23).

[00:23:42.58] And he had associates, which they assigned to him.[69] And there was one doctor who was assigned to be as the medical director of everything.[70] And we mobilized-- all the doctors,[71] not we, they-- uh, in each specialty, who will be this, who will be that. And, uh, we started working, there was no time to think.

[00:24:04.72] Later, after some times-- and you know, it was hard, because there was-- hours, they're strict that you were not allowed to go out.[72] And we physician had to go out. So-- and there were wires. How do you call it?

[00:24:18.57] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah, a--

[00:24:19.01] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:24:19.22] JASCHAEL PERY: --fe-- fence.

[00:24:19.86] ESTHER FOX: So the limit. So whoever was close to the wire, the German-- which were, uh, watching us, they were shooting, because they thought maybe you want to run away.[73] And some doctors were shot too, because we were going on calls. So later we even got a

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[69] "associates, which they assigned to him": The members of both the first and the second advisory councils were not assigned to Rumkowski; he picked them. According to ghetto inhabitant Yisroel Tabaksblat, the members of the second Advisory Council were "persons of the third rank, with little public sense and still less sense of responsibility for the great tasks that stood before them" (quoted in Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 35). Rumkowski's chief concern in assembling this group was hardly its members' capabilities. Offering insight into his priorities, the Elder declared to memoirist Edward Reicher, "My councilors must offer me their solid support" (Reicher, *Country of Ash*, 52). In the end, the second council "never had any influence"; the body simply existed "to help him govern" (Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 23). For insight into how the council drifted into the background and how Rumkowski came to rule in an autocratic manner, see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 35–36.

[70] "the medical director of everything": From the Health Department's establishment on October 20, 1939 until the closing of the ghetto on May 1, 1940, Dr. Dawid Helman served as the chief medical officer. Dr. Leon Szykier was his successor and served in that position until he resigned in April 1941. The Health Department's administrative director was Józek Rumkowski, the brother of Chaim Rumkowski. See Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 176, 180.

[71] "all the doctors": When the ghetto was established, it contained about 128 doctors (Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 55). The number fluctuated due to doctors' deaths and the influx of doctors from elsewhere. Prior to October 1941, approximately 170 Jewish doctors worked in the ghetto (Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 57).

[72] "hours, they're strict that you were not allowed to go out": Jews were originally free to move about the ghetto between the hours of 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. but was subsequently shifted to 7.00 p.m. Only Rumkowski, ghetto police, doctors, medics, and administrators (with Rumkowski's authorization) were exempt. Beginning on May 16, 1940, new hours went into effect: 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.; see ghetto archivists' records reprinted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 58–59.

[73] "So whoever was close to the wire…": For insight into the numerous policies ordering ghetto border guards to "sho[o]t without warning," see Schutzpolizei Kommando (signed Keuck), Special Order, 12 April 1941, in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 120–21. For insight into the frequency of and (reported) circumstances surrounding such shootings at the ghetto perimeter, refer to Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The*

special hat with a red, uh, band around,[74] so the so-- soldiers should know, not because they loved us more than others, but they needed a doctor. There were not so many, and they were afraid of epidemics,[75] which could catch them too.

[00:24:52.12] So this what they gave as the protection, the hat, that the Germans should at least not shoot at us. And we were running day and nights, too.[76] And the younger doctors, to whom I belonged at that time, were assigned to work besides in the daytime making house calls[77] and the ambulatory visits to make, uh, to run the, uh, emergency, uh, thing-- uh, service.[78] So also, everything on a *dorożka* and we were going from call to another.

Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941-1944 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); see, for example, entries from April 4, 6, and 10, 1941. For descriptions of shootings in border areas, see, for example, Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 28. It is interesting to note that, between November 28, 1940 and May 1941, ghetto perimeter guard duty was performed by Reserve Police Battalion 101, which has gained notoriety as the subject of Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998 [1992]), here 41.

[74] "a special hat with a red and around": Doctors initially received armbands with a red cross; at a later point, they received caps; see Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 120. For a description of the cap, see ibid., 108.

[75] "they were afraid of epidemics": Nazi officials were notoriously "afraid of typhus most of all" (ibid., 26).

[76] "running day and nights, too": For another doctor's description of the incessant demands on physicians, see ibid., 53. The overwork, paired with the horrible conditions in the ghetto, claimed many doctors' lives, including six physicians who died in the weeks prior to April 18, 1941; see Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of the Jewish Physicians*, 210.

[77] "house calls": Because hospital facilities were not nearly sufficient given the number of people in need of medical attention and because many patients were not physically able to reach a hospital, it was necessary for doctors to make house calls. Visits to sick patients could involve the prescription and dispensing of medications and the performance of basic procedures when indicated. Of her brother's treatment for water in his lungs, for example, Sara Selver-Urbach recalls: "The various medicines that the doctor prescribed did not help, so he drew out the fluid with a huge syringe that he stuck in David's back" (Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 85). According to Shlomo Frank's diary entry for April 18, 1941, doctors made 71,102 home visits between May 1940 and the date of his writing (Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians*, 210). For figures over several timespans, see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 57.

[78] "ambulatory visits…emergency service": Doctors on emergency service shifts were responsible for responding to medical emergencies, and they had use of two droshkies to reduce travel time. Yet, as former emergency service doctor Arnold Mostowicz recalls, patients had to wait at least several hours to receive medical attention, because, so many required immediate medical attention and, in the general absence of telephones, the response would often have to be initiated with an in-person visit to the office of the emergency service; see Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 47. Note that while "Health Department institutions" had some of the 120 telephone numbers in the ghetto (Litzmannstadt Getto, Plac Koscielny, https://www.lodz-ghetto.com/plac_koscielny.html,8 [accessed July 31, 2019]), those making the emergency phone calls did not necessarily have access to a phone to make an emergency request. Shlomo Frank recorded that the emergency ambulance service received 17,056 calls between May 1940 and April 18, 1941 (Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians*, 210).

[00:25:24.04] And they organized, yes, hospitals.[79] But later on, they divided the ghetto in two parts.[80] And in between was the-- the-- the-- the-- the-- the normal street with the tram with people, so as we Jews shouldn't mingle with them, they built a bridge. So if we go from one part of the ghetto to the other, we had to climb up a bridge, go up and down, and then backward.

[00:25:49.15] And if we had to go to put a patient to a hospital, which was on the other side of the ghetto, patient which was ambulatory but in a *dorożka* so the gate they opened for the *dorożka* but not for-- uh, for pedestrian, not even we, we had to pass and in a quickie. And in the entrance of the ghetto was written, it is *Seuchengefahr*.[81] It meant-- it means it is dangerous for epidemics, not to go there closer-- uh, close. So we were isolated completely in our own-- like Hitler said, we will, uh, perish in our own-- Je-- Jews, what we are there.[82]

--SEGMENT 5--

[00:26:36.19] JASCHAEL PERY: Now you lived in the ghetto from the real beginning, which means in the beginning of 1940.

[00:26:44.76] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:26:45.50] JASCHAEL PERY: Until '44.

[00:26:47.13] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. When I was, uh, deported--

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[79] "hospitals": By June 1940, the ghetto contained five functioning hospitals. Other medical facilities included outpatient clinics, preventive care clinics, and a maternity clinic. For further information about the ghetto's various hospitals and medical facilities, see Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt*, 177; Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians*, 209. Especially for patient statistics, see also, Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 57. By 1943-1944, German authorities reduced medical services in the ghetto, leaving just two hospitals and four laboratories; Wulman et al., *The Martyrdom of Jewish Physicians*, 210. Workshops took over the spaces that were formerly hospitals.

[80] "they divided the ghetto into two parts": As a result of two important roads passing through it, the ghetto was actually divided into three parts, one of which was much smaller than the others (probably why Esther, as well as many other survivors, recalls two parts).

[81] "Seuchengefahr": German word meaning "disease risk." The word appeared on signs at the ghetto perimeter to warn people on the outside that the ghetto was an epidemic hazard and thus to keep them away from the Jewish enclave. In doing so, German authorities made use of an old trope that Jews were carriers of disease and mobilized the concept to justify the isolation of the Jews and the establishment of the ghetto from the beginning. See, for example, Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 59. As historian Dan Michmann explains, German officials "offered a justification in principle for concentrating the Jews in a ghetto, based mainly on a pseudo-hygienic argument lifted from the racist ideology: the Jews were a 'plague spot'" (Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81). The lack of sanitation and food and the overabundance of people turned the warning into a self-fulfilling prophecy, as epidemics took hold.

[82] "like Hitler said…": It is unclear whether Hitler ever made such a public pronouncement.

[00:26:48.82] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:26:49.19] ESTHER FOX: --when they would liquidated the ghetto.

[00:26:50.45] JASCHAEL PERY: During these years, let's see, do you recall some special actions and--

[00:26:56.63] ESTHER FOX: Mm-hmm.

[00:26:57.13] JASCHAEL PERY: --some special activity-- which they had a lot there, probably. Being, I mean, living as an inmate in the ghetto, you probably experienced it personally.

[00:27:08.22] ESTHER FOX: [INAUDIBLE] We experienced every hour and every minute. It wasn't a [UNCLEAR] experience. Because first of all, we experienced what we experienced, the cold,[83] and the epidemics,[84] and the hunger,[85] and the des-- desperation, and people died in the street, but later on.[86] But main thing, they were-- in the beginning, they or-- it was as they took

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[83] "cold": In an illustrative passage in one of his ghetto notebooks, Viennese writer Oskar Rosenfeld writes, "The temperature dropped to 19 degrees below (Celsius). Keys froze in the keyholes. In the rooms lay frozen mice next to shoes and refuse, too weak (like the human beings) to tear them with their teeth" (Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning was the Ghetto: Notebooks from Łódź*, ed. Hanno Loewy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 31; also in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 212). Ghetto inhabitants typically lacked housing and clothing to insulate them from the bitter cold winter air. Furthermore, they generally had insufficient materials (e.g., coal and wood) with which to heat their homes.

[84] "epidemics": Arnold Mostowicz, a fellow ghetto doctor, recalls that, in addition to hunger, the most prevalent causes of death were tuberculosis, dysentery, and typhus (Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 46). Influenza also reached epidemic proportions; for insight into the human toll of the flu epidemic of January 1944, see Rywka Lipszyc, *Rywka's Diary: The Writings of a Jewish Girl from the Lodz Ghetto, Found at Auschwitz in 1945 and Published Seventy Years Later*, ed. Anita Friedman (Berkeley: Lehrhaus Judaica, 2014), 93–98.

[85] "hunger": Hunger was widespread, and it was a constant presence from the beginning. When the food supply was at its greatest – mid-1940 – the average ghetto resident consumed about 1,800 calories per day, an insufficient total for those engaged in labor. By the end of the following year, the average daily caloric intake reached only 700 to 900; see Alan Adelson, Robert Lapides, and Marek Webb, "A Collected Consciousness," in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, xvii–xviii. Making matters worse, the price of food on the black market became exorbitant. For example, in 1941 the cost of a loaf of bread on the black market was 10 to 15 Marks; by 1944 the price had increased to 500 to 1,500 Marks (Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 19). Hunger became so acute in the ghetto that many Jews sought to be included on transports from which others never returned (ibid., 45). For a survivor's recollection of rations and fluctuations in food availability, see ibid., 68–69. For a scholarly discussion of the topic of food distribution and hunger in the ghetto, see, for example, Sinnreich, introduction to *Hidden Diary*, 34–50.

[86] "people died in the streets, but later on": The effects of hunger did not manifest immediately; malnutrition did not kill right away. By January 1941, however, deaths due to hunger were hardly uncommon and on January 18, 1941, Icek Mendel, aged 34, died of "exhaustion caused by hunger" (Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 11).

out people whom they wanted from the hospitals,[87] let's say sick, in middle of the night, they came, they took out.

[00:27:36.97] In the beginning, people wanted to go to a hospital, because it was warm, it was clean, there was a meal. So people even begged the doctor, "Take me in for a few days, maybe I will recover a little bit"; they did.[88] So one night-- but this was later on-- they were not the German also so organized at once, they took out the middle of the night whoever was there.[89] And that this was one thing, which I'm talking more concentrating on hospital aspect, but otherwise, they were *Aktions*, selections.[90]

[00:28:08.68] And when I myself, when I walked out from the house, I only prayed when I come back that I found my mother home, because I might come home and she will not be there.

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[87] "in the beginning,…they took out people whom they wanted": Esther is likely recalling one or both of the relatively small-scale selections of approximately 40 (in March 1940) and 60 patients (July 1941), whom Nazi authorities deemed mentally ill and thus targeted for death under the rubric of "euthanasia"; see Löw, *Juden*, 183–84, and see also the introductory essay.

[88] "maybe I will recover a little bit; they did": People who went to the hospital for treatment had a chance of returning home (almost) healed. For example, recalling her brother's poor condition, Sara Selver-Urbach recalls: "David was taken to the hospital where the nursing and the food were far better than what he'd received at home. A fortnight later he returned to us almost fully recovered" (Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 85–86).

[89] "later on…they took out the middle of the night whoever was there": The major hospital *Aktion* occurred on September 1-2, 1942; see relevant entries in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 248–50. For personal accounts, see, for example, Sierakowiak Diary, 212, 214 (also excerpted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 319–20); Josef Zelkowicz, "In Those Nightmarish Days," in *In Those Nightmarish Days: The Ghetto Reportage of Peretz Opoczynski and Josef Zelkowicz*, ed. Samuel D. Kassow (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 188–94 (also excerpted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 320–28).The hospital patients were taken to the Chelmno (Pol: Chełmno, Ger: Kulmhof) extermination facility, where they were asphyxiated in gas vans. For further information about Chelmno, see Shmuel Krakowski, *Chełmno: A Small Village in Europe: The First Nazi Mass Extermination Camp* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Patrick Montague, *Chelmno and the Holocaust: The History of Hitler's First Death Camp* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

[90] "Aktions, selections": In addition to major *Aktions*, such as the hospital *Aktion* and the *Sperre* (see below), deportations and arrests occurred in various phases and at unpredictable times; see, for example, Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 229–38. The Jewish Order Police generally carried out these roundups, acting on orders from Rumkowski, who, in turn, was following the commands of German officials to deliver Jews for extermination in Chelmno or Auschwitz or for work in forced labor camps for Jews (*Zwangsarbeitslager für Juden*); see, for example, Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 173–74. For information on the forced labor camps for Jews to which Lodz Ghetto inhabitants were sent and the bureaucratic and economic contexts for this labor recruitment, see Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 177–213. Beyond Gruner's work, there is minimal English-language scholarship on these forced labor camps; for studies in German, see, for example, Michael Alberti, *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Juden im Reichsgau Wartheland 1939-1945* [The persecution and extermination of Jews in the Reichsgau Wartheland 1939-1945] (Berlin: Wiesbaden Harrassowitz, 2006), 283–300.

It was never, which streets, will section, you never knew. But luckily, she was as long as I was together.

[00:28:24.70] There was one action that was called the *Sperre*[91] and this was-- they said first that they will take children, an *Aktion* to liquidate the children. So was running everybody to the doctors to give a certificate, because the child-- what is a child, 10 years, 8 years, 12 years-- to make them older.[92] A child, give that he is older. So we did. We didn't know what to do is better.

[00:28:49.95] But what was the end, when they came to take like the children, the parents-- one friend of mine, a person, a classmate from school, uh, put the children in a closet and, and put the boards, clothes, like not to see.[93] And she went out for this selection, because they were supposed to take the children. Meanwhile, they took anybody, everybody. And the children remain, nobody knew.

[00:29:15.25] And later when this was wood, and people broke the houses because it was cold and wasn't a built house, they opened the house, they found two skeletons because nobody knew that over there were hidden children.[94] So you cannot describe this in a few words, it means what happened. And we never knew who is alive and who was taken away or not.

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[91] "Sperre": Yid. *shpere*. Short for *Gehsperre*, this German word signifies "curfew." In this context, however, "the Sperre" refers to a central event in the history of the Lodz Ghetto: the roundup of children (*Kinderaktion*), as well as the elderly, for deportation to their deaths in Chelmno on September 5-12, 1942. The *Aktion* – the combined work of the Jewish Police and German forces (mostly Gestapo and Security Police) – claimed the lives of approximately 16,500 Jews, at least 600 of whom were shot in the ghetto; see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 241–47; see relevant entry (dated September 14, 1942) in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 250–55. For powerful contemporaneous narratives, see, for example, Zelkowicz, "In Those Nightmarish Days," 236–309 (excerpts appear in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 336–48); Heniek Fogel, *A Hidden Diary from the Łódź Ghetto, 1942-1944* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 145–52. For the text of Rumkowski's infamous "Give me your children" speech, see Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 328–31.

[92] "to make them older": This was not the only way Jewish doctors were in a position to influence ghetto inhabitants' fates with respect to deportations. On orders from German officials, the doctors also performed physical examinations of all those whose names appeared on a deportation list. In some cases, the deportees were destined for labor camps, especially those in the vicinity of Posen (Pol: Poznań); in other cases, the destination was Chelmno, which meant death. Hinting that he belonged to an underground organization, Mostowicz recalls receiving a very specific assignment to perform a very specific task for the resistance movement: "to save from deportation some persons from among those whom the ghetto authorities had designated to be deported by qualifying them as capable of working inside the ghetto"; Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 99. For a scholarly discussion of the ethical dilemmas the Lodz doctors' Warsaw colleagues encountered, see Miriam Offer, "Ethical Dilemmas in the Work of Doctors and Nurses in the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 25 (2012): 467–92.

[93] "put the children in a closet and, and put the boards, clothes, like not to see": Many parents hid children in order to save them from capture during the *Sperre*. For a description of this practice, see Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 95.

[94] "nobody knew that over there were hidden children": This was not a rare occurrence; Lodz Ghetto survivor Sara Selver-Urbach reports that "babies and children were discovered dead in all kinds of

[00:29:36.98] And I saw myself, that a mother put in the garbage can, a child. She thought maybe-- we thought in the beginning, it's real, the children, but it wasn't. It was everybody. So they found-- the child started crying, so took out the child, he took the child and hit the brain, the head over a wall, and the whole brain-- this is a picture for plain people who were that exhausted to the-- to the edge from everything else. So such pictures is not to tell you one or two, it was constant fear, day or night.

[00:30:13.82] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, uh, in addition of all these actions, which-- which were going on--

[00:30:23.17] ESTHER FOX: Action, yeah.

[00:30:24.24] JASCHAEL PERY: And deportations started from time to time, children and sick people, and non-sick people, there was a lot of starvation in ghetto, a lot of sickness, and a lot of death because of all this.

[00:30:38.90] ESTHER FOX: Yes.

[00:30:39.46] JASCHAEL PERY: What could you tell us about-- as a physician--

[00:30:42.54] ESTHER FOX: Well, it--

[00:30:42.92] JASCHAEL PERY: --about this?

[00:30:43.73] ESTHER FOX: Well, there was [INAUDIBLE]. Starvation, this is a thing which we couldn't do anything about it. Also, they opened *Ressorts*,[95] working places, and everybody had to work, because being there, you got the soup. And if you didn't work, you didn't get the soup.[96] There were a rations which we got every two weeks, which was-- could last by normal condition for maybe for three days. So you have to divide it.

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hideouts. The parents of these children had been snatched or killed during the 'Aktion' and no one else knew about their hidden children" (ibid., 98).

[95] "Ressorts": An abbreviation of the German *Arbeitsressort*, which literally means "labor department." In Lodz Ghetto parlance, however, the word indicated the factories and workshops that emerged in the ghetto. They were manifestations of Rumkowski's strategy of saving the ghetto by making it economically and materially valuable to German authorities. Furthermore, a portion of the money generated by these facilities went towards supplies for the ghetto. The largest section of ghetto industry was dedicated to textiles, and its major branch was tailoring. In addition, the Central Workshops Bureau "coordinated the production of a diverse assortment of hats gloves, shoes, knitwear, undergarments, leather goods, rubberized coats, quilts, carpeting, and metal products" (Gordon J. Horwitz, *Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2008), 124.

[96] "if you didn't work, you didn't get the soup": In line with Rumkowski's insistence that work was the only way for the ghetto to survive, workers received larger rations than those who did not work. For details of the different distribution schemes, see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 111–14. For example, as memoirist Nirenberg explains, "on a daily basis thousands of workers on their way home from work received a

[00:31:10.93] But the soup was the main thing. And everybody walked with such a-- a-- a can around,[97] everybody. A doctor, not a doctor, an older child, a-- a three-year-old child, for the soup, to get the soup. And when you got the soup, you measured where it was plain water or was a potato in the soup. It's hard to talk about, because this is the humiliation of everything. This is my personal, uh, in addition to the physical aspect of everything--

[00:31:41.07] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:31:41.47] ESTHER FOX: --that we were like rats,[98] running around in this ghetto, really. Like rats who try to survive to-- to remain alive. No, and the-- the-- the *Ressorts* were working for the German, which is, we can call it maybe collaboration,[99] because we supplied-- I never worked in a-- in a *Ressort*, I wasn't even a physician of a *Ressort*. But there were others which they did uniforms for soldiers, boots, shoes, this.

[00:32:09.38] It means we supplied the army.[100] But this was one way of maybe surviving. And there was the one,

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good supper including 150 grams of meat in special soup kitchens set up for this purpose": Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 70. Biebow improved the situation further for workers who performed heavy labor, worked long hours, or held the night shift; see ibid., 74–75; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 112.

[97] "everybody walked with such a can around": Other ghetto inhabitants also recalled an image of everyone walking around clutching cans or bowls of soup. For instance, on June 2, 1942, ghetto chronicler Jozef Zelkowicz wrote, "Neither the bridge nor the barbed wire nor the gate stand as the ghetto's fitting symbol. These are mere accessories; external, decorative signs and nothing more. The ghetto's real symbol is the soup bowl…" (Zelkowicz, "Hold On to That Bowl," in *In Those Nightmarish Days*, 185–86).

[98] "we were like rats": The description of Jews as devolving into animals or displaying animalistic tendencies as a result of their living conditions is a common motif in contemporaneous and survivor accounts. In fact, Esther makes a similar comment in Segment 9. For another example of this analogy, see Zelkowicz: "In the Bałuty Apartments, Łódź Ghetto: The Girl Has to Sleep Alone: In the Fourth Apartment," *In Those Nightmarish Days*, 111.

[99] "the *Ressorts* were working for the German…collaboration": The goods produced in the *Ressorts* benefitted Germany's wartime economy and generated money for their captors. Likely compounding the perception of collaboration were the visits of Nazi dignitaries, including Heinrich Himmler and the Warthegau's Reich Governor Arthur Greiser, to witness firsthand the productivity of the ghetto inhabitants. For a description of these visits, see Horwitz, *Ghettostadt*, 130.

[100] "we supplied the army": Products of the ghetto *Ressorts*, especially uniforms, supplied the German military, and by helping the military, ghetto workers were supporting the war effort of the side that kept them in the ghetto and sent others, including friends and family, to their deaths. Yet, at the same time, the importance of their work to the German military gave their lives value, while countless other Jews were killed because German officials deemed those lives entirely insignificant.

--SEGMENT 6--

the leader of the ghetto, Biebow,[101] I think he tried to save his own life by leading the ghetto with the *Ressort*. He himself didn't go to a-- to the front, and so were others.

[00:32:28.86] So now if I may go a little bit, that was horrible things, because the policy which our *Judenälteste*, Rumkowski, should I talk about that?

[00:32:38.37] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah, of course.

[00:32:38.79] ESTHER FOX: Uh, this-- I don't know how right he was, how wrong he was, because he obeyed the German. And maybe he would not obey, would nobody remained in the ghetto.[102] But if you want to be honorable, and stand like to say, die on your feet and not to-- to live on your knees,[103] uh, you-- we shouldn't have had this. But this is good for individuals, but not to-- so-- so the history will judge him how right or how wrong he was.

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[101] "Biebow": Hans Biebow, the head of the Ghetto Administration (*Gettoverwaltung*), was the German official to whom Rumkowski had to report and whose orders the Jewish Elder had to carry out. His greatest interest – and what made him more valuable to the Nazi regime in Lodz than at the front – was in the success of the ghetto as a financial venture and manufacturing hub due to the products of its factories and workshops. For more on Biebow's efforts, see Michal Unger, "Jewish Forced Labor in the Lodz Ghetto and Its Influence on German Policy," in *Fenomen getta łódzkiego, 1940-1945* [The phenomenon of the Lodz ghetto, 1940-1945], eds. Pawła Samusia and Wiesława Pusia (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersystetu Łódzkiego, 2006), 169–183. Biebow had limited interaction with the ghetto's Jews, with the exceptions of Rumkowski and Aharon Jakubowicz, the director of the Central Office of Labor Workshops. He became more of a physical presence near the time of the ghetto's liquidation, as he delivered speeches to convince Jews to leave the ghetto; see, for example, Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 88. For general biographical information on Biebow, see Shmuel Krakowski, "Biebow, Hans," in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, ed. Yisrael Gutman (New York: Macmillan, 1995). On the Ghetto Administration and Biebow's work there, the best source is Peter Klein, *Die "Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt" 1940 bis 1944: Eine Dienststelle im Spannungsfeld von Kommunalbürokratie und staatlicher Verfolgungspolitik* [The "Litzmannstadt Ghetto Administration" 1940 through 1944: an office at the tense intersection of municipal bureaucracy and state persecution policy] (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

[102] "…would nobody remained in the ghetto": Here Esther is questioning whether Rumkowski's policies were right or wrong in strategic terms. For insight into Rumkowski's reasoning surrounding putting ghetto inhabitants to work to pay for the upkeep of the population, see a memorandum dated April 5, 1940 and reprinted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 45–46. In the most basic terms, his strategy of making the ghetto population valuable to the Reich's economy and war effort through the manufacture of products in ghetto workshops kept thousands of Jews alive until August 1944, by which point all other Jewish communities in Poland had been destroyed. As commentators such as Mostowicz reason, had the assassination attempt on Hitler's life succeeded in the prior month or had the Soviet Army not stalled at the Vistula River, Rumkowski's strategy would have paid off; see Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 124.

[103] "die on your feet and not to live on your knees": Such rhetoric is found elsewhere, such as an undated leaflet entitled "Appeal from the Committee to Protect the Jewish Ghetto Population from

[00:33:06.35] But being in the ghetto, he abused his power, too. He was an older man, and he once was something in the hospital. I didn't work in this, because I lived on the one side of the bridge, and the doctors who lived on the other side worked in the other hospital. It was something with the nurses, he was going and giving-- uh, hits one nurse, another nurse. And so, so the doctor who was on chief objected, so he almost hit him too.

[00:33:34.88] So these were inner things, painful to mention too. But history will judge this, I am not going to say what was right and what was wrong.[104] But was a lot of abuses and a lot of things which shouldn't have happened.[105] But as you say, you, uh, by-- it is self-preservation. I am not going into psychology right now, I don't think so you have-- and I don't want to even be the judge of all this.

[00:34:01.68] JASCHAEL PERY: Ah. Looking backward again about this starvation, and the illness, and sickness, and the conditions in the ghetto, do you think that all this was planned ahead by the Germans, the situation in the ghetto, before the liquidation?

[00:34:23.96] ESTHER FOX: I will tell you, I don't think so, whether the German were so smart to know what will happen. Because Litzmannstadt was the worst, I think, what they said, was hermetic-- hermetically closed. Nobody could get in and nobody could get out.[106] And if somebody tried, most of the time was shot.

Hunger," which calls upon people to "demonstrate that we would rather die by the sword than from hunger"; Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 163–64, here 164.

[104] "what was right and what was wrong": In contrast to the questioning of the success or failure of Rumkowski's *strategy*, Esther appears to be addressing here a *moral judgment* of Rumkowski's actions. It is important to note that she (largely) abstains from passing judgment in both cases, but moral judgment, in the case of Jewish functionaries such as Rumkowski, is practically inevitable. For a discussion of the inevitability of such judgment, especially as it pertains to the representation of these functionaries, see Adam Brown, *Judging "Privileged" Jews: Holocaust Ethics, Representation, and the "Grey Zone"* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), esp. 3–31. For a compelling and rather objective moral assessment of Rumkowski, see Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 111–26.

[105] "a lot of abuses…shouldn't have happened": The excesses for which Rumkowski is most condemned include his formation of summary courts, his jailing of political opponents, and his harsh treatment of those who only committed petty offences in the face of starvation. The political opponents and "criminals" who went to jail were among the first to be deported from the ghetto to their deaths in Chelmno or to forced labor camps. See, for example, Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 20; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 44–45. Esther may also be referring to Rumkowski's rumored sexual predilection for young girls. For survivor accounts related to Rumkowski's alleged sexual abuses (both before and during the war), see, for example, Lucille Eichengreen with Rebecca Camhi Fromer, *Rumkowski and the Orphans of Lodz* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2000); Reicher, *Country of Ash*, 47–48.

[106] "hermetically closed…nobody could get out": Although the separation between the Lodz ghetto inhabitants and the world beyond the ghetto's boundaries was much more stringent than in other ghettos, the ghetto was not hermetically sealed. For example, around the summer of 1942, Jews could bribe the Gestapo to allow them to go from Lodz to Warsaw: Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 54. For the experiences of a Jewish smuggler who brought goods into the ghetto, see the account of Leo Laufer printed in Diane Plotkin, "Smuggling in the Ghettos: Survivor Accounts from the Warsaw, Łódź, and

[00:34:41.00] And they-- the-- the rations which they gave us, the food was so limited that [UNCLEAR] we had medical confe-- conferences, meetings.[107] You know, we-- we wanted to keep up a certain standard. And they brought in doctors from abroad, from Czechoslovakia, from Germany.[108] There was one who counted this kind of diet,[109] which we have as a starvation diet, without working.[110]

[00:35:02.57] And with working, how-- the-- the thousand calories or something, uh, a day with working, that this was impossible. But we-- we lasted more than-- than theoretically it should have, uh, be. So the German couldn't predict what will be, because there was ty--

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Kraków Ghettos," in *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. Eric J. Sterling (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 105–10.

[107] "medical conferences and meetings": It is possible that Esther is referring to the numerous nutrition-related talks that Dr. Wilhelm Caspari delivered to doctors in the ghetto between February 1942 and December 1943 (Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 436).

[108] "they brought in doctors from abroad, from Czechoslovakia, from Germany": The ghetto population included many doctors from these countries, because the Lodz Ghetto became a destination for Jews deported from Czechoslovakia and Germany, as well as Austria and Luxembourg. According to Mostowicz, the initial group of deportees who arrived from Germany in the autumn of 1941 contained "quite a sizeable group of doctors"; Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 41.

[109] "There was one who counted this kind of diet": This is likely a reference to Dr. Wilhelm Caspari, who arrived in the Lodz Ghetto in an October 1941 transport from Frankfurt. The acclaimed medical researcher "occupied himself with compiling tables relating the mortality rate to the caloric and vitamin content of the ghetto diet." For further information about Caspari, see his obituary, included in the entry for January 21, 1944 in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 435–36, here 436. While it is unclear what came of his work in progress, the results of an ambitious research study conducted in the Warsaw Ghetto under the direction of Dr. Israel Milejkowski have survived and have yielded information that remains relevant to current medical practice; see Myron Winick, ed., *Hunger Disease: Studies by the Jewish Physicians in the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Martha Osnos (New York: Wiley, 1979). For a description of Milejkowski's starvation study, see Myron Winick, "Jewish Medical Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Jewish Medical Resistance in the Holocaust*, ed. Michael A. Grodin (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 103–5.

[110] "a starvation diet, without working": Those who did not work did not get extra food rations, which were distributed at job sites. One particularly detrimental rule was that the sick, since they were not working, did not receive coupons for food; see, for example, Fogel, *Hidden Diary*, 113–14. Yet, food is exactly what they needed in order to recover from their illnesses.

tuberculosis.[111] They knew, but I don't know whether they were talk-- thinking of everything. There was typhoid,[112] was-- was, uh, diarrhea,[113] and the avitaminosis,[114] people suffered.

[00:35:33.35] And bone, uh, fractures,[115] because everything of weakness. I don't know whether they know. And if yes, so what do they care? They were dying at least 100, uh, people a day--[116]

[00:35:46.15] JASCHAEL PERY: No, I saw-- I read some--

[00:35:46.70] ESTHER FOX: --laying in the street.

[00:35:48.14] JASCHAEL PERY: I read somewhere that they did, they planned it purposely this way.[117]

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[111] "tuberculosis": This disease, typically the result of the infection of the lung with a bacterium, is most prevalent in overcrowded and malnourished populations. Its presence in the ghetto was therefore hardly surprising. For a discussion of the threat of "endemic tuberculosis" in the ghetto, see the entry for June 2, 1944 in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 497.

[112] "typhoid": Also known as "typhoid fever," the disease results from the consumption of food or water contaminated with feces containing the bacterium. Because of poor sanitary conditions and limited hygienic measures in the ghetto, epidemics of typhoid claimed countless lives. For a description of the toll that the Winter 1942 typhoid epidemic took on a single family, see Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 86–89.

[113] "diarrhea": Esther is likely referring to the occurrence of diarrhea due to dysentery, a disease of the lower intestine caused by several possible pathogens (i.e., bacteria or amoebae). Epidemics of dysentery are more common in insufficiently sanitary conditions, and one that arose in the first year of the ghetto's existence claimed the lives of almost 25 percent of the population; Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 53.

[114] "avitaminosis": vitamin deficiency.

[115] "bone fractures": The prevalence of bone fractures was probably due to vitamin insufficiencies, particularly of calcium and of vitamin D, which stemmed from the lack of nutrient-rich food.

[116] "they were dying at least 100 people a day": While the daily death rate fluctuated, it rarely (if ever) reached 100. Between the ghetto's establishment and mid-October 1941, the daily death rate peaked at 55 in June 1940 during the dysentery epidemic; see entry for October 1–15, 1941 in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 79. In February 1942, the average rate reached above 67; see ibid., 127. The number climbed higher the following month, when 2,244 died, bringing the average daily mortality rate up to 72; see ibid., 132. For a table with annual mortality rates in the Lodz Ghetto (in comparison with those in the Warsaw Ghetto) for the years 1940, 1941, and 1942, see Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, li.

[117] "I read somewhere that they did, they planned it purposely this way": Although Pery's actual source is unclear, the narrative that Nazis established the ghettos with massive Jewish mortality in mind was once widely accepted. That perspective is in line with what has become known as the "intentionalist" approach to Holocaust history. Proponents of this point of view claim that Nazis, and Hitler in particular, aimed to annihilate Jews from the very beginning of the Third Reich; see, for example, Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*. "Functionalists," on the other hand, argue that the path towards the attempted annihilation of European Jewry was a "twisted" one, that the murder of the Jews of Europe was the product of situations that developed over time; see, for example, Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews 1933-1939* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

[00:35:51.45] ESTHER FOX: Maybe. I-- I don't think so, they were so smart, because nobody could predict that it will look like that. Uh-- uh, nobody, even after you can evaluate it. So before, if they were so smart, so too bad, that they were so smart.

[00:36:04.94] JASCHAEL PERY: Now did-- about supplying medicines and all this that time, I'm-- I'm talking about the standard of that years.

[00:36:13.72] ESTHER FOX: It was very poor. We had the minimum thing.[118] What, what do they care? Why should they get-- if they gave something, it's for their preservation, not for our, that they shouldn't catch the sickness and they shouldn't spread to them, but not because they wanted to save our lives.[119]

[00:36:31.49] And in the ghetto, we tried-- I say we, but I wasn't active in that-- to made, uh, uh, the periphery of the ghetto where a little fresh air is such a place for--

[00:36:42.89] JASCHAEL PERY: Recuper--

For a concise overview of this debate, see Christopher R. Browning, "The Decision-Making Process," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 173–96. Regarding the Lodz ghetto, the "intentionalist" argument cited by the interviewer has been discredited. Nazi documents reveal that the ghetto was originally to be a short-term measure and that subsequent circumstances and multiple German officials (e.g., Biebow, Litzmannstadt District President Friedrich Uebelhoer, and Reich Governor of the Warthegau Artur Greiser) who sought to keep the Lodz Ghetto inhabitants alive for their labor capacity, influenced the conditions in the ghetto. For a concise discussion of this transition in the nature of the ghetto and the German officials involved in (and financially benefiting from) the expansion of ghetto industry, see Michal Unger, "Jewish Forced Labor in the Lodz Ghetto and Its Influence on German Policy," in *Fenomen Getta Łódzkiego*,169–83.

[118] "We had the minimum thing": This is echoed in Selver-Urbach's memoir: "The doctors did their utmost with the limited means at their disposal. One doctor sat with father for hours, giving him injections of transpulmin [to treat pneumonia] and other treatments"; *Through the Window*, 42. For a list of other medications available to doctors for injection, see the entry for September 23, 1943 in Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 384.

[119] "Why should they get…not because they wanted to save our lives": Of course, out of self-interest, German officials sought to avoid the spread of illnesses beyond the ghetto's boundaries. Esther does not provide the full picture, however. In addition to concern for their own health, German officials had concern for their own wallets and for supplying the Reich with cheap goods. Officials in many levels of the government – municipal, district, and regional – and the military had a stake in the productivity of the ghetto's factories; see, for example, Unger, "Jewish Forced Labor," esp. 175, 177, 182. Thus, to maintain at least a barely functional workforce, it behooved officials to procure some medical supplies to mitigate the threat that illnesses would wipe out the Jews' labor capacity.

[00:36:43.74] ESTHER FOX: --recuperation for a sickness or weakness,[120] for a week to go for children's colony.[121] But this were art--, art-- artificial mean-- means of survival, it couldn't be. But the situation which was there, somebody was stronger survive and the weaker, because this-- the people who were very well off before took it worse than-- than the, the other who were used more to poverty.

[00:37:09.11] And besides, when they brought over from-- by liquidating other cities-- I don't know, whether Berlin, or from Prague, and from Czechoslovakia,[122] they brought to us-- these people came dressed and with suitcases with the big shots.[123] I will say it like that, they didn't-- they didn't know where they are going. And when they saw this, what happened going on, they were just-- they didn't know what's going on.[124] And they were right away down, because they couldn't take it, the cold, and-- and the condition, and the hunger at once.[125] We made it gradually. So the-- the-- the rate of death was tremendous.

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[120] "recuperation for a sickness or weakness": This began on Rumkowski's initiative and lasted about a year and a half. The "rest homes" were located in the rural Maryszyn (Marysin) section of the ghetto, which contained fields and modest crops. Nirenberg (*Memoirs*, 70) describes: "Each factory in turn, according to a set schedule, sent a group of workers for a one-week vacation. Every week, summer and winter, around 400 workers, young and old, would come to these camps, in which the conditions were very good under the circumstances."

[121] "children's colony": Also located in Maryszyn, first arose in the summer of 1940 at the behest of Rumkowski. They were "recreational camps where, under watchful supervision by adult staff, they would be fed regular, nutritious meals prepared in kitchens on-site, bathed, given haircuts, and issued fresh articles of clothing"; for information about different kinds of colonies and their young participants, see Horwitz, *Ghettostadt*, 82–83. A spot in the colony could serve as a reward for parents from Rumkowski; see Szmul Rozenstajn, Daily Notes, 21 February 1941, in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 111.

[122] "they brought over…from Czechoslovakia": Between October 16, 1941 and November 4, 1941, nineteen transports, each numbering at least one thousand people, arrived in Lodz carrying Jews deported from Prague, Vienna, and multiple cities in Germany: Berlin, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Hamburg. In addition, a transport from Luxembourg brought 512 Jews to the ghetto. For more precise figures, see Avraham Barkai, "Between East and West: Jews from Germany in the Lodz Ghetto," *Yad Vashem Studies* 16 (1984): 271-332, 280.

[123] "These people came dressed and with suitcases with the big shots": As Selver-Urbach (*Through the Window*, 100) puts it, the new arrivals "looked more human than we. Their clothes and possessions were of a better quality than ours." For additional accounts, see Barkai, "Between East and West," 285–94.

[124] "they didn't know what's going on": Oskar Rosenfeld, among the new arrivals from Prague, reports, "We were in an unknown country, a foreign terrain.…We walked as in a trance"; see Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning*, 13; also cited in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 177.

[125] "they were right away down…and the hunger at once": Other former ghetto inhabitants echo Esther's observations. For example, Nirenberg (*Memoirs*, 41) hypothesizes that the higher death rates among these new arrivals resulted from the fact that the new arrivals "were unable to adapt to the harsh life in the ghetto and suffered more from hunger….Whereas we had had two years to adjust, the Western European Jews had not experienced hunger before that time. The transition to ghetto life was too abrupt, and this proved fatal": Nirenberg, 41; see also Fogel, *Hidden Diary*, 137. Taking Nirenberg's hypothesis further, Selver-Urbach recalls, "In conditions such as ours, they did not have a minimal capacity for endurance. They very soon sold all their possessions for a slice of bread. They were totally

[00:37:48.29] JASCHAEL PERY: Of the new-- new incomers.

[00:37:49.30] ESTHER FOX: Of the new, plus the old.

[00:37:50.68] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:37:51.38] ESTHER FOX: People, eh, were laying, eh, cadavers in the street, there were not enough time to collect them.[126] And overnight, was the same thing, again and again.

[00:38:01.22] JASCHAEL PERY: Was there a lot of, uh, suicide going on in ghetto?

[00:38:05.93] ESTHER FOX: I think so.[127] In the beginning, in the very beginning when it started, so many that I know, physicians and from the educated who couldn't take it. As some assimilated, they couldn't accept this idea. I do, and some were mixed marriages. And so they went into the ghetto. Uh, they were suicides.

[00:38:27.62] JASCHAEL PERY: No--

[00:38:28.01] ESTHER FOX: In the ghetto like such, I wouldn't know. I don't know exactly. It was, for sure it was.

--SEGMENT 7--

[00:38:33.92] JASCHAEL PERY: Now living in ghetto, you yourself, did you have some connections, contact with outside world?

[00:38:41.22] ESTHER FOX: No.[128]

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undisciplined in their eating habits…": Selver-Urbach, *Through the Window*, 101. Translating these descriptions into numbers, Rosenfeld reports that over 20 percent of these new arrivals died in the six months after their deportation to the Lodz Ghetto; see Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning*, 38. For additional figures, see Barkai, "Between East and West," 295.

[126] "cadavers in the street, there were not enough time to collect them": As Selver-Urbach (*Through the Window*, 101) observed: "…there was not enough time to bury all the dead. Those who died in the hospitals in that period [when the Western European Jews arrived], did not enjoy the privilege of going to their burials individually, in the black wagon which carried one dead body at a time. These dead were loaded in heaps on the large, truck-like 'rollwagen,' a lot of dead bodies lumped together."

[127] "I think so": Suicide was so prevalent among the new arrivals from Western Europe that Shlomo Frank recorded in his October 28, 1941 diary entry that "not a day passes without a suicide"; see Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 177. For insight into suicides throughout the ghetto's existence, see Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, which provides daily reports that typically include names of suicides and the circumstances surrounding their deaths.

[128] "No": Esther subsequently contradicts this statement, recalling that she received postcards from her husband in Wlodawa. Others engaged in correspondence as well. Heniek Fogel, for example, records in

[00:38:41.92] JASCHAEL PERY: No.

[00:38:42.21] ESTHER FOX: I--

[00:38:42.80] JASCHAEL PERY: Not at all.

[00:38:43.71] ESTHER FOX: No.

[00:38:45.14] JASCHAEL PERY: Did you have some-- you yourself, or your colleagues-- did you have some knowledge what's going on in all-- in other places in Poland, for-- for instance uprising in Warsaw ghetto?[129] Did you hear about it?

[00:39:00.10] ESTHER FOX: We heard,[130] but first of all, we thought-- this was already later-- we thought that this is just the, uh, *Gräuelpropaganda*,[131] that it isn't true, because how can that be true?[132] And, uh, I don't know. I only found out after the war. Somebody told me that my brother was in the underground in Lodz.[133] I didn't know, he didn't get me in.

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his diary entry of June 28, 1942, that his family traded letters with relatives in the nearby town of Zelów (*Hidden Diary*, 117). For a summary of shifts in German restrictions on incoming and outgoing letters and parcels, see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 45–46.

[129] "uprising in Warsaw ghetto": Pery is referring to the armed revolt that the Warsaw Ghetto inhabitants mounted against the Nazis. It lasted from April 19, 1943 until May 16, 1943. For further information, see the USHMM *Holocaust Encyclopedia* entry https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/warsaw-ghetto-uprising.

[130] "We heard": One way news of the uprising reached the Lodz Ghetto was through eyewitnesses who bribed the Gestapo in Warsaw and Lodz to allow them to move from the Warsaw to the Lodz ghetto; see Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 33. Nirenberg (34) also recalls learning of outside events through the German press, the Polish underground's radio broadcasts, and a report from England. It should be mentioned that this was not the first news from the Warsaw Ghetto to arrive; Lodz Ghetto inhabitants had already received word of the "murderous deportations" occurring during the summer of 1942; see Fogel, *Hidden Diary*, 137.

[131] "Gräuelpropaganda": Also spelled *Greuelpropaganda*, this is the German word for "atrocity propaganda," a type of propaganda that vilifies an adversary through the dissemination of embellished or fictional horror stories. As a result, it appears that the use of the term here is inappropriate. In contrast, the word's second appearance in another context (at 55:16) makes much more sense.

[132] "how can that be true": Her doubt likely stemmed from the unprecedented nature of this act of resistance; the uprising marked the first organized armed action by Jews against Nazis in an urban setting (as opposed to partisan warfare in forests). Given the massive disparity in the amount and quality of firepower, the fact that the Jewish underground fighters forced a German retreat and inflicted casualties over several days is astonishing.

[133] "the underground in Lodz": Although Esther speaks of "the underground" no such single entity existed in the Lodz Ghetto. However, there were "conspiratorial groups," which, among other things, "conducted a broad propaganda effort for people not to let themselves be deported and to conceal themselves as long as possible" (Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 397). For a discussion of why no underground

[00:39:26.37] And I imagine why, because he was afraid in case he is caught and they get me, and if I am weak enough, I might start talking.[134] So I never knew. But then somebody told me, whether it's 100% true I wouldn't say, I don't know. So there was some kind of an underground, probably. They were going people, smuggling to Warsaw.[135] There was a period when over there was good.[136] Later Rumkowski brought a group of physicians,[137] we were run out, and so he brought them over here and they told us what's going on.

[00:39:58.77] So we knew, but we never believed that it is true. When we come to Auschwitz, I was there, I didn't believe what I saw. I said, it's not true.

[00:40:07.81] JASCHAEL PERY: And did you also know something about what's going on in the frontiers about the war themself, and that the Russians are advancing?

[00:40:15.57] ESTHER FOX: In the beginning, we heard still that America, uh, entered the war. In the beginning, we heard that England. So we were happy, good. And later we heard on the fronts is not good, because there were some radios.[138] And I didn't get all the news, so they

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movement coalesced in the ghetto, see ibid., 394–97. For insight into an attempt to establish a Bundist "fighting organization" and the concrete challenges they faced, see Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 73.

[134] "if I am weak enough, I might start talking": She is evidently referring to the possibility of her facing pressure – likely in the form of torture – during an interrogation. Esther was not alone in her concern for betraying secrets at the hands of torturers. For example, Trunk writes of a clandestine radio listener who, in response to an informer's denunciation, killed himself because "he feared that he would not be able to withstand the Gestapo torture and would break, revealing the others involved" (Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 398).

[135] "people smuggling to Warsaw": This occurred, usually through bribing Gestapo officials to look the other way. In some cases, like that of a woman named Waldman, the purpose was spreading crucial information, including the true nature of the destination to which Jews were sent from the ghetto: Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 54. People were also smuggled in the opposite direction; see ibid., 33.

[136] "period when over there was good": Extrapolating from mortality statistics alone, the conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto were better than those in the Lodz Ghetto in 1940 and 1942; see chart in Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, xliii.

[137] "Rumkowski brought a group of physicians": Sierakowiak notes Rumkowski's imminent departure to recruit doctors from Warsaw and his return with 12 of them in his entries for May 13 and 21, 1941, respectively; *Sierakowiak Diary*, 89, 93. Evidently, this was a noteworthy event in the ghetto, as the news made its way into the diary of a teenager.

[138] "some radios": There were multiple radios in the Lodz ghetto; see Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 81. Writing of David Tafel, who manned one of them, Nirenberg (83) recalls: "In the ghetto he followed the news from London, Moscow, Berminster and *Swit* [the Polish underground's secret radio station] day and night. He knew several languages and listened to the news in German, Polish, Russian, Czech, Italian and Dutch. He had a phenomenal memory and could repeat the news and speeches exactly as they had been broadcast… Despite the danger, he never for a moment abandoned his 'child,' as he called his radio. He moved with his radio from place to place, bringing the news from 'the other side of the world.'" Unfortunately, Tafel (spelled "Topel" in Trunk, Łódź Ghetto, 398) was discovered and died under torture. While politically connected people like Nirenberg had great access to information, others received "news" in the form of rumors – often ones grounded in wishful thinking. See, for example, Heniek Fogel, *The Diary of Heniek Fogel*, ed. Helene Sinnreich (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2015), 80. For the (Hebrew-

said the worse, the better. If Hitler is uh, defeated here on the Russian front, it's good for us. But how long will it be? This was the point.

[00:40:40.36] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah. Now you-- [COUGHS] did you have some correspondence at a certain time with your brother in France while being in ghetto? When there was no--

[00:40:52.57] ESTHER FOX: With whom?

[00:40:53.08] JASCHAEL PERY: With your-- you had a brother in France.

[00:40:55.89] ESTHER FOX: No, never.[139]

[00:40:56.73] JASCHAEL PERY: No correspondence?

[00:40:57.20] ESTHER FOX: No, no. But I got postcard from my husband who was in his place in Wlodawa I got postcard occasionally.[140]

[00:41:06.34] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:41:06.80] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:41:07.56] JASCHAEL PERY: Until which period?

[00:41:08.26] ESTHER FOX: Until later, no more. Whether he wasn't alive anymore, or it wasn't allowed. But people got some, even from abroad, postcard. And even, I think, people got packages too. But not I, I didn't have any relatives abroad.

[00:41:21.89] JASCHAEL PERY: I see. So you--is there something else you would like to tell me about the ghetto life, about episodes in the ghetto before you were deported?

[00:41:33.73] ESTHER FOX: No, we-- to tell you. It's hard to describe it, because it has so many aspects. Let's say we were not allowed to walk, to be out on the street and no lights to put

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language) account of one of the few radio operators who did survive, see the Fortunoff Video Archive testimony (HVT-3565) of Kalman W., https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/7m03x83p4p.

[139] "no, never": The lack of communication could have been a result of her brother's desire to maintain his adopted identity, as correspondence between a non-Jew (whom he was pretending to be) and someone in the Lodz Ghetto may have aroused suspicion among those monitoring mail.

[140] "I got a postcard occasionally": Esther was far from the only one communicating with people beyond the ghetto boundaries. This included correspondence between Jews in different ghettos; see, for example, *Sierakowiak Diary*, (6 June 1941), 98–99. The Jews from Austria, Germany, and the former Czechoslovakia also corresponded with loved ones and financial institutions in their home countries, especially for the purpose of requesting money; see Barkai, "Between East and West," 300–305. Of course, all communication was predicated on official regulations; see Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, 45–46.

on[141] because we were [UNCLEAR]. So that we're-- and I and another group of doctors, we were in the-- in the night, in emergency. So we were sitting in a dark room and talking politicize, without light, without anything, and hungry, and cold, until the, uh, call came, so we have to go.

[00:42:01.36] And the-- so what will we say, that we are miserable? We did that. Other people were so busy with their troubles, and with children, and with washing.[142] I think my husband's, whom I married, had the family there, and I was in touch with them. So they were also sent to the ghetto, and they lived in a place where there was no water, so they had to go down and bring water.

[00:42:26.39] So in winter, so my one sister-in-law, his sister, uh, a very elegant lady from before, and she brought-- took a ca-- uh, a pail of water, she slipped and broke her hip. And later she was limping all the time. Uh, so this was already the-- the-- the-- the higher class.

[00:42:45.08] And the lower, they had to wash and clean, and-- and carry water, and steal a whole piece of wood[143] when they-- a house, the people slept, they got up, they saw there's no roof, because it was a wooden-- it was the poorest section. No sewage, no-- eh, no, no, this was-- uh, it has to be all kinds of epidemic, because there was no sewage, uh, cleanliness. So they got up and saw there was no roof over their head. The next day, they came home, there was no house anymore.

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[141] "no lights to put on": Several ghetto inhabitants made note of the blackout requirement. According to Nirenberg, lights had to be off after 8 P.M., and no light was to be visible through windows when they were on before that hour. Punishment for infractions was of a collective nature, with the family members and roommates also held responsible and punished accordingly; see Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 44. Fogel recorded that the entire city was under blackout orders over several periods to prevent detection by allied bombers and noted that ghetto inhabitants were threatened with death if they did not adhere to the policy; see Fogel, *Hidden Diary*, 89. See also *Sierakowiak Diary*, 168.

[142] "so busy…with washing": Washing required extra effort because approximately 95 percent of the ghetto's housing units "had no hygienic facilities, water piping, or sewerage"; Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto*, x.

[143] "steal a piece of wood": Here Esther references a relatively common occurrence in the ghetto: the theft of wood. Ghetto diarist Leon Hurwitz recorded that wood was rationed, but only in very small amounts that could not support a fire: "In the dark of night, people began stripping wood from fences, sheds, outhouses, wherever they could. The colder it got, the more widespread the vandalism became. People stopped waiting for the cover of night but descended in throngs on a fence or gate in broad daylight, breaking up the wood within minutes and dragging it away to warm up icy rooms"; reprinted in Adelson and Lapides, *Lodz Ghetto*, 93–95, here 94–95.

[00:43:15.25] And whoever it-- you cannot call it stealing. If the police, the Jewish police[144] caught them, they-- they went to jail.[145] What happened in the jail? I don't know, they kept them. But I consider it wasn't stealing. That was a necessity.

[00:43:30.21] JASCHAEL PERY: There are some people, beh, blaming the behavior of the Jewish police in the ghetto.

[00:43:35.05] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:43:35.64] JASCHAEL PERY: Do you have some opinion about it?

[00:43:38.50] ESTHER FOX: I have my opinion, but I don't know how to explain it. Because if some people, I say that I pre-- prefer to die and not do these things. But others say that this is self-preservation. So this is a question of-- I have to think of it much more, because I wasn't in this position where I was to do-- I would call it dirty things. I did what I could, I couldn't do more than I did.

[00:44:06.59] And I couldn't save everybody's life. But the other things, uh, let's say they-- they-- they-- they collected the people to the gathering places to be deported, no, this was an order from Rumkowski, and then Rumkowski got the order from the German. So if you were a policeman, you could have said, I don't want to do it. So-- so you would have gone, and you had a family. So now, I don't want to go into this. It's too complicated and too hard to accuse. I don't know.

[00:44:38.63] JASCHAEL PERY: Now we mentioned already, and

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[144] "the Jewish Police": Serving directly at the behest of Rumkowski, the ghetto's Jewish police force – also called the "Order Service" (*Ordnungsdienst*) – enforced the Chairman's policies (read: German officials' policies) and aided in roundups of Jews for deportation. Scholarly literature on the topic – as is the case with many other Jewish functionary groups – is relatively scarce. For an example in German, see Andrea Löw, "Ordnungsdienst im Getto Litzmannstadt," in *Fenomen Getta Łódzkiego*, 155–67. For discussions of the Jewish police in Lodz and beyond, see, for example, Trunk, *Judenrat*, 475–526; Aharon Weiss, "The Relations between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police," in *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe, 1933–1945*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia J. Haft (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1979), 201–17.

[145] "jail": The destination for individuals found guilty of crimes such as theft by the ghetto court and summary court. Jail sentences lasted from three months to a full year, and the prison population was usually at the top of the list for deportations. See Nirenberg, *Memoirs*, 20. It was also the destination of people who ran afoul of Rumkowski personally; see, for example, ibid., 37–39.

--SEGMENT 8--

you told us, that there were all kind of actions going on in ghetto, and deportations from the ghetto. And people came in, new people came in in the ghetto. Now hearing about the different deportations from the ghetto, did you have-- that time, before you were deported-- an idea where people are deported and what's happening with the people that are deported.

[00:45:04.18] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. This was already, but I am going to say now at the very end when it came closer, there, uh, people said that they found a note in a train which went and came back, somebody left a note.[146] And somebody found the note, a policeman, a decent policeman said, we are going to Auschwitz. I never heard the word before.

[00:45:24.98] Maybe my brother wanted to save me a little bit, I shouldn't know. And they-- that's all, but what's going on, I didn't know.

[00:45:34.37] JASCHAEL PERY: You didn't know.

[00:45:34.88] ESTHER FOX: As a matter of fact, before the liquidation, as my brother was an engineer, he thought-- they told us that we are going to work. So he said, you know, maybe I will be the engineer, and you don't even say you are a doctor, so we will be together, and my mother. So because if you are a doctor and I'm an engineer, they take you somewhere else.

[00:45:55.59] So-- and he took a case of books, such a-- which not to study, but might be necessary for work. Uh, because they told us, you can take a suitcase with clothes. So he took book. He thought books, he thought that this would be necessary. And later it came out where what they-- they didn't ask him who he is, they didn't ask me when we came over there.

[00:46:16.52] JASCHAEL PERY: So at what date were you deported with your mother and your brother from--

[00:46:21.23] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, I remember exactly.

[00:46:22.21] JASCHAEL PERY: What date?

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[146] "somebody left a note": This discovery of a note in a cattle car was not a unique experience; see Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Deportation of Jews from the Łódź Ghetto to KL Auschwitz and Their Extermination: A Description of the Events and the Presentation of Historical Sources*, trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Kościa (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2006), 44. Ghetto inhabitants also learned about Chelmno in the same manner, as an anonymous diarist noted that he found a letter in a train car that called at a town near Chelmno, "the place of the ['abbatoir'"; quoted in Horwitz, *Ghettostadt*, 284.

[00:46:22.88] ESTHER FOX: It was a day after my-- my happy birthday, let's call it. The 17th of August, '44. This was, uh, at the end of the ghetto, but not the very end.[147] There are others too. There were some who remained over there who managed, they were in bunkers.[148] But the-- I and my brother, my mother, we were not such fighters, you know? We were not so, so high in-- to-- to manage. So we went on the--

[00:46:47.31] JASCHAEL PERY: So can you describe-- can you describe you arriving to Auschwitz, and what you--

[00:46:51.68] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, I will tell you. It was before the-- the fin-- the end, it was so bad for me, emotionally, morally. Uh, no food for a couple days, didn't have a piece of bread. So finally I said, I am sitting outside, when the German come, let them take me.[149] So they did.

[00:47:11.06] Came, uh, wagon, whatever, and they took us to the station.[150] And we went together with my mother and my brother, and we went. And this was, uh, uh, a wagon for-- not for people, but for-- how do you call it-- for, uh, for cattle.

[00:47:26.81] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:47:27.23] ESTHER FOX: And no bench, no [UNCLEAR]. They put us in like in a box of sardines. And everybody had a suitcase. And before we came in, they were hit, and they "herein schnell"[151] and so and so. And they were older people and weak people. Uh, but they-- there was

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[147] "at the end of the ghetto, but not the very end": Her deportation came in the context of the final liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto, which commenced in early August 1944 and ended at the end of the same month or at the start of September 1944; Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 33–34. Over the course of the intervening weeks, more than 60,000, and possibly 67,000, Jews were deported to Auschwitz; ibid., 8, 36. The liquidation of the ghetto marked Himmler's victory over Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production Albert Speer, who had appealed to Hitler to keep the ghetto's workshops open and producing material for the Army's use. For a discussion of these dynamics, see, for example, ibid, 24–25.

[148] "they were in bunkers": Approximately 200 Jews survived the liquidation period in this manner. An additional 700 remained in Lodz to fulfill Ghetto Administration orders to clean up; Dobroszycki, *Chronicle*, 535.

[149] "let them take me": Esther was not alone in resigning herself to whatever fate awaited her. Historian Andrzej Strzelecki writes: "The major turning point in the pogrom, however, occurred on 18th August, when a subsequent Ghetto 'reduction' was announced. That was when the majority of the Ghetto's inhabitants stopped putting up passive resistance and accepted their fate"; Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 36. For a vivid description of the final roundups, or what Jakub Poznański called the "hunting down of human quarry," see excerpts from Poznański's diary reprinted in ibid., 42–44.

[150] "they took us to the station": The trains bound for Auschwitz departed Lodz at the Radegast (Pol. Radogoszcz) Station. For information about the site, see https://www.lodz-ghetto.com/the_radegast_station.html,38. To reach the station, Jews were "sent on foot to a nearby tram or driven in a car or put on a cart," as was the case with Esther; Poznański's diary entry of August 18, 1944, reprinted in Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 43.

[151] "herein schnell": German for "in quickly."

merciless, everything. So they put us in, and people right away, we were traveling-- I couldn't tell you how long, how many hours.

[00:47:50.30] Not a sip of water, and people fainted over there. And no sanitary facilities, so this was [INAUDIBLE]. This was undescribable, uh, how it was, until we finally opened the door and they let us out, who was still alive in this wagon.

[00:48:10.60] JASCHAEL PERY: So you arrived August '44, to Auschwitz.

[00:48:14.32] ESTHER FOX: That's right. I don't know, but it was 17, 18,[152] for how long, I-- I-- I don't know.

[00:48:19.60] JASCHAEL PERY: And while arriving, they separated immediately between you?

[00:48:22.56] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, sure. There was-- they-- first of all, they took away everything what we had. And uh, I had my di-- diploma hidden here. This was my world's most precious thing, which I kept because clothes, this, whatever. So they separated right away. Uh, male, men there, women there. And they, they lined us out.

[00:48:47.42] I don't remember whether they immediately, or they pushed us through the-- we had to run a little bit, because-- no, later. So there was Mengele who made the selection.[153]

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[152] "it was 17 or 18": It is difficult to determine the day she arrived at Auschwitz. According to Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939-1945* (New York: H. Holt, 1990), 688-93, no transports of Jews from the Lodz Ghetto arrived on August 17-20, and no one from the transport arriving on August 21 went to the transit camp. If Czech's sources are complete and correct, and if Esther gives the correct departure date of August 17 or 18, Esther did not arrive at the camp until August 22 (see ibid. 694). A travel time of four or five days to cover approximately 125 miles does not seem likely, although delays were common. Sara Sznek-Bosak, for example, recalls spending three days on the journey (reprinted in Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 46). Given that two transports arrived in Auschwitz on August 16, both of which included people who were "probably kept in Birkenau as 'depot prisoners,'" it appears more likely that her transport from Lodz left on August 16 and arrived in Auschwitz later the same day (Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, 688). It is possible, however, that Czech's source material is incomplete and that Esther's transport departed and arrived according to her recollections.

[153] "Mengele who made the selection": Having viewed countless testimonies in the Fortunoff Archive, Geoffrey Hartman observes that "every Auschwitz survivor seems to have gone through a selection by Mengele, as if he manned his post 24 hours every day" and suggests "simplifications which can be described as metonymies"; see Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 141. Mengele was just one of many SS doctors who performed selections at the ramp, and the seemingly constant arrival of large transports from late spring through the summer of 1944 required the addition of dentists and pharmacists to the roster for so-called "ramp duty." As a result, it is not particularly likely that Mengele was the doctor conducting selections when Esther arrived in Birkenau; see Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2000 [1986]), 176. For a brief history and description of selections "on the ramp," see the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum's Mini Dictionary entry http://auschwitz.org/en/press/mini-dictionary/#Selection%20on%20the%20ramp.

And to whoever looked to him weak, so went to the left, to the right, I don't know. And they-- and the prospective, eventually, workers they could use went to the good side.[154] And my brother got lost with the men, and I never heard from him.

[00:49:14.02] I heard later that, uh, he was gone. And I never saw my mother anymore, because by her age.[155] So this was [INAUDIBLE] they separated for us. And you want to know how it was in the beginning?

[00:49:26.53] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:49:26.83] ESTHER FOX: So they told us that we are going-- this was called the Sauna[156] for washing. So first of all, they-- so we have to undress completely. And they-- it's-- it's-- it's hard to describe the shock. I'm a physician, I saw a naked body, but not in such circumstances. And I was right away like, confused.

[00:49:46.78] And we went into the Sauna. So I still didn't know, with the gas, with all the thing. But there was one, which happened to be an acquaintance of mine from ghetto. She said, they are going to gas us. But I was immune, I didn't care, yes or not.

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[154] "workers they could use went to the good side": Esther was one of about 20,000 Jews from Lodz who were categorized as "transit Jews" (*Durchgangs-Juden*) and thus placed "in deposit" for subsequent transfer to other camps, approximately 19,000 of whom were eventually transported; Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 53. The practice of keeping new arrivals "in deposit" was the result of Germany's dire military situation and severe labor shortage. The German labor market was in desperate need of workers who could produce munitions and other materials important to the war effort. As a result, new arrivals deemed fit (enough) for labor were collected in Birkenau prior to being sent to camps, typically in Germany and thus away from the front.

[155] "by her age": Esther's mother was part of the 67 percent of arrivals from Lodz to be dispatched to the gas chambers immediately or within the first two to three weeks thereafter; see Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 48. In the spring and summer of 1944, the age range of those who were initially spared the gas chamber was 16-40; see Zoltán Vági, László Csősz, and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 217.

[156] "Sauna": Opened for use in the second half of December 1943, this building, typically called the Sauna or the "Central Sauna," had the official title of Decontamination and Disinfection Station; see Andrzej Strzelecki, "The History, Role and Operation of the Central Camp Sauna in Auschwitz II-Birkenau," in *The Architecture of Crime: The "Central Camp Sauna" in Auschwitz II-Birkenau*, ed. Teresa Świebocka, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2001), 13. Among other things, it served as a reception center for the new arrivals who were not immediately condemned to the gas chambers. As Esther indicates, the admission procedure entailed tattooing, shaving, showering, and receiving camp clothing. During the period of her arrival in Auschwitz-Birkenau, thousands of people passed through the building each day. For a description of the facility's rooms and their respective functions, see ibid., 34–36. For a collection of personal accounts of experiences in the Sauna, see Rena Strzelecka, "The Sauna in Eyewitness Accounts and Memoirs," in *The Architecture of Crime*, 95–158.

--SEGMENT 9--

But it was no gas, it was a real-- what to call it, Sauna.

[00:50:07.75] But I-- and like, they shaved our-- our head.[157] Not to cut the hair, that shaved like a thing. So when we walked out, this was our transport at that time. So we were acquainted, more or less. A couple doctors were there at-- with the same transport. So we didn't recognize each other, naked, then without hair, so we had to call by name who was who. And this was-- it's hard to me to describe it, how it was.

[00:50:35.20] And later, they were pushing us to a pile of clothes.[158] And "Schnell"[159] grabbed something. I remember, I grabbed the blouse, which was closed until here, and a skirt which was heavy for-- for January, and this was August.[160] And, and no shoes,[161] and I couldn't walk on stones.

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[157] "they shaved our head": The cutting and shaving of new arrivals' hair served both hygienic and financial purposes. The latter motivation arose in August 1942, at which point camp authorities received orders "to collect all shorn hair over two centimeters in length as an industrial raw material"; for information about what happened with this "raw material," see Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, trans. William Brand, vol. 2: *The Prisoners: Their Life and Work* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 407–12. It is important to note that, unlike so many other survivors of Auschwitz, Esther does not report receiving a tattoo. Her lack of a tattoo is indicative of camp officials' intention to transfer her to another camp soon after her arrival and thus places her in the category of "deposit" inmates. Only two women (and more than three thousand men) from the August transports from Lodz were registered as Birkenau inmates and received the requisite tattoo numbers; Strzelecki, *Deportation of Jews*, 9.

[158] "a pile of clothes": The clothes distributed to new arrivals were plundered from the belongings of those who had arrived previously. Given that Jewish deportees were permitted, and often encouraged, to bring a maximum of 50 kilograms of possessions that they deemed necessary for their promised "resettlement," the camp amassed enough goods – food, clothing, footwear, home goods, professional items, etc. – to fill dozens of warehouses in sectors known as Kanada I (in the Main Camp) and Kanada II (in Birkenau); see Długoborski and Piper, *The Prisoners*, 147–55. Property deemed to be in good shape was shipped to destinations throughout the Reich, while pieces not suitable for other purposes, such as the clothing in the piles to which Esther refers, were distributed to inmates. For information on the "division and exploitation of the spoils," see ibid., 155–65.

[159] "Schnell": German for "quickly."

[160] "I grabbed the blouse…this was August": These mismatched and ill-fitting clothes could give inmates the appearance of a "caricature, a circus clown"; Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 131. For a discussion of the importance of Birkenau inmates' clothing, especially in terms of appearance, to the prisoners' social standing and likelihood of survival, see Noah Benninga, "The Bricolage of Death: Jewish Possessions and the Fashioning of the Prisoner Elite in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1942-1945," in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*, ed. Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 189–220.

[161] "shoes": Footwear was typically distributed to new arrivals. Shoes were either wooden clogs or repurposed footwear plundered from previous transports; see Długoborski and Piper, *The Prisoners*, 57–

[00:50:53.77] So our own people, started they-- they said that I'm a big Madame, I cannot walk on stones. They say, they say, I understand it psychologically. So I couldn't, I never did. So they gave me as a consolation that in Aug-- in later, this skirt will be all right, because it's a hot skirt. But meanwhile, I thought I'm dying from this skirt.

[00:51:14.92] And here, everything was open, because it was a narrow-- it wasn't made to order for me. So you may-- and the looks and everything. So that's what. And where did they take us? Yeah, they take us to such a barrack. And we were a couple, which we knew about each other, because this was our transport. I didn't know everybody from the ghetto, but a few which we knew. So we were in one of the barracks.[162]

[00:51:43.15] And over there were the-- the-- the—the head, the Kapo,[163] of the barracks. I didn't know at the time they were a Kapo. And I didn't know that they were Jewish,[164] but they were. And they were there already a long time, Slovakian,[165] uh, they told us.

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59. For insight into how footwear could determine the fate of an inmates, see Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 34–35.

[162] "barracks": It is likely that she was assigned to a barrack in Birkenau Sector BIIc; Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 73. For further information about BIIc and BIII ("Mexico") – the two sections of Birkenau that functioned as transit camps (*Durchgangslager*), see Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, trans. William Brand, vol. 1: *The Establishment and Organization of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 98–100.

[163] "Kapo": "Kapo" is often used as a generic term for all prisoner-functionaries in a position of power over other inmates. In the camp, however, it often had a more specific meaning: the head of a labor detail. In light of Esther's description, the more precise term would be *Blockowa*/*Blockova* – the word used by female inmates to indicate a female prisoner in charge of a block or barrack. The title of the male analogue was *Blockälteste*, which is German for "Block Elder." For formal definitions of these terms see the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum's Mini Dictionary entries: http://auschwitz.org/en/press/mini-dictionary/#Kapo; http://auschwitz.org/en/press/mini-dictionary/#Block%20elder.

[164] "Jewish": In Birkenau, very few Jewish men held higher posts in the prisoners' functional hierarchy, also known as their "self government" (*Selbstverwaltung*). Yet, as Esther indicates, the situation was different for women. For a discussion of "Jewish VIPs," with keen insight into the strength of the coercive forces acting upon them and influencing their treatment of subordinates, see Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, trans. Harry Zohn (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 169–77.

[165] "Slovakian": The first Jewish women in Auschwitz came from Slovakia and arrived on March 26, 1942; see Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, 148. For further information on the first women to arrive at Auschwitz, see Irena Strzelecka, "The First Transports of Women to Auschwitz," in *The Tragedy of the Jews of Slovakia: 1938-1945: Slovakia and the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question,"* ed. Wacław Długoborski et al. (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2002), 185–99. By the time Esther arrived at Birkenau in August 1944, the Slovak Jewish women who had survived their early ordeals had risen to prominent posts in the prisoner hierarchy and occupied most of the Block Elder positions; see Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, 171.

[00:51:57.10] And they had a bitter time when they came to Auschwitz a year before or something, it was over there. They had to drain, it was wet, there was mud.[166] So they were bitter, and they were-- they called us names, us, Jews. So I thought this is German. So all right, a German I understand, but later I found out they are Jewish too.[167]

[00:52:17.86] And so I-- and they gave us a soup without a spoon, without-- and one soup, for I was-- I never knew where to stay in the right place, because we were lined in five. So I was so-- not-- not handy enough, not quick enough instead to stay in the back. I was always in the front, all right. So the soup came to me first.

[00:52:40.88] And there's no soup,[168] so you took a sou-- a sip, and were supposed to pass it, and pass it, and pass it. I said, I will take two soups. In the beginning, I thought how-- I-- I-- it will never maybe come, and how I wouldn't eat from somebody. So they thought that I'm going to eat the whole soup. You understand, not two sips. But this is like, miserable life, what you become, a half an animal too.[169]

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[166] "bitter time…there was mud": No facility existed to accommodate female inmates when the Slovakian Jewish women began to arrive, so early female deportees were initially housed in a sectioned-off area of the Auschwitz Main Camp, which had been solely for men. Between August 6 and August 10 the women were transferred to Birkenau; Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, 212–14. For further information about the deportation of Jews from Slovakia to Auschwitz, see Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, trans. William Brand, vol. 3: *Mass Murder* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 32–35. The majority of the women's labor assignments were onerous, especially "those connected with the expansion of the camp, with the demolition details or the cleaning and dredging of fish ponds, and a range of agricultural and transport jobs"; see Strzelecka, "The First Transports," 195. For an account of one of earliest arrivals, see Margita Schwalbova, "Slovak Jewish Woman in Auschwitz II-Birkenau," in Długoborski, *The Tragedy*, 201–12.

[167] "a German I understand, but later I found out they are Jewish too": Because Esther expected that the insults and name-calling would be the typical behavior of German functionaries, the Jewish functionaries' behavior came as a shock. Evidently, she was expecting some kind of solidarity among Jews, who were all facing extreme persecution and the threat of complete annihilation.

[168] "there's no soup": Given that the soup's solid ingredients sank to the bottom of the vat, those – like Esther – who were the first to be served soup received only the liquid at the top. Even a portion with the solid ingredients contained only an estimated 350-400 calories; see Długoborski and Piper, *The Prisoners*, 60 and, for further discussion of prisoners' food, 59–63.

[169] "half an animal too": This echoes Esther's prior use of imagery involving humans devolving into (half-)animals. Other survivors have turned to such literary devices. For instance, former prisoner-physician Gisella Perl, who also arrived in BIIc in mid-1944, wrote in her memoir: "It amused [the Nazis] to watch our gradual deterioration and see how long it took for the most cultured twentieth-century intellectuals to reach the moral standards of a hyena"; Gisella Perl, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019 [1948]), 62.

[00:53:04.60] So this what it was, uh, I was only five days. Why five days? Because one day came a German, whatever, a real German, a woman[170] with a-- with a dog, with a, with a, a *Spitzrute*[171]

[00:53:20.95] JASCHAEL PERY: Stick

[00:53:22.27] ESTHER FOX: And she said, are there here, uh, uh, doctors?[172] So we stepped out, five were in the group. So one was with a sister, one was with a daughter, and one was an older. Couldn't recognize without hair, is no, everybody looked the same. So they wanted a single. So I was the single.

[00:53:42.21] And I don't know, not, she said to me, out. So I was selected from this group to go out. So they gave me a pair of shoes, a big like, it was six, some sizes bigger, and some kind of a clothes. And they gave-- put me with a soldier, with a gu-- with a, a, a--

[00:54:03.40] JASCHAEL PERY: Rifle.

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[170] "a real German, a woman": For information on the SS-Auxiliaries (*Helferinnen*) at Auschwitz, see Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz 1940-1945*, vol. 1, 281–93, 333–34. The topic of female perpetrators during the Holocaust recently drew increased attention with the publication of Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013). While Lower's focus is not, for the most part, on female staff members serving as overseers (*Aufseherin*) in concentration camps, she does reveal that "at least thirty-five hundred women were trained as concentration camp guards…"; as for their possible motives, Lower adds: "The uniform was impressive, the pay was good, and the prospect of wielding power was appealing": ibid., 21. It is important to note, however, that few women voluntarily sought employment as camp guards; most were conscripted; see Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2002), 16–17. For additional discussions of German women engaged in murder, ethnic cleansing, and the bureaucratic oversight thereof during the Third Reich, see Rachel Century, *Female Administrators of the Third Reich* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[171] "Spitzrute": German word for "switch," a wooden rod employed for corporal punishment.

[172] "Are there here doctors?": The recruitment of doctors in this manner was not an isolated event; other female Jewish doctors were singled out for transfer from Birkenau to other camps. For example, Czech writes in the *Auschwitz Chronicle* entry for August 30, 1944 (p. 700): "A female French Jew, a physician, is transferred from the women's camp in Auschwitz II to Buchenwald." My own archival research yielded another example: in late November 1944, Irene Janowitz, a female Jewish doctor from Slovakia, was transferred from the women's camp in Auschwitz II to Hirtenberg, a subcamp of Mauthausen; Rapportführer F.K.L. Mauthausen Schutzhaftlager, "Liste der Zugänge [List of New Arrivals] vom 27. November 1944," 12 December 1944, Archive of the Mauthausen Memorial, K/4c/1. Doctors selected for transport for medical work in Gross Rosen subcamps were not necessarily Jewish; see Barbara Rylko-Bauer, *A Polish Doctor in the Nazi Camps: My Mother's Memories of Imprisonment, Immigration, and a Life Remade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 142–91.

[00:54:04.03] ESTHER FOX: A rifle in a train,[173] and they took me somewhere.[174] I didn't know where, they didn't tell me, they didn't ask me, and I had no right to ask questions. I didn't, I didn't care either too. So I came to the, uh uh, *Arbeitslager*,[175] which is, uh, a place where there were girls, women, to work for-- in a factory. And I was supposed to be the physician over there, and I arrived.

[00:54:29.77] JASCHAEL PERY: You left Auschwitz this way as you describe now after five days.

[00:54:34.71] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, only.

[00:54:36.01] JASCHAEL PERY: Being there only five days, did you have an idea what Auschwitz meant as a liquidation camp, as a concentration camp?

[00:54:44.53] ESTHER FOX: I tell you, I couldn't realize exactly. But I had the smell of hair, of bones. And somebody said to me, you know, there is here a crematorium, and my mother went to this side. But I still said, no, maybe they just burn bones, uh, from-- or hair. I didn't believe.

[00:55:03.07] JASCHAEL PERY: OK, go on, go on.

[00:55:03.94] ESTHER FOX: I didn't believe that this is true. And I still had-- the, the-- my old morale, the decency that they can't do such things. I said that this-- this is, uh, uh, uh, *Gräuelpropaganda*. But later, I knew. Sure, I knew.

[00:55:20.36] JASCHAEL PERY: OK, we'll stop now.

[00:55:21.76] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:55:22.21] JASCHAEL PERY: And we'll-- they will change the tape.

[00:55:23.76] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

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[173] "a soldier with…a rifle in a train": Since she was transferred on her own, she did not travel in a cattle car like the one that brought her to Auschwitz. The experience of non-Jewish doctor Jadwiga (Jadzia) Lenartowicz might offer some insight into this journey; she and several other non-Jewish doctors departed Ravensbrück by train "escorted by several SS women. This was a regular train…, but Jadzia and her companions stayed in a separate compartment, forbidden to move about or talk to the other passengers"; see Rylko-Bauer, *Polish Doctor*, 143.

[174] "they took me somewhere": For insight into the destinations of the other "transit Jews" from the Lodz Ghetto, see Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 77–117.

[175] "*Arbeitslager*": German for "labor camp."

[00:55:23.95] JASCHAEL PERY: And then we'll continue.

[00:55:24.90] CREW: Uh, cut.

[00:55:26.60] ESTHER FOX: So it's [INAUDIBLE].

[00:55:27.51] JASCHAEL PERY: Wait for the camera.

[00:55:29.00] CREW: Copy, you cut?

--SEGMENT 10 (START OF TAPE 2)--

[00:00:00.00] [BEEP]

[00:01:08.71] CREW: And speed. Cut mic.

[00:01:15.13] JASCHAEL PERY: Dr. Fox, let's continue with our interview. We stopped while you were deported from Auschwitz--

[00:01:24.68] CREW: I'm sorry. We have to cut a second.

[00:01:26.44] JASCHAEL PERY: OK.

[00:01:27.20] CREW: OK. Cut for a second, [? Godfry. ?]

[00:01:29.77] CREW: Speed. Cut mic.

[00:01:33.61] JASCHAEL PERY: Dr. Fox, we'll continue our interview. We stopped while you left from Auschwitz to a labor camp. Now, you wanted to add something to your story before you continue.

[00:01:47.73] ESTHER FOX: Oh, I only want to say the first ep-- uh, greeting in the-- in the labor camp. Over there, I can say something, but it's not so important.

[00:01:56.47] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:01:57.07] ESTHER FOX: So may I say?

[00:01:58.48] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah.

[00:01:58.86] ESTHER FOX: So-- so when I arrived over there, I didn't know where I'm going, what I'm going, where I am understood. So-- [CLEARS THROAT] there was a German

young woman. She wasn't more than, uh, 25 or 26 years old.[176] And she was wearing a uniform with a swastika and the whole trimming for Hitler.[177] And when they brought me over to her office, she looked at me. And later, I found out that nobody else had shaven the hair.[178] Because these were mostly Hungarian.[179] They probably came from another transport. They always made the selection to send by groups here, there.

[00:02:38.74] So I was the only one. And I imagine so-- that time, I didn't think on the spot, but now, later-- that she never saw such a thing, and she didn't know everything. She was drafted; she was also on a job, or maybe she was a real Hitler. Who knows?[180] And then, she looked at me the first thing. She knew that-- because came a letter that I am assigned to be the physician.

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[176] "25 or 26 years old": The average age of women staffing the camps was 26; see Brown, *Camp Women*, 238. She was one of at least 541 SS-Auxiliary women to work in the Gross-Rosen camp system (ibid.).

[177] "whole trimming for Hitler": She was likely wearing a green SS uniform that she had received after a period of training. For further information on this training and the recruitment of female staff for Gross-Rosen subcamps, see Bella Gutterman, *A Narrow Bridge to Life: Jewish Forced Labor and Survival in the Gross-Rosen Camp System, 1940–1945,* trans. IBRT (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 134–35.

[178] "nobody else had shaven the hair": Enough time had elapsed between the Hungarian girls' hair shaving upon arrival in Auschwitz and Esther's arrival in Guben for the girls' hair to grow and give Esther the impression that their heads had not been shaved. The inmates she encountered upon her arrival in August 1944 had likely arrived in Guben approximately three weeks prior (end of July), with the initial transport of approximately 600 women. *USHMM Ghettos Encyclopedia*, 743; Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 6 (München: Beck, 2006), 334.

[179] "mostly Hungarian": Nearly 438,000 Jews were deported from Hungary between May and July 1944. About 95 percent of that total went to Auschwitz; see the YIVO Encyclopedia entry http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hungary/Hungary_from_1918_to_1945. Ninety percent of those deported to Auschwitz were sent to the gas chambers upon arrival. The remainder either stayed within the Auschwitz camp network or were transported for work in a total of 386 camps throughout much of the Third Reich; see Randolph L. Braham, "Hungarian Jews," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 466. Among these Hungarian deportees were Jews from territories that Hungary had annexed, such as southern Czechoslovakia (e.g., Magda L., FVAHT, HVT- 2237 [1992]; Margalit Peled, USC SF-VHA, Int. 36704 [1998]) and the Northern Transylvania region of Romania (e.g., Eva Last, USC SF-VHA, Int. 6950 [1995]; Mirl Meisels, USC SF-VHA, Int. 16359 [1996]). The Guben inmate population also included Polish Jews in addition to Esther (e.g., Paula Ganis, USC SF-VHA, Int. 21415 [1996]); Gloria Finkelstein, USC SF-VHA, Int. 35596 [1997]).

[180] "Who knows?": Given that, "by 1943, the vast majority of the supervisors were conscripts," this female guard was likely not on staff because she was a committed Nazi; see Brown, *Camp Women*, 16–17. The question of whether she was performing duties for the Reich because she was "on a job" or because she supported Nazi ideology echoes a question that that has received a great deal of scholarly attention – the most impactful of which was Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

[00:03:01.60] So I imagine-- this is my interpretation now-- that she, eh, felt that I am mentally all right. Because with the shaven head, you look whether a mental case, or-- or a criminal. So I'm not mental because they wouldn't send me to be the doctor. So her first question which she gave me, she said-- understood, in German—*Was ist dein Verbrechen*? Understood "*dein*"-- then this is no question that she treated me like garbage,[181] whatever.

[00:03:29.68] So I felt-- I was-- I didn't care what she will do. But I realized in the spot of the second that she can do what she wants with me. But I answered her, my, uh, crime is that I'm Jewish.[182] And I said to [UNCLEAR], a split of a second. She gives me a bullet in the head, it's OK with me, too. But at least I have a moment of revenge.

[00:03:50.23] But by the way, she never made the slightest remark about that. I was there six, seven months, and she never made the slightest remark about that. And she was quite decent what concerns me, and to others, too. I will say it. And I told her that I am-- I don't know. I am assigned here as a physician.

[00:04:09.47] So now, I want to point it out, also, I was only five days in Auschwitz, and four years, or more or less, in the ghetto. And I went through plenty of emotional tears and-- and-- and, uh, humiliations and-- and-- and thinking, why, why,[183] and so and so. But when she took me to her room, and she told me that I should make a list of, uh, things I need for the, uh, medical, uh, services.

[00:04:41.98] So first of all, I sat down and I forgot my name. I didn't remember my name. This is the shock.[184] This is why I say it. And I sit down and there is no one word in my head to

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[181] "garbage": *Deine* is the informal form of the word "your" and is thus used in addressing children or people of great familiarity. *Ihre*, on the other hand, is the formal and thus respectful form of "your." Given their lack of familiarity with each other, the SS woman's use of the informal version conveys that she is talking to a child and is thereby disrespecting Esther, a grown woman with a professional degree.

[182] "my crime is that I'm Jewish": This answer actually carries different meanings. On one level, Esther is referring to the fact that Jews were imprisoned in camps because they were Jews. Yet her words also call to mind the belief – widely held in Germany before, during, and after the Second World War – that Jews are inherently criminal. For a discussion of the latter topic as it manifested during the war and after it, see, respectively, Michael Berkowitz, *The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Michael Berkowitz and Suzanne Brown-Fleming, "Perceptions of Jewish Displaced Persons as Criminals in Early Postwar Germany: Lingering Stereotypes and Self-fulfilling Prophecies," in *"We are Here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, ed. Avinoam J. Patt and Michael Berkowitz (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 167–93.

[183] "thinking, why, why": Her contemplation of "why" calls to mind a poignant encounter that Primo Levi recalls in his memoir: "Driven by thirst, I eyed a fine icicle outside the window, within hand's reach. I opened the window and broke off the icicle but at once a large, heavy guard prowling outside brutally snatched it away from me. '*Warum?*' I asked him in my poor German. '*Hier ist kein warum*' (there is no why here), he replied, pushing me inside with a shove" (Levi, *Survival*, 29).

[184] "shock": Her difficulty recalling her name and the names of medications hint that she could still be experiencing what psychiatrist and Auschwitz survivor Leo Eitinger calls the "shock phase" (of the crisis

put on the paper. And I wasn't so much afraid that she will say that maybe I'm not a doctor because they didn't check of me. The papers and everything-- the last thing I threw away with the clothes was my diploma-- the last. But nobody checked, so I could say I'm a doctor, not to be a doctor.[185] So-- and I don't know a word to write. So I said, what will be, will be.

[00:05:20.89] But sitting down, I said to myself-- she left the room. I said, think of it. When I was called to a patient in normal times-- ghetto, before the ghetto-- how was it? So we had a special satchel, like here, the doctors used to have before the robbing and so. So I said I used to take this satchel and go to a patient and climb stairs, and go in and knock the door and [STUTTERS] whatever. And I examined the patient. And I sat down at the table, and what did I do?

[00:05:53.98] And came-- the first word came to me, I remember: Cibalgine in that time, was stylish. From Ciba, Cibalgine is like an aspirin.[186] So I caught, like holding on something— Cibalgine. All right. I read the one word. The "ine", er, gave me the-- the holding, and I wrote aspirin. Oh. So there were the two things.

[00:06:13.87] And sometimes, a minute later or whatever, I [STUTTERS] cotton, alcohol, iodine, and that's all. Maybe another word, I don't remember. And she came and she says to me, that's all what you ask right now?[187] I couldn't tell her that I have an empty head and I cannot write. I said, right now-- she, anyhow, would haven't given me more.[188] Maybe yes, a bandage. Maybe I wrote, maybe not. I don't think so. It came right away to my head.

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theory paradigm) of an individual's psychological response to Auschwitz; see Leo Eitinger, "Auschwitz – A Psychological Perspective," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 471. For another survivor's recollections of this "state of shock" in the days after arriving in Auschwitz from the Lodz Ghetto, see an excerpt of Hillel Landau's account reprinted in Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 74.

[185] "not to be a doctor": At times, inmates in Birkenau had to complete interviews and pass tests in order to prove that they possessed the knowledge and/or skills they claimed to possess before being assigned to a transport to a specific labor camp. On other occasions, as Esther's case demonstrates, the inmate's word was enough; see Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 76.

[186] "Cibalgine is like an aspirin": Developed and manufactured by the Ciba chemical company, Cibalgine was marketed as a treatment for, among other things, "pain of every description"; see *The Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin* 15, no. 4 (1935): 209. Accessed June 14, 2019 through the DalSpace Institution Repository of Dalhousie University https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10222/14496/NSMB%201935%20Vol.15%284%29%20167-218_OCR_300dpi.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y.

[187] "right now": The supervisor's question implies that she was potentially willing to provide more.

[188] "haven't given me more": It is unclear how and why Esther arrived at this conclusion. An assumption that no more supplies would be made available is not necessarily accurate in light of findings related to the provision of supplies to Jewish prisoner-physicians in subcamps of Auschwitz; see Sari J. Siegel, "Between Coercion and Resistance: Jewish Prisoner-Physicians in Nazi Camps, 1940-1945" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2018), 250–52. The requested supplies likely came from the pharmacy

[00:06:42.04] So I just wanted to emphasize the shock of five days only that I-- and I wasn't such a child anymore. I wasn't old, but I wasn't young. That I forgot my name. No, but gradually, it came, understood, back. And later, they opened a ni-- a place, a room, to examine us, and there was nothing.

[00:07:04.30] JASCHAEL PERY: What was the name of this labor camp, you said?

[00:07:06.58] ESTHER FOX: Guben[189] Gubin, near, near Breslau.

[00:07:08.04] JASCHAEL PERY: Again, can you repeat?

[00:07:09.19] ESTHER FOX: Guben Gubin.[190]

[00:07:10.45] JASCHAEL PERY: Guben Gubin.

[00:07:11.29] ESTHER FOX: Guben Gubin, near Breslau.

[00:07:13.63] JASCHAEL PERY: Guben Gubin

[00:07:14.89] ESTHER FOX: Breslau belongs, now, to Poland.

[00:07:16.96] JASCHAEL PERY: Right Wroclaw

[00:07:17.44] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. But at that time, it was Germany.

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of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp to which the Guben subcamp was subordinated; see Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 148.

[189] "Guben": Guben (not "Guben Gubin"), a Gross-Rosen subcamp, received its first inmates – approximately 600 Jews, most of whom were Hungarian – from Auschwitz in late July 1944. Another 350 women arrived in September 1944, bringing the inmate population to between 900 and 1,000 women, many of whom were not yet 20 years old. Inmates toiled for the Lorenz Radio Company, which had shifted manufacturing away from Berlin in 1943 out of concern for Allied airstrikes. In a factory building rented from the Berlin-Guben Cap Factory, forced laborers and employees were involved in the assembly of radio equipment for the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*). See *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Part A, 743–44; Benz and Distel, *Der Ort*, 333–37. For a discussion of other Gross-Rosen subcamps that received "transit Jews" from the Lodz Ghetto (via Auschwitz), see Strzelecki, *Deportation*, 89–99. These Jews were also sent to subcamps attached to many other major concentration camps, including Dachau, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, and Stutthoff; see map with transfer data located in ibid., between pages 96 and 97; and for data on individual transports, see ibid., 347–49.

[190] "Guben Gubin": The camp was called Guben, but Esther's insistence that it had a compound name might stem from the fact that the camp had two parts. The women's barracks were located on the eastern side of the Neisse River, and the factory was on the river's western bank. With the westward shift of the German-Polish border to the Oder-Neisse line after the Second World War, the eastern side is now the Polish town of Gubin, and the western side in the German town of Guben. See *USHMM Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, part A, 743.

[00:07:19.33] JASCHAEL PERY: Right. Guben Gubin near Breslau.

[00:07:23.44] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:07:24.26] JASCHAEL PERY: OK. So you practiced there as a physician.

[00:07:28.75] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:07:29.61] JASCHAEL PERY: With-- what kind of camp was it? How many inmates did you have? And you said they were from Hungary?

[00:07:35.20] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, mostly, were from Hungary.

[00:07:36.00] JASCHAEL PERY: Can you tell us a little bit about the life of the inmates there, and all that?

[00:07:38.77] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. First of all, I, myself, was so shocked because they-- [STAMMERING] first of all, it was a tremendous shock to see a shaven head--a woman. They had cut short, like a man, because us—the Ostjudens[191] from Poland, they treated us all together like a nothing to show us, right away, you are down. But then, they treated, probably, a little better.

[00:08:02.15] So I was the only one sticking out, and I am the doctor who they-- they have to trust. And with such look, you don't look too much to be trusted. No, but they also-- and-- and we are a little different, Hungarian and Polish. Uh, we have to make each other understood. Not the language. Because I spoke German, I can't Hungarian. But to, eh, to develop some kind of trust to them.

[00:08:24.77] So all right, this was already accepted. So what to say. They-- they worked

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[191] "Ostjudens": The German words *Ostjuden* (plural) and *Ostjude* (singular) literally mean "Jew(s) from the East." The title, often used pejoratively, encompasses Jews not only from Poland but also from Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. The title denotes religious, Yiddish-speaking – and therefore "unassimilated" – Jews. For a discussion of the temporal and societal origins and development of the concept of the *Ostjuden*, see Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800 –1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

--SEGMENT 11--

in a fa-- in a factory of delicate things for the army,[192] and wires. So the whole, uh, population over there, I would say, were youngster-- younger. From fourteen, younger,[193] and a couple older, too. But not old women. A few were old.

[00:08:45.82] So over there, the routine was they woke up 5 o'clock in the-- I had a room for myself with a bed and water for the-- for-- for the ambulance. So I-- I had access to water for myself. And, uh, uh, they had to stand up in line, and they counted every morning and they came back from the factory to see whether somebody didn't run away, or hiding, or uh, camouflage. They don't want to go to work. And I am responsible for everything.

[00:09:15.72] And I also had to stand at the Appell[194] and give a list, how many I keep in-- in because they are sick. So they knew that there-- if there is two hundred or whatever-- I couldn't tell you exactly how much-- five or ten or fifteen are sick. So they knew that so many, minus the amount I gave. And I had to present the list, what's wrong with them.

[00:09:39.05] All right. So and they were marching, they told me, about 10 kilometers, every day, to the factory-- cold-- it was cold, and later, was hot-- and back. And the majority of them, besides that they had little injuries and diarrhea and this, but they most had, eh, uh, lacerations of the leg, especially in the heel. Because they were wearing wooden shoes, and this was rubbing so many kilometers forth and back and every day.[195]

[00:10:10.48] So I had to put the bandage. So what could it be if it drops again? And the bandage was paper bandage, so when I put on the paper bandage, before they went in, this was already cut and nothing. And so-- and there was shortage of water, and they became hungry. And they were lonely children, mostly.

[00:10:29.86] One-- three girls, they were 14 years old, and they said, my father was a doctor, and I came to Budapest to see my grandmother. And uh, meanwhile, they grabbed me. And the child-- uh, and with also with the feet like that, and all of them. And later, was a lot of, uh,

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[192] "for the army": As noted above, the products being manufactured were for the Air Force, not the Army. The German Army (*Wehrmacht*) was also the beneficiary of Jewish forced and slave labor – as noted above for the factories in the Lodz Ghetto.

[193] "younger": There was a cluster of about six young children, including some as young as ten years old (Elvira Tenenbaum, USC SF-VHA, Int. 37234 [1997], Seg. 12).

[194] "Appell": German word for "rollcall," also an abbreviation for *Zählappell*, which has the same meaning. The procedure typically required inmates to stand outside while they were counted. According to Guben survivor Irene Weiss, the process went relatively quickly, especially when compared to those conducted at Auschwitz; see Irene Weiss, USC SF-VHA, Int. 393 (1994), Seg. 82.

[195] "so many kilometers forth and back and every day": The trek took approximately one hour each way (Irene Weiss, USC SF-VHA, Int. 393 [1994], Seg. 78).

sickness and they assigned another doctor,[196] who came, with whom I am in contact. She is now in Israel, but she is from Yugoslavia.

[00:10:56.09] So we worked together, uh, because there was a lot of things to do. When they came, we had to clean and-- and there was no water. So we had to wash them. And I, over there, found one girl from my hometown. She lived across the hall that I lived, a child of a doctor. Uh, she was an-- older, little, and I didn't associate with her personal. But I knew who she is.

[00:11:18.80] So I took special care. I wouldn't say adopted daughter,[197] but I took care, and I begged her, when you come to work, come straight to me, as tired as you are. And I gave her, eh, eh, eh, water to wash herself, to keep her up as much as I could. And if I could save a potato for her or what, I gave her, if I could. If I couldn't, I couldn't.

[00:11:40.90] So, uh, what I said-- a little water, this, I could give her, at least. And once in a while, came a German, uh, official, to check how is there.[198] And I kept, a little bit, a double bookkeeping.[199] For him, I showed the temperature and everything a little bit on the normal side. And the real, I didn't show them because the majority had, uh, TB, and I didn't want he should know it. He didn't examine; he only took it.

[00:12:10.34] So I tried to save. But what's the difference? They died. Not to-- he didn't kill them, but they died. This was the life, uh, miserable. And-- but it wasn't too bad. She didn't do

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[196] "they assigned another doctor": German authorities' assignment of a second doctor reinforces the notion that their goal was not extermination through labor; the productivity of the laborers was important. See the introductory essay for further discussion. Guben survivor Iren Leibowitz recalls that the Yugoslavian doctor's name was Ruth (Iren Leibowitz, USC SF-VHA, Int. 37166 [1997], Seg. 55).

[197] "I wouldn't say adopted daughter": Esther does, however, employ the word "adopted" when she refers to this girl in Segment 12 (15:43). Many survivors use the word to describe relationships in which unrelated "women made a commitment to each other and acted on it, extending the self preservation [sic] instinct to include a weaker woman"; see Brana Gurewitsch, "The Camp Sister Relationship: A Ray of Hope in the Concentration Camp," in *Women in the Holocaust: Responses, Insights and Perspectives*, ed. Marcia Sachs Littell (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 2001), 51. The typical arrangement was "camp sisters," or *Lagerschwestern*, but larger groups also counted as "camp families." Interestingly, as scholar Brana Gurewitsch observes, the adoption of camp family members was a practice specific to women (ibid., 55). See also Felicja Karay, "Women in the Forced-Labor Camps," in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University, 1998), 295.

[198] "German official to check how is there": The official making the inspection of the clinic was likely a camp doctor sent from the main camp, Gross-Rosen; see Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 101.

[199] "double bookkeeping": Her keeping a second set of books, or alternative medical information, was an act of resistance, as it thwarted what the camp's medical overseer sought to do. In other words, Esther undermined his attempts to rid the infirmary of tuberculosis patients and tried to save the lives of as many people as possible. For the historiography of Jewish resistance, and more specifically on medical resistance, see notes 82 and 83 of the introductory essay.

any beating.[200] And uh, sometimes, she punished something. She put a glass of water on some-- on a girl's head, and she had to sit on-- uh, kneel on one, uh, leg for an hour. And how can you stay and not shake the head?

[00:12:36.07] But she did that occasionally. So it wasn't so horrible. And we didn't have any news. They had-- in the factory, they told her, there were some German who gave the girl-- they worked in a German factory, but they were young, so they were assigned to wires. And they gave them, sometimes, a piece of bread.[201] Sometimes, they gave them-- the kids. Until it came the time of liquidation of this Guben Gubin because the Russian front approached.[202]

[00:13:07.67] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, food-wise, did they got enough food to exist?

[00:13:13.06] ESTHER FOX: No. It-- it wasn't so bad because-- [STAMMERING] they needed them because they are very forced, uh, uh, army[203] for them. So they fed. I don't know

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[200] "She didn't do any beating": While Magda Solomon also recalls that no beatings took place, Paula Ganis reports that she was hit in the face by a female camp staff member; see Magda Solomon, USC SF-VHA, Int. 14417 (1996), Seg. 67; Paula Ganis, USC SF-VHA, Int. 21415 (1996), Seg. 75. Likewise, Kathy Zupfer (Seg. 68) reports that the female camp leader had a "strong hand" and slapped her on two occasions; see Kathy Zupfer, USC SF-VHA, Int. 35607 (1997), Seg. 69, 92–93. It is important to note that the disparity in these testimonies reflects the individual nature of camp experiences.

[201] "they gave them sometimes a piece of bread": Several German employees in the factory left food for the Guben inmates. See, for example, Magda Solomon, USC SF-VHA, Int. 14417 (1996), Seg. 65; Kathleen Megerman, USC SF-VHA, Int. 28080 (1997), Seg. 39; Elvira Tenenbaum, USC SF-VHA, Int. 37234 (1997), Seg. 12. For further examples of civilians' clandestine gifts of food, see excerpts (in German) from a Guben-area newspaper's article citing a Guben survivor's letter of thanks addressed to Guben residents; see Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 6 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), 335.

[202] "liquidation…because the Russian front approached": The Soviet military advance, specifically the First Ukrainian Front's attack launched February 4–8 on Lower Silesian territory, catalyzed the evacuation of Guben and all neighboring camps in early February 1945. See Hans Brenner, *Todesmärsche und Todestransporte: Konzentrationslager Groß-Rosen und die Nebenlager* (Chemnitz: Verlag Klaus Gumnior, 2015), 102. The specific date of Guben's evacuation is not known. A study of the death marches and death transports from Gross-Rosen subcamps even appears to be mistaken on the timing, as it asserts that Guben's evacuation preceded the arrival of inmates marching from Grünberg who reported that that they found an empty camp; see ibid. As Esther reports, however, at least some of those marchers arrived before Guben inmates left. Former Guben inmate Margalit Peled recalls that one of her sisters was among the marchers who arrived on February 4 – the birthday of one of her four sisters; see Margalit Peled, USC SF-VHA, Int. 36704, Seg. 152–53. Peled states that the Guben inmates and the new arrivals subsequently evacuated the camp a few days later; see ibid., Seg. 156.

[203] "army": Esther is implying that the food was supplied to the Guben inmates because they were working for the benefit of the army. As noted above, the women's and girls' efforts were for the benefit of the Air Force.

what they got over there in the factory.[204] But back, there was a soup. What else was, nothing.[205] But somehow, nobody die-- died over there from starvation[206] because they kept them as long as they needed them.

[00:13:37.54] So they gave, more or less-- I don't know, in calories. But they-- they-- they lived.

[00:13:44.93] JASCHAEL PERY: I mean, did they give them a possibility to keep themselves hygienic, clean?

[00:13:51.34] ESTHER FOX: Not too much. There were no facilities.[207] But she didn't make it worse than it was. So they-- they keeped up-- kept up the spirit and, uh, more or less, they had to keep them clean. Because they were coming to mix with the German, so they had to look, more or less, clean. And they didn't want that they should bring infections to them. So they had to-- they did it for their own safety, not for our.[208] I emphasize that, whatever.

[00:14:20.11] JASCHAEL PERY: So you stayed in this labor camp until?

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[204] "I don't know what they got over there in the factory": Several survivors recall receiving no food during their shifts at the factory. See, for example, Judy Freeman, USC SF-VHA, Int. 1779 (1995), Seg. 80; Edith Birnholtz, USC SF-VHA, Int. 18767 (1996), Seg. 58. Other survivors, however, report that they received soup at the factory. See, for example, Eva Herszfeld-Lazar, USC SF-VHA, Int. 22145 (1996), Seg. 86; Yolanda Poller, USC SF-VHA, Int. 1463 (1995), Seg. 75. The disparity could be a product of recollections from different periods across which the availability of food changed.

[205] "nothing": Several survivors recall receiving more than soup. According to Judy Freeman, Guben inmates received (at least over a particular stretch of time) bread and ersatz coffee in the morning and soup at night, and on occasion salami or margarine with their bread; see Judy Freeman, USC SF-VHA, Int. 1779 (1995), Seg. 80. In addition, both Magda Solomon and Regina Mauskopf report the sporadic distribution of a kind of pudding; see Magda Solomon, USC SF-VHA, Int. 14417 (1996), Seg. 66; Regina Mauskopf, USC SF-VHA, Int. 24171 (1996), Seg. 141. Based on the collection of testimonies in the USC SF-VHA, the consensus among the Guben survivors is that, while the food was not plentiful, it was a clear improvement on what they received in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

[206] "nobody died over there from starvation": This does not mean, however, that no Guben inmates died during the camp's existence. There was, for instance, a death by hanging due to the suspicion of sabotage; see Helene H., FVAHT, HVT 4396, Seg. 11.

[207] "there were no facilities": Contrary to Esther's testimony, several Guben survivors speak of washing facilities at which inmates could wash themselves daily. See Judy Freeman, USC SF-VHA, Int. 1779 (1995), Seg. 82; Magda Solomon, USC SF-VHA, Int. 14417 (1996), Seg. 64–65; Sarah Wahrman, USC SF-VHA, Int. 27204 (1997), Seg. 27.

[208] "they did it for their own safety": Esther's belief that the sole motivating factor behind keeping the inmates relatively clean was the Germans' own health is, in large part, correct, but it is nevertheless an oversimplification. The company under contract with the Air Force had a material interest in its workforce's productivity, and to maintain productivity, certain standards (albeit very low ones) had to be met in order to fend off (however weakly) illnesses that would keep inmates from their workbenches. For further discussion, see the introductory essay.

[00:14:23.20] ESTHER FOX: They took us out.

[00:14:24.61] JASCHAEL PERY: Until when?

[00:14:25.65] ESTHER FOX: Eh, this was, uh-- I arrived in Bergen-Belsen,[209] eh, the 15th of February, '45.[210]

--SEGMENT 12--

[00:14:33.40] JASCHAEL PERY: They evacuated you from there to Bergen-Belsen--

[00:14:36.16] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:14:36.33] JASCHAEL PERY: --by train?

[00:14:37.15] ESTHER FOX: No. In bus-- in such a open bus, a loading bus, not with cover.[211]

[00:14:42.77] JASCHAEL PERY: Trucks.

[00:14:43.26] ESTHER FOX: And this was winter. And before we left, they brought to us, from other labor camps, groups which they liquidated when-- still closer to the Russian

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[209] "Bergen-Belsen": Located near the small northern German towns of Bergen and Belsen, Bergen-Belsen was a camp complex comprised of the POW camp (est. 1940), the "residence camp" (est. April 1943), and the "prisoners' camp" (est. April 1943). The placement of Jewish citizens of neutral countries (e.g., Spain) in the "neutrals camp" and Dutch Jews for possible prisoner exchange in the "star camp" translated to relatively good conditions for Jewish inmates in these portions of the "residence camp." As Esther's case demonstrates, however, the situation changed drastically as Bergen-Belsen became a destination for thousands of inmates whose previous camps had been liquidated due to the approach of Allied troops. The Bergen-Belsen prisoner population more than doubled, from about 7,300 at the end of July 1944 to around 15,000 by December 1944. The population rose to 22,000 after another three months and then skyrocketed to more than 60,000 by the time the camp was liberated on April 15, 1945. See the entry for Bergen-Belsen in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/bergen-belsen (accessed July 22, 2019). For further information on the camp, see, for example, Joanne Reilly et al., eds., *Belsen in History and Memory* (London: F. Cass, 1997).

[210] "the 15th of February '45": It is impossible to determine whether this date is accurate, especially in light of Esther's lack of certainty about the length of her journey, paired with the fact that the date of Guben's evacuation is unknown.

[211] "a loading bus, not with cover": Her evacuation from Guben in an uncovered military truck placed her in the minority of Guben evacuees – the majority set out on foot. For the account of another survivor who was evacuated in the same manner as Esther, see Edith Birnholtz, USC SF-VHA, Int. 18767 (1996), Seg. 64.

borders.[212] So over there, came another doctor, a woman. And she said to me, listen. Try to get everybody going because whoever says he cannot go-- because some couldn't walk anymore because of the wounds on the legs-- they will shoot them.[213]

[00:15:08.45] So I told them, I couldn't talk Hungarian. He was standing. I couldn't say, in German, get up and go. Because they should think but somebody told them in Hungarian. And whoever couldn't go, couldn't go. Had to go on the bus. And she-- and he assigned me, too. So I didn't do it because I volunteered I will go with them. Because I-- they didn't ask me what I want to do or not. But he assigned me. And the other doctor, the Hungarian-- the Yugoslav and my nurse, she volunteered.

[00:15:40.15] And this girl, whom I took as my adopted child, let's say, I told her, you go. And it wasn't good. Because what was the end? We went by bus a long trip. I don't remember how many days and nights. It was snowing and cold, and and some died. They-- they didn't give us to eat. But finally, we arrived to the place called Bergen-Belsen.

[00:16:02.47] But later, I found out that these who marched, which I forced them-- talked them into march-- they were marching six-- I don't know how many weeks.[214] And they came

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[212] "they brought to us from other labor camps…still closer to the Russian borders": Before Guben's own liquidation, the camp population absorbed inmates who had already been sent on death marches from camps that had been previously liquidated due to their greater proximity to the Soviet front; see Gutterman, *Narrow Bridge*, 203. For an account of one of those who arrived in Guben as a stopover during the march from the Gross-Rosen subcamp of Grünberg to Bergen-Belsen, see Helen Rosenbaum, USC SF-VHA, Int. 55161, Seg. 76.

[213] "whoever says it cannot go…they will shoot them": Given that camp officials themselves had to decipher commands that were "usually muddled and were constantly being modified," it is not surprising that the inmates experienced uncertainty as to their fate (Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 410). Here Esther references one of the main rumors. The doctor's warning likely had some basis in reality, as camp officials received instructions that no one was to be left behind alive; yet they did not always heed them; see, for example, ibid., 98–103. Specifically, as historian Daniel Blatman observes, those who were sick and incapable of marching tended not to be killed *en masse*; "the sick were often left in the camp or evacuated as a group if the means of transportation were available" (ibid., 103). In Esther's case, the available means were trucks.

[214] "I don't know how many weeks": Historian Hans Brenner writes that the survivors of the death march from Guben arrived at Bergen-Belsen near the end of February (Brenner, *Todesmärsche*, 105). Having departed at some point in early February, the former Guben inmates were traveling for perhaps three weeks, as opposed to the six Esther estimates. For a discussion of the route the Guben inmates took on foot and by train, see ibid., 102–5. Survivor testimonies seem to indicate, however, that Brenner's portrayal of the death march from Guben is not comprehensive, as they describe a variety of routes and lengths of time. Susan P. and Mirl Meisels, for instance, describe a journey entirely on foot and echo Esther's estimation of a six-week journey, although it is unclear how they arrived at this estimate; see Susan P., FVAHT, HVT-2124 (1993), Seg. 13–14, https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/hx15m62f7r; Mirl Meisels, Int. 16359 (1996), Seg. 99–100.

with frozen toes, with frozen legs, completely emaciated.[215] Much worse than we, who were on the bus, who were supposed to be shot on the spot. So this is fate, providence, I don't know. So now, I finished already the trip, which was undescribable, miserable. So we are in Bergen-Belsen.[216]

[00:16:35.12] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:16:35.86] ESTHER FOX: Should I go on?

[00:16:36.67] JASCHAEL PERY: Yes, please.

[00:16:37.39] ESTHER FOX: So we came to Bergen-Belsen. I remember how it was is they put us--

[00:16:44.05] JASCHAEL PERY: Date-wise, where-- when was it?

[00:16:46.63] ESTHER FOX: I don't remember. I couldn't tell you.

[00:16:48.25] JASCHAEL PERY: It was-- if you arrived to--

[00:16:49.53] ESTHER FOX: I don't remember it was day or night.

[00:16:50.92] JASCHAEL PERY: --Auschwitz in August '45.[217]

[00:16:53.63] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. It was day or night.

[00:16:54.25] JASCHAEL PERY: You stayed there only five days, and here you said six months, or-- in the--

[00:16:58.33] ESTHER FOX: From-- from August till February, so six--

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[215] "frozen toes, frozen legs, completely emaciated": For a detailed description of the journey from Guben to Bergen-Belsen, see Magda Solomon, USC SF-VHA, Int. 14417 (1996), Seg. 68–71. For an in-depth study of Nazi death marches overall, see Blatman, *Death Marches*. Because Blatman frames the death marches as "the final phase of Nazi genocide" it is important to draw attention to the fact that, while the death marches certainly resulted in countless murders and deaths due to exhaustion and exposure, the rationale behind these marches was not entirely grounded in killing. For a concise discussion of death marches that also addresses original motives, see USHMM, *Holocaust Encyclopedia* https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/death-marches.

[216] "So we are in Bergen-Belsen": Esther and her fellow Guben prisoners were among 4,000 inmates to arrive in Bergen-Belsen after their evacuation from Gross-Rosen and its subcamps; see Blatman, *Death Marches*, 105.

[217] "in August '45": He misspeaks here. Esther arrived in Auschwitz in August 1944.

[00:17:01.44] JASCHAEL PERY: February.

[00:17:01.72] ESTHER FOX: --about five months.

[00:17:02.32] JASCHAEL PERY: So it was beginning of, uh, '45. Somewhere, March '45.

[00:17:05.74] ESTHER FOX: No, no, no. March, I was already in Bergen--15 of February, I was in Bergen-Belsen.

[00:17:10.06] JASCHAEL PERY: In Bergen-Belsen.

[00:17:10.75] ESTHER FOX: So we left in the beginning--

[00:17:12.64] JASCHAEL PERY: OK. So it was February--

[00:17:14.00] ESTHER FOX: Something, a few day.

[00:17:14.35] JASCHAEL PERY: February '45.

[00:17:15.06] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:17:15.49] JASCHAEL PERY: That's good enough.

[00:17:15.91] ESTHER FOX: But the others probably came later because I lost them.

[00:17:19.03] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:17:19.47] ESTHER FOX: I were not with them.

[00:17:20.44] JASCHAEL PERY: But yourself, you arrived February.

[00:17:21.79] ESTHER FOX: So I was assigned to a-- to a block, which was an awful block, they told me. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah. So they told me that there is a doctor. Uh, she was Hadassah Bimko. Now she is-- uh, what's her name now? Uh. Oh, she is now in the Holocaust,[218] uh, eh-- Rosensaft. Hadassah Rosensaft.

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[218] "she is now in the Holocaust": It appears that Esther is referring to Rosensaft's involvement in federal projects related to the Holocaust. Specifically, Rosensaft served as one of 34 members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, formed in November 1978; see Hadassah Rosensaft, *Yesterday: My Story* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), 176. She was subsequently one of 50 Americans to serve on the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, established in 1980, and also served on the Council's Executive Committee; see ibid., 187–88.

[00:17:50.18] She was the head-- no, she was the head in Auschwitz, and later, she was--[219] I shouldn't confuse. In Bergen-Belsen, too, yeah. And I reported to her that I am a physician. So I was, uh, assigned to a block-- a certain block, where already-- where-- uh, it was not, eh, a working to go. It was to-- to stay.

[00:18:14.96] And over there was the greatest misery. The greatest before, too, but over there, I was only five days. They slept-- there were pritches, bunkers, yeah, a little bit. I don't remember. And on the floor and in dirt and everything. And, uh-- and it was the no food, no nothing. And it took me time until I got whoever I am. I was very fragile, emotional, with it all the thing.

[00:18:44.06] And they told me that one-- some of these, with whom I was the doctor for so many months, are in a certain block, number such-and-such. So I went there, and I went there, and I didn't recognize not one of them. Because it was not too long there from the trip, and from the few days, or a week-- I couldn't recall now. They were so changed, so emaciated.

[00:19:06.71] And you see, this was called hunger edema--[220] swollen faces. And so I couldn't recognize who they were. A short time, they disintegrated like nothing. And the incubate-- yeah. And there was an epidemic of typhus--[221] not typhoid. This is from lice.

[00:19:24.35] Because we were covered from-- with lice from the head to the bottom. And the sickness comes from lice. So we all were covered, including me, understood. It wasn't of young-- uh, nobody-- even the German. Uh, so I know that the incubation period of the sickness is two weeks. And exactly, to the hour, I took sick with typhus.

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[219] "Hadassah Rosensaft…was the head; no, she was the head in Auschwitz, and later she was…": Rosensaft – Hadassah Bimko at that time – did not in fact serve as the head prisoner-physician in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Recruited for work by Mengele in late 1943, she initially served as a prisoner-physician in a Jewish clinic barrack in the BIa sector of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Rosensaft, *Yesterday*, 32). In June 1944, after working in the scabies block, Mengele had her transferred to the newly established, yet still unfinished, Birkenau sector BIII, nicknamed "Mexico" (ibid., 35–37). She was, however, "appointed to organize and supervise the hospital" in Bergen-Belsen (ibid., 43).

[220] "hunger edema": Hunger edema, or swelling due to malnutrition, is the result of insufficient protein in the diet. It is among a collection of symptoms of a condition called kwashiorkor, or edematous malnutrition. For further information on kwashiorkor, see, for example, U.S. National Library of Medicine, *Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia,* https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001604.htm (accessed July 24, 2019). The swelling, or fluid retention, is most apparent in legs and feet and also appears in the face.

[221] "epidemic of typhus": Typhus, a louse-borne bacterial disease, reaches epidemic proportions in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, as Bergen-Belsen was when Esther arrived in February 1945. It led to a large percentage of the approximately 18,000 deaths in Bergen-Belsen in March 1945 (Ben Shephard, *After Daybreak: The Liberation of Belsen, 1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 15). This same typhus epidemic also claimed the lives of Anne and Margot Frank.

[00:19:48.11] So I was sick, eh, I don't know how long. Nobody gave me a sip of water. How I survived, I don't know. And when I got-- in the beginning, I couldn't walk, so I was sitting and-- and-- and shuffling by sitting. I couldn't go on my legs because I was so weak.[222]

[00:20:07.04] And I went to find out about my girl. So they told me that she died. So why do I mention her? Because to finish with her, after the liberation, her mother survived, who was a doctor. And one of the doctor wrote to me that she is going to look for her-- to Germany to look for her.

[00:20:27.53] And I didn't have the-- the courage to write to her. So I wrote to the head of the doctors who were in the ghetto-- the head, he survived. He should tell her that she was under my, eh, eh, supervision a little bit. In the end, I know he shouldn't let her go because it's no use. I know she died.

[00:20:47.69] So this was the end and the short in Bergen-Belsen. And

--SEGMENT 13--

in Bergen-Belsen, people died like flies. Absolutely like flies. And they were stack of cadavers and everything. Until-- this wasn't too long because the 15th of April, we were liberated-- exactly, I remember-- by the British army.[223] And I was still very weak. I couldn't walk. And I couldn't anything do.

[00:21:12.50] But when they told me that the British army is here-- others-- so I said listen, I don't believe them.[224] These are German in British uniforms, different color. We should jubilate so that they will have a reason to-- to kill us. So far, I was already-- [STAMMERING] not

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[222] "I couldn't walk…because I was so weak": A couple of symptoms of epidemic typhus would likely have contributed to her difficulty walking: acutely painful muscles and joint and low blood pressure. For a list of additional symptoms, see U.S. National Library of Medicine, *Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia,* https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001363.htm (accessed July 24, 2019).

[223] "we were liberated…by the British Army": For a study of the liberating forces, including Canadian military units, which are often absent from the historiography, see Mark Celinscak, *Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2015). For the recollections of the first British officer to enter the camp, see Derrick Sington, "April 15, 1945," in H. Leivick et al., *Belsen* (Tel Aviv: Irgun Sheerit Hapleita Me'Haezor Habriti, 1957), 67–80.

[224] "I don't believe them": Esther was not the only inmate to be suspicious of the arriving troops. Of liberation, fellow Bergen-Belsen survivor Anita Lasker-Wallfisch recalls, "we looked at our liberators in silence. We were so suspicious." See Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, "A Survivor's Memory of Liberation," in *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 25.

believing that it can happen [UNCLEAR] And later, we found out that they were prepared to put a dynamite in the whole Bergen-Belsen camp.[225] Because when the British were close to-- not to show, eh, proof of-- of-- of everything. But they didn't make it.

[00:21:49.16] And the British came and they were British soldiers, which I said they only put the uniform. So this what it was like, the liberation was-- is no German. And even when they already-- they put out the white flag and they [STAMMERING], the Hungarian were guards.[226] They still were shooting, and one girl had af-- up one arm, and one was killed after the white flag was hung out.[227]

[00:22:12.77] And the-- all these Germans who were, uh, supervising us, taking the girls to the factory and back, when they heard that the Russian are coming, they already knew that it's no good. So they were hiding under us, and they put on, also, some kind of a-- of a rag to believe that they are not Ger-- German.[228]

[00:22:32.94] But they had, I think, under the arm, whoever was a Nazi.[229] And you know this what it was. So I want to say that, when there was the liberation, and, uh, they were, uh, carrying the German who were officials in Bergen-Belsen, soldiers or not soldiers. So the girls who get-- got the soup, they threw the hot soup in their face-- in the German.[230] And I was, that time, saying to myself, I couldn't do it. I didn't have the soup and I didn't have the strength.

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[225] "they were prepared to put a dynamite in the whole Bergen-Belsen camp": It appears that this rumor, perhaps started by the SS themselves, was widespread. One survivor recalls: "the SS kept us in mortal fear by informing us that the camp was mined and we would all be blown up before the day of liberation came" (Hadassa Bimko-Rosensaft, "The Children of Belsen," in Leivick, *Belsen*, 104).

[226] "Hungarian were guards": Around 2,000 Hungarians were serving as guards when the camp was liberated, and they remained armed; see Celinscak, *Distance*, 69. For recollections of these guards, see Rosensaft, *Yesterday*, 52; Magda Solomon, Interview 14417 (1996), Segment 72, USC SF-VHA.

[227] "after the white flag was hung out": In the three days following the camp's liberation, Hungarian guards shot 72 Jews and 11 non-Jews; see Josef Rosensaft, "Our Belsen," in Leivick, *Belsen*, 25.

[228] "they were hiding under us…a rag to believe that they are not German": It is unclear whether any camp staff did, in fact, don prisoner garb and attempt to hide among the prisoners to avoid detection and subsequent punishment by the Allies. Many SS had simply left the camp in the week prior to the camp's liberation, and the majority of those who remained were the Hungarian guards; see Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London: Routledge, 1998), 149.

[229] "they had…under the arm, whoever was a Nazi": She appears to be indicating the blood type tattoo given to members of the Waffen SS, typically above their armpit. Allied forces took advantage of this practice to determine which captured Germans should remain in captivity and be investigated for involvement in war crimes.

[230] "they threw the hot soup in their face": With the drastic shift in power dynamics in the wake of camp liberations, many former inmates sought to exact revenge against their captors and torturers. The extent to which survivors could pursue direct vengeance often differed according to survivors' health. Inmates who had been in the main Belsen camp for long periods tended not to fight, whereas those who had recently arrived in "Camp 2" (at the Panzer Training School) killed as many as 150 former prisoner-functionaries. See Shephard, *After Daybreak*, 38–39. Another determining factor was the degree of

[00:23:01.17] But my soup, I could do. But I somehow couldn't do that. I don't know it's a weakness or what. I wouldn't be able. I was too old, maybe, for that. So this was the liberation. And, uh, it took time because the British, they were overwhelmed[231] themself.[232] And uh, they prepared. Where the German had the hospital,[233] they washed us, they cleaned with DD--DBT.[234]

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lenience demonstrated by individual Allied soldiers towards acts of revenge. Esther Brunstein, for example, recalls that "inmates had to be restrained from attacking [the Germans]" (quoted in Celinscak, *Distance*, 43).

[231] "they were overwhelmed": The liberating forces unexpectedly encountered about 40,000 prisoners, many of whom were very close to death, as well as 10,000 unburied corpses. See H.L. Glyn Hughes, "Belsen Camp, April, 1945," in Leivick, *Belsen*, 95. For a first-hand description of how the Allied forces coped with the situation, see W.R.F. Collis, "A Medical Appraisal of the Horrors," in ibid., 109–16 (originally published in the June 9, 1945 issue of the *British Medical Journal*). For personal accounts from Allied healthcare workers, see, for example, Ben Barnett, Molly Silva Jones, and Gerald Raperport, "The Medical Relief Effort: Eyewitness Accounts," in Bardgett and Cesarani, *Belsen*, 51–61; Muriel Knox Doherty, *Letters from Belsen, 1945: An Australian Nurse's Experiences with the Survivors of War*, ed. Judith Cornell and R. Lynette Russell (St. Leonard's, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Ben Flanagan and Donald Bloxham, eds., *Remembering Belsen: Eyewitnesses Record the Liberation* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005), 41–60.

[232] "themself": The British were not the only liberating forces to be overwhelmed by what they found. They and the other Allied powers that divided the conquered Germany into four sectors – American, British, French, and Soviet – had to contend with almost seven and a half million people who needed either to return to their home countries or to find homes somewhere else; see Barry Trachtenberg, *The United States and the Nazi Holocaust: Race, Refuge, and Remembrance* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 94. For insight into some of the international politics stemming from, and in some cases contributing to, the Jewish displaced persons (DP) crisis in the immediate postwar years, see, for example, Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[233] "where the German had the hospital": Allied forces took over the nearby German military hospital and also established a provisional emergency hospital in barracks of the former Panzer Training School, which was located about a mile from the main camp. The two facilities were to accommodate approximately 10,000 patients. See Shephard, *After Daybreak*, 50.

[234] "DD—DBT": To kill lice and thus combat further spread of typhus, British medical officers utilized DDT, a pesticide whose full name is dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane. For discussion of how DDT was used, as well as an opinion on how it could have and should have been used, see Paul Weindling, "'Belsenitis': Liberating Belsen, Its Hospitals, UNRRA, and Selection for Re-emigration, 1945–1948," *Science in Context* 19, no. 3 (2006): 402–7. The washing and spraying of the inmates with DDT was known as "the human laundry," and it took place in a former stable building on the grounds of the Panzer Training School. For a more detailed description of this process through which about 14,000 people passed, see Shephard, *After Daybreak*, 59.

[00:23:27.57] And they put us in-- in German, the Revier.[235] And they assigned, to each building, one of the doctors.[236] And I, among them, I was also one.[237] And my Hungarian and others-- there were a few. And one of the supervising German-- or, uh, English was from the Israel brigade,[238] a Jewish. His name-- by the name-- was Deutsch.[239] So we were confused. Deutsch, and he was Israeli.[240]

[00:23:51.81] [LAUGHS]

[00:23:52.95] So he was, you know-- we saw a-- a Jewish man, and a Jew has, uh, power. We were-- we didn't know what's going on. A Jew has something to say? So he was instrumental in the moving and [INAUDIBLE]. And we were trying to-- to rescue whatever we can. And the British wanted to do well to gave so much food. The can stuff, the beans, and with-- with pork.

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[235] "Revier": German word indicating, in this context, a medical facility, here a hospital.

[236] "they assigned to each building one of the doctors": British and Canadian doctors, nurses, and medics were assigned to as many places as possible, but their numbers fell far short of the demand. As a result, Allied medical officers begrudgingly recruited local German doctors and nurses to supplement the medical staff. In addition, former prisoners with medical training were also recruited to provide care. See Celinscak, *Distance*, 162–63, 166–69.

[237] "I was also one": When Hadassa(h) Bimko-Rosensaft, a survivor appointed as hospital administrator, requested that doctors and nurses identify themselves, 28 doctors and 620 others (only a few of whom had formal nursing training) stepped forward from the survivor population. See Hadassa Bimko-Rosensaft, "The Children of Belsen," in Leivick, *Belsen*, 106. In her memoir, Rosensaft writes that eight doctors, not 28, volunteered (Rosensaft, *Yesterday*, 53). Other Bergen-Belsen survivor-doctors included Gisella Perl and Terézia Braun. See, respectively, Gisella Perl, *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, 115–120; Terézia Braun, Statement, 20 July 1945, Bergen-Belsen Archives, BT-80 (B-12), 13. Survivor-doctors were active in most, if not all, places where survivors congregated, yet the medical work of these individuals is largely absent from the historiography. My next project seeks to address this lacuna.

[238] "Israel Brigade": Founded in September 1944, the Jewish Brigade, technically the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group, was an infantry unit in the British Army comprising over 5,000 Jewish volunteers from Mandate Palestine. The Brigade saw action in Italy during the last months of the war, and some members subsequently served as teachers in schools established in Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons Camp (Rosensaft, *Yesterday*, 76, 84). For a historical summary and two larger studies of the group, see, respectively, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-brigade-group; Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters, 1944-1945* (New York: Sarpedon, 1998); Howard Blum, *The Brigade: An Epic Story of Vengeance, Salvation, and WWII* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002). For a brief discussion of their emotional and practical effects on survivors, see Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, trans. John A. Broadwin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 20–21.

[239] "His name…was Deutsch": Because "Deutsch" means "German" confusion resulted from having a Jewish soldier with a name that means "German," especially right after liberation, which marked the end of Germans in supervisory roles in the camp.

[240] "he was Israeli": This term is an anachronism as the State of Israel did not exist before 1948. He was from British Mandate Palestine, much of which became the State of Israel in 1948.

[00:24:16.71] And we had a meeting, and we told them, don't give so much. They can-- their stomach cannot take it. Give light food. But they did. So a lot-- thousands died from giving not the right food.[241] So this was about, uh-- there is a lot to say about it.

[00:24:34.53] JASCHAEL PERY: Right. So how long did you stay there in Bergen-Belsen after the liberation?

[00:24:38.76] ESTHER FOX: I left, I think, the 15th or something of July to Sweden.[242] Why to Sweden? One day-- I was in my place where I worked-- came some military men, and they wore a uniform. And I didn't know, at the time, a word English. And I-- they spoke English to the British who would supervise everything.

[00:25:00.36] But they didn't look English, and the uniform was different. And I didn't know who they are, but I knew they are somebody. But who, I didn't know. So later, we found out that they came-- the British government[243] offered to take 10,000 refugees,[244] such criminals like we,[245] for rehabilitation. And they took us, and they ask, who wants to go?

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[241] "thousands died from giving not the right food": According to estimates, about 2,000 former inmates died as a result of liberators' feeding them food that their bodies could not process on account of the amount and/or type of food. See, for example, Ben Shephard, "The Medical Relief Effort at Belsen," in Bardgett and Cesarani, *Belsen*, 37. After prolonged periods without sufficient nutrition, the inmates' metabolisms had changed, so the introduction of particular types of food in large amounts was detrimental and proved deadly in many cases.

[242] "to Sweden": Departing in July 1945, Esther was among the majority of liberated Belsen inmates who left within six months (Reilly, *Belsen*, 162).

[243] "British government": It appears that she is referring to the Swedish government, not the British government.

[244] "the British government offered to take 10,000 refugees": Refugee immigration to Sweden came in two waves. The first, carried out by the Swedish Red Cross, brought approximately 20,000 former concentration camp inmates. Citizens of Nordic countries comprised the majority of this group. Esther was part of the second wave, which resulted from the Swedish government's agreement to accept 10,000 additional former concentration camp inmates. As a female Polish Jew, Esther was among the majority of this second group. See Mikael Byström, "When the State Stepped into the Arena: The Swedish Welfare State, Refugees and Immigrants 1930s-50s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 3 (2014): 599-621, 610. Approximately 4,700 Jewish survivors went to Sweden in 1945; see World Jewish Congress, Relief and Rehabilitation Department and Jewish Agency for Palestine, Rescue Committee, *About Jews Liberated from German Concentration Camps Arrived in Sweden in 1945, List No. 1* (Stockholm: World Jewish Congress, Relief and Rehabilitation Department and Jewish Agency for Palestine, Rescue Committee, 1945) and idem, *About Jews Liberated from German Concentration Camps Arrived in Sweden in 1945-46, List No. 2* (Stockholm: World Jewish Congress, Relief and Rehabilitation Department and Jewish Agency for Palestine, Rescue Committee, 1946). The second wave, which included Esther, left for Sweden between June 23 and July 25 and comprised 9,273 people, about 7,000 of whom departed from Bergen-Belsen (Shephard, *After Daybreak*, 148).

[245] "such criminals like we": She is using sarcasm to criticize the Swedish government for not accepting more Jewish displaced persons, who were not criminals and whose immigration should therefore not have been so strictly limited.

[00:25:25.44] So we were a couple doctors and dentists from my hometown. And we decided what to do, where to go. To Poland was out, whatever, no more.[246] So where to go. And Palestine, at that time, wasn't yet mentioned,[247] and-- and I had no connection, as I mentioned before. I wasn't affiliated with any, uh, political movement.

[00:25:48.24] So we said, uh, uh-- we were, like to say, the-- we knew a little geography, a little older. So we said, maybe Sweden is a good idea. It's a neutral country,[248] this we knew. It's the window to the world. Uh, somebody had relatives in America. I said, maybe from there, I will communicate.

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[246] "to Poland was out, whatever, no more": She was in the majority of Polish Holocaust survivors who did not return home. Many feared ongoing antisemitism and animosity from non-Jewish Poles and thought of the country as a cemetery. Esther herself explains, "Never would we consider to go there where so much of our blood and pain is in each stone and home" (Fox, *Memoir*, 7). For further discussions of antisemitism and anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland, see Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946," *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998): 43–85. Had she returned to her home city of Lodz, she would have found what was actually considered to be a relatively safe place for Jews after liberation, and as such, forty percent of all Jews remaining in Poland in 1945 found themselves in that city and its environs (Shimon Redlich, "Between History and Biography: Memories from Postwar Lodz," in *Fenomen Getta Łódzkiego*, 422). For a deeper discussion of Jews in (and passing through) Lodz in the postwar period, see Shimon Redlich, *Life in Transit: Jews in Postwar Lodz, 1945-1950* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011). Many other locations were not safe for Jews, as exemplified by the city of Kielce, where Poles murdered 42 Jew and injured many more in a pogrom on July 4, 1946. For information about the Kielce Pogrom and its immediate historical context, see https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/anti-jewish-violence-in-poland-after-liberation.html.

[247] "Palestine, at that time, wasn't yet mentioned": Perhaps in her midst survivors were not discussing Palestine as an immigration destination, but it was on the minds of many others. A Zionist-led movement to form and subsequently maintain Jewish self-government in Bergen-Belsen appeared within weeks of liberation and pressured British authorities for immigration to Palestine. For brief and more engaged discussions, respectively, of this group and its political activities, see Hagit Lavsky, "A Community of Survivors: Bergen-Belsen as a Jewish Centre after 1945," in *Belsen in History and Memory*, ed. Jo Reilly et al. (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 167–75; Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945-1950* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002). For a discussion of the important role Zionism played amongst Jewish Displaced Persons in postwar Germany overall, see, for example, Ze'ev Mankowitz, "Zionism and *She'erit Hapletah*," in She'erit Hapletah*, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 211–30.

[248] "maybe Sweden is a good idea. It's a neutral country": Sweden was not particularly far, and having declared itself a neutral country during the war, it had not suffered any physical or financial ruin, unlike so many other European countries.

[00:26:05.37] So we registered what will be, will be. So let's go to Sweden.[249] So the 15th-- I remember, if I'm not mistaken-- of July, I left for Sweden by a boat. You know, first to Germany, to Lubeck, and from over there, to Sweden.[250]

--SEGMENT 14--

[00:26:23.23] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, what do you recall from how were you accepted in Sweden, and how well you dealt there?

[00:26:31.72] ESTHER FOX: I have my personal best, uh, memories about Sweden. I was particularly, eh, lucky in some respect. I came over there and they put us for, eh, eh, eh, eh, for two weeks, for three weeks, for, uh, eh-- two-- I forgot, this moment, the word-- eliminate any incubation of other sicknesses for, uh-- oh, maybe the word will come.[251]

[00:26:59.55] JASCHAEL PERY: Isolation?

[00:26:59.96] ESTHER FOX: Huh? Yeah, for isolation. So we were in Landskrona[252] two weeks or three weeks. And over there, they cleaned us, they washed us. They, uh, fed us and they gave us some clothes to fit, more or less-- the government.[253] And after three weeks, they came social workers. And they put us north of Sweden because they couldn't take us in the center of Sweden for a, in, Baggå[254] was the name.

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[249] "let's go to Sweden": As scholar Joanne Reilly writes: "If whilst a DP was waiting for a visa or for an illegal passage, however, an offer of settlement to another country came along, more often than not he or she would take it. These people sought independence and security rather than the uncertainty of a prolonged wait in Europe and the possibility of settlement in Palestine" (Reilly, *Belsen*, 163).

[250] "first to Germany, to Lübeck, and from over there, to Sweden": Already in Germany, Esther traveled from Bergen-Belsen to the Baltic Sea port city of Lübeck. She then crossed the Baltic from northern Germany to reach Sweden.

[251] "the word will come": Esther is likely trying to remember the word "quarantine."

[252] "Landskrona": Landskrona is a city close to the southern tip of Sweden, known for its deep harbor.

[253] "they cleaned us, they washed us…the government": The Swedish government established the Government Board of Refugee Relief to address myriad needs of refugees arriving in Sweden from October 1, 1941. For more information about this organization and the evolution of support for refugees in Sweden, see Byström, "When the State Stepped into the Arena."

[254] "Baggå": According to the finding aid in the Swedish National Archive, the only Swedish displaced persons camp with a name close to Esther's pronunciation is Baggå (med Krampen); see https://sok.riksarkivet.se/?postid=Arkis+5a99ff05-beb8-496d-982c-ece83739512e&fbclid=IwAR1LtB3LU5ILzj5KggaIUs9vonQ3YrbXQNUEXKomZ77SMYDE0SXcRm-HZCw&vol=n&ct=50&inc=1&exp=y#tab (accessed July 30, 2019; thanks to Malin Thor Tureby for informing me of the link). Esther also speaks of this DP facility in her USC Shoah Foundation testimony; see Esther Fox, USC SF-VHA, Int. 766, Seg. 141. Another survivor speaks of the same facility, and tells a story about a trip to a Malmö pastry shop that is identical to the one Esther shares in her USC SF-VHA testimony (Seg. 140–41); see Rita Hilton, USC SF-VHA, Int. 30717 (1997), Seg. 58. In Esther's

[00:27:26.54] And over there, we came. It was in the woods, already not far from-- from Lapland, very north. And there came-- when they recovered everybody-- yeah, they sent right away to hospitals, to sanatoriums, for TB, mostly.[255] And other sicknesses--[256] uh, skin and the intestinal trouble, and so.

[00:27:46.45] But when we were over there in Baggå came social workers. And they started taking a register, who is who. Dressmakers, eh, eh, hat makers. So they needed, eh, uh, a working power. And they assigned them through the whole country of Sweden-- to south, to north, to west, to east-- to different factories.[257]

[00:28:10.01] But the biggest trouble were the couple doctors, what to do with us. Because we have no right to practice.[258] We cannot go to a factory. We are-- we are not handy for that. So eh, one day came an invitation to probably all camps,[259] but to our camps, too, that ladies physicians from Stockholm-- not Jewish because-- I don't know. Maybe there were a few Jewish, but the local people are-- [STAMMERING] inviting all refugees-- doctors, females-- to Stockholm to be their guests. And uh, to accommodate to a [UNCLEAR]

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handwritten account at the United States Holocaust Museum, the name appears as "Baggö"; see Esther Fox, "A Memoir Related to Experiences in the Łódź Ghetto, Auschwitz, Guben, and Bergen-Belsen," undated, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Acc. 1995.A.0532, p. 8. The confusion regarding spelling probably stems from the fact that the Swedish letter "å" has a pronunciation close to the English letter "o." Esther locates this camp in the north of Sweden near Lapland, but there is no site of that name and spelling in the region. The camp of that name was near the center of the country. Due to the lack of research on Swedish refugee camps, however, scholar Malin Thor Tureby cautions that a camp meeting Esther's description may have, in fact, existed but has thus far escaped historians' attention.

[255] "sanatoriums, for TB, mostly": For insight into survivors' experiences in Swedish sanatoria, see Freda T., FVAHT, HVT-38 (1984), Seg. 15, https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/7659c6s317; Sara T., FVAHT, HVT-3114 (1992), Seg. 9, https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/7659c6s317.

[256] "other sicknesses": Survivors remained ill with a variety of ailments for many months after their liberation. Bergen-Belsen Chief Nurse Muriel Knox Doherty, for example, reports that, in early September 1945, her patients in the DP hospital required treatment for "typhus, typhoid, meningitis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, osteomyelitis, and…other medical complaints" (Doherty, *Letters from Belsen*, 115).

[257] "they needed working power…to different factories": For a discussion of refugees and the Swedish labor market, see Byström, "When the State Stepped into the Arena," 615–17.

[258] "we have no right to practice": It is important to note that doctors often face this challenge when immigrating to another country. For a discussion of the dynamics between several interested parties regarding medical refugees in particular, see, for example, Paul Weindling, "Medical Refugees and the Modernisation of British Medicine, 1930–1960," *Social History of Medicine* 22, no. 3 (December 1, 2009): 489–511, https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkp054.

[259] "camps": The aforementioned finding aid (note 258) lists 56 camps, but Tureby suspects that further scholarship on the subject will bring to light additional facilities established in Sweden to accommodate refugees. For a survivor's description of a displaced persons camp in Sweden, see, for example, Judith P., FVAHT, HVT-2548 (1993), Seg. 43, https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/r/9z90863b64.

[00:28:51.44] So we went to Sweden-- to Stockholm, and each lady physician from Stockholm took one doctor to her house, and took her to all the meetings we had, to all conventions [INAUDIBLE]. And we were three from my hometown, which they ran out of ladies physicians, and we were three.

[00:29:10.61] So what to with us? So I found out later, was a professor, Erik Wolff in Stockholm, a Jew. And he was the, uh, Chief of the Forensic Medicine in Stockholm.[260] And they asked-- and his wife-- and he was a prominent Jew,[261] besides being a Swedish professor. But he is a conscious Jew.

[00:29:32.15] And ask him, her whether he could help out with three doctors. And a rich man he was, by the way. So she said-- and she was always the President of the Council of Jewish Women from before the war. Because-- this I found out later. He said he will take care of the three.

[00:29:50.39] How? He didn't have an apartment to accommodate three strangers, so she rented a room next to their house at a Swedish family-- a woman, it was. And we lived there. And she took us, every morning, uh, to the, uh, convention places. And over there, I remember, I heard the first time the word penicillin. We didn't know.

[00:30:13.16] And, uh, finally, later, uh, I got a job. And everybody, they found still were sick. Then not everybody was, right away, sent to factories. So an hour from Stockholm, I was assigned to a place where there were still sick, weak refugees.[262] So I worked over there. And gradually, gradually, gradually, they were placed for different jobs, and my job ran out again.

[00:30:41.72] So Professor Wolff and I was invited there, as it was an hour from Stockholm, when there was a Jewish holiday, like a Seder,[263] and another holiday, they invited me. And he, uh, made a place for me in his laboratory. But in Stockholm, they were very fair for the refugees,

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[260] "Chief of the Forensic Medicine in Stockholm": Erik Wolff (1891-1971) served as the chief forensic chemist at Sweden's National Laboratory of Forensic Chemistry from 1925 to 1956. For information about his scholarly interests, see Alan Wayne Jones, *Research Work Published by the Department of Forensic Toxicology National Board of Forensic Medicine* (Linköping: Taberg Media Group, 2014), 113–15.

[261] "a prominent Jew": Wolff served on the board of the Jewish Community of Stockholm and was a member of the World Jewish Congress's Swedish Section; see Pontus Rudberg, *The Swedish Jews and the Holocaust* (London: Routledge, 2017), 26.

[262] "weak refugees": Under the supervision of Swedish doctors, Esther treated camp survivors in Nykvarn for approximately a year. See Fox, *Memoir*, 8.

[263] "Seder": Hebrew word denoting the religious service and the dinner before and during which the service is performed on the first two nights of the Jewish Passover holiday, which celebrates the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt.

not to make us feel like beggars or on charity. They gave us, like, archival-- archive work. So it was in the library, in a museum, something.

[00:31:14.84] And he gave me a job in his laboratory for a certain department-- I have a certificate of it-- so that he didn't pay me. Otherwise, I would feel very unhappy that it means he could pay me not to work also. He was a rich man, but I wouldn't be happy. I wouldn't want it. But this was a job, and I was paid by the government by-- by-- like anybody else in the museum and the laboratory.

[00:31:39.68] And I worked over there for-- uh, after the first year in the camp near Stockholm-- until I came to America. And I had the best memories of this time in the laboratory. These people all were Swedish, but at that time, they all knew German. I didn't know Swedish. Later, I learned. But I-- in the beginning. And they were all kind and all good and understanding.

[00:32:04.46] And uh, I never [MUMBLING]. I want only to say that

--SEGMENT 15—

we arrived to Sweden, the first-- you know, you come to a strange country, you read signs. So we saw something "Förbjuden." "Förbjuden" in Sweden means "Verboten" in German. It's, uh, not allowed. But we read "förb*juden*."

[00:32:23.27] So we start something again with Juden. So what for did we come to Stockholm, to Sweden? We didn't know that it doesn't mean Juden. But we were conditioned that anything which sounds with Juden, we felt that's me, that's us. So but it wasn't like that. So this was--

[00:32:40.79] JASCHAEL PERY: So you stayed in Ger-- in Sweden until '49.

[00:32:44.58] ESTHER FOX: No, '47.

[00:32:45.77] JASCHAEL PERY: '47, sorry.

[00:32:46.65] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. May '47, I arrived in America.

[00:32:49.41] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, when did you find out about your brother in France?

[00:32:53.97] ESTHER FOX: When I was in north Sweden, I wrote to a pla-- because he went toge-- together with me to France. And he remained over there until the war because it was [INAUDIBLE] the war. And I remembered the address where he worked. And I wrote to them a letter from Sweden that maybe they know where he is. And they prob-- not proba-- they knew. And they contacted him, and he wrote to me to Sweden.

[00:33:18.64] And that time was a terrible shortage in France of anything-- a sweater, a shirt-- because it was after the war. And I was in Sweden and I didn't need anything. What have I need? So whatever I made-- well, even it was-- the-- at that time, I didn't work. But-- but the Swedish gave us a certain allowance, a couple kroner every week. I send him a package, that's to say.

[00:33:40.68] So we-- we communicated. And he-- and he worked in-- and he lived, at that time, in Marseilles.

[00:33:47.44] JASCHAEL PERY: So--

[00:33:48.12] ESTHER FOX: In the south of France.

[00:33:49.11] JASCHAEL PERY: --you found out, probably, how he survived there.

[00:33:51.90] ESTHER FOX: And he survived on Aryan papers.[264] And a French man helped him. He knew that he's a Jew.

[00:33:56.40] JASCHAEL PERY: In Paris?

[00:33:57.15] ESTHER FOX: Huh?

[00:33:57.51] JASCHAEL PERY: In Paris? Or in south France?

[00:33:59.19] ESTHER FOX: I don't know in which-- not in s-- in s-- in the south. Probably in the Vichy Regime.[265]

[00:34:03.03] JASCHAEL PERY: In the Vichy.

[00:34:03.75] ESTHER FOX: [INAUDIBLE] even with his looks. Also French look dark could be a Jew, the same.

[00:34:08.50] JASCHAEL PERY: But--

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[264] "Aryan papers": These are identity documents that state that the bearer is not Jewish. As a result, they protected people from antisemitic legislation and violence and thus enabled some Jews to survive the war.

[265] "Vichy Regime": The Vichy Regime, so named because its capital was located in the city of Vichy, was the collaborationist government ruling over "unoccupied," or "free," France, which was located in the southern and eastern portions of the country unoccupied by the German Army. For basic information about the politics and anti-Jewish measures of Vichy France, as well as Occupied France, see *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, 505–13. For the standard study of the Vichy Regime and the Holocaust, see Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

[00:34:08.82] ESTHER FOX: But this French man helped him.

[00:34:11.34] JASCHAEL PERY: Mm-hmm.

[00:34:11.92] ESTHER FOX: He didn't, uh say that he's a Jew. But he became a French citizen because he was there from 1933, '34, really.

[00:34:20.55] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, you--

[00:34:20.82] ESTHER FOX: No, what did I say? From 1926, when we came-- he never came back to Poland.

[00:34:26.28] JASCHAEL PERY: OK. Now, I recall that you have some photographs. I would like to see the first photograph, how you looked coming, shortly after liberation, to Sweden.

[00:34:36.97] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. This was the picture where they took in the laboratory to-- I couldn't afford to take a picture of my own, and I didn't care for whom-- for what. So this was the picture they took.

[00:34:49.51] JASCHAEL PERY: But this was still 1945.

[00:34:51.90] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. '46, it's written here.

[00:34:54.12] JASCHAEL PERY: '46. OK. OK. Now, there is another one which you--

[00:35:01.62] ESTHER FOX: Here, already when I am in America. It's probably a picture which I made for a passport, or for a document.

[00:35:07.21] JASCHAEL PERY: This was in '47.

[00:35:08.67] ESTHER FOX: Probably, yes. This when I came.

[00:35:12.33] JASCHAEL PERY: OK. Now, you have another picture, yourself and your husband. You remarried.

[00:35:19.38] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:35:19.65] JASCHAEL PERY: Let's hear about it a little bit.

[00:35:21.36] ESTHER FOX: We didn't mention that. You take it now?

[00:35:22.56] JASCHAEL PERY: Yeah. OK. So tell us a little bit about how you remarried, and about your husband-- ex-husband.

[00:35:41.30] ESTHER FOX: Yeah. So this will come a little bit, if I may, to the lighter side of my life. So I was in Stockholm, in Sweden. And at that time, the whole world around Polands, America, other countries-- Palestine--whoever had people in Poland or other countries were writing letters to people. Maybe you knew my brother, my mother, my cousins, my somebody.[266]

[00:36:08.75] And I had a nurse from my hometown who worked for me. She was my patient and whatever. So she had an uncle here in America. And he-- in that time, we made an agreement-- everybody, but we particularly-- that if we get the letter, somebody ask about somebody, and if you don't know, don't throw it in the garbage. Show me. I will show the third. The third will show the fourth. Maybe he knows, she knows. So maybe we will help somebody.

[00:36:36.80] So one day, she comes to me and she says, I got a letter from, uh, a person from America. [CLEARS THROAT] And he writes that he is from Lodz, but he got stuck in America. Here, he came in 1939. And he asks about his family. He has a wife and two children. And she says she was younger. She-- I don't know.

[00:36:59.34] And she showed it to me, and I said, give me. I know something. So now, how do I know something? Before I married my first husband-- let's say two months before the war-- when we were still courting each other, not, uh, married, one evening, he said-- I was working. I didn't have too much time. We met in the evening.

[00:37:19.88] He said, tomorrow, [CLEARS THROAT] we will not meet because a colleague-- he was also a principal of the same school, but it was such a big, eh, attendance that they had two parallel, one and the other, but the same curriculum. So he was a principal, and he said, a colleague of mine is going to America to visit his mother, and just to visit. So we give him a farewell party. But no wives, no women, no acquaintances.

[00:37:49.13] And I was happy. I wasn't married yet. Why should I show? Maybe they wouldn't like me.

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[266] "Maybe you knew my brother, my mother, my cousins, my somebody": In the immediate postwar years, survivors and their relatives sought information about their loved ones and hoped to (re)connect with each other. Currently comprising tens of millions of documents, the International Tracing Service (ITS), located in Bad Arolsen, Germany and administered by the International Committee of the Red Cross, was one of the central resources in the pursuit of this task. For a brief discussion of the archive's history, see Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *Nazi Persecution and Postwar Repercussions: The International Tracing Service Archive and Holocaust Research* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 3–6.

--SEGMENT 16--

So I only knew that his name is Fuchs[267] in Poland. Alright. But I didn't know him.

[00:38:01.02] And when I got the letter which my nurse got in Sweden, and it was written Fuchs so I said, this must be the same Fuchs. And accidentally, his children were my patients in the ghetto. But I didn't know who he is.

[00:38:17.32] So I took, from her, the letter. And I wrote to him that she-- she got your letter, but she doesn't know. But I know. I met your wife once, and I was treating your children. And I didn't want to tell him that, uh, many people are sick. And so I said, you have still to take-- have patience and wait. They might be in a hospital. I didn't want to say sanatorium, which they were, mostly, in Sweden. I don't know what was in the DP camps.

[00:38:45.98] And uh, they will, uh, maybe report to you in some way. And later, I wrote postscriptum. By the way, I will tell you who I am. Two months before the war, after a few days, or a week after you left, I married him-and-him, which I know was your best friend. That's all.

[00:39:06.45] And after this, I right away got a letter from America that if you are the wife of my best friend, you're already my best friend. And he started writing. And he had a good way of writing, which touched me a lot by only getting a letter, not knowing him. And he said maybe you want to come to America. There are, uh, Jewish physician from Poland who came before me, before the war, or in '40, in '39.[268] And somehow, they manage.

[00:39:35.84] And he says, I will help you if you can. But I didn't even want because I said, even the Joint[269] through Professor Wolff, they wanted to give me an affidavit which the Joint gave to their, uh, judgment to give. But I didn't even want. To whom will I go? I have nobody.

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[267] "Fuchs": He subsequently changed his name to "Fox" – the English translation of the German word "Fuchs."

[268] "Jewish physician[s] from Poland who came…in '40, in '39": It is not surprising that physicians were among the limited number of Jews who managed to emigrate prior to the war and shortly after the war started. They were more likely to have the financial means to do so, and their skillsets were not tied to a particular place. For insight into the assistance these doctors received and the challenges that they faced once they arrived in the United States, see Laurel Leff, "Combating Prejudice and Protectionism in American Medicine: The Physicians Committee's Fight for Refugees from Nazism, 1939–1945," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 181–239.

[269] "the Joint": This is the shortened name of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, also known as the JDC. For histories of this Jewish aid organization, see Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974); idem, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981). In the postwar period, this organization was dedicated to assisting Jewish Displaced Persons in numerous ways – one of which was supporting the emigration of Holocaust survivors from Europe. For a brief discussion of its efforts, see United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia* entry

[00:39:54.56] So, uh, I will be a burden in-- in America. To whom-- I don't know what to be in Sweden. And-- but this what it is. So I didn't want to accept, and he offered me that he will help me. And I didn't respond. But he still sent letters here and there.

[00:40:10.82] And after we corresponded a year, maybe a year and a half, and I found out that my husband-- this, I knew before, from-- that he perished-- that he, nobody reported. And he also found out, somehow, that nobody survived. So one day, I got a letter from him that if I am not emotionally involved with somebody, and if I want, maybe we can-- I remember the words. I don't have the letter. I wasn't careful enough. I didn't think of it to keep it. "We will carry the same broken boat, ship."[270]

[00:40:48.50] So in the first moment, I thought that maybe I still have remnants from the shock which I had before, because I didn't expect some kind of-- such kind of a letter. So I waited three, four days-- an incubation period-- to settle in my head. I had to answer. So I answered that I got your letter, and I'm not involved emotional. And I don't know. If you want to come, I wouldn't say no.

[00:41:15.17] And I remember exactly. I said-- I wrote to him, if you-- when you come-- if you come-- if you [INAUDIBLE] you said A, you don't have to say B when you are here. And so it didn't take short time. He came. And after four weeks or something, we got married.[271] He left right away for America because he had to go back for his job, and it took time to take care of-- of papers. And I followed him.[272]

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https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/american-jewish-joint-distribution-committee-and-refugee-aid (accessed July 21, 2019).

[270] "'We will carry the same broken boat, ship'": Many survivor marriages after the war were unions of two people who considered themselves "broken" given the loss of so many family members and possibly previous spouses – as was the case with Esther and her second husband. For further discussion of motivations for marriage among Jewish Holocaust survivors, see, for example, Margarete L. Meyers, "Hannah's Prayer: Jewish Women as Displaced Persons, 1945-1948," in *Women in the Holocaust: Responses, Insights and Perspectives*, ed. Marcia Sachs Littell (Merion Station, PA: Merion Westfield Press International, 2001), 175. A survivor in the Zeilsheim DP camp spoke about marriage in a similar way: "I was lonely; she was lonely. Perhaps together we will be half as lonely." See Atina Grossmann, "Victims, Villains, and Survivors: Gendered Perceptions and Self-Perceptions of Jewish Displaced Persons in Occupied Postwar Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2 (January–April 2002): 291-318, 306. Thanks to Stephen Naron for bringing this quote to my attention.

[271] "We got married": Marriages were so common in the DP camps that, according to historian Atina Grossmann, the JDC "found itself having to scramble to build Jewish ritual baths for brides (*Mikveh*) and to produce gold wedding rings as well as wigs for Orthodox wives" (ibid., 305). She hypothesizes that "one of the most powerful forces driving the quick marriages among survivors was surely the need to be with someone who required no explanation or rehearsal of the traumatic recent past…" (ibid. 314).

[272] "I followed him": Having arrived in the United States in 1947, Esther was among approximately 50,000 Jewish survivors to immigrate to America prior to the passage of the Displaced Persons Act on June 2, 1948. For further information on this and subsequent legislation related to easing immigration of DPs, see William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 46–48. She was also part of a total of 140,000

[00:41:45.60] JASCHAEL PERY: So you came to America in 1947, following your husband?

[00:41:51.45] ESTHER FOX: After his husband.

[00:41:52.36] JASCHAEL PERY: Right.

[00:41:52.62] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:41:54.00] JASCHAEL PERY: You married in Sweden?

[00:41:55.08] ESTHER FOX: Yeah.

[00:41:56.04] JASCHAEL PERY: So how did you adjust here as a doctor in the States?

[00:42:03.32] ESTHER FOX: It's hard to say. First of all, I didn't know a word English. Because when I was in school, the-- our language-- first of all, German-- the city was German, and I was later with the Germans was French. And I studied. But in school, it was no English out, and I was never interested in English. I never thought that I will have anything to do with English-speaking countries. Maybe as a tourist, but I wasn't rich enough to think of it.

[00:42:28.20] So I didn't know English. So was bad. And, uh, my husband knew, uh, the-- the-- this class of people who came before-- doctors and others. So he introduced me to them. There were some from our hometown,[273] which one was my doctor. I was younger, he was a little older. And others.

[00:42:46.61] And uh, uh, I took a course, right away, of English. Because before-- to uh, pass the state board examinations to have the right to practice medicine in America, we had, at that time-- I don't know how it is now--[274] to pass English. So I took a course, which everybody else took, and I passed the examination. So when I passed the examination, I had to take a course in a

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Jewish DPs to immigrate to America between 1947 and 1954 (Trachtenberg, *United States*, 111). For a short discussion of immigration policies that came before and after the Displaced Persons Act, as well as information on the Act's bias against Jewish immigration, see ibid., 98–105.

[273] "some from our hometown": While it does not appear that Esther is referring to an organized group of people from her hometown, it is important to note that immigrants often founded "Landsmannschaften" (Ger) or "Landsmanshaftn" (Yid), which were societies comprising people who shared a city or region of origin. As sociologist William B. Helmreich explains, these organizations "played a part in helping the DPs. The survivors, especially those who had no family in America, looked to their hometown brethren as people with whom they had an emotional bond and hoped that life in America had only loosened, but not completely broken, the connection"; see Helmreich, *Against All Odds*, 55, 150–58.

[274] "I don't know how it is now": Knowledge of English remains central to medical professional certification. For example, one of the subcomponents of the Clinical Skills stage (i.e., Step 2) of the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination is "Spoken English Proficiency." See "Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) Content Description and General Information" (last updated November 2018), 11–12. https://www.usmle.org/pdfs/step-2-cs/cs-info-manual.pdf. Accessed June 19, 2019.

medical subject, which was so many far years back I finished. It was a different medicine, in English.

[00:43:16.31] But meanwhile, I learned, and my husband then made a rule-- as he was a pedagogue, a teacher-- no other language. No Polish, no Yiddish. Because English. So I suffered. [LAUGHS] And I-- I-- but I suffered because-- but it was good. I was one of the first from these who didn't know that I learned more. Because I practiced, with-- with pain, but I did.

[00:43:41.24] So I took the courses in

--SEGMENT 17--

English, and I passed my English-- my medical tests. And I went voluntarily to a hospital like an intern. Because I was already over the age, and my medical school in Paris is considered, in America, grade A. And I didn't have to take anything. I could start away-- right away.

[00:44:04.64] But I felt that it isn't fair for myself and for medicine that I should go right in medicine. I was so many years out of medicine-- no book, no medicine, no journal. In Sweden, I heard there is penicillin.[275] So I volunteered and I went to a city hospital, not, uh, because they paid. There, don't pay, and here they didn't pay. But at least, here, was a lot of work to do. So I said, I have to do it.

[00:44:31.19] And I worked day and night. At city hospital, was day and night constantly. Because I wanted to get in as much as I could. And you asked me how it was, it was hard. And, but I have a-- had a supportive husband who was very much had respect for-- not for me expec-- especially, but for knowledge, for science, and for a profession, and this profession.

[00:44:56.31] So he suffered, too, because one year, he was really alone. I was in the hospital. I came once in a couple days, and I was dead tired. I went away, lay down, and slept on the couch, and I wouldn't even undress. So when I finished this year, I got, right away, a job with the city in a well-baby clinic. And I worked in the same hospital. They accepted me in the clinic for patients.

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[275] "I heard there is penicillin": While she was away from medical practice between 1939 and 1945, a lot changed. One major difference was the availability of penicillin. Although the drug had been discovered in 1928, the mass production and widespread usage of penicillin, catalyzed by the need to treat Allied troops, began only in 1943/1944. For a short summary of its discovery and development and for a thorough history, see, respectively, Bill Bynum, "Rediscovering Penicillin," *The Lancet* 392, no. 10153 (September 29, 2018–October 5, 2018): 1108–1109; Robert Bud, *Penicillin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). The rapid and extensive adoption of the drug in clinical medicine signaled to Esther that she had missed much during her years away from formal medical practice. As a result, she recognized the need to fill the gap in her knowledge.

[00:45:22.75] And later-- it took a little time-- I opened an office, my private office, and I had this job. And so I continued. And finally, I retired.

[00:45:37.13] JASCHAEL PERY: I see. Now, is there something else you'd like to add to your story I didn't ask? You recall something important to tell me? Some episodes?

[00:45:54.47] ESTHER FOX: I don't know at this moment, especially about the ghetto. But uh, I know that I, uh, became, here, more conscious. I was always-- I wasn't an assimilated Jew, eh, not at all. But here, I became-- my husband was a-- a-- an ardent Zionist from before the war. Not because, uh, Israel and Palestine. He was, from before, known.

[00:46:18.05] So he, uh, took me in. And I became very much involved[276] with him. Because I still didn't have time to give my time for that. But I was always in. I was, uh, 12 time in Israel not because of family, but because of Israel and because of him. And now, even after he died, I was many times.[277] And uh, I am-- I am active even at that-- Uh, uh, socially, I mean, for-- for medical problems, I was, for some times, the President. We have, here, an Association of Jewish Physicians from Poland.[278]

[00:46:54.56] So I was elected, whatever you call it, the President. So I did whatever I could, and whatever was necessary with-- in connection with Holocaust.[279] And right now, whatever is connected with Holocaust, whether literature or a movie or a meeting or a gathering, I am there if I can.

[00:47:15.01] JASCHAEL PERY: I see.

[00:47:17.00] ESTHER FOX: I never went back to Poland.

[00:47:18.80] JASCHAEL PERY: I would like to ask you another question. I don't remember whether you told me about-- you find out, till after the war, what was the fate of your brother in Auschwitz? What happened to him?

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[276] "I became very much involved": Many other survivors became involved in Zionist organizations. According to Helmreich's study, 13 percent of the interviewed survivors had such an affiliation; see Helmreich, *Against All Odds*, 204–205.

[277] "I was many times": According to Helmreich's sociological study of Holocaust survivors in America, Esther's repeated travel to Israel was typical of fellow survivors, who were "more than three times as likely to have gone to Israel twice or more than their American Jewish counterparts"; see Helmreich, *Against All Odds*, 185.

[278] "the President…Association of Jewish Physicians from Poland": For a history of this organization, see J. Schweig and E.[sther] Fox, "The Medical Alliance (Prefatory Note)," in Wulman, *The Martyrdom*, xi–xii.

[279] "I did whatever I could…in connection with Holocaust": Like the vast majority of survivors, Esther was dedicated to Holocaust remembrance. For a discussion of survivors' involvement in Holocaust memorialization and education in the U.S., see, for example, Helmreich, *Against All Odds*, 191–203.

[00:47:29.22] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, somebody told me that my brother, who the only one who went there, had, uh, erysipelas[280] on the leg. This is number one. He was incapacitated. But somebody told me-- it's not re-checked-- that the German and he was very-- if he was in the underground--[281] I say if because I official didn't know from him that the German insulted him in some way. So he, uh, lifted his hand and the German killed him. This is what they--

[00:47:56.55] JASCHAEL PERY: In Auschwitz?

[00:47:57.08] ESTHER FOX: Yeah, in Auschwitz.

[00:48:01.55] JASCHAEL PERY: Now,

--SEGMENT 18--

when we had this break, you sat down with Nava and you looked of all kinds of photographs from ghetto Lodz from your college-- eh, colleagues and hospitals. [COUGHS] Did you recall some-- first of all, what-- how would you looking backward of what you experienced there as a doctor with your colleagues in the circumstances you had there in the ghetto, how would you judge[282] the action there of the doctors in the ghetto?

[00:48:37.12] ESTHER FOX: You mean, the doctors' behavior.

[00:48:37.94] JASCHAEL PERY: The doctors. How did they behave, and how did they act there in these circumstances?

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[280] "erysipelas": Erysipelas is a skin infection caused by streptococci bacteria. It appears as a painful red rash and leads to symptoms such as high fever and chills. See Medline Plus entry: https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000618.htm. Given the absence of antibiotics to treat the infection, chances of recovery in Auschwitz were not high. As a result, SS camp doctors typically killed inmates with erysipelas because they would not be able to return to productive labor.

[281] "underground": An underground movement existed in Auschwitz almost from the camp's inception in 1940, when it was a concentration camp specifically for Poles. As people of other nationalities arrived in the expanding Auschwitz camp system, new groups arose. By the time Esther and her family arrived in Birkenau, these disparate groups were largely united, despite differences across nationality, religion, and politics; and their work incorporated military and mutual aid components. For the definitive monograph about the origins and activities of, as well as the interactions between, numerous resistance organizations, see Józef Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz: The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp* (London, Julian Friedmann, 1976). See also Długoborski and Piper, *Auschwitz*, vol. 4, 63–137; Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, 240–69.

[282] "judge": It appears that the interviewer has a view shaped by what Primo Levi calls the "tendency, indeed the need, to separate evil from good, to be able to take sides, to emulate Christ's gesture on Judgment Day" (Levi, *The Drowned*, 37). As such, he does not heed Levi's call for the recognition of the "imprudence of issuing hasty moral judgment" on individuals in such morally ambiguous circumstances. For further discussion, see the introductory essay.

[00:48:41.75] ESTHER FOX: I would say very decent. And everybody tried-- you see, it's hard to say to try and to do because they are two difficult things. You were-- we had paralyzed hands what we did. But nobody abused anything what, as far as I know, and I am sure there wasn't to abuse, in any way, patients or neglect patients, or to collaborate the German. Not at all. Not at all. None of them.

[00:49:10.70] And as far as I heard, some went to concentration camps[283] and to different that I never heard about anybody, some survived. They are in Israel. I met them, some. That nobody-- I never heard anything wrong about anybody, said that they did something undecent, wherever it was. [284]

[00:49:30.68] JASCHAEL PERY: Now, experiencing the ghetto life and the concentration camps, labor camps where you were, and you worked as a doctor all the line, and you met some of your friends there, also, what would you say was the policy of the Germans? They tried to keep the doctors alive-- the Jewish doctors alive as much as possible? For-- did they have some policy about it, or they--

[00:49:59.87] ESTHER FOX: I think, in the ghe--

[00:50:00.77] JASCHAEL PERY: --killed them as the other Jews?

[00:50:02.00] ESTHER FOX: I think, in the ghetto, they did. Because they were afraid of the epidemic, which will catch them.[285] As a matter of fact, this German to whom I said, I am Jewish. This is my crime. We came together to Bergen-Belsen. She got typhus, she died. I didn't. Not-- I'm not the only one who didn't die. But she had good care. She was in a real German hospital.

[00:50:24.74] But she had-- didn't have, maybe, the resistance. She ate, she slept. So all of the sudden, all this knocked her off. So I want to say, so what they did for us in the ghetto-- they

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[283] "some went to concentration camps": Arnold Mostowicz, for example, went to Auschwitz when the ghetto was liquidated, and he, like Esther, went to subcamps of Gross-Rosen: Hirschberg (Jelenia Góra), Bad Warmbrunn (Cieplice Zdrój), Dörnhau (Kolce), and Erlenbusch (Olszyniec). See Mostowicz, *With a Yellow Star*, 161–245.

[284] "But nobody abused anything…. None of them." Esther evidently is compelled to defend the memory of the ghetto doctors and goes so far as to say that she is "sure" that all the doctors behaved "very decent[ly]." There is, of course, no way that she knows for certain how all the doctors conducted themselves – something at which she subsequently hints when she says that she "never heard anything wrong about anybody." Although she may not have personally heard any negative comments, harsh assessments of Jewish doctors' conduct in the Lodz Ghetto did exist. See the introductory essay for further discussion.

[285] "I think in the ghetto they did [have a policy], because they were afraid of the epidemic…": Historian Miriam Offer, an expert on ghetto physicians, is not aware of any such policy. For further engagement with this topic, see the introductory essay.

gave us such a red thing on the head. We had-- like a policeman, but with the red, that the po-- the Germans should see it. It is for their preservation.

[00:50:43.73] And later on was such a mix-up that they didn't know who is a doctor, who is not a doctor. We did it on our own. In Auschwitz, you could poison them, they wouldn't care.[286] They wouldn't care. But-- but we did-- we did real on our conscience because they didn't come to check.

[00:51:01.28] JASCHAEL PERY: Being now involved in the Holocaust, as you told me just before, as a survivor, which was the-- you and your brother were the only survivors of all the family. Looking backward on what happened to-- the catastrophe which happened to the Jewish people, the Holocaust, what would you say should we Jewish people do to avoid such catastrophe in the future?

[00:51:34.82] ESTHER FOX: I tell you, there are many aspects in this. I know not too many, but I know some survivors who want to forget the whole story. And they-- they-- they, uh, say I don't want to think of it. I had enough. And I have the opposite—a compulsion. And I-- I-- I cannot-- if I know something, I wouldn't have a minute peace. I should not go deep into it, and know-- and be there.

[00:52:01.68] So this is, how do you say, what we should do. Is my first thing is to-- that you cannot tell people how to feel. But if it's teaching, that they shouldn't try to forget. They should remember. Why should they forget? Because for them, as we are rather closer to the end than to the middle, even some are younger years, sure. That it's for posterity, for their children and grandchildren.[287]

[00:52:27.78] I accept that I was approached, years back, on a panel discussion-- psychology, psychiatry-- some place in Brooklyn. But that time, I, myself, was emotionally so not, uh, balanced that I felt I cannot make any statements or judgments. I-- it's too, uh, egocentric.

[00:52:46.58] Now I was approached again, but here now. So I said to myself, it's later than I think. If I don't come now, it will be too late. So I accepted the idea, and I made an appointment and I came.

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[286] "They wouldn't care": New research on Jewish prisoner-physicians in Auschwitz-Birkenau reveals that camp officials did, in fact, have an interest in identifying doctors among new arrivals and the prisoner population in order to utilize their medical training in the camp; see Siegel, "Between Coercion and Resistance," 132–49, 153–59. For accounts of Jewish doctors specifically recruited for their medical prowess, see, for example, Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011); Perl, *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz*.

[287] "for posterity, for their children and grandchildren": Many survivors cite the next generations as their motivation to record their testimonies. Geoffrey Hartman calls it "the 'bribe' of life, that is, their children, and also the fear that the Holocaust would not be forgotten so much as denied or distorted" (Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 23).

[00:53:00.20] JASCHAEL PERY: I would like to thank you, in the name of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, for the unusual interview you gave us, which as you said, it's very important, historically. And to wish you be healthy. And let's never had troubles like this again.

[00:53:14.77] ESTHER FOX: I wish, too. Thank you.

[00:53:16.52] JASCHAEL PERY: Thank you very much.

[00:53:17.15] ESTHER FOX: Thank you.

[00:53:17.60] JASCHAEL PERY: Hold on a moment. He will disconnect.

[00:53:19.52] CREW: Cut copy.

[00:53:20.60] CREW: Yeah, got it.

[00:53:23.48] [AUDIO OUT]