

The Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don: Official Russian Holocaust
remembrance versus a local case study

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Abstract

The Russian view on the Holocaust: Official remembrance versus a local case study on the Holocaust in Rostov and how it is remembered by Rostovians today

This thesis provides a complex and in-depth analysis of Russian Holocaust remembrance on the level of memory politics and its manifestations that is contrasted with a local case study on Rostov-on-Don using oral history interviews and archive research. In a first step the thesis delivers an analysis of the Russian post-Soviet public treatment of the Holocaust and what share remembrance of the *katastrofa* has within remembrance of World War II in Russia. Drawing on approaches from Halbwachs, Assmann and Welzer on communicative and multigenerational memory research as well as historical studies it is furthermore demonstrated how the largest mass killing of Jews on Russian territory is remembered by different generations of Rostovians today and how this private representation of World War II and the Holocaust contrasts with public forms of remembrance. Above all, the thesis provides new facts about the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don by introducing previously unexamined eyewitness accounts. In doing so, the thesis illustrates that a tradition of privileging perpetrator sources in previous western studies has worked to the detriment of research on the events in occupied Rostov, for which we have relatively more first-hand testimony. The thesis thereby adds an important contribution to the discourse surrounding the blank spots in the Russian memory of World War II.

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List of abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| BARch | Bundesarchiv, Federal Archives (Berlin and Ludwigsburg) |
| TsDNIRO | Rostov Oblast Recent History Documentation Centre |
| GARO | Rostov Oblast State Archive |
| USHMM | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum |

Transliteration of the Russian alphabet

The transliteration from Russian to English follows the BGN/PCGN 1947 System

| Russian letter | Transliteration |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| А а | A a |
| Б б | B b |
| В в | V v |
| Г г | G g |
| Д д | D d |
| Е е | E e |
| Ё ё | Ё ё |
| Ж ж | Zh zh |
| З з | Z z |
| И и | I i |
| Й й | Y y |
| К к | K k |
| Л л | L l |
| М м | M m |
| Н н | N n |
| О о | O o |
| П п | P p |
| Р р | R r |
| С с | S s |
| Т т | T t |
| У у | U u |
| Ф ф | F f |
| Х х | KH kh |
| Ц ц | Ts ts |
| Ч ч | Ch ch |
| Ш ш | Sh sh |
| Щ щ | Shch shch |
| Ъ ъ | " |
| Ы ы | Y y |
| Ь ь | ' |
| Э э | E e |
| Ю ю | Yu yu |
| Я я | Ya ya |

Introduction

A note on definitions and Soviet terminology

Throughout the thesis a number of Soviet and Russian terms are used that reflect the Russian memory culture and were translated into English by the author, as were all other quotations from Russian. Among these terms are first and foremost the *Velikaya Otechestvennaya Voyna*, 'Great Patriotic War' (GPW hereafter) that is commonly used in Russia when referring to the war against Nazi-Germany between 1941 and 1945. In the same context we often find the paraphrase 'defeat of fascism'. In Russia, the term *fashizm*, fascism is used in a generic sense to describe right-wing political movements, rather than in the sense of the Italian fascism movement. The Russian press coverage on the Ukraine crisis illustrates this very well as the term is often used to describe parts of the country's newly elected political elite.¹ In the context of World War II *fashizm* mainly refers to Nazism, yet the latter term is not used as frequently. It is for instance common to speak of *fashisty*, fascists, when in fact referring to the Nazi movement and its representatives and the interviews conducted for this thesis reflect this very well. The originally Greek term *Kholokost*, *holokaustos*, Holocaust that is commonly used to term the annihilation of the European Jewish population by Nazi-Germany has a Russian equivalent in the rarely used *katastrofa*. In Russia, too, however, *Kholokost* is more common to paraphrase the Nazi extermination of Jews during the Third Reich.

¹ 'Ukraina: Fashizm kak oni est', *Pravda.ru* (5 May 2014), <http://www.pravda.ru/world/formerussr/ukraine/05-05-2014/1206749-odessa-0/> [accessed 16 November 2014]; I. Vaseykina, 'Nadoeli eti fashisty! Na Ukraine predlagayut razognat' "Pravyj sektor", *Moskovskiy komsomolets* (9 October 2014), <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2014/10/09/nadoeli-eti-fashisty-na-ukraine-predlagayut-razognat-pravyj-sektor.html> [accessed 16 November 2014].

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Russia

No other event serves more as a defining moment for the majority of Russians than the defeat of Nazi Germany during World War II. A number of recent studies focus on the specific nature of Russian collective memory of the war that differs strongly from western cultures of remembrance. Lyudmila Lutz-Auras defines the country's self perception and view on its wartime past as a constant shift between pride and humiliation.² The immediate post-Soviet El'tsin era was characterised by harsh disputes among pro-Soviet and reformist historians regarding the need for an entirely new historiography of the war as well as by a growing disillusionment about the widely anticipated quick changes for the better that many Russians had expected from the democratic reforms. Throughout the turbulent 1990s the defeat of Nazi Germany remained the only event from the Soviet past that evoked positive associations among the population and stayed an inherent part of Russian memory culture, consequently lacking a truly fresh approach towards the question how to assess the victory.³ El'tsin's successor Vladimir Putin sensed the 'Appeal of Communism',⁴ as Satter terms it and his taking office on New Year's Eve 2000 marked the beginning of a memory politics that put the defeat of Nazi Germany anew at the centre of Russia's self-image thus consciously seeking a connection between past and present. This nearly unreflected

² L. Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin, Sieg und Vaterland, Politisierung der Erinnerung des Zweiten Weltkriegs in Russland* (Rostock, 2012), pp. 392, 392-400. Other studies addressing the subject in recent years for instance include (in order of appearance): J. Lassila, 'On the Limits of Triumph and Trauma: The Generational Challenge in the Commemoration of the Great Patriotic War in Putin's Russia', *East European Memory Studies*, no. 2 (October 2012), pp. 1-3; D. Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago and It Never Happened Anyway, Russia and the Communist Past* (New Haven, London, 2012); T. Zhurzhenko, 'Heroes into victims The Second World War in Post-Soviet memory politics', *eurozine* (31 October 2012); P. Jahn, '22. Juni 1941: Kriegserinnerung in Deutschland und Russland', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 49/50 (December 2011), pp. 48-54; A. Portnov, 'Studying Memory in the Polish-Russian-Ukrainian Triangle: Some Observations', *East European Memory Studies*, no. 8 (December 2011), pp. 10-12; B. Fieseler and J. Ganzenmüller (eds), *Kriegsbilder Mediale Repräsentationen des 'Großen Vaterländischen Krieges'* (Fulda, 2010); Ivo Mijnsen, 'Die Russische Identität und der Siegesmythos, *Russland-Analysen*, 196 (12 February 2010), p. 10-13; I. Shcherbakova, *Zerrissene Erinnerung Der Umgang mit Stalinismus und Zweitem Weltkrieg im heutigen Russland* (Goettingen, 2010); I. Shcherbakova, 'Wenn Stumme mit Tauben reden: Generationendialog und Geschichtspolitik in Russland', *osteuropa*, 5 (2010), pp. 17-25; E. Trubina, 'Past Wars in the Russian Blogosphere', *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, no. 4 (2010), pp. 63-85; L. Karl and I. Polianski (eds), *Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur im neuen Russland* (Goettingen, 2009); W. Bonner and A. Rosenholm (eds), *Recalling the Past - (Re)constructing the Past Collective and Individual Memory of World War II in Russia and Germany* (Jyväskylä, 2008); N. Frieß, *Nichts ist vergessen, niemand ist vergessen? Erinnerungskultur und kollektives Gedächtnis im heutigen Russland* (Potsdam, 2008); J. Wertsch, 'Blank Spots in Collective Memory: A Case Study of Russia', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617, no. 1 (May, 2008), pp. 58-71.

³ Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin, Sieg und Vaterland*, pp. 134, 396.

⁴ Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*, p. 95.

continuation of the old conception of history however bears problematic aspects, particularly but not limited to the role of the Holocaust that has not been part of the Soviet GPW historiography and was likewise mostly absent in its early post-Soviet version. While a number of studies have addressed the role of Gulag-memory and remembrance of the Stalinist repressions within the current Russian memory culture⁵, the question how Russian memory politics relate to the genocide of the European Jews has not been a focal point of recent studies on Russian war commemoration. Apart from a 2005 article by Il'ya Al'tman⁶ which has to be considered pioneer work in this respect, only Stefan Rohdewald's 2008 comparative analysis of post-Soviet Holocaust and World War II-remembrance in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania addressed the subject.⁷ The latter lacked an indepth-approach, though, and neither of those studies that followed discussed Russian memory politics of the recent years that have brought about a number of important changes regarding the treatment of the Holocaust. Another question that so far remains unanswered is how the Holocaust is remembered individually in Russia, and what narratives about it persist at a place where Jews were actually annihilated. Shcherbakova points to the problem that the current focus in Russian history politics blocks a public handing over of authentic remembrance of the war to young Russians.⁸ Given the long-term silence on the Holocaust, the question, what different generations of Russians know or remember is of particular interest, as previous quantitative studies have shown that throughout the country the level of

⁵ See for instance J. Ganzenmüller and R. Utz (ed.), *Sowjetische Verbrechen und russische Erinnerung: Orte-Akteure-Deutungen* (Munich, 2014); S. Creuzberger, 'Stalinismus und Erinnerungskultur', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 61, no. 49-50 (December 2011), pp. 42-7; A. Etkind, Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror, *Constellations*, 16, no. 1 (2009), pp. 182-200; Frieß, *Nichts ist vergessen*; L. Gudkov, 'The fetters of victory How the war provides Russia with its identity', *eurozine* (2005), <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2005-05-03-gudkov-en.pdf> (3 May 2005) [accessed 2 November 2014]; A. Roginski, 'Fragmented memory' Stalin and Stalinism in present-day Russia', *eurozine* (2 March 2009), <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2009-03-02-roginiski-en.pdf> [accessed 2 November 2014]; Shcherbakova, *Zerrissene Erinnerung; GULAG v Rossiyskoy Pamyati: Sbornik stat'ey uchastnikov rossiysko-germanskoy gruppy v Permskom krae* (Perm, 2011).

⁶ Supplement: A more recent analysis was provided in an essay by Al'tman in July 2015. For further information see I. Al'tman, 'Der Stellenwert des Holocaust im Russischen Historischen Gedächtnis', in: A. Wirsching, J. Zarusky, A. Tschubarjan and V. Ischtschenko (eds), *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg: Brennpunkte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zwischen Russland und Deutschland seit 1945* (Berlin/Boston 2015), p. 213-45.

⁷ I. Al'tman, 'Memoralizatsiya Kholokosta v Rossii: Istoriya, sovremennost', tendentsii', *Neprikoznovennyy zapas*, no. 2-3 (2005), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2005/2/alt28.html> [accessed 1 February 2015]. S. Rohdewald, 'Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust and National Memories of the World War II in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44, no. 2 (2008), pp. 173-84.

⁸ Shcherbakova, 'Wenn Stumme mit Tauben reden', p. 19.

knowledge about the Holocaust is low.⁹ Memory studies have shown that there is always an exchange between the personal memories of an individual and the collective memory of the social group to which a person belongs. The works of Maurice Halbwachs and Aleida and Jan Assmann have outlined this social component of memory and its twofold cultural and communicative character, thus demonstrating that memory also serves as a marker of individual and group identities.¹⁰ James Wertsch argues it ‘functions to provide a usable past for the creation of coherent individual and group identities’.¹¹ Informed by these approaches the thesis aims at comparing collective forms of Holocaust remembrance in Russia to forms of historical transmission and individual memories of people living near a former killing site. It seeks to thereby close the gap mentioned above by first of all examining how remembrance of the Holocaust is included in the Russian commemoration of the GPW. The second and central question this thesis addresses is how the official remembrance of the Holocaust differs from individual memory and persisting narratives at a former Holocaust site. In a unique approach that combines historical research with an empirical study, the thesis is generating empirical data and an analysis thereof that provide insights into how different generations of Russians view and interpret the Holocaust, thus adding to studies on European and German perceptions of the Holocaust and the role of communicative memory in terms of assessing historic events. For this purpose Rostov-on-Don was chosen, Russia's largest Holocaust site, where 15,000 to 18,000 Jews were murdered by members of *Sonderkommando* 10a in August 1942. In 1939 Rostov had the third largest Jewish community in the Russian Federative Republic with 27,039 out of an overall population of 510,212 according to a census conducted that year.¹² Following the German invasion in June 1941, many Jews from Rostov were evacuated due to an evacuation decree yet many also remained in their home town when

⁹ I. V. Berno-Bellekur, *socialno-psikhologicheskii analiz vzaimosvazi tolerantnosti i informirovannosti o katastrofe* (Saint Petersburg, Jerusalem 2008), <http://hedir.openu.ac.il/kurs/skorb-poznanuya/berno-bellekur.doc> [accessed 09.08.2013]. Berno-Bellekur's analysis was carried out on the national level, including 874 participants. Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰ M. Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen* (1985), pp. 203f; J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (2007), pp. 48-64.

¹¹ J. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 31.

¹² E. V. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu* (Rostov-on-Don, 2011), p. 134. See also: B. Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War 1917-1920: The Key to Victory* (Abingdon, New York, 2005), p. 55f. Hilberg assumes that the number of Jews in Rostov was higher. He refers to the census of 1926 when 40,000 Jews lived in Rostov, representing 13,2% of the city's population, and argues that '[g]enerally, the figures, if not the percentages, had increased by 1939.' It is unclear however, why he does not quote from the later census of 1939. R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven, London, 3rd ed., 2003), vol. 1, p. 296.

it was captured by the *Wehrmacht*. The first occupation only lasted one week in November 1941 however in July of 1942 Rostov was recaptured by the *Wehrmacht* and under German rule until mid-February of 1943. It was during the second occupation that its Jewish community was annihilated and many non-Jewish Rostovians were murdered together with their Jewish spouses and children. Remembrance of and knowledge about the occupation as such as well as the mass atrocity formed the central subjects of the interview study. Between September and November 2011, 33 non-Jewish Rostovians belonging to three different age groups were interviewed in 21 individual and 4 group interviews, featuring two or more family members. Based on the analysis of these interviews, the following questions will be answered: How do the study participants generally recall the period of German military occupation? What do the respondents know about the annihilation of their home town's Jewish community and the Holocaust per se and how do they interpret the two events? When compared to official forms of Holocaust commemoration, (how) do these correspond?

In addition to the empirical study, the thesis also challenges existing research results on the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don by introducing previously unexamined sources produced by the local branch of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission (ChGK). The documents deliver new insights into the openness of the crime that was witnessed in all its stages by many local non-Jewish inhabitants who testified to the ChGK immediately after the city's liberation and in the months thereafter. Perpetrator sources on Rostov on the other hand are particularly scarce and unreliable. Despite some scholars' concerns regarding ChGK-documents in general, the author argues that they need to be included in a study on the Holocaust in Rostov because they allow us the promptest possible insight in the course of events.

In its first part, the thesis looks at those areas where memory politics manifest. To this end, political initiatives aiming at Holocaust commemoration will be analysed in the first chapter, followed by a look at the realms of memorial sites, commemoration ceremonies and museums as well as on the way history is taught in schools. This part of the thesis relies to a large extent on websites which reflects the currentness and the lack of previous studies on the subject, particularly regarding the aspect of political initiatives and Holocaust remembrance as well as the recent treatment of the Holocaust in the education sector. Previous studies cover the first post-Soviet decade whereas a Russian study which was initialised by the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC hereafter) analysed textbooks that were in use until 2007.

Part II forms the the local case study on Rostov-on-Don. It is divided into three chapters the first of which provides the methodological framework of the interview study that is informed by Grounded Theory and qualitative research. In addition to that, archival research was conducted in the Federal Archive of Rostov *Oblast*, the Documentation Centre for the Recent History of Rostov Oblast, the Federal Archive in Berlin and Ludwigsburg and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Apart from outlining the overall study design and introducing corresponding studies from other western European countries, the chapter delivers demographic details on the case group (see also bibliography), and outlines the recruitment of the study participants.

Chapter two of Part II introduces the history of the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don and previously unexamined archival material. The chapter furthermore provides an analysis of the post-war and post-Soviet treatment of the Holocaust in Rostov and the implications thereof, much of which is again based to a large extent on newspaper clippings, likewise attesting to the currentness of the subject as previous studies on local Holocaust commemoration in Rostov are lacking to this date. Rostov exemplifies the fate of many other cities in the occupied Soviet territories where the occupation policy led to the destruction of local Jewish communities that was witnessed by many non-Jewish inhabitants. It stands out in terms of the scale of the crime, though. For a number of reasons, only few scholars have however so far focused on Rostov's history during the war, let alone the large holdings of eyewitness accounts stored in the city's local archives. Local Russian historians argue that it was the biggest Holocaust-related mass atrocity on Russian territory. The few existing studies on the events in occupied Rostov-on-Don in August 1942 sharply disagree with respect to the number of victims and draw differing conclusions regarding the significance of the mass killings perpetrated by *Sonderkommando* 10a. Depending on which documents were evaluated - the perpetrators' or those of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission - the results vary.

Based on the preliminary research that was conducted in the aforementioned local archives to prepare the oral history interviews the chapter focuses on eyewitness accounts that had to be taken into consideration regarding possible narratives about the Holocaust in Rostov that persist today. As Omer Bartov points out, the methodological approach of using personal accounts to describe historic events preserves details that might otherwise fall into oblivion. It also adds additional perspectives to achieve a more

comprehensive picture than that created by conventional sources.¹³ Despite the critique this approach faces from some historians who argue memory was unreliable for research purposes, it bears the chance to add additional perspectives on the events to be described. Moreover, Daria Khubova, Andrey Ivankiev and Tonya Sharova point at the problem of defining reliable sources in post-totalitarian states and underline oral history's possible contribution. Following theirs and Bartov's suggestion, the thesis therefore provides a comprehensive overview of the events in occupied Rostov-on-Don in the first chapter of Part II, based both on existing studies as well as archival material. Apart from the Black Book, other early examinations of the Holocaust on Soviet territory referred to perpetrator sources or the rare but officially controlled Soviet sources available such as newspapers, periodicals or books. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the opening of relevant archives, publications such as Al'tman's *Victims of Hate*, Angrick's *Occupation Politics and Mass Murder. The Einsatzgruppe D in the Southern Soviet Union, 1941-1943*, Arads *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* or Volume 7 of *Edition Judenverfolgung* by the German Institute of Contemporary History have managed to deliver a more balanced description of events by drawing on additional sources such as, for instance, judicial documents.

Still, a history of the Holocaust in Rostov that combines primary Soviet and perpetrator sources from regional and central Russian as well as western archives with eyewitness accounts is lacking so far. The very few Russian publications on the subject focus on Russian primary sources and at best include secondary western sources and the same holds true for western research dedicated to the subject. One simple reason could be the language barrier persisting among western as well as Russian-speaking historians. Another explanation could be that until Patrick Desbois' book *Holocaust by Bullets* about eyewitness accounts on the Holocaust in Ukraine, Holocaust research has not particularly focused on the mass executions on Soviet territory but rather on the camps and ghettos, on which new findings have only recently been published by the USHMM.¹⁴ The often overt mass killings are now receiving wider attention thanks to Desbois work and other regional studies such as the one by Jeffrey Burds on the Holocaust in Rovno, Laurie Cohen's work on occupied Smolensk, or Michaela Christ's

¹³ O. Bartov, 'Wartime lies and other Testimonies, Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczac, 1939-1944', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25, no. 3 (August 2011), pp. 486- 487.

¹⁴ E. Lichtblau, 'The Holocaust Just Got More shocking', *The New York Times* (3 March 2013), p. 3.

book on Berdichev.¹⁵ Earlier works on Operation Barbarossa and individual memory of war and Holocaust in the former Soviet Union such as Andrea Gotzes', Paul Kohl's or Daniel Romanovsky's studies have not received the attention they deserve, however.¹⁶ At least for German historiography this might be explained by a perpetrator oriented approach that is still dominant in German research, as Pohl points out.¹⁷ Exemplified by the case of Rostov, we will see that an approach which includes eyewitness testimony and thus individual memory adds valuable insights to the already existing research results (on the perspective of victims, bystanders, collaborators and perpetrators), and indeed proves to be essential for an analysis of local narratives based on communicative memory.

The results of the interview analysis are presented in chapter three of Part II. It illustrates how people who live near former sites of mass atrocities recollect and interpret these events and share them within the family or other social networks. Based on these interpretations the chapter thus also addresses implications for the historical understanding of the events in occupied Rostov. Since remembrance of the Holocaust is limited to a small part in the official Russian memory of the GPW, it is questionable how these memories correspond with public forms of remembrance. Chapter three of Part II links the results of the local case study to the results of Part I on official Russian Holocaust remembrance and discusses how personal memories of people who have witnessed the Holocaust in the occupied territories and consequently narratives passed down by these witnesses through oral tradition differ from or correspond with those forms of commemoration that currently exist in the public sphere. As previous three-generational studies with German families have shown, intergenerational communication to a large extent forms a person's historical conscience. Harald Welzer's study on the Holocaust in German family remembrance showed that the young respondents' interpretation of the past 'was quite different from the textbook history of the Holocaust period'.¹⁸ Ideally, the study will therefore not only shed light on the

¹⁵ J. Burds, *Holocaust in Rovno* (New York, 2013). L. Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis Everyday life in Occupied Russia* (Rochester, 2013). M. Christ, *Die Dynamik des Tötens Die Ermordung der Juden in Berditschew* (Frankfurt on the Main, 2011).

¹⁶ A. Gotzes, *Krieg und Vernichtung. Sowjetische Zeitzeugen erinnern sich* (Darmstadt, 2006); P. Kohl, *Ich wundere mich, daß ich noch lebe: Sowjetische Augenzeugen berichten* (Guetersloh, 1990). D. Romanovsky, 'The Holocaust in the Eyes of Homo Sovieticus: A Survey Based on Northeastern Belorussia and Northwestern Russia', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (1999) Vol. 13 (3).

¹⁷ D. Pohl, 'Prosecutors and Historians: Holocaust Investigations and Historiography in the Federal Republic 1955-1975', in *Holocaust and Justice, Representation and Historiography of the Holocaust in Post-War Trials* (Jerusalem, New York, Oxford, 2010), p. 128.

¹⁸ H. Welzer, Grandpa wasn't a Nazi, *AJC International Perspectives* 54 (2005), p. 7.

relation between local cultures of (Holocaust) remembrance and official Holocaust remembrance in Russia today but also add to the question, where Russia will in the long run position herself regarding the western European memory space where the Holocaust functions as a common reference frame. It is not possible to comprehend this question without an in-depth understanding of the role of the GPW in the Russian national identity as well as a look at the Soviet legacy regarding the treatment of the Holocaust.

The Russian view on World War II

'We think that 'Holocaust'- that is wallpaper paste', Evgeniya and Ksenya Karatygina, two nineteen-year-old twin sisters from the Vladimir *oblast* (region) near Moscow said in a quiz show in March 2012 on a Russian TV channel.¹⁹ About a year after the sisters' appearance at the show, Russian filmmaker Mumin Shakirov's film *Kholokost - kley dlya oboev*, Holocaust - that is Wallpaper paste premiered in autumn 2013 in Russia marking the highlight of a public discussion about Evgeniya and Ksenya Karatygina's participation in the popular quiz show *Bezumno krasivye*, madly beautiful. The two students had unwillingly won national notoriety, as their case exemplified how little the average Russian knows about the annihilation of the European Jews. According to a survey that was conducted in eleven cities throughout the country in 2008, about 50 per cent of the respondents knew what the term Holocaust stands for and that Jews were its victims.²⁰ More than 91 per cent of the respondents said they did not learn about the Holocaust anywhere, and over eighty percent reported they never talk about the genocide.²¹ Nearly half of the six million victims of the Holocaust were Soviet Jews,²² but it was the overall Soviet death toll of 27 million that shaped the collective experience and remembrance of the war against Nazi Germany. From the Russian point of view, the Holocaust forms but one part of the story of immense suffering that affected nearly every family. Assmann considers Russia's culture of remembrance as an example for a selective process of shaping and preserving national memories in order to effectively select those elements of memory that are best suited to support historico-

¹⁹ M. Shakirov, 'Kholokost, dikhlofos, kley dlya oboev', *Radio svoboda* (28 March 2012), <http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/24527650.html> [accessed 16 November 2014].

²⁰ Berno-Bellekur, *socialno-psikhologicheskii analiz*, p. 19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

²² I. Al'tman (ed.), *Kholokost na territorii SSSR*, Entsiklopediya (Moscow, 2009), p. 927-8. See also Z. Gitelman, 'History, Memory and Politics: The Holocaust in the Soviet Union', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 5, no. 1 (1990), p. 23.

political objectives.²³ What exactly constitutes the power of the GPW-narrative? Wertsch argues that it fits what he terms the superordinate 'Triumph-Over-Alien-Forces Schematic Narrative Template'.²⁴ Reduced to its basic storyline, this narrative is based on the core assertion that Russia is surrounded by outer aggressors threatening its existence. Their attacks are however overcome by the Russian people after a period of crisis, thereby attesting to the nation's heroism yet also its isolation.²⁵ Russian history holds a set of examples that confirm and explain this narrative, beginning with the Mongol invasion, the French invasion referred to as the Fatherland War in Russia, or the war against Nazi Germany. The narrative has shaped Russia's collective memory over centuries, thus also explaining the only seemingly odd continuity of its latest modification, the GPW narrative that finds broad public consent also in post-Soviet Russia. While the Soviet elite had a comprehensible interest in replacing any memory of the communist dictatorship with memories of the heroic victory over National Socialism, the same historic narrative currently serves the purpose of legitimising the current centralistic order and the repression of subconscious fears, the origin of which Lev Gudkov sees in a state of national instability: '[T]he disintegration of the USSR and the failure of the post-Soviet reforms, the noticeable weakening of mass hopes, and the disappearance of the illusions of Perestroika have furnished the content of a traumatic experience of national failure.'²⁶ Arseni Roginski speaks of an identity deficit within the post-Soviet Russian population, which had wide-ranging societal impact: The nationalistic politics of recent years knew to use the fears of the people for its own benefit – by channelling them into seclusion, anti-Western agitation, and the return to traditional values.²⁷ In the interpretative frame of the Triumph-Over-Alien-Forces-narrative, the old – and new - ideal of a strong Russia fits this concept well at a time when western-Russian relations have reached a crossroads regarding the crisis in Ukraine. Peter Jahn made a statement in 2005, that, ten years on, still has not lost its relevance - the remembrance of the war and victory today is of even bigger significance to the historical identity of Russian society than during the decades of the Soviet

²³ A. Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich, 2006), p. 263.

²⁴ Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, p. 93.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Gudkov, 'The fetters of victory', p. 4.

²⁷ A. Roginski, 'Fragmented memory' Stalin and Stalinism in present-day Russia', *eurozine* (2009), <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2009-03-02-roginiski-en.pdf>, pp. 2-3 [accessed 2 November 2014].

Union.²⁸ It enables the creation of a collective identity, which in the case of Russia is defined by a consensus, which includes wide parts of society. Vladimir Putin has skilfully utilised this, as Rohdewald determines:

Victory is one of the few elements, if not the only one, of Soviet history that has retained a positive quality in collective memory. Under Putin, it serves - as it has in the past - as a means to the assertion of a collective identity.²⁹

The self-confidence drawn from this is fragile, however, as an example illustrates: The appeal of members of the European Parliament not to follow the Russian invitation to the 9 May 2005 celebrations, caused an affront, as a comment in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* illustrates: 'What gives these people the right to suggest forgetting the unforgettable?! It was us, after all, our nation saved them twice in the past century.'³⁰ The Russian impression of the international community's failure to recognise Russia's merits only serves to increase the symbolic power of the GPW even further. Gudkov observes that due to the rise of Russian nationalism and the growing distance in time, it increasingly fits into the traditional framework of Russian rivalry with the West.³¹ The recent example of the Ukraine crisis confirms this conclusion: Vladimir Putin's initial handling of the situation has demonstrated that references to an alleged current threat posed on the country by 'Ukrainian ideological heirs to Bandera - aiders of Hitler during World War II' qualify to mobilise public opinion. In his speech on 18 March 2014, the president pointed to the 'essential, historical importance' the Crimea question has for all Russians and drew an inherent connection between the annexation and what he termed the protection of native Russian residents in Ukraine from 'neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites'.³² This latest example shows how mere hints at the GPW suffice to unite the Russian public: Vladimir Putin's popularity rose from 65 per cent in January 2014 to 80 per cent in March 2014 and reached 88 per cent in October of the same year, the independent Levada institute reported. At the same time, Russians tended to hold a more positive view of their governmental institutions, despite a worsening economy,

²⁸ Jahn, *Triumph und Trauma*, p. 16.

²⁹ Rohdewald, 'Post-Soviet Remembrance', p. 175.

³⁰ A. Utkin, 'Nashu Pobedu - nam zashishat!' *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (1 - 7 December 2004).

³¹ Gudkov, 'The fetters of victory', p. 8.

³² For a Russian version of the speech, see 'Obrashhenie Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federacii, 18 March 2014', <http://kremlin.ru/news/20603> [accessed 20 February 2015].

rising prices and a weak rouble.³³ Given the dominant role of the GPW as the central determinant of Russian self-perception, the question applies how the Holocaust fits into this view on the heroic past.

The Soviet Treatment of the Holocaust

‘You will search Soviet post-war history in vain for traces of the Nazi’s annihilation of Europe’s Jews’, Klas-Göran Karlsson summarises the Soviet post-war historiography.³⁴ The murder of the Jews had indeed provoked little resonance within the Soviet public, both while it happened and after the war. In the 1970s, Zvi Gitelman wrote in an essay about the Soviet treatment of the Holocaust: ‘Some Western observers charge that it is Soviet policy to suppress any public discussion of the Holocaust.’³⁵ The German war of extermination was first and foremost viewed as a war against the Slavic Soviet population and the Jewish victims of this war were made out to be victims of the war against the Soviet Union just as much as members of other minorities who were subjected to repressions in the multi-ethnic Soviet state. The singularisation of one ethnic group would have been contradictory to the policy of unification of the peoples, the legitimisation of which the Soviet regime based on the ideal of a Russian *Vsechelovechnost*, ‘universal humanity’, that was perceived as the basis for peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic society. Under the pressure of the German attack, Stalin reversed this strategy into the opposite in 1941 and began to encourage nationalistic tendencies among Jews as well as other nationalities. The so called Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAFC) was founded as Stalin hoped to gain the support of Jewish communities worldwide.³⁶ Subordinated to the *Sovinformbureau* and composed of creative artists, scientists, state officials, and heroes of the Soviet Union, the JAFC operated in Western foreign countries, the USA and Great Britain in particular and successfully acquired financial as well as material support in their fight against Nazi Germany. In return, the Soviet Jews were offered to cultivate their language, tradition and culture publically, which had been impossible before, given the Soviet regime's

³³ ‘Reyting Putina: anomalija ili zakonomernost? Publikatsiya pressy’, *Levada-tsentr* (15 January 2015), <http://www.levada.ru/15-01-2015/reiting-putina-anomalija-ili-zakonomernost> [accessed 20 February 2015].

³⁴ K.-G. Karlsson, ‘The Holocaust and Russian Historical Culture’ A Century-Long Perspective, in K. Göran-Zander, and U. Zander (eds) *Echoes of the Holocaust Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe* (Riga, 2003), p. 209.

³⁵ Z. Gitelman, ‘Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union’, in Z. Gitelman, (ed.) *Bitter legacy. Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR* (Bloomington, 1997), p. 17.

³⁶ A. Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden Die tragische Geschichte des Jüdischen Antifaschistischen Komitees und der sowjetischen Juden*, 2nd. ed. (Berlin, 2nd ed., 2002), p. 51.

previous minority policy. Stalin's philo-Semitic politics were very short-lived, however, and considering the mass extinction of the European Jewry in particular, the Soviet reaction was only half-hearted: In December 1942 through a common declaration by eleven allied governments and governments-in-exile— including the Soviet Union - the genocide was recognised as such and the actions of the perpetrators condemned. Nevertheless, the Holocaust was marginalised by the Soviet regime while the war was still ongoing, as the Soviet media either did not report on the murderous attacks against the Jewish population, downplayed them by falsifying the number of casualties, or concealed the victims' ethnicity.³⁷ Outside the media very few references to the genocide were made in the course of reporting or discussing war events. Rather, a duty of confidentiality, already implemented by Stalin during the war, was continued. In 1944 there had been an explicit directive - the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission 'was instructed to avoid stating that the victims of the massacres had been Jews' and 'to suppress the extent of Ukrainian collaboration with the Germans and particularly with the SS in the mass shooting of Jews'.³⁸

When the Soviet victory became apparent, the JAFC lost its former purpose and Soviet Jews faced rising anti-Semitism and an increase in politically motivated persecution which was justified with alleged nationalistic tendencies and led to the ostracism of Jews and members of other ethnic minority groups from public life.³⁹ The anti-Jewish notion of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign was further upheld by a growing anti-Semitism within the population that had set root long before the war. The war crime tribunals, held for Soviet collaborators in the USSR as well as German perpetrators, had no affect on the general concealment of Jewish suffering, as they were hardly given attention in the media. Documents that were used in the Nuremberg War Crime Trials, for instance, were not published in the Soviet Union until the late 1950s and into the 60s.⁴⁰

³⁷ R. Shapiro, *Why didn't the Press cry out? American and International Journalism during the Holocaust*, part 804 (2002), pp. 202-3. Publications that were not accessible to the wider public constituted the exceptions to this practice. Lustiger, *Rotbuch*, p. 131.

³⁸ Gitelman, 'Politics and the Historiography', p. 21. A detailed overview of the coverage from the occupied Soviet territories can be found in: I. Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses: Der Holocaust in der UdSSR 1941-1945* (Gleichen, 2008), pp. 68-76.

The JAFC was dissolved and its members were accused of having spread chauvinist and nationalist ideas. In show trials in 1952 they were either sentenced to death or exiled.

⁴⁰ L. Hirsowicz, 'The Holocaust in the Soviet Mirror', in L. Dobroszycki and J. Gurock (eds), *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Studies and Sources of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945* (New York, London, 1993), p. 31.

The anti-Semitic policies initiated under Stalin were continued by his successors. Until the mid-1980s and the onset of Gorbachev's *Perestroika* reform process, many Jews in the Soviet Union found themselves subjected to hostilities and political persecution.⁴¹ The reticence in terms of the Holocaust was a defining feature not only of politics but also within the Soviet post-war historiography. The blanking-out of the Holocaust for instance affected school books, where data on the genocide were usually missing altogether, a study conducted in the 1970s revealed.⁴² In view of this fact, it is not surprising that the *Chernaya Kniga*, the Black Book of Russian Jewry by JAFU-member Ilya Ehrenburg, was never published in the Soviet Union, even though both a Russian and a Yiddish version existed. Private commemoration initiatives of Jewish communities were answered with draconic punishments: Due to the alleged formation of an anti-Soviet nationalist organisation for instance, the initiators of a memorial in Odessa were sentenced to several years in camps.⁴³

Summarising, it can be stated that no noteworthy commemoration of the Holocaust and its victims existed in the Soviet Union until the beginning of Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. To the contrary, the genocide was rather omitted, however not as systematically as some historians such as Arad, Gitelman or Hirszowicz argue which will be demonstrated by a number of examples regarding the city of Rostov in the course of this thesis. These examples rather confirm Berkhoff's and Feferman's findings on occasional deviations of the ban on addressing the Jewish victims in reports by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission as well as Soviet media responses to the Holocaust.⁴⁴

The first post-Soviet decade was marked by a more or less unchanged continuation of the official silence on the Holocaust on Soviet territory. In 2005 Il'ya Al'tman, historian and founder of the country's first Holocaust research institute Tsentr Kholokost, founded in 1992, concluded that 'unfortunately, the topic is not touched upon neither in Russian nor foreign scholarly literature'.⁴⁵ It has to be considered an achievement of the long-term effort Jewish organisations devoted to establishing a greater public awareness that during the last ten years the picture has become more inconsistent. As an indepth-analysis of official Holocaust commemoration in

⁴¹ K. Armbrorst, *Ablösung von der Sowjetunion: Die Emigrationsbewegung der Juden und Deutschen vor 1987* (Berlin, Hamburg, Muenster, 2001), p. 329. Lustiger, *Rotbuch*, pp. 304f.

⁴² Gitelman, 'History, Memory and Politics', pp. 26f.

⁴³ Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 491.

⁴⁴ K. Berkhoff, 'Total Annihilation of the Jewish Population: 'The Holocaust in the Soviet Media', 1941-45', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 10, no. 1 (2009), pp. 61-105.

⁴⁵ I. Al'tman, 'Memorializatsiya Kholokosta v Rossii'.

contemporary Russia and its role in Russian memory politics of the past ten years has nevertheless not yet been the subject of research, the following chapter focuses on this question thereby closing a gap in existing works on Russian memory culture.

PART I: Holocaust Commemoration in the Russian Federation

Memory Politics and Holocaust Remembrance

This chapter addresses the question, how Russian memory politics has integrated the commemoration of the Holocaust victims into remembrance of the war against Nazi Germany. Do apparent interpretative patterns show the same continuity as they have with the GPW? How have cultural policies been shaped by the post-Soviet political elite in terms of Holocaust memorials or commemoration ceremonies? These are questions this chapter aims to shed light on. In view of World War II the European project was pushed ahead in post-war Western Europe in order to prevent catastrophes of such magnitude in the future. Through close co-operation on initially only economic, later also on cultural and political spheres, Europe was supposed to grow closer together and evolve into a region whose residents would not only identify with their respective nation-state but would evolve into defining themselves as European. Against the background of recent experiences the formula Never Again reaped general approval. As previously shown only the victory in the GPW received a comparable social consensus as an origin myth within the Russian Federation. After the demise of the USSR, Russia assigned growing importance to the remembrance of the Holocaust, albeit in a different way than Western Europe, the USA and Israel. This is probably best reflected in the fact that Russia is neither among the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) member states nor their observer countries whose aim is to promote Holocaust education. In Russia, remembrance of the Holocaust has only recently entered the political agenda and competes with the remembrance of other collective tragedies of World War II as will be elaborated on hereafter by reference to specific examples from areas in which history politics show an impact. Karlsson considers the preservation of the old - that is Soviet - concept of history to be a serious problem for Russia and the international community alike:

A further quandary is that the explicit interest in the Holocaust that currently distinguishes European and American society is hard to reconcile with such an historical culture. It is a problem not only for Russia, but for a world that wishes to integrate Russia into a community of international values.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Karlsson, 'The Holocaust and Russian Historical Culture', p. 218.

Karlsson refers to the differing leitmotifs, separating Russia and the West. In the USA, Israel and (Western) Europe, the catastrophe of the Holocaust led to the emergence of a shared set of values, which is based on the consensus in Western cultures of remembrance: to never again allow genocide to be committed anywhere. Natan Sznaider and Daniel Levy describe this process as a globalisation of Holocaust remembrance, within which the shock over the genocide of Europe's Jews involved a moral imperative. They argue that after the end of the Cold War, teachings of the Holocaust became a moral standard. Detached from its national and ethnic container, this creation of comparability of the Holocaust, or the remembrance of it, led to the creation of moral leitmotifs.⁴⁷ Even though the author agrees with Wolfgang Kiesel and Ulrike Liebert that it is questionable if this can and will in the long run be the basis of a common European memory of the war given the very different national experiences and narratives of World War II⁴⁸, the Holocaust has nevertheless been identified as the one event best suited to promote tolerance and human rights. In Russia this process is at the very beginning, yet here the state initiated Holocaust remembrance serves a different purpose. From a Russian perspective, the emphasis on the role of the USA in freeing the world from the National Socialist dictatorship, beginning with the Normandy landings, has so far been too unilateral. Russia attributes the decisive turning point during the war to the victory of the Soviet troops in Stalingrad, as another reference to Utkin's commentary in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* illustrates:

On our acres and with the blood of our fighters the nearly unstoppable machinery of the Wehrmacht was put to a halt (...). We are grateful to the West for the help in our terrible hours, but it would be better for them to remember who and how many lay on the altar of victory, which may be forgotten there, but by us – never.⁴⁹

The key to a solution to both sides of the problem has been in reach for Russia in the form of a political affirmation of Holocaust remembrance, however with a particular link to Russian history: On 27 January 2005, the Russian president Vladimir Putin took part in celebrations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz.

⁴⁷ D. Levy and N. Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (2006), pp. 131f.

⁴⁸ W. Kiesel and U. Liebert (eds), *Perspektiven einer europäischen Erinnerungsgemeinschaft: Nationale Narrative und Transnationale Dynamiken seit 1989* (Berlin, 2010), p. 15.

⁴⁹ Utkin, 'Nashu Pobedu - nam zashishat!'.

He was decorated with the Salvation Medal by the Israeli president as a sign of gratitude for the liberation of the death camp by the Red Army. The newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* commented:

He receives this decoration in the stead of those, who liberated the prisoners of the concentration camp. Jewish organisations worldwide have deliberated how they could best show their gratitude to those who liberated Auschwitz among them the Soviet Army.⁵⁰

This gesture signified both reconciliation and recognition of the efforts of the Red Army and can thus be taken as an initial event, which was followed by a first political step to enshrine the commemoration of the genocide of the European Jews. It was with the UN resolution 60/7 that, in November of the same year, the Russian government eventually put the Holocaust on its official agenda for the first time. The Israeli draft of the resolution was coordinated with Russia before it was brought to the General Assembly.⁵¹ From the Russian perspective, the liberation of Auschwitz lent itself as a historical event, the commemoration of which allowed for the integration of both the commemoration of the Holocaust victims and the merits of the Soviet army. Another important step was taken on 27 January 2007, two years after the adoption of UN resolution 60/7 marking 27 January as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day: The Russian Ministry of Interior Affairs released a press statement condemning the denial of the Holocaust and referring to an identically worded United Nations resolution that had been unanimously adopted the previous day. The closing sentence of the statement reads:

In our nation the victims of Nazism are, and always will be, highly and sacredly honoured, and among those six million Jews, half of whom were citizens of the USSR. We will never forget the heroic deeds of those who ended the Nazi-Regime in all its inhumanity.⁵²

The Russian state thus, for the first time, manifested the remembrance of six million Jews murdered by Nazi Germany in an official declaration. Russia's acknowledgement of Holocaust remembrance must however be seen and interpreted in its specific context

⁵⁰ N. Melikova, 'Putina budut chestvovat kak vojna-osvoboditel', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (27 January 2005).

⁵¹ N. Talwar, 'Holocaust Remembrance. A Resolution Unfolds—The World Remembers', *UN Chronicle*, 42, no. 4 (December 2005).

⁵² 'Soobshchenie dlya SMI o prinyati 61-y sessiey General'noy Assembly OON rezolyutsii Otritsanie Kholokosta', *Russian Ministry of Interior Affairs* (29 January 2007), [http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/bl.nsf/78b919b523f2fa20c3256fa3003e9536/0f1cf196191581e9c325727200500f31/\\$FILE/29.01.2007.doc](http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/bl.nsf/78b919b523f2fa20c3256fa3003e9536/0f1cf196191581e9c325727200500f31/$FILE/29.01.2007.doc) [accessed 2 November 2014].

that serves the victor's narrative. This is symbolically reflected in the aforementioned 2005-ceremony in Auschwitz, yet also in Vladimir Putin's speech on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the 'Memorial of the the Red Army's Victory over Nazi Germany' in Netanya, Israel. Here, the monument in honour of the Red Army's role as a liberator of the Jewish people was installed on 25 June 2012. In his speech, Vladimir Putin noted that the monument 'reminded of the war generation's heroism and strength of mind' and stressed that in Russia 'remembrance of this horrible war is holy'. Yet he likewise argued that apart from Jews representatives of other nationalities also fell victim to the Nazi policy of extermination.⁵³ Langenohl quite accurately comments on the political representation of remembrance, that practices of societal memory – or their prevention – in the socio-political sphere always bring up certain questions: by whom, where, in which context, against what?⁵⁴ A look at the realms of memorial sites, Holocaust commemoration practices and the way history is taught in schools in the following passages examines whether Russian memory politics has so far turned rhetoric into action.

Holocaust remembrance and cultural policy

When the Communist past was being dealt with more openly under Gorbachev in the 1980s, victimised groups such as forced labourers of Nazi Germany and former Soviet prisoners of war were publically heard and acknowledged for the first time with the help of human rights organisations, who raised attention to their fate. This did not include the victims of the Holocaust and their descendants, whose suffering, to this day, has hardly been memorialised in the form of state-implemented memorial sites in Russia. The bureaucratic and socio-cultural obstacles towards the establishment of monuments are high, although this does not only characterise Russia, bearing in mind a long and intensive dispute about the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. Natalya Kolygina points to the Russian practice that the decision to erect a monument is generally made by local officials who possess the authority to do so and to decline proposals from civil society.

⁵³ The monument was co-financed by the RJC and the Israeli foundation Keren Ha-Jesod. The RJC was in charge of the implementation of the project which took two years. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had informed then Prime Minister President Vladimir Putin about the idea to create a monument in honour of the Red Army in 2010 at a state visit. 'Memorial Pobedy Krasnoj Armii v Izraile', *RJC*, <http://www.rjc.ru/rus/site.aspx?IID=1860179&SECTIONID=1909342> [accessed 10 February 2015]. 'V Netani otkryt memorial voimom Krasnoj Armii. Reportazh', *news.ru.co.il*, (25 June 2012) http://www.newsru.co.il/israel/25jun2012/net_201.html [accessed 10 February 2015].

⁵⁴ Langenohl, *Erinnerung und Modernisierung*, p. 38.

Exceptions to this rule are monuments of federal significance,⁵⁵ whose part in the process of identity building is that of a mirror of history politics, Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson argue:

Official memorials, monuments, and museums play a unique role in the creation of national identity because they reflect how political elites choose to represent the nation publicly.⁵⁶

Given the focus in Russian history politics of the past twenty years, so far no official, state initiated Holocaust memorial exists in Russia. Accordingly, Jewish organisations have aimed at promoting awareness of the topic through civil society initiatives. Apart from the Jewish Museum and Centre for Tolerance opened in 2012 in Moscow, so far, there is a virtual Holocaust Museum, which was established in 2008. The project called Babi Yars of Russia was initiated by the European Jewish Congress, its Russian equivalent, the RJC and Tsentr Kholokost and defines its purpose as tracing locations on Russian territory that were used as sites of mass executions, in order to mark them and establish memorial sites. The aforementioned project *vernut' dostoinstvo* forms an essential part of the virtual museum Babi Yars of Russia as it delivers the results of field work that are presented on the museum's website. Here, the initiators call for the submission of relevant information on execution sites via email or to report the creation of a memorial site. More than 400 locations have already been established and marked that can be visited in the virtual museum. Yet, not all of these sites commemorate Holocaust victims: According to Babi Yars of Russia, there is an entirety of 19 memorials that explicitly commemorate the Jewish victims. They are part of a total of 40 memorials that commemorate mass atrocities committed by the Nazis countrywide.⁵⁷ According to Yury Kanner, one of the initiators of the project, around one fifth of them can be traced back to private initiatives of local residents.⁵⁸ The few other existing memorial sites were initiated – just as Baby Yars of Russia – by non-governmental Jewish institutions. This applies also to the Jewish Museum and Centre for Tolerance in

⁵⁵ N. Kolygina, 'Contemporary Russian Memorials: Sculptural Bureaucratism / Russian Historical Politics in January 2012', *Uroki istorii*, (21 August 2012), <http://urokiistorii.ru/51411> [accessed 27 February 2015].

⁵⁶ B. Forest and J. Johnson, 'Unraveling the Threads of History: Soviet-Era monuments and Post-Soviet National Identity in Moscow', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92, no. 3 (September, 2000), p. 526.

⁵⁷ A list of all presently existing memorials can be found at the project's website with information on each individual monument and who it is dedicated to. For further information see: <http://www.holomemory.ru/?region=37> [accessed 16 April 2014].

⁵⁸ A. Zaripova, 'Gigabayty molchaniya, V Runete otkrylsya muzey Kholokosta', *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (21 June 2008).

Moscow, which dedicates part of its permanent exhibition to the Holocaust on Soviet territory. Comparable to the Jewish Museum in Warsaw, the construction of the museum was in large parts funded by donations, symbolic support was however provided by the Russian government in form of a monthly wage donated by President Putin.⁵⁹

The aforementioned central World War II memorial on *Poklonnaia Gora*, Prostration Hill, is where Russia's memory politics of the past two decades is best reflected. The location of the site was chosen in view of its special historical importance that was linked to the Russian defeat of Napoleon in 1812. The memorial site was completed for the 50th anniversary of the end of the war after almost 40 years of planning and more than a decade of (re-) construction. It is located in the *Park Pobedy*, Victory-Park, in Moscow and 'was completed by the Moscow city government in 1995 as a site glorifying Russian national identity'.⁶⁰ Thus, it commemorates the victory of the Soviet troops in the fight against Nazi Germany in Soviet style, consisting of an ensemble of individual buildings arranged around the centre of the complex, the Hall of Glory.⁶¹ Among them are four houses of prayer, which represent the war victims' religious identity, an aspect that was not included in the planning stage due to the Soviet ban on religion. Alongside a Russian-Orthodox and a catholic church a mosque and a synagogue are situated on the site.⁶² The synagogue, an initiative of the RJC, was enclosed in the memorial complex only at a later planning stage following discussions about its inclusion, Lars Karl notes in his study on *Poklonnaia Gora*.⁶³ It opened in 1998 and hosts a permanent exhibition on Jewish life in Russia, the Holocaust, and the foundation of the State of Israel, and is funded by the International Jewish Foundation.⁶⁴ Near the synagogue, a sculpture that depicts victims of a concentration camp and was initially intended as a gift to Israel is a forceful reminder of the Jewish fate. Originally

⁵⁹ T. Markina, 'U Evreyskogo muzeya i tsentra tolerantnosti sozdan endaument', in *коммерсант.ru* (16 February 2014), <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2400953> [accessed 17 July 2014]. In February 2014 a foundation was established to secure the institution's future funding. Information about the foundation and the museum is available on the museum's website <http://www.jewish-museum.ru/fond/> [accessed 15 January 2015].

⁶⁰ Forest and Johnson, 'Unraveling the Threads of History', p. 524.

⁶¹ Ibid. Rohdewald, 'Post-Soviet Remembrance', p. 174. L. Karl, "'Den Verteidigern der russischen Erde"...Poklonnaja Gora: Erinnerungskultur im postkommunistischen Russland', *zeitgeschichte online*, <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/thema/den-verteidigern-der-russischen-erde> [accessed 12 February 2015].

⁶² Karl, 'Den Verteidigern der russischen Erde', p. 10; Lutz-Auras, *Auf Stalin, Sieg und Vaterland*, p. 175.

⁶³ Ibid., Forest and Johnson, 'Unraveling the Threads of History', p. 532.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Information on the synagogue is also available on the RJC's website: <http://www.rjc.ru/rus/site.aspx?SECTIONID=415840&IID=416253> [accessed 10 March 2015].

named 'The Tragedy of the Jewish People', its title was however changed to 'A People's Tragedy' when the sculpture was installed at the memorial site, thereby obliterating the specific fate of Jews during World War II.⁶⁵ Concluding, despite the fact that recent Russian memory politics have announced a strong commitment to the preservation of remembrance, there have been few changes in the field of state-run memorial sites to include remembrance of the Holocaust.

A look at commemoration ceremonies or memorial days results in a similar finding. Even though the Russian government announced its commitment to remembering the Holocaust victims, establishing a national Holocaust Memorial Day is a step official politics is not yet committed to do. As Yury Kanner, head of the RJC, stressed at a RIA-Novosti press conference on 23 January 2014, one of the main problems that are so far impeding attempts to establish a national holiday in honour of the Holocaust victims is that the date collides with the anniversary of the end of the Leningrad blockade.⁶⁶ At the same press conference Al'tman pointed to the fact that Tsentr Kholokost had already conducted commemoration ceremonies on 27 January 1995 and since then on an annual basis. Since 2009 and together with other Jewish organisations, the centre had furthermore approached the Russian authorities with the proposal to establish a national memorial day dedicated to the liberators of Auschwitz and the victims of the Holocaust, albeit, so far without success - although Russia was one of the initiators of UN-resolution 60/7. In an interview with Russia 24, one of the country's largest TV stations, Al'tman stated on 30 January 2015 that for the first time and due to a grown media attention connected to the 70 anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Russians throughout the country learned about the deathcamp and that the 27 January not only marked the end of the Leningrad siege.⁶⁷

Indeed, the 70th anniversary of the victory over Nazi-Germany and the end of World War II mark a significant turn in the official treatment of the Holocaust which was most evident with Vladimir Putin's visit to the Jewish museum on occasion of the International Holocaust Memorial Day.⁶⁸ In his speech the Russian president stressed

⁶⁵ Karl, 'Den Verteidigern der russischen Erde', p. 10.

⁶⁶ Videomost. Den' osvobozhdeniya Osventsima. Chtoby pomnili... K 70-letiyu velikoy pobedy. *RIA novosti*, <http://pressria.ru/pressclub/20140123/948906571.html>, (27 January 2014), (08:40-08:47), [accessed 08 february 2015].

⁶⁷ Il'ya Al'tman: Pomnit' ob osvobozhdeniya Osventsima nuzhno vo imya budushhego, *vesti*, <http://www.vesti.ru/videos/show/vid/634385/>, (30 January), (05:45-06:12), [accessed 08 february 2015].

⁶⁸ Vladimir Putin pochtil pamyat zhertv Kholokosta, *Izvestiya* (27 January 2015), <http://izvestia.ru/news/582320> [accessed 15 February 2015].

that the Nazi persecution affected all nationalities of the multinational country, be it that they were used as forced labourers or annihilated due to the Nazi policy of *Lebensraum*. Putin however also pointed to the specific fate of the European Jews who were killed merely for being Jews, including 'hundreds of thousands of fellow countrymen' and stressed that any attempt to silence the Holocaust or rewrite history are intolerable and immoral.⁶⁹ The President noted that numerous Jewish and non-Jewish civil society and religious organisations are continuously trying to detect further places of mass atrocities throughout the country and announced that this work will be continued with the government's support.⁷⁰ Confirming Kanner's aforementioned assertion, Putin however also addressed the end of the siege of Leningrad, and stressed the equally horrific character of this event.⁷¹ By incorporating these three events - the Masterplan East, the siege of Leningrad and the Holocaust - into the narrative of suffering that affected Russians per se the President's speech reflected very clearly the general guideline of current Russian memory politics. This was also underlined by Putin's allusion that the Russian people suffered most during the war. He underlined that 70 per cent of all Red Army soldiers and officers were Russians who were 'the main victims on the victory's altar'.⁷² Concluding, this speech resembled Putin's speeches in Auschwitz in 2005 and Netanya in 2012 in its main statements and once again illustrates how the Holocaust is assessed in line with other events of the war in Russian memory politics.

January 2015 nevertheless also marked the beginning of a new cooperation of civil society organisations and the state aimed at Holocaust remembrance: For the first time, the Russian government was among the co-organisors of the so called *Nedelya pamyati*, Remembrance week. The joint project of the RJC, the Moscow city administration, and Tsentralnyy Khokost under the auspices of the Russian government was dedicated to the commemoration of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. The two-week event included a series of conferences, book and film presentations at *Poklonnaya Gora* and throughout Moscow.⁷³ In summing up, the effort Jewish organisations devoted to establishing a greater awareness of the Holocaust in the Russian public was accompanied by encouraging recent steps in Russian memory politics. However,

⁶⁹ Speech by Vladimir Putin on occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2015, *Kremlin.ru* (01:41-02:36), <http://news.kremlin.ru/video/2809>, [accessed 15 January 2015].

⁷⁰ Ibid., (03:36-03:55), [accessed 28 January 2015].

⁷¹ Ibid., (04:15-04:35), [accessed 28 January 2015].

⁷² Ibid., (04:57-05:15), [accessed 28 January 2015].

⁷³ 'V Moskve nachinaetsya "Nedelya pamyati" zhertv Kholokosta', *TASS* (15 January 2015), <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/1698154> [accessed 01 February 2015]

concrete steps have to follow the announcements President Putin made, Al'tman noted in an interview on 26 January 2015 regarding the official Russian treatment of the Holocaust:

In our legislation are articles that allow for the penalization of Holocaust denial. ... But so far Russia has no national holiday and respective commemoration measures at the state level, school and university textbooks lack distinct texts, there are no worthy exhibitions in museums, including also regional ones...⁷⁴

Apart from the sphere of cultural policy that overlaps with history politics and where the latter manifests in monuments and cultural practices, educational policy is another area that mirrors history politics. Whether the findings from the cultural sphere also apply to education policy and the way history textbooks address the Holocaust will be analysed in the following passage that examines how the subject is presented to the youngest generation of Russians.

The Holocaust in Russian education policy

In his 2003 study on Russian history textbooks, Karlsson notes: 'A Russian historian has summed up the manifestations of this culture as a continuous deadening, silencing, and blackening of all things Jewish.'⁷⁵ Al'tman assesses post-Soviet Russian historiography and its relation to the Holocaust a little more favourably and cites a number of works, in particular by young researchers whose work focuses on the Holocaust, and who make valuable contributions towards gathering a comprehensive history of the Holocaust within the territories of the Russian Federation.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, he critically remarks that the engagement of many historians with the Jewish victims has changed only formally, compared to previous times. Solely the choice of a Holocaust-related subject could often cause negative reactions.⁷⁷ In the Russian Federation, for instance, until 2008 only one dissertation about the Holocaust on Russian territory was defended, Igor Berno-Bellekur notes.⁷⁸ Al'tman identifies socio-psychological causes and argues these have to be considered within the context of the

⁷⁴ A. Mamedov, 'Pochemu svideteli Shoa ne svidetel'stvujut o Shoa: Otpiski so ssylkoy na den' pamyati i skorbi', *Lekhaim* (26 January 2015), <http://www.lechaim.ru/3529> [accessed 16 February 2015].

⁷⁵ Karlsson, 'The Holocaust and Russian Historical Culture', p. 217.

⁷⁶ A. Al'tman, *Kholokost i evreyskoe soprotivlenie na okkupatsionnoy territorii SSSR* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 20f.

⁷⁷ Al'tman, *Kholokost i evreyskoe soprotivlenie* p. 22.

⁷⁸ Berno-Bellekur refers to Voytenko's 2005 dissertation. E. Voytenko, *Kholokost na juge Rossii v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny*, (Stavropol 2005). Berno-Bellekur, *socialno-psikhologicheskii analiz*, p. 7.

established narrative of the GPW, as the orientation towards the history of the Jewish victims implicitly meant an orientation away from the non-Jewish victims and their suffering.⁷⁹ The persistence of Soviet interpretative patterns is already apparent in the way history is taught in schools. Jahn sees the reason for this not least in the circumstance that the old professors and teachers remained in their jobs and the old history textbooks continued to be used in the first post-Soviet years.⁸⁰ But even after textbooks had been revised they showed no significant improvements, as corrections were limited to just nuances. Even the young post-Soviet generation was denied access to historical facts on the Holocaust, or they received falsified information, Karlssons' study on the depiction of the Holocaust in Russian history textbooks concluded.⁸¹

The aforementioned Moscow-based Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre Tsentr Kholokost and the associated Holocaust Foundation are in many aspects pioneers in research on the Holocaust in Russia and used these sobering circumstances from the immediate post-Soviet years onwards as an opportunity to develop textbooks for the historical education on the Holocaust in schools and universities. Additionally, in the mid-1990s Tsentr Kholokost started offering further education for teaching staff – which to this day has remained one of the focal points of the Centre's work.⁸² The foreword of a textbook for middle schools published by Tsentr Kholokost with permission of the Russian Ministry of Education in 2001, reads: 'Not only in Russia, but also in the West, not all students know of the Holocaust. (...). In our most recent past, teaching materials do not commemorate the tragedy of the Holocaust on Soviet soil.'⁸³ The year 2002 saw the publishing of a textbook developed by Tsentr Kholokost for university use. However, it has to be questioned to what extent the Centre's history textbooks will be used in lessons as the question of whether a textbook is actually put to use in Russian schools depends on specific factors. Yearly, the Russian Ministry of Education puts together a list of recommended textbooks for all school subjects, from

⁷⁹ Al'tman, *Kholokost i evreyskoe soprotivlenie*, pp. 20f.

⁸⁰ Jahn, *Triumph und Trauma*, p. 16.

⁸¹ Karlsson, 'The Holocaust and Russian Historical Culture', p. 214. Said teaching materials are three history textbooks from the years 1995, 1997 and 1999 for school and university use. A more detailed account is given in: Karlsson, 'The Holocaust and Russian Historical Culture', p. 221.

⁸² Another institution offering lectures on the Holocaust as part of its professional development programme is the Moscow Institute of Open Education. I. Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today: Its Challenges and Achievements', *The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme: Discussion Papers Journal*, 2 (New York, 2012), pp. 120-1.

⁸³ I. Al'tman, A. Gerber and D. Poltorak, *Istoriya Kholokosta na territorii SSSR Uchebnye posobie dlya sredney obshcheobrazovatel'noy shkoly* (Moscow, 2001) http://jhistory.nfurman.com/shoa/hfond_1.htm. [accessed 1 November 2014].

which the teachers then choose. In order for a textbook to be put to use, it needs to be listed by the Ministry of Education. The decision to what extent the listed teaching materials are in fact eventually worked with during lessons is ultimately up to the teachers, who find themselves faced with an oversupply. Lev Krichevsky notes: 'In the 1998-99 school year, Russian students used textbooks published by over ninety publishing houses.'⁸⁴ Nearly ten years on, the Ministry list from the school year 2008/09 contained 85 textbooks solely for the subject of History, 30 of which were devised for the history lessons of grade nine to 11, when 20th century history is taught in accordance with the curriculum.⁸⁵ The books Tsentr Kholokost had developed were not among the recommended textbooks for said school year and were therefore effectively excluded from a chance to be put to use in schools nationwide.⁸⁶ Although Al'tman points to the fact that 'in 2003, the inclusion of the Holocaust in a draft of the official Russian Standard of History Education marked a turning point in the teaching of the Holocaust in the country',⁸⁷ a study of textbooks the Russian Academy of Science undertook in 2007 concluded that, even after several years, there had apparently been little or no changes in the circumstances described by Krichevsky. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* commented 'the heritage of Soviet historiography in which the topic of Jews is missing just as the pogroms, the Holocaust and the stately anti-Semitism, can likewise be found when looking through contemporary teaching materials'.⁸⁸ The genocide of the European Jewry hence was not reflected on in history textbooks. What is more: The study further showed that some of the history books recommended by the Ministry of Education showed anti-Semitic tendencies. The *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* further cites findings of the study, which establish that textbook authors have omitted detailed

⁸⁴ L. Krichevsky, *The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Russian Schools*, *American Jewish Committee Publications* (1 September 2000), p. 5, http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/Treatment_Jewish_Themes_Russian_Schools.pdf [accessed 1 November 2014].

⁸⁵ Federalnyy perechen uchebnikov rekomendovannykh Ministerstvom obrazovaniya i nauki Rossiyskoy Federatsii k ispolzovaniyu v obrazovatel'nom protsesse v obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdeniyakh/ v spetsial'nykh (korrektsionnykh) obrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdeniyakh, na 2008/2009 uchebnyy god, utverzhden prikazom Minobrnauki Rossii ot 13 dekabrya 2007 g. no. 349, http://www.edu.ru/db-mon/mo/Data/d_07/m349.html [accessed 1 November 2014].

⁸⁶ A look at the list of recommendations from the school year 2007/08 shows that 85 history textbooks were recommended, among those 36 for grade nine to 11. The teaching materials of the foundation *Tsentr Kholokost* also were not included in the books recommended on part of the Ministry, and could thus not be used.

⁸⁷ Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today', *The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, Discussion Papers Journal*, 2 (New York, 2012), p. 121.

⁸⁸ L. Mukhamedyarova, *Nedetskaya istoriya Akademii nauk proverila shkolnye uchebniki na antisemitizm*, in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (13 February 2008), http://www.ng.ru/politics/2008-02-13/3_history.html [accessed 1 November 2014].

motives for Jewish emigrants, who were fleeing pogroms, discrimination and an overall anti-Jewish sentiment within the majority population.⁸⁹ This example illustrates the underlying problem of Russian society in the handling of their history: History, or rather, its historiographical depiction has continuously been understood as an ideological instrument of power, and has been biased correspondingly – to this day. This is demonstrated not only through the omission of an appropriate account of the Holocaust in most Russian schoolbooks, which led the involved researchers to issue the statement that none of the listed textbooks were recommendable.

A 2012 article in the UN Outreach Programme's journal concluded that the Holocaust was still not taught in Russian schools⁹⁰ and Al'tman's aforementioned statement demonstrates that at least until the beginning of 2015 when this thesis was completed things had remained unchanged. Considering the described development, the decision of the Ministry for Science and Education from March 2012, to include the Holocaust in the regular curriculum as well as in the exams of middle schools, thereby following a proposal by *Tsentr Kholokost*, was an impactful step.⁹¹ In July 2013, a report of the respective task force within the Ministry of Education was published with an outline for the entire middle school history curriculum. With item 4 the task force stresses the importance of conveying the history of the GPW in such manner that it adds to the pupils' patriotic view of the fatherland. In section five it lists the Holocaust and other so far marginalised topics such as local collaboration among those to be included into the curriculum.⁹² It is questionable, though, how far reaching this step will be in the long run, given that so far all together only six history lessons are devoted to the entire history of World War II in secondary schools.⁹³ Opponents of singling out one group of victims are legion and an early false announcement in the Russian print media in 2012

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today', p. 122.

⁹¹ 'Tema Kholokosta vklyuchena v Rossiyskikh shkolakh v uchebnyy plan', *Komsomol'skaya pravda* (8 March 2012), <http://www.kp.ru/daily/25847/2817754/> [accessed 11 March 2015]. See also Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today', p. 121.

⁹² The entire report can be downloaded on the Ministry's website: 'Rabochaya gruppa po podgotovke po kontseptsii nogovo uchebno-metodogicheskogo kompleksa po otechestvennoy istorii', *Rossiyskoe ministerstvo obrazovaniya i nauki* (1 July 2013), <http://xn--80abucjiibhv9a.xn--p1ai/%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8B/3483>, [accessed 11 March 2015].

⁹³ Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today', p. 122.

according to which 72 hours will be devoted to the subject in school history classes produced an outcry among representatives of other religious groups.⁹⁴

Concluding, commemoration of the Holocaust exists in all of the analysed spheres where history politics develop an immediate impact. It is however firmly integrated into the super-ordinated commemoration of the victory in the GPW and is so far only insufficiently represented in textbooks. Thus, in 2012, 20 writers had written chapters for history textbooks,⁹⁵ yet this number is negligible compared to the amount of history textbooks a teacher can choose from and the hurdles a book needs to overcome before it can be used for teaching purposes. Al'tman's aforementioned interview statement illustrates that Holocaust education is merely at the beginning and fragile.

⁹⁴ Nuzhno li izuchat Kholokost v rossiyskikh shkolakh? Mneniya svyashchennosluzhiteley, *regions.ru* (4 May 2012), <http://www.regions.ru/news/science/2406292/> [accessed 1 November 2014].

⁹⁵ Al'tman, 'Holocaust Education in Russia Today', p. 121.

Part II: A Local Case Study on Holocaust Remembrance in Rostov-on-Don

Part II of the thesis will discuss the results of archival research on the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don and of an oral history study on how the annihilation of the city's Jewish population is remembered and interpreted by Rostovians of various age groups today. The latter is preceded by an analysis of the post-war to post-Soviet treatment of the mass atrocity on the local level. The methodology underlying the case study forms the first chapter of Part II, followed by the historiography chapter and finally the oral history study.

Particularly the short-lived first occupation of Rostov has so far not been approached with respect to local eyewitnesses' accounts, although these also exist for this period. The chapter on the history of events therefore traces the period of both occupations based on existing studies as well as new findings by the author that originate in the testimonies. The description of the events in occupied Rostov is important for yet another reason as it helps to understand and estimate how the Holocaust was perceived by the local population and what narratives about it could have evolved through communicative memory.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the qualitative study on Holocaust narratives and individual memory of Rostovians belonging to various age groups. Apart from delivering information on the study design, including the interview process, how respondents were recruited, and the composition of the case group, it addresses what methodology was used for the interview analysis and what study limitations applied. In a second step, the chapter introduces the archives and files that were used for research on eyewitness accounts about the Holocaust in Rostov.

Oral History

In June 2010, the first of a series of workshops was launched within the project *Memory at war*. The three-year joint project led by Cambridge University and its four partner universities of Bergen, Groningen, Helsinki and Tartu focused on cultural dynamics in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Each of these universities explored a particular aspect of remembrance of World War II in one of the three countries and Eastern Europe as a whole.⁹⁶ In his inaugural speech 'Reflections on Silence', Jay Winter argued that history and memory cannot be examined separately and suggested 'that the distinction between memory and history is a false distinction and it needs to be reconfigured to allow for the history in the representation of the past called memory and vice versa the representation of the past we call history.'⁹⁷ He continued by defining memory as history seen through affect, whereas history was memory seen through documents. Both history and memory as well as remembering and forgetting, could not be bifurcated because they are part of a continua, Winter argued.⁹⁸ His approach forms one of the main assumptions of this study which is why archival documents as well as personal memories have been analysed. This chapter focuses on the methodological aspects underlying the study whereas the following describes the history of the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don based on documents and the memories of contemporary witnesses.

⁹⁶ For further information on the project, visit: <http://www.memoryatwar.org/> [accessed 19 March 2014].

⁹⁷ Professor Jay Winter (Yale University) launched Memory at War's inaugural workshop in June 2010 with a Keynote Lecture, 'Reflections on Silence'. <http://www.memoryatwar.org/resources>, (min. 3:11) [accessed 25.01.2014].

⁹⁸ Ibid. (min. 3:57-4:41).

To evaluate the question of individual memory and persisting narratives of war and the Holocaust at a former crime scene, an oral history approach in the form of semi-structured interviews was pursued. Modern oral history has its origins in the post World War II years and can be characterised as a both popular and much criticised discipline. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as the 'collection and study of historical information using tape recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events.'⁹⁹ The material that results from the recording, preservation and interpretation of the historical information is consequently per se subjective which has been the main problem positivist critics addressed in oral history. Traditional historians argued that memory was distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia, the personal bias of interviewer and interviewee, and influenced by collective memory.¹⁰⁰ Yet, oral storytelling is almost as old as human history itself. In his 1978 book *The Voice of the Past*, Paul Thompson one of Britain's oral history pioneers, describes how for the past 3000 years western European historians have used eyewitness reports.¹⁰¹ In Russia, too, historical writing has a deeply rooted oral tradition.¹⁰² The development of history as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century was however characterised by the primacy of archival research and documentary sources. Until the twentieth century history's focus was essentially political and administrative, ordinary people were included mainly 'as aggregates derived from some earlier administrative investigation', Thompson notes.¹⁰³ He sees modern oral history's main achievement not only in a shift of focus in history and in its ability to open up new areas of inquiry. To him, history as such becomes more democratic, 'as the chronicle of kings has taken into its concern the life experience of ordinary people'.¹⁰⁴ Partly as a response to its positivist critics, oral history has undergone a series of paradigm transformations during the past decades. The first of these shifts occurred in the 1970s when basic guidelines were developed that allowed for a better assessment of oral history's reliability and the determination of bias and were informed by social psychology and anthropology. Methods of representative

⁹⁹ Oxford Dictionary Online, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/oral-history?q=oral+history> [accessed 14 March 2014].

¹⁰⁰ A. Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, 34, Issue 1 (2006), p. 53.

¹⁰¹ P. Thompson, *The voice of the past Oral history*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford, New York, 2000), pp. 25-82.

¹⁰² D. Khubova, A. Ivankiev and T. Sharova, 'After Glasnost Oral History in the Soviet Union', *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, 1, Memory and Totalitarianism (Oxford, 1992), pp. 91-94.

¹⁰³ Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 9.

sampling were adopted from sociology as were rules from documentary history for checking the reliability and internal consistency of sources.¹⁰⁵ A further paradigmatic shift in the 1980s involved a new thinking not only among oral historians who had begun to question the notion of researcher objectivity advocated by positivists and instead argued that subjectivity was oral history's inherent strength. Alessandro Portelli argues that 'this does not imply that oral history has no factual validity. To the contrary, interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events.'¹⁰⁶ Portelli continues that 'subjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible 'facts'.¹⁰⁷ Bartov shares his view and extends it by referring to any form of personal memory. According to him, the approach to use personal accounts in order to describe historic events permits to save knowledge about events that might otherwise fall into oblivion.¹⁰⁸ Apart from the above mentioned authors, other equally accredited historians have used oral history and personal accounts as a source for their work on National Socialism - either in the role of the interviewer and analyst or by examining already existing testimonies and accounts. For his study on *Einsatzgruppe D*, Andrej Angrick examined testimonies from Soviet witnesses as well as perpetrators collected by the Central Office for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg; Christopher Browning conducted personal interviews and analysed other previous survivor testimonies stored at the Fortunoff and Visual History Archives, among others, for his book on the Starachowice slave-labor camp; For *The Stalingrad Protocols*, Jochen Hellbeck looked into more than two hundred interviews with Soviet Red Army soldiers and civilians that had been conducted during and shortly after the battle of Stalingrad by Soviet historians; Sönke Neitzel used the secret transcripts of Trent Park, bugged conversations among high-ranking German prisoners of war. These were collected by the British Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre and included statements by Heinrich Kittel, the former city commandant of occupied Rostov.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ A. Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in R. Perks and A. Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, London, New York (2000), p.67.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ O. Bartov, 'Wartime lies and other Testimonies, Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939-1944', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25 No. 3 (August 2011), p. 486.

¹⁰⁹ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, pp. 26-9; C. Browning, *Remembering Survival: inside a Nazi slave-labor camp* (New York, 2010), pp. 4-7; J. Hellbeck, *Die Stalingrad Protokolle Sowjetische Augenzeugen berichten aus der Schlacht* (Frankfurt on the Main, 2012), pp. 8-11; 105-8; S. Neitzel, *Abgehört Deutsche Generäle in britischer Kriegsgefangenschaft 1942-1945* (Berlin, 2005), pp. 283, 288.

Twenty years after Thompson's *Voice of the Past* and regardless of oral history's enhanced implementation and recognition, oral historian Ronald Grele however pointed to the still pertaining scepticism of many professional historians.¹¹⁰ He identified one of the reasons in the often ill prepared oral historians who conduct their interviews in great haste and without the necessary research which ultimately leads to doubtful reliability. A few years before Grele, shortly after the decline of the Soviet Union, Russian oral historians Ivankiev, Khubova and Sharova had noticed the same scepticism towards their discipline.¹¹¹ Notwithstanding this, the 1990s brought about a rebirth in Russian oral history projects, Irina Rebrova as well as Bertaux, Rotkirch and Thompson note.¹¹² The trend continued, as Rebrova demonstrates in her analysis of oral history projects and centres in contemporary Russia, the majority of which focus on memory of World War II.¹¹³ Another ten years after Grele's critical remarks, Olaf Jensen pointed to further limitations oral history still has. Apart from the problem that he/she relies on the respondent's consent to conduct an interview, the individual oral historian can only do a limited number of interviews and the analysis of the material involves time consuming steps such as the transcription and/or translation of the recordings. These restrictions may be followed by others mainly in geographical terms if a study can only be conducted on the local level, and ultimately impede general conclusions.¹¹⁴ In the end it is questionable, to what extent historiography per se can be objective. In his 1962 book *What is history?*, Edward Carr argues that a historian necessarily makes selective choices when describing past events thus turning them into history. He uses a vivid example to illustrate the historian's work:

History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ R. Grele, 'Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London, New York, 2000), p. 39.

¹¹¹ D. Khubova, A. Ivankiev and T. Sharova, 'After Glasnost: Oral History in the Soviet Union', *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, 1, Memory and Totalitarianism (Oxford, 1992), p. 93.

¹¹² Bertaux, Thompson, Rotkirch, 'On living through Soviet Russia', pp. 1-22. I. Rebrova, 'Oral History im heutigen Russland: Tätigkeitsfeld, Probleme, Perspektiven', *BIOS*, 22, no. 2 (2009), p. 263.

¹¹³ Rebrova's study on trends in contemporary Russian oral history gives a very practical overview of existing trends and centres throughout the country. Rebrova, 'Oral History im heutigen Russland', pp. 263-300.

¹¹⁴ O. Jensen, 'The Importance of Oral Testimony: Some Introductory Reflections', *The Holocaust in History and Memory*, 2 (Colchester, 2009), p. 10.

¹¹⁵ E. Carr, *What is History?* (London, 1962), p. 3.

Oral History and Historical Blank Spots

Notwithstanding the criticism and obvious limitations oral history is confronted with, the fact that the study at hand addresses the individual memories and knowledge of people who live near a specific former Holocaust site speaks for the implementation of an oral history approach. Furthermore, oral history can contribute an important share to traditional historiography by filling gaps caused by silence. Sources or the 'raw material from which history was written' as Thompson puts it more generally, were always produced in order to document what was considered important at the time. They were kept or, to the contrary, destroyed based on the same principle. Apart from an inherent political component, public presentation of history has a social purpose, as have, consequently, deliberate white spots in the public presentation of history,¹¹⁶ or as Wertsch puts it, blank spots in history: 'These blank spots were understood [...] as involving something that could not be mentioned.'¹¹⁷ Winter refers to these blank spots as silence and argues that silence or blank spots involve both, remembering and forgetting and that silence has to be considered as a first step of commemoration, or sometimes even its last.¹¹⁸ Soviet history indeed offers many examples of episodes or people who were treated as unwanted blank spots. It is unique, Irina Shcherbakova argues, because historical truth for decades existed merely as underground memory. Even though she refers to memory of the *Gulag*, the Stalinist camps, her observation equally applies to other episodes of the country's history, as was outlined earlier regarding Holocaust remembrance. Shcherbakova notes that '[t]he entire history of the past, and above all of the revolution and the civil war, was rewritten and mythologized'.¹¹⁹ Yet, even the underground memory was not easily accessible. For fear of repressions, private memories, entire family histories, to the contrary, were not even shared with family members, Veronika Duprat-Kushtanina shows with her local study on the non-transmission of family memory of the Stalinist terror.¹²⁰ A similar observation is made by Daniel Bertaux, Anna Rotkirch and Paul Thompson who note in their study *On living through Soviet Russia* that they witnessed a high level of suspicion

¹¹⁶ Thompson, *The voice of the past*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ J. Wertsch, 'Blank Spots in Collective Memory: A Case Study of Russia', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617, no. 1 (May, 2008), p. 58.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.memoryatwar.org/resources> (min. 10:00-10:11), [accessed 20.02.2014].

¹¹⁹ I. Shcherbakova, 'The Gulag in memory', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, London, New York (2000), p. 235.

¹²⁰ V. Duprat-Kushtanina, 'Remembering the Repression of the Stalin era in Russia: on the non-transmission of family memory', *Nationalities Papers*, 41, no. 2 (2013), p. 226.

resulting from the deeply routed fear of a possible denunciation: '... the less that people knew about you and your family story, the better because most information was potentially dangerous.'¹²¹ In order to prevent a part of this underground memory, the personal memories of former *Gulag* inmates, from being entirely lost, Shcherbakova began collecting their individual accounts in the mid-1970s.¹²² Of course, traditional historians again might argue that the personal memories of Shcherbakova's respondents are not only subjective but also very likely distorted by time, considering the long period between the Stalinist repressions and the recording of the testimonies. Yet, the accounts tell us something about the meaning the *Gulag* had for the interviewees at the time of the interviews rather than merely about the institution or event itself, an aspect, conventional history cannot address. In addition to this, Ivankiev, Khubova and Sharova point to another problem: They stress oral history's particularly important role in the former USSR where document-based histories have a tradition of being less trusted because they were considered distorted for ideological reasons. Oral testimonies, on the contrary, were perceived as truer than official history.¹²³ Furthermore, in the particular case of *Gulag* memory, the sources Gheith and Jolluck,¹²⁴ Shcherbakova or Memorial produced with their interviews are vital for a better understanding of the Stalinist terror because even though the political upheaval of the late 1980s and the following years brought about different ways of discussion about the totalitarian Soviet past, these were not stable and permanent.¹²⁵

Today, remembrance of the *Gulag* exists publicly, yet it is reduced to the victims and excludes the perpetrators. It is a part in Soviet history the political elite has managed to limit in favour of an uncritical view on Stalin, as Frieß outlines in her study on

¹²¹ D. Bertaux, P. Thompson and A. Rotkirch (eds), *On living through Soviet Russia* (London, 2004), p. 7.

¹²² Shcherbakova, 'The Gulag in memory', p. 235.

¹²³ D. Khubova, A. Ivankiev and T. Sharova, 'After Glasnost', pp. 95-6.

¹²⁴ J. Gheith and K. Jolluck, *Gulag Voices Oral Histories of Soviet Incarceration and Exile* (New York, 2011).

¹²⁵ Harald Welzer points to an interesting impact the Soviet political reforms known as *Perestroika* had on the German youth in the GDR. He refers to a correlation between the silence on the Stalinist terror in GDR textbooks and a significant rise of interest in the Stalin era among young Germans in the GDR shortly before the fall of the Berlin wall. According to Welzer, the Central Institute for Youth Research in Leipzig had conducted large-scale surveys about young peoples' historical interests and attitude towards fascism at the end of the 1980s. Following the revelations on the Hitler-Stalin-Pact during the *Perestroika* era, the German language Soviet journal *Sputnik*, companion, had published several articles about the Stalinist terror and compared Stalin and Hitler. The GDR thereupon banned the journal in November 1988. One of the former authors of the study a few years later commented that the correlation reflected 'the young peoples' interest in the white spots of GDR historiography'. H. Welzer, S. Moller et. al., *Opa war kein Nazi Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt on the Main, 2002), p. 187.

collective memory of the Stalinist repressions in contemporary Russia.¹²⁶ Dan Diner further notes, that not only the Russian political extreme promotes an image that distances Russia from the communist system that is defined as a non-Russian regime dominated by Balts, Caucasians, Jews and other nationalities. As a result, the perpetrators are equally found elsewhere, he notes.¹²⁷ The examples underline oral history's important role in preserving historical truths offside the official narrative, particularly in former totalitarian regimes.

Oral History and Qualitative Research

As was mentioned before, the present study has picked up on Winter's aforementioned assumption that memory and history should not be examined separately. It thereby also follows Ivankiev's, Khubova's and Sharova's advice who point out that documents might be biased just as personal memories and conclude that for this very reason all available sources need to be taken into account. The study therefore combines both the conservative research method of source analysis and the oral history approach and aims at thereby also closing the gap Thomas McKay points at:

Often, historians dealing only with documented evidence have a limited amount of sources to draw from and make their conclusions. Oral historians leave themselves open to the accusation that they propose their findings whilst perhaps many potential sources remain without consultation.¹²⁸

With regard to the study's research aim, a qualitative approach was chosen as this allows interpreting human action in terms of the meanings and perceptions attributed to them by the acting person much like oral history seeks to examine a person's memory and particularly peoples' interpretation of the past. Using Weber's definition of human action, '(w)e shall speak of action insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior – be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence.'¹²⁹ For two reasons qualitative research proves to be better suited for this study than quantitative research. First, it focuses on small-scale social phenomena, unlike quantitative research,

¹²⁶ Frieß, *Nichts ist vergessen*, p. 79.

¹²⁷ D. Diner, *Gedächtnis und Erkenntnis, Nationalismus und Stalinismus im Vergleichsdiskurs, osteuropa*, no. 6 (2000), p. 700.

¹²⁸ T. McKay, *A multi-generational oral history study considering English collective memory of the World War II and Holocaust* (Leicester, 2012), p. 43.

¹²⁹ M. Weber: *Economy and Society: an outline of interpretative sociology*, G. Roth and C. Wittich (eds) (Los Angeles and London, 1978), p. 4.

and on the detailed analysis of only a small number of cases.¹³⁰ Secondly, and more importantly, qualitative research examines causalities that produce specific effects under specific conditions and includes the identification of the causes and effects involved. Quantitative research, on the other hand, investigates the relation of cause and effect by using standardised methods. It does not deliver information regarding the mechanism behind this relation and was consequently not ideally suited for the research interest of this study.

Portelli reasons that the potential benefit of oral history is its ability to investigate a cross section of the subjectivity of a group.¹³¹ This is particularly important regarding an analysis of communicative memory and the composition of content that is transferred from generation to generation. In his book *Sociology of Knowledge*, Karl Mannheim speaks of a society's continuous necessity of such transfer and argues that knowledge a person acquires unconsciously as it is passed down has a stronger effect on the person's natural concept of the world than knowledge that is acquired deliberately.¹³² In terms of the study at hand, this leads to the following questions: Given that remembrance of the Holocaust is not yet promoted broadly in Russia, which narratives of the Shoah exist among different generations in places where the Jewish population was annihilated? How do people who have not witnessed the events personally interpret them? How or by whom did they receive their knowledge about the Holocaust in the first place?

Earlier qualitative oral history studies on remembrance of the war and Holocaust on Soviet territory were conducted by Daniel Romanovsky, Paul Kohl, Sabine Gotzes, and Patrick Desbois, all of which however focused on eyewitness accounts and therefore fail to answer the above-mentioned questions. Romanovsky's findings are based on 120 accounts of Jewish and non-Jewish eyewitnesses to the Holocaust that were collected between 1984 and 1987 in north eastern Belarus and neighbouring Russian districts.¹³³ His research was of particular importance for the author's own project because Romanovsky specifically questioned witnesses to the Holocaust whereas Kohl and Gotzes focused on remembrance of the war as such. Kohl's interviews in Belarus and Russia also date back to the mid 1980s.¹³⁴ Gotzes on the contrary presents post-Soviet

¹³⁰ J. Gläser and G. Laudel, *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse als Instrumente rekonstruierender Untersuchungen* (Wiesbaden, 3rd. ed., 2009), pp. 24-26.

¹³¹ Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', p. 67.

¹³² K. Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie* (Berlin, 1994), p. 538.

¹³³ D. Romanovsky, 'The Holocaust in the Eyes of Homo Sovieticus: A Survey Based on Northeastern Belorussia and Northwestern Russia', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 13, 3 (1999), p. 355.

¹³⁴ Kohl, *Ich wundere mich*.

accounts of the war and some of these accounts refer to the Holocaust.¹³⁵ Desbois' long-term project on the Holocaust in Ukraine began in 2003 but the French priest has since then expanded his work to Belarus and parts of Russia.¹³⁶ Another very important work, although in the quantitative field, was Berno-Bellekur's aforementioned socio-psychological study carried out in 2008, which examined the correlation of tolerance and the level of knowledge about the Holocaust among Russians.¹³⁷ None of the above mentioned studies examined remembrance and narratives within a social group that lives near a former Holocaust site, though. Apart from Berno-Bellekur's quantitative analysis, the studies also focused exclusively on contemporary witnesses and Berno-Bellekur does not address specific age-related or generational questions. Multi-generational aspects of memory transfer however form the main object of investigation in this study therefore this aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the following passage.

Why multi-generational?

In her dissertation on third-generation Germans and their coming to grips with their Nazi family history, Alice Hohenlohe-Bartenstein interviewed twenty-six Germans born between 1964 and 1986.¹³⁸ The intention of the study was to identify how cultural memory and narratives about the NS-past that exist in families with at least one former *Wehrmacht* grandfather correspond and how historical trauma - the long-term effects of trauma that exceed the lifespan of one generation - and structural trauma - trauma that may be evoked for instance by a child's separation of the mother and that affects each individual - intersect in the third generation.¹³⁹ Although the relation of cultural memory and family narrative is a central aspect the present study likewise addresses, the author chose a multi-generational approach mainly for two reasons: First, the intention is to not focus on but one age group but to identify what narratives of war and the Holocaust persist among Russians belonging to different age groups and how they have developed over the generations and under different political regimes. In this context the author agrees with Figs that '[a] multi-generational approach is important

¹³⁵ A. Gotzes, *Krieg und Vernichtung. Sowjetische Zeitzeugen erinnern sich* (Darmstadt, 2006).

¹³⁶ P. Desbois, *Der vergessene Holocaust* (Berlin, 2009).

¹³⁷ Berno-Bellekur, *socialno-psikhologicheskii analiz*.

¹³⁸ A. Hohenlohe-Bartenstein, *In the Presence of the Past: 'Third Generation' Germans and the Cultural Memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust* (London, 2011).

¹³⁹ Ibid. p. 3. For a detailed analysis of historical and structural trauma see D. LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, 2nd ed., 2014), pp. 76-7.

to understanding the legacies of the regime.¹⁴⁰ Other genealogically oriented multi-generational studies with a particular reference to the Holocaust and its aftermath have for example been conducted in the field of trauma research.¹⁴¹ Second, intergenerational communication has a significant impact on a person's historical conscience as previous three- generational interview studies have demonstrated, thus confirming Mannheim's aforementioned assumption. Harald Welzer's in-depth study on the Holocaust in German family remembrance illustrated that what young Germans learn about the Holocaust within the family 'was quite different from the textbook history of the Holocaust period'.¹⁴² While Germany's political culture and self-image are shaped by commemoration of the Nazi past and particularly the murder of six million Jews, the private perception and interpretation of the Third Reich period is influenced by many factors, among which family memories play an important role. The three-generational family interviews and an additional representative study following the first showed that young Germans tended to ascribe positive attributes to their family members behaviour during the Third Reich. Regardless of their educational background, many respondents were convinced that their relatives had not approved Nazism and had actually helped people who were persecuted.¹⁴³ Only a minority assumed their grandparents had been in favour of the regime and its ideology. Contrarily to historical facts, nearly none of the participants surveyed believed that their relatives had been anti-Semitic. Welzer comments on his representative study:

¹⁴⁰ O. Figes, *The Whisperers private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London, 2007), p. xxxvi.

¹⁴¹ The following list is incomplete and contains but a few publications: J. Albeck, 'Intergenerational Consequences of Trauma: Reframing Traps in Treatment Theory – A Second Generation Perspective', *Handbook of Post-Traumatic Therapy* (Westport, 1994); D. Bar-On, et al. 'Multigenerational Perspectives on Coping with the Holocaust Experience: An Attachment Perspective for Understanding the Developmental Sequelae of Trauma across Generations', *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 22, 2 (1998); N. Burchardt, 'Transgenerational Transmission in the Families of Holocaust Survivors in England', in D. Bertaux, P. Thompson (eds), *Between Generations Family, Models, Myths, and Memories, International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories*, 2 (Oxford, 1993), pp. 121-37; H. Epstein, *Die Kinder des Holocaust: Gespräche mit Söhnen und Töchtern von Überlebenden* (Munich, 1987); H. S. Herzka, A. von Schumacher and S. Tyrangiel, *Die Kinder der Verfolgten: Die Nachkommen der Naziopfer und Flüchtlingskinder heute* (Goettingen, 1989); R. Lempp, 'Seelische Verfolgungsschäden bei Kindern in der ersten und zweiten Generation', *Spuren der Verfolgung. Seelische Auswirkungen des Holocaust auf die Opfer und ihre Kinder* (1992).

¹⁴² H. Welzer, Grandpa wasn't a Nazi, *AJC International Perspectives*, 54 (2005), p. 7.

¹⁴³ The quantitative study, which was conducted by one of Germany's largest polling firms, concluded that respondents with a higher level of education tended to view their relatives' past even more positive and apologetic than less educated participants. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The results of the broader survey make it clear that the overwhelming majority believes their own family members were not Nazis. Anti-Semites and perpetrators appear to be practically nonexistent in German families.¹⁴⁴

The in-depth interviews demonstrated that this applied even if respondents had evidence that their grandparents or parents had been involved in crimes.¹⁴⁵ Horst-Alfred Heinrich's multi-generational quantitative study on German cultural and social memory of World War II concludes that only about 10 per cent of the respondents associate war and Holocaust. Heinrich assumes that the actual percentage of Germans who remember and know about Auschwitz might even be close to one per cent of the population, regardless of how firmly established the Shoah is in the German cultural memory and reasons that 'without an external stimulus, it is obviously hardly noticed on the individual level.'¹⁴⁶

All three studies point to the limitations of Holocaust education and to the impact family or communicative memory has on historical conscience as it is passed down from one generation to another. Heinrich concludes that 'the existing result nevertheless demonstrates that the persecution of the Jews has a different meaning on the personal than on the social level.'¹⁴⁷ Indeed, even against better judgement, the need for a positive identification with the family history led a majority of Welzer's respondents to believe that their parents or grandparents had not been actively involved in the Nazi system or had even opposed it. Regardless of, and in contradiction to the factual knowledge acquired about the Third Reich, German family remembrance of war and Holocaust thus softens the actual role of ordinary Germans in the Nazi crimes. Welzer argues that based on the results of his study, a distinction has to be made between what he calls album and lexicon, the knowledge about the past a person receives within the family and historical knowledge acquired in school.

The above mentioned studies can only convey an insight into private memories and narratives of war and the Holocaust passed on within the German population. Analogous studies have been conducted in six other European countries by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Memory Research as a follow-up to Welzer's German study.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ H.-A. Heinrich, *Kollektive Erinnerungen der Deutschen. Theoretische Konzepte und empirische Befunde zum sozialen Gedächtnis* (Munich, 2002), pp. 201, 202.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁴⁸ Apart from Germany, similar studies were carried out in Denmark, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia and Switzerland. H. Welzer (ed.), *Der Krieg der Erinnerung: Holocaust, Kollaboration und Widerstand im europäischen Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt on the Main, 2007), pp. 7f.

They demonstrated that until the 1980s and even early 1990s, similarly structured official narratives of nations unified in the fight against an inner and the outer enemy, Nazi Germany, existed in the respective countries, and that remembrance of the period of occupation determined the striving for legitimacy of current political positions.¹⁴⁹ From the 1990s onwards only the west European countries underwent a critical analysis of their national narratives when aspects such as collaboration or reactions to the deportation of the Jewish population entered the public discourse. However, this was not accompanied by a detachment from the respective official narrative, or national basis narrative, which the family memory is tied to.

The basis narrative “functions as leading interpretative frame for the remembrance the individual person has of his or her experiences” and for the perception and interpretation of those who were not present.¹⁵⁰

According to Welzer, the basis narrative's vital characteristic is its unifying and harmonising effect within a society's political and cultural production of meaning. The national basis narrative thus functions as a mediator between inter-generational diverging views on and interpretations of past as well as present issues.¹⁵¹ On the individual level, the multi-national study revealed a parallel between the German study on the one side and Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway on the other, where representatives of the third generation tended to ascribe positive characteristics to their grandparents like the German respondents of the same age group. This equally applied to the topic of anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews in which case the third generation idealised and cleared their grandparents by seeing them either as rescuers, or unknowing but not as possible anti-Semites.¹⁵² At the same time, however, the passing on of private memory did not have an equally important meaning in these countries as was the case in Germany.¹⁵³ To the contrary, the Danish, Dutch and Norwegian respondents of the third generation tended more towards forming their individual concept of the past based on information conveyed officially, in the media or elsewhere outside the family. This can be explained by the unifying role of the basis narrative

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 17. Welzer refers to the term ‘basic narrative’ which was introduced by Norwegian historian Anne Eriksen and Danish historians Claus Bryld and Annette Warring. Unfortunately, neither of their studies *Historie, Minne og Myte* by Eriksen or *Besættelsestiden som kollektiv erindring* by Bryld and Warring is available in English. The author therefore decided to cite Welzer including his quotation from the above mentioned studies.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 28, 34.

which the majority of respondents identified with positively. Welzer concludes, the fact that in the above mentioned countries the basis narratives still function as a matrix for the private memories characterises the main difference between these societies and Germany whose culture of remembrance is characterised by a lack of such a basis narrative. The interviews with Swiss participants demonstrated a similar inclination of the third generation towards clearing the generation of the contemporary witnesses, albeit without the aspect of heroisation.¹⁵⁴

What characterised all of the analysed west European countries, particularly Switzerland, and their view on World War II was the universalisation of Holocaust remembrance which points to a European, if not globalised historical conscience and thus confirms Sznajder's and Levy's concept. Although the respective countries looked back at differing or, in the Swiss case, even no experiences with deportations of Jewish citizens at all and the numbers of Jews who fell victim to the Nazis in these countries deviated significantly, all of them underwent considerable revisions of their basis narratives due to a critical public analysis of opposing aspects such as local collaboration, the attitude of the non-Jewish population etc.. Nevertheless, the private memory could still be brought in line with the basis narratives even despite these critical revisions, Welzer and his colleagues discovered in their interviews. The fact that unlike in Germany, the basis narratives enabled a genuinely positive identification allowed for the integration of private memories in the overall basis narrative, the studies demonstrated.¹⁵⁵

A multi-generational interview study on British collective memory of World War II and the Holocaust by McKay revealed parallels to the Swiss study in that the murder of the Jews was not as dominant a subject in the overall memory of World War II as was the case in those west European countries that experienced German occupation and the deportation of the Jews. However, in Britain, too, remembrance of the Holocaust has become universalised and figures as a leitmotif for a system of universal humanist values. The topic entered the school curriculum in 1991 and although the country was not directly affected by the Nazi racial policy like the occupied west European

¹⁵⁴ N. Burgermeister, 'Ein Mythos im Umbruch: Gespräche mit Schweizerinnen und Schweizern über den Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus', *Der Krieg der Erinnerung: Holocaust, Kollaboration und Widerstand im europäischen Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt on the Main, 2007), pp. 186-7, 203.

¹⁵⁵ Welzer, *Der Krieg der Erinnerung*, pp. 27-9.

countries, Great Britain was among the founding members of the IHRA.¹⁵⁶ Since 2001 the country commemorates Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January. Awareness of the topic has however only been raised recently. A great impact was ascribed to the role of the media in this process. McKay's study demonstrated that the level of knowledge about the genocide differed noticeably among the participants of his study - a fact he explains by the diverging effect of Holocaust education at British schools.¹⁵⁷ What the British study also pointed out was that, as in Germany, private memory partly differed noticeably from the official basis narrative. In contrast to the other west European countries where similar studies had been conducted, the British study showed 'how people do not always use the national metanarrative to draw their knowledge of the past' or, in other words, 'the memory of the family group an individual belongs to overrides that of the nation'.¹⁵⁸ What all aforementioned studies demonstrated, although varyingly strong, was the impact of education and the media on the respective basis narrative. The Holocaust is not a mandatory subject in each of the countries that have been examined in the multi-national studies, however all of them are members of the IHRA and promote Holocaust education.¹⁵⁹

Interesting differences became apparent between the analysed west European countries examined by Welzer and his team in their transnational study, and those that were former member states of the Communist Block. Unlike in the west European countries, the third-generation Croatian and Serbian respondents had problems to use the past as an identity resource. Due to the turmoil caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the experience of the Yugoslav wars in the early 1990s, the traditional interpretive culture had become obsolete. Welzer notes that the contemporary witnesses' memories and interpretations of history suffered a devaluation in these two countries. However, new interpretive cultures had not yet arisen.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ For further information, please visit: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/member-countries/holocaust-education-remembrance-and-research-united-kingdom> [accessed 04 March 2014].

¹⁵⁷ McKay, *A multi-generational oral history*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁵⁹ For a list of each of the countries activities in the education sector, and for further information visit: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/member-countries> [accessed 04 March 2014].

¹⁶⁰ Welzer, *Der Krieg der Erinnerung*, pp. 32f.

Parallels to Russia?

The Russian Federation equally resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union, but as we have seen, remembrance of the GPW is the key element in the country's national identity. Due to the specific nature of the war against the Soviet Union, the Russian perspective on World War II naturally differs from the aforementioned countries. The aspect of fear and suffering is suppressed in the official commemoration for the benefit of a narrative of heroism although nearly every Russian family had been exposed to the horrors of the war in one way or another or mourned the death of loved ones at the front. The war against Nazi Germany had such traumatic impact that its significance can still be traced three generations after the events. As shall be specified later when introducing the interviews, some of the study's youngest respondents used the word 'trauma' to describe what had befallen their relatives during the war. To date, these elements of memory still mainly exist in the private sphere. As in the case of the private memory of World War II in Germany, Russian private memory is therefore likely to deviate significantly from official remembrance - although of course from a diametrical perspective. There is little time left to examine this deviation in communicative memory, keeping in mind Russian demography: From the 1960s until very recently, life expectancy has been sinking in the Russian Federation, which explains why the number of people aged over 59 today is only 16.3 percent of the total population.¹⁶¹ As Assmann argues, oral history studies have shown that living memory within a society only lasts up to eighty years.¹⁶² Unlike in other European countries with higher life expectancy rates, in Russia the process of memory transition has begun earlier.¹⁶³ Remembrance of the GPW is therefore already in the process of transition from communicative to cultural memory, as is consequently remembrance of the Holocaust. The interviews were thus conducted on the verge of the life-span of communicative memory of World War II in Russia.

¹⁶¹ According to a study by the Berlin Institute for Population and Development, life expectancy suddenly began to sink in the 1960s after a period of rapid population growth between the 1950s and 1970s. S. Sievert, S. Zakharov and R. Klingholz, *The Waning World Power. The demographic future of Russia and the other Soviet successor states* (Berlin, 2011), p. 15, 140.

¹⁶² J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 51.

¹⁶³ For example "the average Russian life span is [...] almost 13 years shorter than in Germany." The difference between Russia and France is even bigger, according to the study by the Berlin Institute for Population and Development. S. Sievert, S. Zakharov and R. Klingholz, *The Waning World Power*, p. 27.

Study Design

The author has tried to minimise or at best eliminate the risks Grele has pointed to by devoting several weeks to the preparation of field research in Rostov-on-Don. This included attending professional training lessons in qualitative research methods as well as conducting semi-structured test interviews and their subsequent critical examination by a professional qualitative interviewer. The interviews were preceded by studies of relevant literature about the events in occupied Rostov as well as research in archives in Rostov, Berlin, Ludwigsburg and Washington following the completion of the interviews. Details regarding the latter are included at the end of this chapter. Last but not least, one of the first things following arrival was an inspection of the former crime scene in Rostov-on-Don in order to get an understanding of the topography and be prepared for potential geographical information regarding the site. Having done this, it is hoped that the three categories under which Grele subsumed the criticisms oral history still faces - interviewing followed by research standards for preparation and questions of historical methodology - are best dealt with.¹⁶⁴

Grounded Theory Approach

The qualitative study is based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the city of Rostov-on-Don in September and October 2011. Following Griffin's suggestion according to which '[i]n the context of a PhD [...] unstructured interviews may include between twenty and forty interviews', twenty-five interviews with all together thirty-three respondents were carried out.¹⁶⁵ The collection and interpretation of data is informed by Charmaz's concept of Constructivist Grounded Theory. When it first appeared in the late 1960s, Grounded Theory's concept was based on the innovative approach by sociologists Strauss and Glaser that hypotheses are generated during the process of data collection rather than before. Grounded Theory postulated that the researcher should ignore existing theories on the field of inquiry and approach the matter of interest merely by observing and interviewing relevant respondents. Thereby, the gap between the theoretical assumptions and empirical research can be bypassed as hypotheses are verified within the empirical material – or, in other words,

¹⁶⁴ Grele, 'Methodological and theoretical problems', p. 40.

¹⁶⁵ G. Griffin, 'Discourse Analysis', in G. Griffin (ed), *Research Methods for English Studies* (Edinburgh, 2005), p.185.

grounded in it.¹⁶⁶ Glaser's and Strauss' critique focused on attempts to bridge the discrepancy between theory and social reality by merely developing improved examination methods. They argued:

In contrasting grounded theory with logico-deductive theory and discussing and assessing their relative merits in ability to fit and work (predict, explain, and be relevant), we have taken the position that the adequacy of a theory for sociology today cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated.¹⁶⁷

The researcher should therefore approach the subject of interest without preconceived assumptions. This is of course not entirely possible because previously acquired knowledge and sociological perspectives no doubt have an impact. Nevertheless, the process of generating theory begins as soon as first categories appear in the collected data. Verification and falsification of hypotheses and their constant modification are in fact already part of the entire process of data collection. Based on the codification of memos and transcripts, a final hypothesis on the field of inquiry is then generated. Glaser and Strauss stressed the importance of comparative analysis and suggested integrating as many different reference groups as possible in order to identify under which conditions certain hypothesis apply.¹⁶⁸ In the present case, three reference groups were therefore analysed, as is outlined in greater detail in the following section on interviewee recruitment.

Grounded Theory has undergone further enhancements since its first appearance due to its founders differing academic positions in positivism (Glaser) and pragmatism (Strauss).¹⁶⁹ Glaser's concept of traditional Grounded Theory is based on the assumption of an objective reality and a neutral researcher who objectively analyses data. Strauss and Cobin, on the other hand, postulated a concept in which the researcher ideally aims at maintaining objectivity but the authors also point out that it is not possible to be completely free of bias and thereby add a post-positivist notion to Grounded Theory.¹⁷⁰ This idea is further enhanced in Constructivist Grounded Theory

¹⁶⁶ B. Glaser, A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*, 3rd. ed. (New Brunswick, London, 2008), p. 3. See also: S. Lamnek, *Qualitative Sozialforschung* (Basel, 2005), pp. 101-117.

¹⁶⁷ Glaser, Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Lamnek, *Qualitative Sozialforschung*, pp. 106-7.

¹⁶⁹ A. Bryant, K. Charmaz, Grounded Theory in Historical Perspective: An Epistemological Account, *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, 2007), p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ J. Mills, A. Bonner, and K. Francis, 'The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 25-35.

as advocated by Charmaz. Here, the subjective interrelationship between researcher and respondent during the process of data collection is emphasised. Constructivist Grounded Theory takes into account that both researcher and interviewee produce subjective views of reality and the world surrounding them, based on their personal and cultural imprinting. It assumes that these different understandings of the nature of reality influence the outcome of an interview.¹⁷¹ For two reasons this aspect is of particular importance for the present study: Participants and researcher have a different cultural background (Russian/German) and were socialised in two different political systems. Bearing in mind the aforementioned deeply rooted neglect in Soviet and early post-Soviet Russian society towards sharing information on family histories, this is likely to still have an effect mainly on interviewees belonging to the middle-aged and oldest age groups that have been fully socialised in the Soviet Union. Bertaux, Rotkirch and Thompson argue that, indeed, the mistrust is a habit that has often continued into the post-Soviet period and therefore recommend:

To get 'real' information, authentic personal narratives, [...] one has either to have high credibility by belonging to the periphery of the respondent's social network, or to get access to his/her "private" realm through a third person enjoying the respondent's trust.¹⁷²

Both of these aspects applied to the present case, as is described in the following chapter. The second, very important aspect that needs to be considered is that remembrance and the meaning of World War II is very different in these two countries who were former opponents and it is likely that this has an effect on the interviews. During the interview process, some respondents for example apologised for mentioning things that they feared might offend the interviewer. This was often the case when the German occupiers were referred to as fascists. An aspect that is very apparent in this context is that the respective respondents were torn between their cultural imprinting according to which on the one side 'the enemy was the fascist' and on the other 'this could be taken as an offence, but one has to be friendly towards guests'. This dilemma is often solved by an excuse and politically correct remark indicating that the interviewee distinguishes between former Nazis and Germans of today. However, these examples also illustrate how the respondents' cultural and social imprinting had an

¹⁷¹ K. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Thousand Oaks et. al., 2006), p.15.

¹⁷² Bertaux, Rotkirch, Thompson, *On living through Soviet Russia*, p. 9.

influence on the conversation and filtered their attitude. As for the interviewees, some aspects during an interview were also inconvenient for the interviewer. This was always the case whenever respondents reported about their families' or their own suffering caused by the German occupation. The author therefore sought to implement Charmaz' suggestion that

researchers need to go beyond the surface in seeking meaning in the data, searching for and questioning tacit meanings about values, beliefs, and ideologies. There is an underlying assumption that the interaction between the researcher and participants “*produces* the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines”.¹⁷³

Study limitations

Apart from the already mentioned aspect of the different cultural background of interviewee and interviewer that has a potential influence on the outcome of an interview, it is also important to bear in mind certain preconceived assumptions the interviewee and interviewer will most likely have. These expectations could for instance refer to the interviewer's institutional affiliation and they can affect the decision what content the interviewee thinks is expected of him or her and which aspects are less important. The outcome or direction of the interview is furthermore likely to be influenced by the questions the interviewer raises. Often, particularly but not exclusively, the respondents who were contemporary witnesses began their stories without waiting for an initial question by the author because apparently they anticipated what was expected from them. Those passages of an interview have to be distinguished from others in which the interviewee reacts to a question. In both cases the interview is biased, however the latter has a stronger impact on the direction of the interview and does not necessarily reflect what the respondent might have considered important had the question not been posed. In other words: The question whether an issue is brought up because it was mentioned unmotivated by the respondent or because the interviewer addressed this aspect is particularly important and has to be taken into account during the entire interview analysis. The author has aimed at doing so by constantly applying a set of questions to the interviews: 1. Has the interviewer influenced the direction of the interview by posing a certain question? 2. Did the interviewer influence the direction of the interview by comments she made? 3. Did these comments or questions have an

¹⁷³ K. Charmaz, 'Grounded theory', in J. Smith, R. Harré, and L. Langenhove (eds), *Rethinking methods in psychology*, (London, 1995 b), p. 35.

effect on the respondent's memory and lead to a focus on a particular period? Ulrike Jureit points to the problematic power the researcher has in terms of the oral sources he/she interprets, especially if he/she is also the producer of these sources, if the material is not or only partly published, as in the existing study.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, to allow for the best possible transparency, the audio files as their transcripts are accessible for future analysis at the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Interviewee Recruitment

Generally, multiple reference groups were analysed, according to Glaser's and Strauss' suggestion. Their main distinction was that the participants belonged to three different age groups. In the planning phase, each age group was supposed to be represented by eight respondents. Furthermore, the study was intended to be a multi-generational study with representatives belonging to three generations of non-Jewish families. This, however, turned out to be difficult because recruitment of three generations of families that included people belonging to the group of contemporary witnesses proved harder than expected. Unlike in the aforementioned oral history studies by Welzer et al., multi-generational is therefore not to be understood genealogically as the sequence of family members but in accordance with Karl Mannheim's socio-cultural definition of the term generation. He argues that people who participate in the same, temporarily confined period of history belong to a generation. People are consequently not part of the same generation simply because they are born at the same time, but because they participate at the same events and share the same contents of experiences based on the same sort of awareness stratification. Mannheim notes that even though various genealogical generations share the same stage of history, age is a dividing factor due to the differing level of experiences and consequently varying awareness structures. It is crucial, at what stage in life a person makes an experience - for an old person the same experience has a different relevance than for a young person for whom the experience adds to that person's conception of the world which is formed at young age. An older person with different experiences consequently has a different world view and this ultimately divides the generations, Mannheim concludes.¹⁷⁵ His generational concept forms the basis for the present study and was applied during the recruiting process. Most of the interviews in the present study are

¹⁷⁴ U. Jureit, *Erinnerungsmuster: Zur Methodik lebensgeschichtlicher Interviews mit Überlebenden der Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslager* (Hamburg, 1999), p. 33.

¹⁷⁵ Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie*, p. 529-36.

individual, in two cases the respondents belonged to two generations of one family (parent and child). In both of these cases, the younger of the two had been interviewed first and had later agreed to ask the parent to participate as well. Both interviews with the parent were however not individual because the respective child was also present and participated in the interview. The two family interviews were carried out as group interviews.

The criteria for the recruitment of the interviewees were age, place of residence and birth and the status of employment - retiree, employee, worker or apprentice/student.¹⁷⁶ The most important of these criteria was age followed by the place of birth and residence, whereas the employment status was considered least important, given the lack of Holocaust education in Soviet times and the early post-Soviet era when most respondents received their socialisation. The sample consists of people from three different age groups that were chosen with reference to the time period in which the persons experienced their socialisation. Socialisation refers to the interactive process by which an individual acquires the norms, values, attitudes, beliefs and language of the group he or she belongs to. It is a lifelong process but in order to narrow the age range, socialisation was defined as a period that includes school education and early professional life. The three groups were chosen with reference to three prominent political epochs they were socialised in – 1. Stalinism, 2. post-Stalinism and pre-Perestroika, and 3. Perestroika-post-Soviet conforming with Mannheim's idea that '[o]nly where events occur in such a manner as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its 'historical-social' consciousness, should we speak of a true generation.'¹⁷⁷ The oldest group of respondents consists of people who were socialised during the Stalin Era (1928-1953). Stalin's death in 1953 marked the end of this period, therefore people who were 'fully' socialised during Stalinism that is, completed their school years and started their professional life in that period, were born in the mid- and late 1930s or earlier. The second group of participants represents people who experienced socialisation mainly during the Brezhnev-era, at the height of the Cold War during the early 1960s and 1970s until the early 1980s. The time span represented by the second group is the longest, yet it also corresponds with a period in Soviet history that was marked by

¹⁷⁶ The intention was to get a sample that is, apart from the participants' place of birth, as diverse and thereby as close to the average of the population as possible. Some of the younger retirees had de facto not retired but carried out mini-jobs in order to increase their pension.

¹⁷⁷ H. Schumann and J. Scott, Generations and Collective Memories, *American Sociological Review*, 54, no. 3 (June 1989), p. 359.

political stability, comparable to Stalin's twenty-five-year reign. More importantly, though, it was during the Brezhnev era that the myth of the GPW was created and reached its peak swamping Soviet society with memorials and commemoration parades celebrating the victory narrative. Victory Day was first celebrated on 1 May 1965 marking a turning point in public commemoration of World War II in the Soviet Union and beyond as it continues to be Russia's most important official holiday. The third group comprises people who were socialised in the Perestroika years and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union which leads to a time period ranging from the mid-1980s to now. The age ranges within the three groups are therefore as follows: 75 years and older, 45-65 years and 20-35 years. The total number of participants is 33. This includes 23 individual interviews and two group interviews comprising three and seven participants, respectively. It was not possible to recruit eight participants per group for individual interviews as intended, because only six respondents were found who represent the oldest age group. There are, however, four participants of the group interviews who are 74 years of age and older. Altogether, nine respondents were between 20 and 36 years old, eight were aged 40 to 64 and six were aged between 72 and 82. Participants of the group interviews were aged 83, 77, 74 (2), 56, 53, 52, 47 and 31. One participant refused information regarding his age but refers to the middle aged group. The majority of respondents was female, 12 men and 21 women participated in the study.

Table 1: *Age-groups and participants*

| | Number of individual interviews | Number of participants in family interviews | Total number of participants |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Ages 20-35* | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Ages 45-65* | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Ages 75 and older* | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Total | 23 | 10 | 33 |

*approximate age span - each age group contains up to two respondents who were marginally above or below the respective age range

Participants were recruited by random selection and word of mouth. Establishing contacts prior to the interviews and from abroad turned out difficult and nearly impossible. About six weeks prior to arrival in Rostov-on-Don, the author had written letters to various institutions such as a hunting association, the city's local diabetics association, a choir, the Southern Federal University's alumni organisation as well as schools and had asked them for support. Several of the institutions were contacted within three days of arrival but the results were negative, phone calls were either not returned or rejected. Personal contacts proved to be vital in order to begin with the study. The first respondents were recruited by three acquaintances of the author and according to the aforementioned criteria.¹⁷⁸ Once the first interviews had been conducted, these participants were asked whether they might help to find more interviewees for the project. In all of these cases the interviewer pointed to the importance not to recruit experts in order to ensure that the bias is as minimal as possible. In addition to those respondents who were recruited through acquaintances, the author additionally recruited participants at public places such as in a café, at the airport, a shop or in archives. Six interviewees were thus recruited in the cloak room of Donskoy State Public Library, in the former Party archive and in the State Archive as well as in the waiting area of Rostov airport. This procedure can be interpreted as a weakness of the study design as one might assume that respondents who were recruited at the archive possibly have a greater interest in history than others. The respondents' respective fields of inquiry however deviated strongly from the subject of interest in this thesis. Examples of two other respondents furthermore demonstrated that the place of birth and long-term residence in Rostov proved to be a much stronger factor in terms of knowledge about the events in the Zmievska gulch. In fact, the single respondent who did not know what happened to the Jews of Rostov was a history student who had moved to Rostov only a few years before the interview. All in all, 14 of the 33 respondents had university degrees or were students at the time of the interview and seven of these degrees were acquired in Soviet times. 12 respondents were workers, and the remaining seven had visited so called *uchilishche*, technical vocational schools.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Two of the author's acquaintances were journalists, one was a history lecturer at the Southern Federal University. All were instructed to look for participants within their non-professional circle of friends and acquaintances, and were acquainted with the study design. In three cases participants were however deliberately recruited from the professional setting of the history lecturer.

¹⁷⁹ In order to ensure the respondents' anonymity no further information is made available.

Interview Process

Following R. Kenneth Kirby's advice, the author sought to 'develop a neutral, nonthreatening atmosphere for the interview so the informant will feel free to answer as candidly as possible.'¹⁸⁰ The interviews were therefore conducted at the respondents' homes or offices or elsewhere, the decision was always left to the interviewees. The interviews followed a guideline¹⁸¹ that included opening and leading questions but were intended to be as close to a normal conversation as possible. This was to ensure that the respondents were free to leave out any unsettling aspects. The participants were presented a short description of the project before the beginning of each interview.¹⁸² It explained that Rostovians belonging to different age groups are to be interviewed in order to find out how three different generations remember the period of occupation or what they know about it. The intention behind not informing the potential respondents that the main research interest focused on the mass annihilation of the city's Jewish population was that this might have had an effect on the outcome of the interviews. Finding out where in the participants' memory or knowledge the mass atrocity in Rostov is located, so to speak, was one of the central aims of the interviews. Therefore informing the respondents beforehand about this central research interest would have been counterproductive.¹⁸³ However, the interviewer's impression was that in some cases respondents had been informed by former participants who had approached them following the interviewer's request for help in finding more interviewees. This was however only an assumption and not verified, yet it was considered in the process of analysing the respective interviews. The participants were also informed about the security of their data and that the interviews were strictly confidential and anonymous. Instead of the respondents' actual names pseudonyms are therefore used throughout the analysis.¹⁸⁴ Provided that the participants had given their consent, they were furthermore informed that they were free to leave the interview at any stage should it upset them. One respondent became emotionally very upset during the course of the

¹⁸⁰ R. K. Kirby, 'Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, 35, no. 1 (2008) p. 24.

¹⁸¹ see appendix.

¹⁸² see appendix.

¹⁸³ Gläser and Laudel also point to this aspect of social research that it is sometimes not possible to fully and openly inform participants of a study beforehand, for example if even the researcher does not have detailed information as to the potential course of events as is the case with studies that involve participant observation. Gläser, Laudel, *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁴ For other possible options see: V. Janesick, *Oral History For the Qualitative Researcher Choreographing the Story* (New York, London, 2010), pp. 52-3.

interview and was asked by the interviewer whether the conversation should be stopped. The interviewee wanted to continue, however the case illustrated the interviewer's responsibility towards the respondent in terms of the risk of emotional stress or even a potential re-traumatisation. Valerie Janesick, Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel stress this main premise of research ethics - that people who become parts of a sociological study in their role of respondents must not be harmed by this.¹⁸⁵ This not only includes providing potential participants with information on the study but also involves aftercare following an interview. In the particular case, the interviewer stayed with the respondent after the interview in order to make sure the interviewee was in no harm.

The interviews were recorded with two digital recording devices and always began with general questions about the interviewees' personal background, his or her profession etc. and then proceeded towards questions about the family history, i.e. how the respondent's family had experienced the war and occupation. The main part of the interviews surrounded the mass atrocity of August 1942 without explicitly addressing it in the beginning. Respondents were rather asked how, to their knowledge, the German occupants behaved towards the local population or what they would name as the most important historical fact should a stranger ask them about the period of Rostov's occupation. If the interviewee did not mention the mass murder him- or herself, the interviewer referred to it directly. In order to evaluate how the respondent interpreted the mass atrocity, i.e. as a part of the Holocaust or a non-Holocaust-related war crime, the following questions addressed the interviewee's knowledge about the Holocaust and particularly the Holocaust on Soviet territory. An important aspect of all questions focusing on the knowledge about the Holocaust in Rostov was the origin of this knowledge. As mentioned earlier, apart from tackling the question of individual memory, a central aim of the study was to extract persisting narratives about the mass atrocity committed by *Sonderkommando* 10a in order to compare these to official commemoration. Of equal importance is the question where or by whom the respondent gained his or her knowledge because it allows for conclusions, how openly the matter was addressed as well as how local authorities treated the subject. The last part of an interview comprised questions about current commemoration practices, both on the official as well as on the private level. This also included the question about activities of the Jewish community in Rostov.

¹⁸⁵ Janesick, *Oral History For the Qualitative Researcher*, pp. 52f. Gläser, Laudel, *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, pp. 48-50.

During the interviews no notes were taken as this would have had an effect on the intended atmosphere of the conversation. Instead, memory protocols were compiled straight or shortly afterwards. Unfortunately, this was not possible in every case due to the local conditions. In the majority of cases (19 out of 25), the interviews were conducted in public settings such as the city's public library or centrally located cafés, one also took place at the interviewee's office in a remote region. Six interviews were however conducted at the respondents' homes. Here, the interviews were followed by a meal or snack. Apart from two interviewees, these respondents lived outside the city centre. Due to the long distances and the means of public transport, it took a long time to reach their homes and turned out impossible to compile protocols immediately after an interview. In such cases no memory protocols were compiled because of the considerably long pauses between interview and protocol. In terms of length, the interviews vary but on average an individual interview is between 40 to 45 minutes long, whereas both group interviews took more than two hours.

Interview Analysis

All of the twenty-five interviews have been transcribed but the author refrained from additionally translating them. Only passages that appear as quotations were translated by the author and marked with a clear indication in the footnotes where in the audio files the respective original passage appears. Since the author is not a native Russian speaker, the transcripts were produced by two native speakers in order to minimize the risk of linguistic mistakes. Twenty-two of the interviews were transcribed by one person, three interviews were transcribed by the second native speaker. The transcripts were first and foremost produced to assist the author and they form the basis for a detailed analysis, as Philipp Mayring points out.¹⁸⁶ This is of particular relevance in the case of foreign language interviews where the transcripts provide additional orientation to the researcher. The transcription guidelines of the so called Visual History Archive for oral history video testimonies produced by the Shoah Foundation form the basis for the transcripts. This means that the texts stick to the exact wording of the interviews, including filler words like 'vot' which is used in Russian like 'ehm' in English, slips of the tongue, grammatical mistakes by the interviewer, or pauses that are marked in the texts, as well as laughs or other emotional reactions. Pauses were however not marked with their duration, as in the VHA transcription guidelines or as equally suggested by

¹⁸⁶ P. Mayring, *Einführung in die Qualitative Sozialforschung* (Weinheim/Basel, 2002), p. 89.

Hans-Jürgen Glinka.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, if a word or paraphrase appeared inarticulately, it is marked 'nzb.' for *nerazborchivyy* (vague). Contrary to Glinka's suggestion, within the transcripts not the lines are numbered¹⁸⁸ but the interview minutes. This facilitates locating a specific episode within the digital audio file. The transcripts were finally reviewed by the author, as suggested by Christine Schmidt for cases in which the researcher does not produce them him- or herself, in order to make sure they correspond with the verbal recordings.¹⁸⁹

The analysis of the interviews is based on chronological steps suggested by Schmidt for the evaluation of semi-structured interviews.¹⁹⁰ In a first step of the content analytic approach, categories were formed inductively based on the detailed examination of the literal transcripts. Each transcript was therefore first studied in terms of the topics it contained. All topics or individual aspects considered important with reference to the research questions were listed for each transcript. Extracting the categories from within the material instead of applying preassigned evaluation categories ensured the evaluation's open character and corresponded with the principle of open questions applied during data collection. In a next step, the categories extracted from the transcripts were compiled within a coding guide that was then applied to all interviews. Contrary to Grounded Theory's concept of coding, the categories extracted from the transcripts in step one were not subject to further enhancements during the coding process. As a result of coding, the extent of information within the material was reduced which allowed comparing the material in terms of tendencies that are more dominant than others or connections between different categories. The author to a large extent refrained from a detailed quantitative evaluation and left out step four of Schmidt's methodology in which she quantifies the results of the coding process and presents them in charts. Instead, a descriptive frequency analysis was pursued. Referring to Möller's approach, the last step of the analysis comprises the interpretation of the interviews.¹⁹¹ All conclusions are consequently the author's.

¹⁸⁷ H.-J. Glinka, *Das narrative Interview: Eine Einführung für Sozialpädagogen* (Weinheim, Munich, 1998), p. 22.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁸⁹ C. Schmidt, "Am Material": Auswertungstechniken für Leitfadeninterviews, B. Friebertshäuser, A. Prengel (eds), *Handbuch qualitative Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft* (Weinheim, Munich, 1997), p. 546.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 547-59.

¹⁹¹ L. Möller, *Wege der Überlieferung: Eine Untersuchung zu Weitergabe christlicher Überlieferung bei Studierenden der Religionspädagogik der Universität Kassel* (Goettingen, 2005), pp. 50-1.

Finally, the following passage will discuss the archives and sources that were visited and analysed for the purpose of preparing the interview study and gaining insights into the perspective of eyewitnesses to the Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don.

Archives and Sources

Soviet Extraordinary Commission Sources

The eyewitness accounts and other relevant primary sources cited in this study were accessed in October 2011 in Rostov-on-Don, in January 2012 in Ludwigsburg and in February 2013 in Washington. They are stored in the Russian State Archive of Rostov Oblast, the former Communist Party archive, today known as the Documentation Centre for Recent History of the Rostov Oblast, in the German Federal Archive in Ludwigsburg and Berlin, and in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Soviet sources stored at the GARO were produced by the local branch of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission in Rostov in the immediate aftermath of the city's liberation in February 1943 and the months thereafter. In 1942 the commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR (ChGK) was established. It was headed by Nikolai Shvernik, head of the Soviet Trade Unions. Its staff were 'academicians, people from the arts, and some high-ranking priests of the Russian Orthodox Church'.¹⁹² Around 32,000 public representatives gathered evidence from all over the occupied parts of the Soviet Union by interviewing witnesses whose testimonies were then used for reports on the damage caused in a liberated town or region. Additionally, about seven million Soviet citizens collected and prepared documents for the commission. All expenses resulting from the Commission's activities were covered as part of the national budget. The overall material consists of about 54,000 witness-statements and some 250,000 interrogation protocols. About four million reports on the damage caused by the Nazis were compiled based on these testimonies. Twenty-seven reports were published in English and Russian between 1943 and 1945.¹⁹³

For a number of reasons these documents need to be examined critically.¹⁹⁴ All evidence was first of all gathered to justify the demand for extensive German reparations at a future war trial. Kiril Feferman argues that the Soviet State had a strong

¹⁹² K. Feferman, 'Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR: documenting the Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5, no. 4 (2003), p. 589.

¹⁹³ Ibid. See also: M.A. Sorokina, 'People and Procedures: Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6, no. 4 (Fall 2005), p. 801.

¹⁹⁴ Sorokina, 'People and Procedures', pp. 804-6.

interest to present the Commission as a formally independent institution not tied to the government in order to validate the compensation claims.¹⁹⁵ Practically though, local and regional commission's offices all over the liberated territories, headed by the respective party leaders, ensured that not only the material damage but also the number of Soviet citizens who were deported for forced labour as well as all human losses were carefully documented. In Rostov *oblast*, the regional commission reported about the mass atrocities perpetrated by the Germans in a document from 23 November 1943: 'During the temporary occupation of Rostov-on-Don by the German fascist invaders mass shootings and killings of the civilian population - men, women, and children, as well as prisoners of war held captive in Rostov were conducted in the city.'¹⁹⁶ On the following two pages we find a detailed description of the mass shootings, including information on the Jewish ethnicity of at least '10 thousand Jewish people' and the exact positions of the mass graves of all together 'more than 27 thousand civilians of Rostov' who were murdered by the occupiers.¹⁹⁷ As this example demonstrates, the commission thus also collected material that documented the Holocaust in the Soviet Union - without even intending to. Dobroszycki therefore argues, that 'regardless of what one might think of the way the Soviets conducted the investigations, the files ... should not be overlooked.'¹⁹⁸ The Commission's goal was however not only to collect material on the crimes committed by the German army on Soviet territory but also to accuse Nazi Germany of crimes that were actually committed by the Soviets, as the Katyn affair showed.¹⁹⁹

With reference to the Holocaust, the ChGK reports have to be accessed with caution for yet another reason: As Arad and Bezymenskiy point out, the officials who wrote the reports were instructed not to state that the victims of the mass atrocities had been Jews as it was Soviet policy to 'tie ... the murder of Jews to that of other nations'.²⁰⁰ Stalin only once condemned the National Socialists for their treatment of the Jews,²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ Feferman, 'Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR', p. 590.

¹⁹⁶ 'Akt no. 1231' (23 November 1943), GARO fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 7.

¹⁹⁷ 'Akt no. 1231', list 10.

¹⁹⁸ L. Dobroszycki and J. Gurock, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945* (Armonk, New York, 1993), p. 218.

¹⁹⁹ Sorokina, 'People and Procedures', p. 804.

²⁰⁰ Arad, p. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, pp. 538, 540. Lev A. Bezymenskii, 'Informatsiya po-sovetskii', *Znaniya*, no. 5 (1998), pp. 191–9.

²⁰¹ Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv 'Kosmopolitov' Vlast' i Evreyskaya intelligentsiya v SSSR* (Moscow, 2010), p. 79.

otherwise he never mentioned the persecution of the Jews in his speeches, and Molotov made merely minor comments on the subject in his note from 7 January 1942.²⁰² But apart from the first six months of the war, the fate of the Soviet Jews was silenced by the authorities.²⁰³ Many of the commission's reports therefore contain the neutral paraphrase 'innocent Soviet citizens'. However, despite the instruction there were occasional deviations depending on which commission produced a report, as the aforementioned file from Rostov's local commission demonstrates. According to Arad, local commissions' reports most likely included the word 'Jews' whereas 'in documents produced by the district commissions, which were based on the local committees' reports, the word *Jews* was even rarer.'²⁰⁴ On the next level, the republican reports hardly ever contained information on the ethnicity of the victims.

Consequently, the reports and interrogation protocols from Rostov's local commission are most interesting: In some cases, as with a report stored in the State Archive of Rostov Oblast, for instance, we find both the terms 'Jews' as well as 'peaceful soviet citizens' used as synonyms in a description of the annihilation of the Jews.²⁰⁵ Moreover, the protocols of eyewitness interrogations in Rostov contain information on the victim's Jewish ethnicity. According to Feferman, the commission investigators sometimes even asked to confirm that the Nazi victims were Jews and not representatives of other nations, as, for example, in the case of an investigation in Smolensk.²⁰⁶ In other, more frequent cases, questions about the destruction of the Jewish population were posed.²⁰⁷ The objections towards the commission's documents can therefore only partly be shared if one takes a closer look at the material in regional archives, as in this case Rostov's State and Party Archive. Diana Dumitru's description of the case of Petru Lupan, a Moldovan who was accused of the participation in the mass murder of 200 Jews in Cepeleuți, demonstrates that a combined approach of oral testimony and Soviet sources - in this case NKVD files - helped not only to trace back the course of events. Moreover, the oral history testimony confirmed the information in

²⁰² Molotov Notes on German Atrocities, *His Majesty's Stationery Office* (London, 1942), p. 14.

²⁰³ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 540. See also: I. Arad, *Katastrofa Evropeyskogo Evreystvo (1933-1945)*, *Sbornik Statey* (Ierusalim, 1990), p. 143.

²⁰⁴ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 540.

²⁰⁵ 'Dokladnaya zapiska o zverstvax i zlodeyaniyah nemecko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov v g. Rostove na Donu v period ego okkupacii' (21 February 1944), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 2, list 1ob.-5.

²⁰⁶ Feferman, 'Soviet Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR', p. 591.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

the NKVD-files, thus adding to their credibility.²⁰⁸ And another factor needs to be considered: Pohl notes, that albeit justified concerns about the undemocratic nature of the Soviet trials, an analysis of national socialist crimes in Eastern Europe, particularly on the local level, cannot afford to exclude the documents that originated from them because these were produced shortly after the events and sometimes provide the only source there is.²⁰⁹ It should be added that this also applies to the documents produced by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission, probably even more so, as they consist of eyewitness testimonies. The Soviet documents were therefore accessed and analysed in due consideration of their above mentioned characteristics but following Krausnick's suggestion as to which sources to consult, according to which there are 'situations when you have to pick one piece of the puzzle among four or five others without being able to consider the surrounding pieces.'²¹⁰ For this particular case, the ChGK-records were prioritised for the reconstruction of events in occupied Rostov, because they allow us to draw more information from them than from the few available perpetrator documents.

Post-War Trials' Documents

The documents compiled in Ludwigsburg's B 162 inventory were collected in the 1960s by the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes, founded in 1958.²¹¹ They were used for the preparation of West German legal proceedings against members of *Sonderkommando 10a* which was responsible for the mass atrocity in Rostov.²¹² Some of those accounts were provided by the same witnesses who had been questioned by the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission twenty years earlier, while others were translations from collaborators' testimonies made after the second Krasnodar trial of 1963.²¹³ In October of that same year, the Central Office had been informed by Soviet authorities that these had evidence

²⁰⁸ D. Dumitru, 'An Analysis of Soviet Postwar Investigation and Trial Documents and Their Relevance for Holocaust Studies', in: M. David-Fox, P. Holquist and A. Martin, *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses* (Pittsburgh, 2014), pp. 145-9.

²⁰⁹ D. Pohl, 'Sowjetische und Polnische Strafverfahren wegen NS-Verbrechen - Quellen für den Historiker?' in J. Finger, S. Keller and A. Wirsching (eds), *Vom Recht zur Geschichte Akten aus NS-Prozessen als Quellen der Zeitgeschichte* (Goettingen, 2009), p. 140.

²¹⁰ Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, p. 333.

²¹¹ Information sheet by the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes, Gen. IV -215, December 2012.

²¹² Trial No. 864, *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen XLIV* (Amsterdam, 2011), pp. 247-311.

²¹³ A first trial against former *Sonderkommando 10a* members was held in Krasnodar in July 1943. For further information see Central Archives of the Federal Security Services (FSB, former KGB) of the Russian Federation (records relating to war crime trials in the Soviet Union, 1939-1992), USHMM RG 06.025 reels 15, 16, 17.

about former members of *Sonderkommando* 10a that left no doubt that the former SS men were perpetrators of mass atrocities against Soviet civilians.²¹⁴ As a consequence, the senior prosecutor from Munich's district court, where preliminary proceedings were conducted against Christmann et al., approached his Soviet colleagues for judicial assistance.²¹⁵ Of particular interest were testimonies from eyewitnesses as well as collaborators, and a lot of information regarding both the course of events as well as intentions and motivations can be drawn from these interrogation transcripts. Given the availability of evidence, it is troubling that a specific trial regarding the crimes committed in Rostov was subsequently never conducted in either West or East Germany despite the investigations of the Central Office.²¹⁶ Pohl argues that murder verdicts 'almost exclusively applied to excess murders, that is, murder without specific orders.'²¹⁷

The USHMM archive gradually received Holocaust-related files from major Russian archives over the past two decades, including the Russian State Archive (GARF), the Russian Military Archive, the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, and the Central Archives of the Russian Federal Security Services (FSB, former KGB). Among the sources studied from these archives for this article were selected records from the collection of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission (ChGK), reports and investigative materials compiled by the Military Commissions of the Red (Soviet) Army related to the crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators on the occupied territories of the Soviet Union between 1942 and 1945, as well as records relating to war crime trials in the Soviet Union held between 1945 and 1947. In 2012 the USHMM archives furthermore received copies of Ludwigsburg's Central Office's inventory B 162.

²¹⁴ Letter Soviet attorney general Rudenko to chief prosecutor Schulze (8 October 1963), Central Office of the Judicial Authorities of the Federal States for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes (B 162), USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1257, pp. 1-3.

²¹⁵ Letter chief prosecutor of Munich district court Bader to Soviet attorney general Rudenko (20 February 1964), Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1257, pp. 6-12.

²¹⁶ In many cases, the Central Office's preliminary investigations did not result in indictments, and this was the case too regarding the crimes committed in Rostov. Of 172,294 persons against whom the Central Office investigated, only 16,740 were indicted, 6,656 of whom were sentenced to prison. See <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/imperia/md/content/dienstorte/ludwigsburg/strafverfolgungsbilanz.pdf> [accessed 10.08.2013].

²¹⁷ Pohl, *Sowjetische und Polnische Strafverfahren*, p. 125.

The Holocaust in Rostov-on-Don

This chapter describes the first and second occupation of Rostov-on-Don and the annihilation of the city's Jewish population based on existing literature and the previously unexamined sources introduced in the previous methodology chapter. The main aspects that will be addressed in the chapter are the Soviet evacuation policy and possible motives preventing people from escaping individually as well as the question how the local population witnessed the events. Particularly the latter aspect enables us to draw conclusions in terms of potential narratives about the Holocaust today. The question how many people were killed in the mass atrocity that was committed in August 1942 is closely linked to the aspects of evacuation and local collaboration, both of which are referred to in many interviews from 2011. The author agrees with Al'tman and Feferman that particularly in cases like Rostov it is not expedient to focus mainly on perpetrator documents²¹⁸ and ignore existing Soviet sources as only few German sources are available in the case of Rostov. Feferman furthermore points to the dynamics of the local population's evacuation that need to be considered in this respect. Both aspects have been picked up regarding the study at hand and each of these aspects will be discussed in greater detail in the following to add to a more comprehensive analysis of the Holocaust in Rostov.

Jewish Pre-war Rostov

Multiethnic Rostov was situated within the so called Pale of Settlement. For centuries the Russian Empire had forbidden Jews to settle within its borders but as a consequence of the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, Catherine II saw herself confronted with 500,000 Jews who were now under Russian rule.²¹⁹ They were granted the right to settle exclusively within a region encompassing 25 governorates stretching from Lithuania and Belarussia to the Ukrainian shores of the Black Sea. Apart from Rostov's Jewish community, Armenians, members of Caucasian tribes,

²¹⁸ Al'tman and Feferman refer mainly, though not exclusively to Aleksandr Kruglov's article on Rostov: A. Kruglov, 'O nekotorykh spornikh momentov Kholokosta v Rostove na Donu', in *Rossiyskaya biblioteka Kholokosta: Materialy 7-y Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya'* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 45-52. I. Al'tman, *Istoriografiya istochnikovedeniya istorii Kholokosta v Rostove-na-Donu: k postanovke problemy*, in *Rossiyskaya biblioteka Kholokosta: Materialy 7-y Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya'* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 67, 68, 71, 74. K. Feferman, 'Ot redaktora', in *Rossiyskaya biblioteka Kholokosta: Materialy 7-y Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya'* (Moscow, 2013), p. 9.

²¹⁹ S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Poland and Russia From the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 1 (Philadelphia, 1918), pp. 39f.

Cossacks, Georgians, Greeks, and Tartars have lived in Rostov for centuries and shaped the city since it was founded in 1749.²²⁰ After the establishment of the Pale of Settlement, its Jewish population quickly grew: While in 1800 only ten Jews lived here, by 1886 the number of Jewish inhabitants had already risen to over seven thousand, or 9.2 % of the population, and was still to grow.²²¹ In 1888 however, Rostov and the nearby city of Taganrog were excluded from the Pale of Settlement due to local government reform, a decision with great impact on the Jewish influx: Jews who had already settled in Rostov were from now on allowed to stay but forbidden to move to other parts or travel within the territory of the *Oblast Voyska Dona*. Jewish non-residents who wanted to settle down in the administrative district of Rostov could only do so if they were granted the Ataman's permission.²²² As a result, Rostov's Jewish community growth decelerated noticeably although it did not come to a halt. Another factor that troubled Russian Jewish communities at that time, and Rostov was not an exception, were the hostile conditions they were confronted with.²²³ Rostov faced three waves of pogroms in the late 19th and early 20th century, beginning in 1881 followed by the city's largest pogrom in 1905 and the last between 1918 and 1919.²²⁴ Partly, this can be explained by the growing hostility towards a growing number of Jews among the overall population. Both politically and socially, Jews were accused of being the cause for many of the city's problems. As the number of economically successful Jews grew, many identified them as unwanted competitors. Murphy quotes a young British woman, Rhoda Power, who worked as an English teacher in a wealthy Rostovian household in 1917 and describes her impressions regarding the public attitude towards Jews:

²²⁰ J. Jones, *Everyday Life and the Reconstruction of Soviet Russia During and After the GPW, 1943-1948* (Bloomington, 2008), p. 19.

²²¹ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, pp. 26, 61.

²²² Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, pp. 60-1. See also: Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War*, p. 4.

²²³ M. Aronson, 'The anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia in 1881', in J. Klier and S. Lambroza (eds), *Pogroms: anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 45-47.

²²⁵ S. Weinberg, *Pogroms and Riots, German Press Responses to Anti-Jewish Violence in Germany and Russia (1881-1882)* (Frankfurt/Main, 2010), p.84.

²²⁴ E. V. Movshovich, *Pechal'nyy yubiley Evrejskiy pogrom v Rostove-na-Donu 18-20 oktyabrya 1905 goda*, *Donskoy vremennik* (Rostov-na-Donu, 2000), http://www.donvrem.dspl.ru/Files/article/m2/2/art.aspx?art_id=81 [accessed 08 August 2013].

The Jews, many of whom were said to have become rich since the outbreak of the European War, were admitted into society, but were considered "outsiders", and invited to few of the big social functions. ... [T]he attitude of the Russian bourgeoisie and peasantry towards the Jews was amazing. The peasants quite frankly hated them and made no bones about it.²²⁵

Perhaps an even more crucial factor during the politically turbulent times of the Russian Civil War, many who adhered to the Whites held Jews responsible for Russia's misfortunes, identifying them with the Bolsheviks. Yet, as Kenez argues, Judeophobia was not limited to but one political group. '[S]ocialists saw them as capitalist exploiters; and conservatives blamed them for being socialists.'²²⁶ Because of its strategic importance, Rostov changed hands six times during the Civil War and was also under British control for a short period of time in 1919, when the Royal Air Force intervened on the side of the Whites, thus occupying Rostov on their behalf.²²⁷ As Kenez points out, both armies, Bolsheviks and Whites, were responsible for the pogroms²²⁸ and Krysko, a young Rostovian witness to the Civil War in his home town, describes chaotic political circumstances and regular violence against Jews in his memoirs.²²⁹ The anti-Semitic notion could however not stop the Jewish influx. In 1939 Rostov had the third largest Jewish community in the Russian Federative Republic with 27,039 out of an overall population of 510,212 according to a census conducted that year.²³⁰

²²⁵ Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War*, pp. 3-4.

²²⁶ P. Kenez, 'Pogroms and White ideology in the Russian Civil War', in J. Klier and S. Lambroza (eds), *Pogroms: anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 294.

²²⁷ Jones, *Everyday Life*, p. 21. See also: M. H. Aten and A. Orrmont, *Last Train Over Rostov Bridge* (London, 2010).

²²⁸ Kenez, *Pogroms and White ideology in the Russian Civil War*, p. 294.

²²⁹ W. Krysko, *Witness to the Birth of Political Anti-Judaism* (New York, 1999), p. 61-2.

²³⁰ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 134. See also: Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War*, p. 55f. Hilberg assumes that the number of Jews in Rostov was higher. He refers to the census of 1926 when 40,000 Jews lived in Rostov, representing 13,2% of the city's population, and argues that '[g]enerally, the figures, if not the per centages, had increased by 1939.' It is unclear however, why he does not quote from the later census of 1939. R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven, London, 3rd ed., 2003), vol. 1, p. 296.

Operation Barbarossa and Soviet evacuation policy in Rostov

By the early 20th century, Rostov had turned into a commercial and urban centre with a population of 199,200 in 1912.²³¹ By then the city's harbour was the third largest in European Russia.²³² In the 1930s Rostov experienced further economic and population growth thanks to its state combine Rostselmash. During the war years, Rostselmash produced military equipment and was of such strategic importance that it was evacuated to Uzbekistan before the German invasion.²³³ The city's economic significance was accompanied by growing political power. Since 1937 Rostov served as the regional capital of Rostov *oblast*. Rostov was considered strategically important because of its status as key industrial city in southern Russia and gate to the Caucasus with its oil fields. Particularly the latter aspect made it a strategic objective of highest significance.²³⁴ A first attempt by the *Wehrmacht* to take Rostov on 21 November 1941 failed when the Red Army managed to recapture the city after only a week.²³⁵ It is difficult to determine how many civilians, particularly Jews, were captured in the city during those seven days and the numbers vary.²³⁶ Straight after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, Soviet authorities had established an evacuation council whose task it was to 'evacuate government and Communist Party offices and industrial plants in the areas under threat of occupation.'²³⁷ The order also applied to the personnel of the plants to be evacuated, party functionaries, senior civil servants as well as young men at military age.²³⁸ A resolution on the evacuation of the civilian population in areas under direct threat of occupation and those where military action was already taking place was adopted 5 July 1941.²³⁹ Its implementation in the field proved to be problematic, though, as local authorities to whom the decision to evacuate was left in the final instance had to take pros and cons of such an action into consideration and then report

²³¹ Jones, *Everyday Life*, pp. 17f. See also Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War*, p. 3.

²³² Murphy, *Rostov in the Russian Civil War*, p. 3.

²³³ G. Belenkiy, *Rostov-na-Donu gorod u tikhovo Dona* (Rostov-on-Don, 2005), pp. 133-4.

²³⁴ A. Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 309, 515.

²³⁵ Angrick *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 317. See also Y. Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem, 2009), p. 85. See also Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 138. See also Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 867.

²³⁶ Angrick mentions estimates by *Sonderkommando 10a* according to which about 50,000 Jews lived in Rostov during the first occupation. Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 562.

²³⁷ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 72.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* See also Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv 'Kosmopolitov'*, p. 76.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

to Moscow about it.²⁴⁰ It was first and foremost 'privileged people and privileged places' that benefitted from the evacuation decree of 27 June 1941.²⁴¹ In Rostov, a city that featured a number of such privileged, economically important places, this affected thousands of people who worked for the local factories, including their family members. *Rostselmash* alone employed 17,000 workers on the eve of the war, and there were other plants that produced military devices such as Factory No. 168 with several thousand employees.²⁴² Thus, about half of the population had been evacuated before the Germans reached the city boundary. 200,000 to 300,000 people had nevertheless remained in the city.²⁴³ To a great extent these numbers coincide with Movshovich's findings: Referring to documents from the Western Caucasian Railway, he argues that from September to November 1941 between 100,000 to 150,000 people were taken eastwards and to the south by train or boat. Manley points out that Rostov's evacuation began only in the first days of October, according to an Evacuation Council decree from 9 October.²⁴⁴

Indeed, at least during the first weeks of the war, evacuation generally began only under the direct threat of occupation and thus often chaotic conditions.²⁴⁵ The same applied to Rostov that had been bombarded from 12 August 1941 onwards.²⁴⁶ From 22 June 1941 Rostov *oblast* had been under martial law like other western parts of the Soviet Union as a consequence of which moving within these territories was extremely difficult and required the permission of local authorities.²⁴⁷ Due to an influx of Ukrainian and Polish Jewish refugees during the months following the German

²⁴⁰ M. Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews' at the time of the Nazi Invasion', in L. Dobroszycki and J. Gurock (eds), *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union, Studies and Sources on the Destruction of the Jews in the Nazi-Occupied Territories of the USSR, 1941-1945* (New York, 1993), pp. 79f.

²⁴¹ R. Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca and London, 2009), p. 32. Efforts regarding the evacuation of the civilian population were not made until 26 September, 1941, when a special agency was established. An order to evacuate the Jewish population was never issued, regardless of the fact that the Soviet regime at that time had information about mass executions of Jews in the occupied territories. I. Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 462.

²⁴² Jones, *Everyday Life*, p. 25.

²⁴³ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 561. Angrick cites documents from *Sonderkommando 10a*. Pohl also refers to German documents according to which 300,000 people remained in Rostov. D. Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944* (Munich, 2009), p. 123.

²⁴⁴ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, p. 70.

²⁴⁵ Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews', pp. 80-1.

²⁴⁶ Belenkiy, *Rostov-na-Donu gorod u tikhovo Dona*, p. 161.

²⁴⁷ Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews', p. 78. The declaration of martial law was followed by travel restrictions that applied to the entire Soviet territory and should ensure that any person travelling from A to B was permitted to do so by the NKVD. The intention behind these moving restrictions was to limit the number of refugees heading eastwards and have some form of control over who was departing and entering. Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, pp. 43f. See also Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 453.

invasion, the number of Jews residing in Rostov had risen to about 50,000 by November 1941, according to estimates of *Sonderkommando 10a*.²⁴⁸ Their number might have reached up to 60,000.²⁴⁹ The regulations soon became irrelevant once local authorities started to flee themselves in panic over the massive German advance and another 50,000 to 100,000 Rostovians evacuated themselves unorganised. According to Movshovich, among the overall number of evacuees were about 14,000 to 20,000 Jews, about half of which were employees of state institutions and factories.²⁵⁰ Concluding, estimates are that more than half of the population of Rostov stayed in the city and witnessed its first occupation.

Soviet Propaganda and Civilian Evacuation

Apart from ineffective evacuation policies in the field, the question why the number of people who evacuated was not higher has to also be assessed from the perspective of then Rostovians and the available level of information. Due to the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact of 23 August 1939, public critique of Hitler Germany was prohibited until the beginning of Operation Barbarossa. Soviet propaganda had not stressed the anti-Jewish nature of German fascism unlike in the pre-war years when Soviet media had repeatedly reported about the anti-Semitic policies in Nazi Germany.²⁵¹ As public critique of Nazi Germany had come to a halt with the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact, in June of 1941 the almost two year stop in critical press coverage that had been accompanied by pro-German propaganda had consequently left people misinformed in terms of the violence against Jews following the German attack on Poland. Soviet Jews either were not aware of the threat posed to them due to the German invasion or did not believe the rumours that had spread following the influx of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who had witnessed German atrocities in the *Generalgouvernement*. The Soviet regime

²⁴⁸ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 652. See also Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 289.

²⁴⁹ M. Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews' p. 84. See also Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 562; Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 134.

²⁵⁰ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 134. See also Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 866. See also Belenkiy, *Rostov-na-Donu gorod u tikhovo Dona*, pp. 161f. Gert Robel points out that it is however difficult to determine exact numbers of the overall Jewish population in Soviet Russia which also applies to Rostov. Soviet population statistics only delivered information about the nationality of a person based on his or her native language but excluded people who ascribed themselves to mosaic faith. As a result of assimilation and social pressure, the number of people with 'J' for Jew in their passport was smaller than the number of people who defined themselves as Jews for religious reasons. The racial Nazi definition of Jewishness did not distinguish between faith and nationality - converts were therefore equally defined as Jews. See: G. Robel, 'Sowjetunion', in W. Benz (ed.), *Dimension des Völkermords, Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1991), pp. 499-500.

²⁵¹ Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv 'Kosmopolitov'*, p. 50.

needed the first two months following the German invasion until it had gained distinct evidence about the fate of the Jews in the occupied territories. On 24 August 1941 a countrywide radio transmission addressed to the Jewish public was organised by Jewish intellectuals who later became members of the aforementioned Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The transmission warned Jews all over the Soviet Union, many of whom then decided to evacuate.²⁵² A survey among refugees from eastern Byelorussia demonstrated however, that the media only played a subordinate role in the decision whether or not to leave.²⁵³ Based on interviews with the survivors from various places in Byelorussia about the individual circumstances of their evacuation, the study documented that at least in this particular region only a minority of the respondents named the media as their source of information on atrocities against Jews. Far more important was information obtained from Polish refugees who had escaped the terror and reported about what they had witnessed. Nevertheless, the level of information as such did not have as strong an impact on the decision to evacuate - many Jews stayed because they had a positive view of Germans and did not believe in an imminent threat.²⁵⁴ The consequences of this misjudgement proved to be fatal, as the following passages on the first and second occupation of Rostov document.

The first occupation in eyewitness accounts

Even though the first occupation of Rostov lasted only a week, those who had not managed or did not want to evacuate witnessed horrible scenes. Shortly after the city was re-captured by the Red Army, many Rostovians reported to the Soviet authorities. Their accounts describe plunderings, random shootings, and raids.²⁵⁵ What the documents also demonstrate is that the violence hit the entire population. In search for partisans or *Kommissars* German soldiers arbitrarily killed anyone who became a suspect.²⁵⁶ Among the testimonies are only few that mention specific anti-Jewish acts of violence, even though arrangements for annihilating the Jews of Rostov were made

²⁵² Lustiger, *Rotbuch*, pp. 127f. See also Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 461. See also Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews', pp. 84f, 89. See also K. Berkhoff, 'The Holocaust in the Soviet Media', pp. 61-105.

²⁵³ Altshuler, 'Escape and Evacuation of Soviet Jews', pp. 89f.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. See also Krysko, *Witness to the Birth of Political Anti-Judaism*, p. 52.

²⁵⁵ Reports and Investigative Materials Compiled by the Military Commissions of the Red (Soviet) Army Related to the Crimes Committed by the Nazis and Their Collaborators on the Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during WWII, 1942-1945: USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 44, 48, 49.

²⁵⁶ Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 49, page 169.

during the few days of the first occupation.²⁵⁷ It is hard to identify whether these were noticed by the non-Jewish population or not, given the short term the city was taken. What information can be drawn from the accounts on the first occupation? First of all, the eyewitnesses mainly refer to the victims as Soviet citizens, only occasionally the ethnicity of a person is mentioned.²⁵⁸ Most of the testimonies refer to purges in the Nakhichevan district, committed by members of the 60. infantry division.²⁵⁹ Repeatedly witnesses report that their neighbours or relatives were shot because they were accused of helping partisans or being party or Komsomol members.²⁶⁰ Entire families were thus murdered, children were not spared. Inhabitants of the Vtoraya-Murlychevskaya street for example report the death of their neighbours who were executed by German soldiers without an obvious reason, among them children:

On 26 November a gang of German soldiers threw our neighbours, the Magals, into the courtyard, marched off men, elderly, women, invalids and even children and shot them right here in the streets.²⁶¹

Judging from the family name that is of Hebrew origin, we may assume that the victims of this execution were Jews which remains unmentioned in the testimony, however.²⁶² In another case, two women report that three of their male neighbours were taken away on 26 November 1941 by 15 German soldiers and shot at the courtyard of a nearby orphanage together with 57 other victims among whom the two women

²⁵⁷ Jewish survivors from Rostov who were interviewed for the Shoah foundation mention public announcements addressed to the Jewish population ordering people to register. See for example: Goliand, Iosif. Interview 37726. tape 2, minute 6. USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Accessed online at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on 5 March 2013. Brodianskaia, Revekka. Interview 44288. tape 2, minute 8. Visual History Archive. USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Accessed online at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on 5 March 2013.

²⁵⁸ Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 49, page 139. See also F. D. Sverdlov, *Dokumenty obvinayut, Kholokost: svidetel'stva Krasnoj Armii* (Moscow, 1996), p. 86.

²⁵⁹ Angrick describes in detail how the German troops including members of *Sonderkommando* 10a fought a brutal street fight in *Nakhichevan*, the former Armenian part of Rostov. He refers to perpetrator documents that affirm the witnesses' accounts regarding the use of flamethrowers and mass shootings. Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 317.

²⁶⁰ Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 48, page 95.

²⁶¹ Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 48, page 94.

²⁶² While at the very beginning of *Operation Barbarossa* only Jewish men were murdered, soon Jewish women, elderly and children were included. Though never clearly set out in writing, the *Einsatzgruppen* from mid-July 1941 onwards gradually began to also murder Jewish women, children and elderly. By mid-August of the same year the genocide had become general procedure. Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, pp. 129ff; C. Browning, *Die Entfesselung der "Endlösung": Nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik 1939-1942* (Munich 2003); B. Hoppe, H. Glass, Sowjetunion mit annektierten Gebieten I, Besetzte sowjetische Gebiete unter deutscher Militärverwaltung, Baltikum und Transnistrien, *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933-1945*, 7 (Munich, 2011), pp. 33-4, 160-1.

identified more neighbours of theirs, some were old men in their seventies.²⁶³ Jews were targeted with great brutality straight after the city was taken witnesses state on 30 November 1941:

As soon as they marched into Rostov they began to pillage, abuse the local population, particularly Jews. They killed them just because they were Jews. They searched the houses for them, the cellars, the streets. In the house on 36 Liniya alone, near the kindergarten, they killed 60 Jewish inhabitants and a few hundred in our entire district, mainly women, children, elderly.²⁶⁴

Due to the short period of the first capture, the German occupiers only managed to announce the establishment of a Jewish council and a registration order addressed to the Jewish population. Straight after the city had been taken the Jews of Rostov were furthermore informed that they were to wear a yellow star for identification purposes.²⁶⁵ Unlike during the second capture, there was no time to organize further radical measures including the large-scale robbery of Jewish property. All in all, the first capture of Rostov was only a preview of the anti-Jewish terror accompanying the second. The number of Jewish victims of the first occupation is unknown, estimates range from one hundred²⁶⁶ to about one thousand Jews who became the first Holocaust victims of Rostov.²⁶⁷

From 29 November 1941 the city was under Soviet control for nearly eight months again. On 24 July 1942 German forces recaptured Rostov, however, and this time for more than half a year until 13 February 1943. Tragically, many of those who had evacuated before returned to Rostov in early 1942 because the city's liberation in November 1941 by the Red Army was perceived as a first important military success. But Stalingrad with its symbolic moral and physical defeat of the enemy was still a year ahead and the return to Rostov soon proved to be a fatal mistake for many evacuees. In February 1942 an order had been issued by the authorities that anyone who wanted to leave the city could only do so with the permission of the commander's office.²⁶⁸ Notwithstanding, many Jews left Rostov before the second occupation but many also

²⁶³ Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 48, page 99. Many other accounts report similar cases of random shootings. See Reports and Investigative Materials, USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 48, page 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 114, 115, 117, 122, 126, 131, 133, 141. See also USHMM RG 22.016, Box 6, Folder 49, page 139, 154, 160, 162, 165, 167, 169, 172, 175, 178, 186.

²⁶⁴ Sverdlov, *Dokumenty obvinyayut*, p. 81.

²⁶⁵ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 139.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁶⁷ Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 333.

²⁶⁸ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 139.

decided to stay and one can only speculate about their reasons. If information on mass atrocities was theoretically available, as argued by Berkhoff, other aspects seem to have been essential regarding the decision to evacuate or not and age might have been an important factor. In terms of the information Jews might have obtained from refugees from Poland to Belarus and Ukraine in 1939 - before the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact - It is crucial to remember that before the attack on the Soviet Union there were no mass executions and consequently information about the maltreatment of Jews will have sounded differently than later when rumours about ghettos and camps reached Soviet Jews. Regarding this later stage, Altshuler stresses that 'it is impossible to determine to what extent [Jews] took the information on board, and what percentage of the Jews actually heard the rumours.'²⁶⁹ Berkhoff argues that the rare Soviet media hints or the warning of the Jewish Anti-fascist Committee, after all an organisation Stalin himself had created, could also have been perceived as propaganda.²⁷⁰ Another aspect is worth considering: The Soviet terror of the 1930s against the population, including Jews, may have left many people sceptical towards any form of state-driven information.

In Rostov, evacuees returning after the city's liberation in late November 1941 were most likely confronted with stories about the overall violence therefore it was not easy for civilians, including Jews, who had remained, to identify a pattern. To the contrary - the violence had hit everybody who became suspicious, regardless of their ethnicity. People who had witnessed the presence of German troops in Rostov in 1918 had a positive view of the Germans and many may not have believed in an imminent threat.²⁷¹ Thanks to eyewitness accounts we know that the victims of the Zmievskaya Balka mass atrocity were women, children and elderly. These people formed a group who was particularly vulnerable and for whom evacuating was not as easy as it might have been for others. All the above mentioned factors have to be taken into account when trying to evaluate the question what influenced people in their decisions to stay or go. Laurie Cohen who conducted interviews with contemporary witnesses of World War II in the city of Smolensk points to yet another factor that needs to be considered:

²⁶⁹ M. Altshuler, 'The distress of Jews in the Soviet Union in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 36, no. 2 (2008), p. 106.

²⁷⁰ Berkhoff, 'The Holocaust in the Soviet Media', p. 62.

²⁷¹ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 139.

...the main circumstance preventing families from escaping the German army was a lack of financial resources. With what means could a lone woman who had lost in the first week of war all of her belongings, her savings - everything - flee...²⁷²

The heavy destruction of Rostov most likely had the same effect for many Rostovians. Additionally, when the German summer offensive in southern Russia had been launched, the evacuation was conducted in great haste and with only few days left, beginning on 18 July 1942, 'four days before German forces reached the outskirts of the city.'²⁷³ Arad notes, unlike during the first occupation: 'This time the city was taken by surprise, and the local Soviet authorities had no time to evacuate the population.'²⁷⁴ Movshovich, on the other hand, speaks of a period of several weeks in June and July during which 'a few thousand closed wagons with people were sent away'.²⁷⁵ Those who did not manage to evacuate witnessed terrible crimes against the local, mainly Jewish population, and the massive destruction of Rostov. This time, people and objects of value were annihilated systematically.²⁷⁶ Again, many witnesses later reported about what they saw to the Soviet authorities.

Holocaust

As Arad, Gutman and Margaliot point out referring to mass killings in general in those areas under German military administration, the atrocities 'were carried out openly, in full view of *Wehrmacht* soldiers who watched the shocking spectacle.'²⁷⁷ The same applied to the second occupation of Rostov, and the annihilation of the Jewish population was witnessed by many local inhabitants. An early published description of the Rostov massacre was included in *The Blackbook* by Ehrenburg and Grossman who estimated that 15,000-16,000 Jews fell victim to the Nazis.²⁷⁸ On 13 March 1943, *Pravda* reported on the mass atrocity by quoting a record from the Soviet Extraordinary

²⁷² L. Cohen, *Smolensk Under The Nazis Everyday Life In Occupied Russia* (Rochester, 2013), p. 139.

²⁷³ Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, p. 71.

²⁷⁴ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 288.

²⁷⁵ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 140.

²⁷⁶ Belenkiy, *Rostov-na-Donu gorod u tikhovo Dona*, p. 165.

²⁷⁷ Y. Arad, Gutman and Margaliot (eds), *Documents on the Holocaust Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union* (Yad Vashem, 1981), p. 369.

²⁷⁸ W. Grossman, I. Ehrenburg and A. Lustiger (eds), *Das Schwarzbuch: Der Genozid an den sowjetischen Juden* (Reinbek, 1994), p. 414.

Commission that spoke of 15,000-18,000 civilian casualties.²⁷⁹ Important western studies on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union nevertheless lack information on the events in Rostov.²⁸⁰ Regarding the general course of events, the annihilation of the Jews of Rostov resembles other cities in the occupied Soviet territories, for instance Kiev or Krasnodar. The actual number of Jews who had remained in the city after its second capture on 24 July 1942 is unknown but estimates range from 16,000 up to 32,000.²⁸¹ On 1 August 1942 a *Judenrat*²⁸² was installed, shortly afterwards Rostov's Jewish

²⁷⁹ Zverstva nemetsko-fashistskih lyudoedov v Rostove-na-Donu, *Pravda*, no. 70 (13.03.1943), p. 3. Arad and Schwarz deliver equivalent numbers of 15,000 to 18,000 Jews by referring to Soviet sources and an article published in the Jewish Antifascist Committee's newspaper *Eynikayt* in March 1945. Y. Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem, 2009), p. 288. S. Schwarz, 'The Jews in the Soviet Union', R. Steel (ed.), *World Affairs: National and International Viewpoints* (New York, 1972), p. 231. 18,000 is also the number Heinrich Kittel, the former city commandant of occupied Rostov, quotes with respect to Russian accusations regarding his responsibility for the mass killing. Neitzel, *Abgehört*, p. 283. Gert Robel also speaks of 18,000 Jewish victims quoting Luck, who remains indefinite as to the overall number of Jews who were murdered in occupied Rostov and mixes the dates of the mass shooting by assigning it to the first occupation. D. Luck, 'Use and Abuse of Holocaust Documents Reitlinger and "How many?"', *Jewish Social Studies*, 41, no. 2 (1979), pp. 105-106. Robel, 'Sowjetunion', p. 548. Gerald Reitlinger who equally mentions 18,000 victims quotes Schwarz and refers to the Black Book, yet at the same time questions the accuracy of the number: 'In any case 18,000 seems much too big a proportion for those who had failed to flee after so many months of warning.' G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (London, 1961), p. 253. Perhaps most interestingly because it does not correspond to the general practice of omitting the victims' ethnicity, a study of 1963 by the Command of the western-Caucasian military district clearly describes the mass atrocity as a Holocaust-related event: 'In the area of the Botanical garden and the Zoo the entire adult Jewish population was shot, whereas children were poisoned. This way about 18,000 people perished in Rostov alone.' Shtab severo-kavkazskogo voennogo okruga, *informatsionnyy sbornik*, no. 22 (Rostov-na-Donu, 1963), p. 63. A recent Russian military-historical publication on the other hand speaks of 1154 civilian casualties in the city of Rostov-on-Don. G. F. Krivosheev, B. M. Andronikov, P. D. Burikov, B. B. Gurkin and A. I. Kruglov, *Velikaya Otechestvennaya na zemle Rossiyskoy. Voenno-istoricheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 2010), p. 25. Local historians Movshovich and Voytenko argue the mass killing in August was the biggest single massacre committed on Russian territory with 27,000 victims, the majority of whom were Jews. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 147. E. Voytenko, *Kholokost na yuge Rossii v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny* (Stavropol 2005), p. 112. Angrick, Kruglov and Pohl speak of 2,000 and 3,000 Jewish victims referring to German files. Angrick notes that the number might be higher but argues that they were falsely assigned to *Sonderkommando* 10a only. Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 565. A. Kruglov, O nekotorykh spornykh momentakh Kholokosta v Rostove-na-Donu, *Istoriya Kholokosta na Severnom Kavkaze i sud'by evreyskoi intelligentsii v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny*, Materialy 7-i Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii "Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya" (Moscow, 2013), p. 47. Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, p. 277.

²⁸⁰ Thus, Browning does not mention the events in Rostov-on-Don, yet he comments on the neighbouring city of Taganrog. Browning, *Die Entfesselung der "Endlösung"*, p. 426. Longerich's and Snyder's works equally lack information on the events in Rostov. P. Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York, 2010). T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europa zwischen Hitler und Stalin* (Munich, 2011).

²⁸¹ Arad mentions 16,000 to 18,000 Jewish inhabitants while Movshovich speaks of 30,000 to 32,000 mostly Jewish victims. Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 288. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 140.

²⁸² It was headed by medical doctor and former director of the city's sanitary house, Dr. Lurie, and his deputy Lapiner. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 141.

population was ordered to register no later than 10 August.²⁸³ A public appeal was published on 4 August signed by Dr. Lurie, head of the *Judenrat*, and *Sonderkommando 10a*, and about 2000 people had complied with the order a few days later, according to *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* no. 16.²⁸⁴ A classified NKGB-report from 21 February 1944 describes how in order to avoid suspicion and to organize a massive robbery of Jewish property the registration was conducted by Jews who had been specifically picked for this procedure by the Germans.²⁸⁵ On 9 August a second announcement signed by Dr. Lurie and *Sonderkommando 10a* was published that all Jews, 'as well as persons from mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews',²⁸⁶ were ordered to gather at specific concentration points in the city centre on August 11 in order to be relocated at a safe place outside the city. Non compliance would be punished by death. The resettlement was said to be for the Jews' own protection as there had been 'acts of enraged elements'.²⁸⁷ People were ordered to bring their personal documents, money, and the keys to their houses or flats with the address attached to it.

These initial stages were witnessed by many Rostovians and we can draw on accounts from perpetrators, observers, and local policemen that deliver information on the existence of a Jewish council, the target groups as well as the deceit facilitating first the deportation, followed by the robbery of Jewish property. Several civilian observers reported seeing the announcements addressed to the Jewish population instructing people to register and appear at the six collection points for relocation. These witnesses also remembered that the Jews were ordered to bring their valuables and keys to their houses: Lina Pravdneva recalls: 'Around 9 August 1942 the Germans published an appeal ordering all Jews to appear at collection points with their valuables and keys to their flats on 11 August.'²⁸⁸ As Lothar Heimbach, former deputy commander of *Sonderkommando 10a*, remembered twenty years after the events, the announcements

²⁸³ *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, no. 16 (14 August 1942), BARch, R 58/698, p. 144. Announcement addressed to the Jewish population (2 August 1942), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 19, list 1. Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 562; Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 288; Kruglov, 'O nekotorykh spornikh momentov', pp. 46-7; Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 141; Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, p. 277; Voytenko, *Kholokost na yuge Rossii*, p. 103.

²⁸⁴ *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, no. 16, p. 144. See also: Y. Arad, S. Krakowski and S. Spector, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports: Selections from the Dispatches of the Nazi Death Squads' Campaign Against the Jews in Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union July 1941-January 1943* (New York, 1989), p. 358.

²⁸⁵ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 2.

²⁸⁶ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 2ob.

²⁸⁷ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 2ob. See also: Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 288.

²⁸⁸ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list. 5.

were intended to insure an uninterrupted deportation and killing.²⁸⁹ Heimbach's statement was reassured by Nikolai Vinokurov, a Russian collaborator who was interrogated in Krasnodar in 1964 by the Chief Inquisitor of the State Security Committee to the Soviet Council of Ministers of the Rostov and Krasnodar *oblasts*. The questioning was conducted due to a request from the Central Office in Ludwigsburg one year after the second Krasnodar trial against nine collaborators had come to an end. Vinokurov testified that arrangements for the liquidation of the Jews were made straight after the arrival of the *Sonderkommando* members in Rostov. The announcements to the Jewish population were published for the purpose of collecting people under false pretences, he notes:

These announcements explained that all people of Jewish ethnicity from Rostov would be relocated to other populated villages where they would be guaranteed work and a steady life.²⁹⁰

Daria Enkova lived on the second floor of Engelsstreet No. 60, one of the six spots where the announced registration procedure took place. Enkova, who testified as a witness at the Krasnodar trial of 1963,²⁹¹ remembered how the registration was conducted by a German and a local translator in room No. 10 on the first floor of her house: She had asked a man who was waiting to be registered why Jews in particular had to follow this procedure and the man had said he heard they would be resettled someplace else where they could work and live.²⁹² After the Krasnodar trial Enkova also testified for investigations conducted by the Central Office of the Judicial Authorities for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in 1964. She provided important information because she was one of the few witnesses who not only witnessed the registration procedure but also the use of gas vans in Rostov and could confirm that Soviet prisoners of war were forced to aid in preparing the crime.²⁹³ In the first days of August Soviet prisoners of war had been taken from a POW-camp to the

²⁸⁹ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 563. For Heimbach's full statement see: Testimony of Lothar Heimbach (9 May 1962), Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M, B 162/1219, pp. 1323-1354.

²⁹⁰ Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurow] (17 October 1964), *Ermittlungsakten* Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BArch, B 162/1262, p. 15.

²⁹¹ M. Andriasov, 'Palachi derzhat otvet', *Molot* No. 251 (24 October 1963). See also: L. Ginzburg, *Bezдна: Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 206-7.

²⁹² Testimony of Daria Enkova [Enjkowa] (3 October 1964), *Ermittlungsakten* Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BArch, B 162/1262, p. 55.

²⁹³ For Enkova's full statement see: BArch, B 162/1262, pp. 54-7. The killing of Soviet prisoners of war who had to prepare the execution is mentioned in several eyewitness accounts: 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 4. See also testimony of Mariya Trufanova (24 November 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 17. See also testimony of Anna Danilchenko (25 November 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 19.

area that had been chosen for the mass killing.²⁹⁴ The camp which has so far not been described in the relevant literature on occupied Rostov had been organised near Tonel'naya street in Rostov a few kilometres outside the city centre.²⁹⁵ The soldiers had to dig 13 ditches by the size of 3m x 5m x 7m and did not return to the camp, they were shot once the task was completed.²⁹⁶

The gathering of the Jewish population in the city centre on 11 August is documented in accounts from civilian observers and collaborators that deliver very important information first of all on the victims, who represented all age groups, children, men and women. But the testimonies also give us an insight into these peoples' behaviour and emotional state. Apart from the victims, the accounts deliver information on the perpetrators and their local collaborators who worked for the occupants during the mass executions. What do the documents provide in detail? Numerous standardized reports of local commissions exist that are based on eyewitness accounts by people who stated that their neighbours followed the order to appear at the collecting points, documents which read as follows:

During Rostov-on-Don's occupation by the Germans, Boris Sergeevich Tsipelman who lived on Semashko street No. 63 appeared as ordered by the German command and was shot which is confirmed by eyewitness accounts.²⁹⁷

Often, the reports themselves don't mention the ethnicity of those who went missing while some clearly speak of Jews who were taken away, as in the case of Grigoriy Topitser who was reported missing by eyewitnesses: 'Jew Grigoriy Topitser, 75 years, was taken by order of the German command.'²⁹⁸ Interestingly, we find two versions of this report labeled Akt Nr. 1156: Both documents refer to Topitser, and yet only one

²⁹⁴ Testimony of Varvara I. Filenko (25 November 1943), GARO fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 13; 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 7ob.

²⁹⁵ 'Akt no. 1231', list 7, 8. The abovementioned, strictly confidential memo from 21 February 1944 mentions a concentration camp in the Voenved-district. See: 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 2ob. It is likely, that the two records refer to the same POW-camp as Tonel'naya street was situated close to the Voenved-district. The mortality rate in the camp was high: According to record no. 1707 from 1 December 1943, behind the camp were 50 m long, 3 m broad and 3 m deep ditches dug by the weakest or injured camp inmates who the Germans considered to be unfit for further work. Those who did not survive the harsh conditions were shot on the spot. The record speaks of at least 1435 prisoners of war who died in the camp on Tunnelstreet. The total number of inmates held in the camp is unknown. TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 22, list 78. See also 'Sbornik materialov i dokumentov', GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 17a, list 11-27.

²⁹⁶ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 6.

²⁹⁷ 'Akt no. 1140', Selected Records of the Extraordinary State Commission, Fond 7021-40 Russia, Rostovskaya (Rostov) oblast, USHMM, RG-22.002M, Reel 10, delo 778, p. 39.

²⁹⁸ 'Akt no. 1156', Selected Records of the Extraordinary State Commission, USHMM, RG-22.002M, Reel 10, delo 778, p. 56.

mentions his Jewish ethnicity whereas the other contains the standardized version also used in the report on Tsipelman.²⁹⁹ The majority of the reports are likewise standardized, in some cases, depending on the district ChGK that produced them we find typed forms filled in with the names and addresses of the missing person. Yet other local office reports read less pre-drafted: 'A Jewish family from Pushkinskaya street 166 perished. ... All members followed the order.'³⁰⁰ 'Being Jewish, citizen Lipkovich Abramova ... and her son Lipovich Iosifov appeared at the collection points as ordered and did not return. They were all shot.'³⁰¹

What the documents clearly demonstrate is that the Jews - and invariably Jews were ordered for collection and relocation - did not disappear unnoticed by their fellow citizens but in a surprisingly open way. Not only neighbours witnessed what happened but many inhabitants who lived near the collecting points that were situated in residential areas. These observers were so close to the events that they could not only watch a general scene but were sometimes part of it. Like the aforementioned Daria Enkova who recalls how the Jews were transported off from her house a few days after the registration: 'No resident of our house was allowed to leave the house towards Engels Street and only Jews were admitted to the concentration points.'³⁰² Enkova watched from inside her house how a young Jewish woman was separated from her baby son. The child was thrown into a black vehicle, one of the gas wagons used for the mass execution in Rostov, whereas the mother was forced to board a green vehicle.³⁰³ 'Two to three days after the deportation of the Jews'³⁰⁴, Enkova spoke to a Soviet prisoner of war and learned that the Jews had not been relocated but murdered. The man had been forced to aid the German perpetrators in the mass murder and told her about the use of gas vans, how children had been thrown into the ravine alive and adults were shot in front of him.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ 'Akt no. 1156', Selected Records of the Extraordinary State Commission, USHMM, RG-22.002M, Reel 10, delo 778, p. 55.

³⁰⁰ 'Akt no. 1289', Selected Records of the Extraordinary State Commission, USHMM, RG-22.002M, Reel 10, delo 778, p. 54.

³⁰¹ 'Akt no. 1821', Selected Records of the Extraordinary State Commission, USHMM, RG-22.002M, Reel 10, delo 778, p. 95.

³⁰² Testimony of Daria Enkova [Enjkowa] (3 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, pp. 54, 55.

³⁰³ Testimony of Daria Enkova [Enjkowa] (3 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 56.

³⁰⁴ Testimony of Daria Enkova [Enjkowa] (3 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 57.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

Olga Golova who stood near one of the concentration points and whose testimony was included in the aforementioned classified report saw Jews hand in their belongings and heard what victims and members of the *vspomogatelnaya politsiya* were saying, local collaborators who formed the auxiliary police that is generally referred to as *politsay*. Some of the latter were former Soviet prisoners of war who were put on trial twenty years later and sentenced to death.³⁰⁶ The conversations Golova overheard indicate that the victims were highly alarmed and had a sense that they would not only be relocated:

There were elderly, young people, children and adolescents, all in all about 1500 people were gathering. ... The people were worried, you could hear outcries everywhere: "Are they going to kill us" - "Where are they taking us?" etc..³⁰⁷

It is likely that some victims might have remembered the anti-Semitic terror during the first occupation nine months before when about one thousand Jews were murdered, as Al'tman notes.³⁰⁸ According to the eyewitness Klavdiya Tolstikova who was on Pushkin street 137/139 when the Jews were concentrated there, members of the *politsay* spoke to the worried people and told them not to be scared: 'Russian traitors in German uniforms walked up and down between the assembled Jews and calmed them down. Nobody is going to harm you, they're not going to shoot you.'³⁰⁹ Tolstikova heard how the *politsay* referred to the nearby city of Taganrog where according to eyewitness accounts up to 8,000 Jews had been murdered in October of 1941 following the same procedure.³¹⁰ The collaborators appeased people by telling them the Jews of Taganrog had also been resettled.³¹¹ On 11 August 1942, witness Lina Pravdneva stood nearby school No. 42 on Sotsialisticheskaya Street which was also one of the collection points and later reported very detailed how she saw the Jews arrive at the collection points where Germans took their belongings. She recalled how the people were transported off on lorries towards the Rabochiy Gorod district:

³⁰⁶ 'Akt no. 1231', list 8, 10. See also: Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurow] (17 October 1964), BARCh, B 162/1262, p. 17. See also: Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 288. See also: L. Ginzburg, *Bezдна Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 64-69. See also: Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 145. See also: Voytenko, *Kholokost na yuge Rossii*, p. 108.

³⁰⁷ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 3 ob..

³⁰⁸ Al'tman, *Opfer des Hasses*, p. 333.

³⁰⁹ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 3 ob..

³¹⁰ Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR (2011)*, p. 962.

³¹¹ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 3 ob..

On the appointed date, the Jewish population gathered at the collection point on Socialisticheskaya street and Gazetnyi per./ with personal belongings and keys to their flats. The Germans took the luggage and the keys off the arriving Jews and put them on a pile whereas the Jews were chased off into the opposite corner of the courtyard. After a while German vehicles drove up towards the school onto which the Germans started to board the Jews. Loaded with the Jewish population, the vehicles were sent towards the *Rabochiy Gorod* district by the Germans.³¹²

Other observers later testified that they witnessed physical abuse by the Germans for example when people could not get onto the lorries quick enough.³¹³ What all accounts have in common is that the witnesses describe how people were taken away on large vehicles. Like, for instance, Olga Kotnarovskaya, who was looking for her father at the police headquarters on Krasnoarmeyskaya street when she accidentally witnessed how men and women were loaded on trucks. She knew that the Germans were particularly looking for Jewish Rostovians and had seen the respective public announcements. While she was standing in front of the police station, she identified her former colleague Aleksandr Rubinstein among them, who shouted ‘goodbye’ to a woman from one of the vehicles. In her testimony Kotnarovskaya also describes meeting a Jewish acquaintance of hers named Raya a few days prior to watching this scene who had told her that she and her little son would obey the order to appear at one of the collection points which was also on Krasnoarmeyskaya street.³¹⁴ Not all Jews were driven away to the execution site which may have had logistical reasons as the number of vehicle may have been limited, this remains speculation however and cannot be deduced from the sources. The aforementioned witnesses Tolstikova and Golova describe in their testimonies how about 200 people were chased towards the *Rabochiy Gorod* district on foot.³¹⁵

Among the files from the BArch and the USHMM are also few accounts from those people who collaborated with the occupiers thanks to which we get an insight into their perspective of the events. In his testimony, Vinokurov describes the scope of his functions during the transportation of the Jews as taking the moribund to the killing site, a task he and other *politsay* members fulfilled all day.³¹⁶ The role of locals who worked for *Sonderkommando* 10a and thus assisted in the mass atrocities is highly ambivalent

³¹² ‘Dokladnaya zapiska’, list 3.

³¹³ ‘Dokladnaya zapiska’, list 3, 3 ob.

³¹⁴ Testimony of Olga Kotnarovskaya [Kotnarovskaja] (5 October 1964), Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BARch, B162/1262, p. 64.

³¹⁵ ‘Dokladnaya zapiska’, list 3, 4.

³¹⁶ Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurov] (17 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 16.

as are their motives. Tanja Penter's conclusions may have also applied to collaborators of *Sonderkommando* 10a.³¹⁷ Often, these men were or felt forced to collaborate as various accounts from the Krasnodar trial of 1943 show.³¹⁸ Many defendants testify that they were afraid they would be killed should they not cooperate. Another reason was the precarious food situation the local population was confronted with. Some collaborators joined *Sonderkommando* 10a to avoid deportation because they feared for their families. Others had just lost faith in the Red Army and tried to secure their own well being by assisting those newly in power. Anti-Jewish attitudes might also have played a role although none of the testimonies consulted for this study contain anti-Semitic indications. Whatever their reasons may have been, those who were later charged for assisting in the killing either faced long prison sentences or death, not to mention long-term social proscription. Klavdiya Tolstikova's testimony reflects not only her own, but the emotions of a broad public as she calls them 'traitors'.³¹⁹

Those Jews who did not report on the designated day were chased by the SS, sometimes for months, and murdered once they were caught. Movshovich speaks of three to four thousand Jews who were thus killed, often after they had been betrayed to the enemy by their former neighbours.³²⁰ The majority of the victims were however transported on trucks from the concentration points in the city centre outside the city to the execution site Zmievkenskaya Balka - Snake gulch. Within the gulch was an abandoned sandpit. 15,000 men, women and children were killed there by members of *Sonderkommando* 10a and the *politsay*.³²¹ Captured Red Army soldiers had to throw the bodies of some hundred people who were killed in gas vans into the three mass graves in the gulch and had to cover the corpses.³²² Children were poisoned with a yellow substance that was applied to their lips and they were thrown into the pit alive.³²³ This so far unknown killing method was later described by Jewish survivor Mikhail

³¹⁷ T. Penter, 'Collaboration on Trial: New Source Material on Soviet Postwar Trials against Collaborators', *Slavic Review*, 64, no. 4 (2005), pp. 782-90.

³¹⁸ Relevant testimonies can be found in documents by the Central Archives of the Federal Security Services (FSB, former KGB) of the Russian Federation (records relating to war crime trials in the Soviet Union, 1939-1992), USHMM, RG 06.025, reel 15-17, Krasnodar trial (H-16708).

³¹⁹ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 3 ob..

³²⁰ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 146.

³²¹ 'Akt no. 1231', list 10.

³²² Testimony of Daria Enkova [Enjkowa] (3 October 1964), BARch, B 162/1262, p. 57. See also: Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 565.

³²³ 'Akt no 1' (17 February 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 1. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 145. See also: Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR (2011)*, p. 868. Shtab severo-kavkazskogo voennogo okruga, *informatsionnyy sbornik*, p. 63. Voytenko, *Kholokost na yuge Rossii*, p. 109.

Konstantinovich Sharenskiy who managed to hide behind bushes and watch the mass killing.³²⁴ The former quarry was not the only killing site - according to record no. 1231 from 23 November 1943, on 11 August 'a mass execution of the local population, partly Jews, [was conducted] but the Jews were shot at a different place on the edge of the lawn in the ravine.'³²⁵ In this second mass grave 500 metres northeast of the Zmievka colony on the outskirts of the botanical garden about 10,000 corpses were counted in 13 ditches after Rostov's liberation.³²⁶ A third mass grave with about 2,000 bodies was found south of the village at the western border of the botanical garden.³²⁷ A few days after the massacre, *Golos Rostova* published a triple-spaced article informing its readers that all Jews who had previously worked in pharmacies and medical institutions would be replaced by Russians with immediate effect.³²⁸ This was the only allusion to the fate of the Jewish population.³²⁹

The testimonies referring to the Zmievskaya Balka mass atrocity are mainly from local inhabitants of the Zmievka settlement. On 10 August the residents of the Zmievka colony 300 m next to the former sandpit had been ordered to leave their houses during that time but not all of them complied with the order.³³⁰ They were later questioned by members of the Extraordinary State Commission and their accounts were used for reports. The executions were witnessed by up to 50 people, as a secret police lieutenant informs his superior in a report from 14 October 1943.³³¹ None of the eyewitnesses had obeyed the order of the occupiers to leave their houses during the time of the executions and their accounts are important for a number of reasons. They first of all deliver information on the victims' ethnicity and presumably how many people were killed, but they also tell us where and how these people were murdered and by whom. In detail, the witnesses name the Zmievka ravine and botanical garden and specifically refer to the

³²⁴ V. Podorozhnova, *Massovoy rasstrel evreev v Rostove*, *Rostov ofitsial'nyy* (14 August 2002), p. 2. It is unclear what the yellow substance that is mentioned in the eyewitness accounts was composed of. Movshovich argues that it was a poison invented by Heinrich Görz, a medical doctor and member of *Sonderkommando 10a*. The post-war interrogation of Heinrich Görz and other former Sk-members in the Ludwigsburg files do not deliver any evidence, so it remains speculation whether Görz invented the poison and what exactly it was composed of. Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 145-6.

³²⁵ 'Akt no. 1231', list 8.

³²⁶ 'Akt no. 1231', list 10.

³²⁷ 'Akt no. 1231', list 10. See also: Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 146.

³²⁸ 'Zamena zhidov russkimi v lechebnykh uchrezhdeniya', *Golos Rostova* no. 5, TsDNIRO, fond 3, opis' 2, list 3.

³²⁹ In the Black Book Ehrenburg states that the Nazis publicly announced that Rostov was *judenfrei* in *Golos Rostova's* first issue, which appeared before the actual mass killing. This information could not be verified, however. The respective sentence or announcement could not be retrieved in the newspaper's editions from August and September 1942. See Grossman, Ehrenburg, *Das Schwarzbuch*, p. 414.

³³⁰ 'Akt no. 1231', list 7, 8.

³³¹ 'Raport' (14 October 1943), GARO Fond 3163, opis' 1, delo 6, list 1.

killing of 15.000-18.000 Jewish victims.³³² In his report which is based on a conversation with Anna Tolstykh, one of the inhabitants of Zmievka, the secret police lieutenant mentions three shooting sites he inspected and estimates that these were filled with more than ten thousand bodies. According to his report, Tolstykh witnessed the shooting of the Jews of Rostov which began at 7 o'clock in the morning and continued until 11 o'clock at night.³³³ Together with other inhabitants she later testified about the events:

From early morning until late in the evening of 11 August, a mass execution of the Jewish population took place in the nursery of the Botanical garden. ... I saw how the Germans undressed men, women and children until they were nearly naked and how they pulled them almost like idiots to the pit.³³⁴

The perpetrators were accommodated in a building near the crime scene that belonged to a lard factory and witness Marfa Derganova later reported that local inhabitants were not allowed near the ravine.³³⁵ Her house was close to the shooting site and she remembers tragic scenes she could watch from her garden. Thanks to Derganova's testimony we may assume that the victims were aware of the anti-Jewish nature of the crime. Derganova describes how a girl saw her in her garden and called upon her to save her:

When I went to the vegetable garden and onto the stand on the day of that horrible fascist execution, a girl near the pit where the German murderers were shooting cried: "Oh auntie, oh dear uncle, rescue me, my mum is Russian and my father is Jewish, rescue me." That cry had such an effect on me that I fainted.³³⁶

The accounts furthermore inform about the treatment of small children and infants. Zinaida Saprykina testifies that she could hear children cry from where she was standing.³³⁷ While Anna Tolstykh recalls that the victims were undressed, other observers don't particularly mention this specific fact. As other mass atrocities of the *Einsatzgruppen* show, it is however likely, that the victims had to undress before being taken to the actual shooting site. Several testimonies from people who were very close

³³² 'Akt no. 1' (17 February 1943), GARO Fond 3163, opis' 1, delo 30, list 1 ob..

³³³ Testimony of Marfa Derganova (24 November 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 15.

³³⁴ Testimony of Anna I. Tolstykh (25 November 1943), GARO Fond 3163, opis' 1, delo 30, list 22.

³³⁵ 'Akt no. 1231', list 8.

³³⁶ Testimony of Marfa I. Derganova (24 November 1943), GARO Fond 3163, opis' 1, delo 30, list 16. See also Y. Arad, *Unichtozhenie evreev SSSR v gody nemetskoj okkupatsii* (1941-1944) (Ierusalim, 1992), p. 219.

³³⁷ Testimony of Zinaida D. Saprykina (25 November 1943), GARO fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 11.

to the crime scene suggest that this was also the case in Rostov: Leo Maar, a *Volksdeutscher*, who was questioned by Bavarian authorities four times between 1965 and 1969 worked as an interpreter near the place of the mass execution. While at first neglecting any participation, he later testified in detail that the victims were brought to a transit house near the killing site where he awaited them before they were taken to the shooting site. Nikolai Vinokurov, who escorted the victims, also mentions this house in his testimony.³³⁸ According to Maar, the Jews had to first hand in their valuables and then undress before leaving the house and being driven to the execution site. Unlike in his first statement from 1965 when he claimed to have stayed in the staff accommodation during the executions,³³⁹ in his testimony from 1966 Maar admits being involved in the robbery and preparation of the shootings. He describes what happened inside the building: In a first step, men women and children were separated before entering the room where the interpreter awaited them joined by an SS man. It was always groups of eight to ten women and children who were led into the room at once and Maar's task was to translate to the victims to undress after they had handed in their valuables. The women and children then left the room and the next group was brought in.³⁴⁰ His statement at least partly explains how it was technically possible to conduct a crime of this scale. According to Maar, the procedure took several hours from early morning until the afternoon and several hundred Jews passed through it that day. He assumes that the victims were finally loaded on trucks behind the building once they had left it and taken to the shooting site.³⁴¹ It is likely that this was indeed the case, as the inhabitants of Zmievka who witnessed the shooting, gassing and poisoning of the victims, mention trucks on which the people were driven to the crime scene.³⁴² Various

³³⁸ Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurov] (17 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 16. Valeriy Suchov, one of the defendants of the Krasnodar trial of 1963, also mentions the house in his testimony and confirms Vinokurov's testimony regarding the procedure of the crime. Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1257, pp. 4/52-53.

³³⁹ Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1229, p. 3491.

³⁴⁰ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 564. For Maar's full statement see: Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1229, pp. 3484-3498; USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1230, pp. 3796-3863; USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1230, pp. 3857-3863 and USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1232, pp. 4275-4280.

³⁴¹ Ibid. Unlike Maar, Vinokurov, who also mentions the building Maar refers to, testified that the victims were undressed by him and other members of the *politsay* outside the building before they were taken to the shooting site on lorries. Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurov] (17 October 1964), BARch, B 162/1262, p. 16.

³⁴² Testimony of Mariya Trufanova [Trufanowa] (8 October 1964), Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BARch, B162/1262, p. 70-71, testimony of Ulyana [Ul'jana] Kireewa (6 October 1964), Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BARch, B162/1262, p. 80, testimony of Marfa Derganova

accounts also mention dark lorries that carried the bodies of those who were gassed which were disposed of into the ravine.³⁴³ A report based on the accounts of the witnesses Tolstykh, Saprykina, Trufanova and Danil'chenko describes that in some cases on the way to the shooting site the victims were loaded from an open truck to closed black vehicles, the gas vans. Upon arrival at the Zmievka ravine, these vehicles were opened.³⁴⁴ Vinokurov's account shows that he as well as other *politsay* members had to both prepare and assist or participate in the executions. He testifies that the majority of people was shot rather than gassed and admits that he was among the perpetrators: 'The shootings were mainly conducted by the Germans but sometimes, by command of the German soldiers, we had to do it.'³⁴⁵ Vinokurov also names one of the main perpetrators, Heinrich Görz, who was never brought to justice for the crimes he committed in Rostov.³⁴⁶

In the aftermath of the crime, aforementioned *Sonderkommando* 10a-member Werner Spiegelberg took care of the personal belongings of the victims by opening and sorting their luggage for further use.³⁴⁷ Their property, houses or flats and furniture, was scattered by the Gestapo among *politsay* members or 'taken away by Germans', as we can draw from documents produced by the ChGK that are based on statements of the victims' neighbours as well as building managers.³⁴⁸ After Rostov's liberation on 14 February 1943, the inhabitants of the Zmievka colony described what they had witnessed when being questioned by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission. Some reported that the victims' bodies 'were not covered with earth, the corpses decayed and delivered an unbearable stench, hereby making it impossible for the inhabitants to

[Derganowa] (6 October 1964), Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BARch, B162/1262, p. 85.

³⁴³ Testimony of Mariya Trufanova [Trufanova] (8 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 74, testimony of Ulyana [Ul'jana] Kireeva (6 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 80, testimony of Zinaida D. Saprykina (25 November 1943), GARO fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 11, testimony of Varvara I. Filenko (25 November 1943), GARO fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 13.

³⁴⁴ 'Akt no. 1231', list 9.

³⁴⁵ Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurow] (17 October 1964), BARch, B162/1262, p. 17.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.230, pp. 3843-3844. See also Werner Spiegelberg's earlier testimony from 4 November 1964: Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.224, p. 2300.

³⁴⁸ 'Akt no. 1323', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 11, korobka 3, list 6. See also 'Akt no. 1235', 'Akt no. 1236', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 11, korobka 3, list 35, 'Akt no. 1299', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 11, korobka 3, list 45, 'Akt no. 1321', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 11, korobka 3, list 46. See also J. Jones, 'Every Family Has Its Freak': Perceptions of Collaboration in Soviet Russia 1943-1948, *Slavic Review*, 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005), p. 753.

remain in the 2. village of Zmievka.³⁴⁹ Anna Tolstykh remembers in her testimony that when they approached the mayor's office to ask whether they could bury the dead, the reaction was unequivocal: 'Whoever buries the dead will stay there and not return home.'³⁵⁰ As we know from the Black Book, inhabitants of the Zmievka colony also reported seeing how a female survivor stepped out of the shooting site at night but then dropped dead.³⁵¹ In other cases, citizens of the village mention still hearing sounds of the wounded days after the execution.³⁵² According to many inhabitants of Zmievka, further executions were conducted at the gulch until December 1942, and particularly in the first days of October. Anna Danil'chenko who had also witnessed the very first executions of prisoners of war at the ravine on 4 August, later reported how the executions intensified at 7 and 8 October: 'And these mass executions continued until December 1942, during the day lorry after lorry brought captured Soviet soldiers and Soviet citizens from the city to and they were shot at the slope of the quarry.'³⁵³

Some historians argue that responsibility for the mass atrocity of August 1942 cannot be ascribed solely to *Sonderkommando* 10a, however *Sonderkommando* 4b which is mentioned by Angrick and Kruglov, did not reach the city until autumn 1942 according to Wilhelm and Krausnick.³⁵⁴ In addition, none of the Soviet files mention *Sonderkommando* 4b in connection with the Zmievskaya Balka execution and neither can we find evidence in the testimonies of the former *Sonderkommando* 10a-members. The latter to the contrary confirm that the *Sonderkommando* was stationed in Rostov until after the massacre.

³⁴⁹ 'Akt no. 1231', list 9.

³⁵⁰ Testimony of Anna I. Tolstykh (25 November), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 22.

³⁵¹ Grossman and Ehrenburg, *Das Schwarzbuch*, p. 414.

³⁵² Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 146. See also: Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 868.

³⁵³ Testimony of Anna S. Danil'chenko (25 November), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 20.

³⁵⁴ H. Krausnick and H.-H. Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938-1942* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 191.

Further victim groups

Alongside the annihilation of the city's Jewish population as well as the killing of hundreds of Soviet prisoners of war in the Zmievskaia Balka, the Germans also implemented the Euthanasia programme in Rostov. As we know from testimonies of the clinic staff of the city's psychiatric hospital on Pushkin street 196, 72 patients were murdered in gas vans during the first weeks under German occupation.³⁵⁵ When the Red Army liberated Rostov, they found 3400 injured Soviet soldiers in critical condition from several POW-camps in the area in a military hospital that was used together with the aforementioned camp on Tonel'naya street as a camp for Soviet prisoners of war. Local commission report no. 1706 from 27 October 1943 notes that bodies of another 3,700 former Soviet soldiers were found on the territory of the hospital.³⁵⁶

Martin Holler's study on the annihilation of the Roma in the occupied territories of the USSR illustrates that Rostov *oblast*, an area with a high amount of Roma, also witnessed the extermination of this specific victim group. Holler and Angrick name two examples of massacres against Roma which followed a pattern that was similar to the mass atrocity in Rostov. The Roma of the Ordzhonikidze kolkhoz near Vesselovsk in Rostov *oblast* had been informed by the village headman that they would be relocated and should appear at the administrative building when three trucks picked them up and drove them to a nearby forest. There the men, women and children were shot by members of *Teilkommando Trimborn*, which belonged to *Sonderkommando* 10a.³⁵⁷ On 3 January 1943 38 Roma of the kolkhoz Pobeda sotsializma were murdered, again men, women and children.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ Testimony of Praskov'ya A. Voloshchenko (6 February 1944), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 1, list 7-8, 9-10. See also testimony of Anna I. Evstaf'eva (undated), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 1, list 13-16, testimony of Antonina S. Solodovnikova (7 February 1944), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 1, list 24-5, report of the senior physician Manukyan (4 February 1944), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 1, list 28-30, 'Dokladnaya zapiska glavnogo vracha Rostovskoj Psikhiatricheskoi Bol'nicy Manukyan' (25 August 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 1, list 33-5. See also: 'Sbornik materialov i dokumentov', GARO, fond 3613, opis 1, delo 17a, list 49-65.

³⁵⁶ 'Akt no. 1706', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis 1, delo 22, list 73-5. See also 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 8ob- 9ob.

³⁵⁷ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 518. M. Holler, *Der Nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Roma in der Besetzten Sowjetunion (1941-1944)* (Heidelberg, 2009), pp. 101-2.

³⁵⁸ Holler, *Der Nationalsozialistische Völkermord*, p. 102.

The scale of the crime

As was outlined before, it proves to be very difficult to determine the number of Jewish victims of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity. From the author's point of view, this can mainly be explained by the deviating numbers we find in the Extraordinary Commission's and the perpetrators' documents. While the latter do not provide us with any victim numbers, the figures stated in the Soviet Extraordinary Commission's reports range from 10,000³⁵⁹ to 13,000³⁶⁰, 15,000-18,000³⁶¹, and 27,000³⁶². While the first two refer explicitly to Jewish victims, the last two speak of 'people' or 'civilians', the common Soviet paraphrase used to disguise the victims' ethnicity. Movshovich argues that depending on when the reports were compiled, the victim number is smaller or larger, thus reflecting the Soviet approach of falsifying the death toll.³⁶³ Indeed, the report that speaks of 15,000-18,000 Jewish victims was compiled immediately after the city's liberation in February 1943. Akt no. 1231, to the contrary, from 23 November 1943 mentions 10,000 Jewish victims.

A statement as to the exact scale of the crime is thus hardly possible unless the final registration lists were found. No. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* speaks of a *Judenrat* which had been established on 1 August 1942, and of about 2000 Jews who had complied with the registration order when the report was written. It is however unclear when exactly the original report of *Sonderkommando 10a* or one of its subunits, upon which no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* is based, was compiled. These initial reports passed several stages and respective editing before they were sent to Berlin. Generally speaking, the

³⁵⁹ 'Raport' (14 October 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 6, list 1. 'Akt no. 1231', list 10. In the trial against collaborators of *Sonderkommando 10a* Es'kov, Psarev, Skripkin, Veikh et. al. conducted in Krasnodar in 1963 the number of victims of the mass execution named by the court was 10,000. M. Andriasov, 'Palachi derzhat otvet', *Molot* (24 October 1963).

³⁶⁰ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 4ob.

³⁶¹ 'Akt no. 1' (17 February 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 1ob., 2.

³⁶² 'Akt no. 1231', list 10.

³⁶³ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 147.

Sonderkommandos and *Einsatzkommandos* reported on their extermination activities to their respective *Einsatzgruppe* headquarters which sent the information to Berlin. There the RSHA compiled concise reports in the name of the Chief of Sipo and the SD.³⁶⁴

In detail, the initial reports that were prepared once a task was completed were first edited by the *Sonderkommando* leaders who drafted more extensive reports based on the various incoming initial reports. These more substantial documents were then sent to the *Einsatzgruppen* headquarter and edited once more by the chiefs of the *Einsatzgruppen* before being sent to the RSHA. There, they were eventually used for final reports that documented the operations of all four *Einsatzgruppen*.³⁶⁵ In other words,

the reports to this point were the result of several steps in a series in which a number of people - the men carrying out the operations, their leaders, various officials in the Kommandos, and those on the staff of the *Einsatzgruppen* headquarters - all came to bear on the content of the reports.³⁶⁶

The *Einsatzgruppen* reports were marked *Geheime Reichssache* and were therefore subject to the highest security level.³⁶⁷ No. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* is a clipped RSHA report compiled in Berlin and dated 14 August, two days after the mass killings in Rostov had ended. Two aspects seem problematic when trying to determine whether the document could be interpreted as a reliable source regarding the victim numbers as done by Kruglov, Angrick and Pohl: First of all, no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* indicates that the registration process had not yet been finalised when the initial report was compiled. The relevant passage in the document reads as follows: 'On 1 August 1942 a Jewish *Ältestenrat* was constituted by the *Sonderkommando* which is deployed in Rostov and 2000 Jews have been determined until now. Further necessary measures have been taken.'³⁶⁸ This could not have been stated on 14 August 1942. We must therefore assume that the writer of the initial report that was used as a source for report no. 16 described activities that took place before the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish population and that a concluding document from *Sonderkommando* 10a about its extermination activities in Rostov was either never compiled, went missing or was destroyed. Headland points out that '[t]here

³⁶⁴ Arad, Krakowski, Spector, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, p. xiii. See also R. Hilberg, *Die Quellen des Holocaust Entschlüsseln und Interpretieren* (Frankfurt/Main, 2002), p. 66.

³⁶⁵ R. Headland, *Messages of Murder: A study of the Reports of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943* (1992), p. 39.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ R. Hilberg, *Die Quellen des Holocaust*, p. 71.

³⁶⁸ *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, no. 16, p. 144.

was a time lapse between the events and their appearance in the reports'.³⁶⁹ These lapses were small in the first reports, yet 'greater distances, plus the ever-increasing amount of information sent to Berlin made even greater the time lapse between the events and the final reports.' Two or more weeks could have passed between an event and its reference in a report, yet this coherence is not characterised by uniformity, Headland concludes.³⁷⁰

The *Einsatzgruppen* were instructed by *Reichsführer SS* Heydrich to give continuous, detailed reports about their operations. This usually included exact information on executions and the number of people killed. The reports were at first cabled to Berlin, from late summer of 1941 however, the documents were sent to the *zentrale Nachrichtenübermittlungsstelle* situated at the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* by courier, therefore the two options, loss or destruction, are possible.³⁷¹ Angrick argues that the loss of documents marked *Geheime Reichssache* is 'immense'.³⁷² Another possibility however, is that an initial report by *Sonderkommando* 10a that included information about the mass execution was never compiled, - and could consequently not be part of no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* - as suggested by Robel.³⁷³ In this context Headland points to the discrepancy in the representation of the four *Einsatzgruppen* in the Operational Situation reports that is particularly staggering for *Einsatzgruppe* D which received the least representation, according to his findings.³⁷⁴ This might be explained by the fact that the 'Kommandos often filed separate reports directly to the RSHA, and these reports appeared frequently on their own, independently of other reports from their *Einsatzgruppe*'.³⁷⁵ Unfortunately, so far a relevant report which refers to the mass atrocity in Rostov could nevertheless not be traced. Yet another aspect might be very important also in terms of the informative value of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* no. 16: As to the methods of reporting, on the Kommando level *Einsatzgruppe* D produced less informative reports compared to the other *Einsatzgruppen*. Especially information on the killing activities were often imprecise regarding the dates of shootings. And, more importantly, in terms

³⁶⁹ Headland, *Messages of Murder*, p. 55.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ B. Hoppe, H. Glass, *Die Verfolgung*, pp. 89, 146. See also: Headland, *Messages of Murder*, p. 40.

³⁷² A. Angrick et. al. (eds), *Deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in der UdSSR 1941-1945, Dokumente der Einsatzgruppen in der Sowjetunion* (Darmstadt, 2013), p. 18.

³⁷³ Robel, 'Sowjetunion', p. 548.

³⁷⁴ Headland, *Messages of Murder*, pp. 94-5.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

of the victim numbers, Headland states that ‘relatively little can be learned about numbers for individual Kommandos of this Einsatzgruppe.’³⁷⁶

Secondly, the *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* that replaced the *Ereignismeldungen UdSSR* from 01 May 1942, were compiled on a weekly basis, unlike the preceding *Ereignismeldungen UdSSR* that appeared almost day-to-day.³⁷⁷ According to Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, they were more general, and hardly delivered details about the annihilation of the Jews.³⁷⁸ Wilhelm adds that reports from the *Einsatzgruppen* would not reach the *zentrale Nachrichtenübermittlungsstelle* on a daily basis, as with the military intelligence corps, but within days. Furthermore, the radio stations that finally cabled the reports to Berlin had often first left them unhandled for a very long time.³⁷⁹ The difficult task for the editors of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* then was to put the incoming reports into chronological order, occasionally failing to do so. Given the fact that no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* from 14 August 1942 informs about the 2,000 Jews that had been determined ‘to date’, that is when the original report was compiled, Headland's suggestion probably applies that there was some lag of time between the two documents. It is likely that report no. 16 would also have mentioned a mass execution of this scale, had it already taken place.

Concluding, we can assume that no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* is not relevant when trying to determine the number of victims of the mass executions in Rostov on 11 and 12 August 1942. Even if the number is mentioned in the war crimes indictment against Trimborn et al. and the testimony of a former *Sonderkommando* 10a-member draws this connection,³⁸⁰ we cannot assume that because 2,000 Jews had so far been determined, this is also the number of people who were executed. We are therefore depending on the Soviet documents when trying to determine the number of victims. Here, however, we are confronted with yet another problem described earlier: Since the Extraordinary Commissions' relevant reports do not always contain information on the victims' Jewish ethnicity, we can only refer to documents which clearly indicate that the

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Arad, Krakowski, Spector, *The Einsatzgruppen Reports*, p. xv.

³⁷⁸ Krausnick and Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges*, p. 336.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Indictment against H. Görz, F. Severin and K. Trimborn, Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.263, p. 27. In his testimony from 20 March 1967, Werner Spiegelberg mentions having been informed about *Ereignismeldung* no. 16 from 14 August 1942, according to which about 2000 Jews had been executed in Rostov. See Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.230, p. 3843. See also Werner Spiegelberg's earlier testimony from 4 November 1964: Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.224, p. 2300.

civilians were indeed Jews. Two documents illustrate this quite well: An undated report entitled 'Record. Atrocities of the German fascist cannibals in the city of Rostov-on-Don' contains information on the collection, deportation and finally the annihilation of 15,000 - 18,000 'peaceful citizens' of Rostov. The document lists the names of some personalities who were among the victims:

According to incomplete specifications the German tormentors shot and poisoned 15 - 18 thousand people. Among those who were shot are the department head of the Soviet hospital no. 2 lecturer KIRSHMAN, internist INGAL, jurist LUTSKII, deputy director of the Voroshilov factory BUNKOV and his wife, lecturer NOVIKOV, his seventy year old mother, wife and eight year old son, medical doctor SHERSHEVSKAYA, nurse SIMONOVICH, wood turner PAVLOVSKAYA and others.³⁸¹

In the other document entitled 'Record no. 1' which was produced only three days after the city's liberation and is identical to the first regarding contents, we find the same list of names amended by the victims' age and full name but in this case the preceding passage reads as follows: 'According to preliminary specifications, the number of Jews who were shot, poisoned, tortured to death and annihilated in Rostov-on-Don between 23 July 1942 and 13 February 1943 adds up to 15 - 18 thousand people.'³⁸² Throughout this file we find the word Jew whereas the first lacks any such information.

To sum up, it is hardly possible to verify the exact number of Jews who lost their lives in the mass atrocity committed by members of *Sonderkommando* 10a. What we can however conclude, is that based on inspections of the crime scene, the estimates on the number of Jewish inhabitants, including refugees, in Rostov in July of 1942 and the eyewitness testimonies that served as the basis for ChGK-reports, at least 15,000 to 18,000 Jews were murdered. Bearing in mind that their non-Jewish spouses were killed together with them, it is likely that of the 27,000 overall victims calculated by the ChGK the majority were victims of the Holocaust. All in all the author therefore agrees with Luck's conclusion regarding the mass atrocity in Rostov: 'If, in short, eyewitnesses report a vast killing of Jews at Rostov or anywhere else in occupied Russia, then there is no objective reason for assuming that it did not occur.'³⁸³

³⁸¹ 'Akt' (undated), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 25, list 14.

³⁸² 'Akt no. 1' (17 February 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 1ob., 2.

³⁸³ D. Luck, 'Use and Abuse of Holocaust Documents', p. 106.

Summing up, the inclusion of eyewitness testimonies proved to be essential in order to write a more comprehensive history of events and get a clearer understanding of how openly the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish population was conducted, how it was perceived by the local population and how - in its properly organised manner - the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity and the organised robbery of Jewish property resembled the large scale, similarly well organised mass murder and robbery in the concentration camps. All stages of this mass atrocity have been witnessed and described by ordinary Rostovians as well as local collaborators. Their testimonies allow insights into their own and the victims' perspective at the collection points and the crime scene and illustrate that both victims and witnesses were aware of the fact that exclusively Jews were targeted - with the help of local collaborators. The fact that this information is also included in several reports of the local ChGK-branch confirms Feferman's findings regarding the occasional deviation from the rule to exclude the victims' ethnicity from the reports. Yet the description of local perpetrators' immediate involvement in the crime also confirms Dumitru's conclusion on these peoples' expectation of impunity and thereby reveals the greater picture and the nature of the Holocaust on Soviet territory. Although implemented with different means, it resembled the conveyor belt machinery of the death camps mainly because it was conducted with the help of local collaborators who spoke the victims' language and were well informed about local conditions. Dumitru refers to a case in Moldova, however her resume likewise applies to Rostov:

Because they did not expect to be punished, these perpetrators took no steps to conceal their participation in these crimes They murdered the Jews in full sight of others, both in the villages and in the surrounding fields. Many gentiles saw perpetrators forcing Jews toward the murder sites and easily recognized the victims and their would-be murderers.³⁸⁴

Apart from a few exceptions like for instance the aforementioned testimonies of Leo Maar and Nikolay Vinokurov, the post-war interrogations of former *Sonderkommando*-members and their collaborators to the contrary demonstrate that the juristic documents resulting thereof produce an unbalanced picture and need to be approached with view of their underlying motives. Bearing in mind that the interrogations were conducted for the preparation of trials against former *Einsatzgruppen*-members, it is not surprising that the respondents represented their own interests and the extent of incriminatory

³⁸⁴ Dumitru, 'An Analysis of Soviet Postwar Investigation', pp. 151-2.

information is consequently small. Respectively, these documents do not deliver new insights into the question of victim numbers in Rostov or the mass killing as such. The decision by some scholars to nevertheless rely strongly on perpetrator documents and these judicial files that repeat the victim number of no. 16 of *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten* and to ignore the Soviet documents therefore has to be considered debatable. Bearing these aspects in mind, and when considering the information on evacuation and Jewish refugees in Rostov, the information we can draw from the Soviet files seem to depict a more realistic picture of the course of events than the German documents.

The Soviet eyewitness accounts furthermore deliver important information on a so far unknown killing method. The use of poison to kill children was not mentioned in those perpetrator documents or interrogation protocols of the involved *Sonderkommando*-members accessed for this study. This aspect therefore deserves closer future examination. The same applies to sources that could not be included in this study like for instance letters of a Jewish Rostovian family to relatives in other parts of Soviet Russia that are stored at Yad Vashem Archives and will be part of a future analysis by Kiril Feferman. Finally, the implications we can draw from the eyewitness testimonies are however also relevant for today's local remembrance of the Holocaust in Rostov. Persistent controversial aspects addressed in the accounts such as local collaboration or the fact that non-Jewish spouses died in the Zmievskaia Balka together with their Jewish family members still have an impact on how Rostovians remember the Holocaust in their home town or what they know about it, the oral history study of the following chapter demonstrates.

Post-war Remembrance of the Holocaust in Rostov

Even though the annihilation of the Jewish population had taken place in full view of many witnesses, the true nature of the tragic events was silenced for decades by the authorities due to the political agenda not to include Holocaust remembrance into the overall commemoration of the GPW.³⁸⁵ Immediately after the war, a monument in the form of two Red Army soldiers was raised at the Zmievskaia Balka, thus distorting the history of the site as the identity of the mainly civilian casualties was left unmentioned.³⁸⁶ During the first post-war years the living conditions in heavily destroyed Rostov were characterised by severe material hardship which contributed to an overall distraction from the past horrors of war and occupation.³⁸⁷ Often families had lost their main provider to the war and people faced dire straits. Notwithstanding this, the events at the Zmievskaia Balka did not fall into oblivion, not least because many Jews who had fled Rostov before the second capture returned to the city after liberation and were faced with the fact that the third largest Jewish community in the RSFSR had ceased to exist. The Soviet regime however did not permit public commemoration of the crime. Officially this also applied to post-war Rostov: From 1949 onwards the remaining Jews of Rostov were denied permission by the authorities to conduct commemoration ceremonies on the territory of the former killing site. Two attempts in 1953 and 1959 were not authorized.³⁸⁸ Stories of suffering occasionally nevertheless appeared in the local press as sideline information, as in an article by S. Burmenskii, a former participant in the battle of Rostov.³⁸⁹ In his memoirs, published in the local Communist party's organ *Molot* ten years after the city's liberation, the author described how he witnessed the city's recapture. Although focusing on the devastating material damage caused during the occupation, Burmenskii also depicts how citizens mourned their murdered relatives - about one thousand women, children and elderly were killed

³⁸⁵ In its aforementioned article on Rostov, party organ *Pravda* consequently used the common phrasing 'peaceful Soviet citizens' to paraphrase the word 'Jews'. Zverstva nemetsko-fashistskikh lyudoedov v Rostove-na-Donu, *Pravda*, no. 70 (13 March 1943), p. 3.

³⁸⁶ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 152. At the beginning of the 1950s two more memorials titled 'klyatva tovarischchey' (Comrades oath) were built in the area of the Zmievskaia Balka. For further information see: L. Voloshinova, 'Istoriya i sovremennost' Zmievskoj balki', *Donskoy vremennik*, god 2013-y (Rostov-na-Donu, 2012), p. 213.

³⁸⁷ For his study on everyday life and the 'reconstruction', Jones analysed files from the former party archive that reveal dramatic conditions in all spheres of daily life, particularly housing and food supply. Jones, *Everyday Life*, pp. 47f.

³⁸⁸ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 154.

³⁸⁹ S. Burmenskii, 'V pervye dni Vospominanie uchastnika boev za Rostov', *Molot* (14 February 1953), p. 2.

by the Nazis and later found in a mass grave in the local prison yard. The mass atrocity in the Zmievskaia Balka was not part of his article. Yet the killing of civilians in Rostov and the Rostov *oblast* became subject of the press coverage about trials against local Nazi collaborators in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s when a number of war crime trials against former Soviet members of *Sonderkommando* 10a were conducted in Rostov (1959), nearby Krasnodar (1963) and Stavropol (1961).³⁹⁰ Articles about traitors had appeared in *Molot* straight after liberation but focused especially on so called female collaboration.³⁹¹ The large-scale collaboration of Cossacks and other peoples of the north Caucasus was not addressed openly, though and neither were the crimes against the civilian population.³⁹² Public discussion of the topic was also short-lived, as Jeremy Jones concludes in his study on Rostov.³⁹³ In connection with the collaboration trials Rostov's local newspapers *Komsomolets*, *Molot* and *Vecherniy Rostov* reported about the defendants participation in mass atrocities against the local population of Yeisk, Rostov, Taganrog, Shakhty and Krasnodar.³⁹⁴ But more importantly, the trials and the press coverage thereof, presented a different memory discourse as the one established by the regime by occasionally also pointing at the victims' Jewish identity.³⁹⁵ The fact that the majority of reports nevertheless appeared in *Molot* displays the importance of the trials for both the regime and the population in the former occupied territories. The need for revenge on the one side was met by the need to demonstrate the regime's power. As Penter points out, 'the trials were not simply something directed and forced on the population from above but expressed an interaction between the Soviet authorities and the local communities.'³⁹⁶ The newspaper articles in Rostov's local press clearly reflect this. On 20 July 1959 *Vecherniy Rostov*

³⁹⁰ Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 753-57. Penter, 'Collaboration on Trial', p. 783.

³⁹¹ Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 759f.

³⁹² Ibid. About 28,000 Caucasians fought on the side of the Germans, among them many Cossacks who welcomed the Germans as liberators from oppression by the Soviet regime. B. Kovalev, *Kollaboratsionizm v Rossii v 1941-1945: Tipy i formy* (Velikiy Novgorod, 2009), p. 32-34.

³⁹³ Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', p. 765.

³⁹⁴ See for example: V. Nesterenko, 'Chas vozmezdiya nastal Sudebny protsess nad gruppoy materikh ubiyts', *Komsomolets* (29 July 1961), pp. 3,4. Nesterenko reports about a trial against collaborators held in Stavropol I. Judovich, 'Shakhtinskaya Tragediya Izmenniki Pered Sudom', *Molot* (19 July 1959), p. 3; Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 1088. Other articles about the same trial appeared in the newspapers *Komsomolets* and *Vecherniy Rostov*: A. Agafonov, 'Vstat! Sud Idet!', *Komsomolets* (21 July 1959), pp. 3,4. Yu. Evdokimov, 'Oni ne ushli ot rasplaty'..., *Vecherniy Rostov* (20 July 1959), p. 3.

³⁹⁵ Unlike the Krasnodar trial of 1943 or the Soviet show trials of the 1930s, the trials against Nazi collaborators that were conducted in the post-war period often convicted real criminals who were accused of crimes against humanity and homeland betrayal. Often, they were also not public, as in the case of the trial held in Rostov in 1959. For further information on Soviet war crime trials see: Penter, 'Collaboration on Trial', pp. 782-90.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 789.

wrote: 'For many years they went into hiding, mingling, and already anticipated that the pictures of the past would not return in front of the eyes of the Soviet people - it did not work.' In July of 1961 Komsomolets reported that sixty witnesses from various north Caucasian towns testified against the defendants at the public Stavropol trial and 'one picture of the past more horrible than the other appeared in the mind's eye of the trial's attendees.' During the hearing the mass execution near the village Zmievkha was described by some of the witnesses and made public by Komsomolets.³⁹⁷ In the case of the Krasnodar trial of 1963 readers again heard about the horrific acts of violence against thousands of Rostovians, who were 'for the main part Jewish nationals.'³⁹⁸ Molot quoted from various witness statements during the trial. The newspaper for instance cited eyewitness En'kova who testified about the transport of Jews from her house, Engelsstreet no. 60: '[S]he spoke about heartbreaking scenes of fascist acts of violence against the Jewish population, about how thousands of innocent people were brutally murdered in 'gas vans' outside the city in the days of August 1942.'³⁹⁹ Other articles about the mass atrocities of *Sonderkommando 10a* followed after the trials had ended.⁴⁰⁰ In 1966 Russian journalist Lev Ginzburg published his book *Bez dna* a narrative based on documents about the Krasnodar trial he had attended, thus also touching on the subject of the Holocaust in Rostov.⁴⁰¹ Ginzburg's articles about a trip to western Germany and former German SS men who had never been brought to justice for their deeds appeared in the famous *Literaturnaya Gazeta* weeks before the beginning of the Krasnodar trial of 1963 and later added significantly to an unprecedented co-operation of Soviet and German authorities.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ Nesterenko, *Komsomolets*, p. 3,4.

³⁹⁸ B. Cherkasov, 'Eto prostit' nel'z'ya Pered sudom predateli, byvshie esesovtsy karatel'nogo otryada "SS-10-A"', *Molot* (15 October 1963), p. 4.

³⁹⁹ M. Andriasov, 'Palachi derzhat otvet', *Molot* (24 October 1963), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰ In April of 1964 Molot reported about a former collaborator who had lived in Siberia under a false identity until he was traced by the KGB. I. Yudovich, 'Pod chuzhim imenem', *Molot* (19 April 1964), p. 4. The following year Molot published two articles about the German debate over the limitation period of NS-crimes. A. Gerasimov, 'Gnevnyy golos protesta', *Molot* (20 February 1965), p. 1. V. Molozhachenko, 'Ne budet proshcheniya palacham!', *Molot* (20 February 1965), p. 3.

⁴⁰¹ L. Ginzburg, *Bez dna Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* (Moscow, 1967).

⁴⁰² L. Ginzburg, 'Poezdka v zapadnuyu Germaniyu Nedaleku ot Dakhau', *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (27 August 1963), p. 3. See also Ginzburg, 'Chetyre razgovora so Shtutgartom i Gamburgom', *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (23 September 1963). Ginzburg's above mentioned reports were important sources for the Central Office's as well as the senior prosecutor's investigations against former members of *Sonderkommando 10a*. The mass execution in Rostov was part of these investigations. For further information see: Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1257, pp. 1-12.

As throughout the entire Soviet Union, dozens of memorials connected to the GPW were also erected in post-war Rostov,⁴⁰³ yet it was only in 1975 that the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy was addressed with a monument dedicated to the victims of fascism. Great effort was put in a series of commemoration events organised to mark the 30th anniversary of the defeat of fascism which culminated in the festivities surrounding the opening of the memorial complex on 9 May. Citizens of all age groups attended the 49 political, cultural, academic, social and sporting events from October 1974 through to 10 May 1975 that had been meticulously planned by the *gorkom*, the city's Communist party committee.⁴⁰⁴ The new memorial complex was erected near the site where the mass killing took place. The Jewish identity of the majority of victims was not mentioned, nor was the fact that it was a memorial honouring the thousands of civilians who were executed in occupied Rostov in 1942. However, a permanent exhibition that was displayed in a museum next to the monument informed visitors about the history of the site. The exhibit included documents from the Soviet Extraordinary Commission in which the course of events was described, though again without mentioning the victims' ethnicity. Between 1975 and 2004, the memorial site de facto contained no information on the mostly Jewish victims⁴⁰⁵ and it was not until the post-Soviet era - and only due to private Jewish initiatives - that the true history of the Zmievskaia Balka started to become an object of local public interest.

Post-Soviet Remembrance of the Holocaust in Rostov

As previously outlined, the *Perestroika* era and finally the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the beginning of a new approach to the past. In Rostov the city's Jewish community strived for the long overdue acknowledgement that Jews were indeed the main victim group of the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy. With the opening of archives new source material appeared about the mass execution of August 1942. In 1992 Jewish film maker Jury Kalugin shot a documentary about the annihilation of the Jews in his hometown Rostov. '*Svobodno ot Evreev – judenfrei*', Free of Jews, is based entirely on eyewitness accounts and documents from the FSB archive that were accessible at the

⁴⁰³ For information on the city's war memorials see: G. Belen'kiy, *Rostov-na-Donu, gorod u tikhovo Dona* (Rostov-on-Don, 2005), pp. 167-168. The most recent and central monument is situated at the city centre on Teatral'naya Square. It was built in 1983 to commemorate the 40. anniversary of Rostov's liberation. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Plan podgotovki i provedeniya v Rostove-na-Donu prazdnovaniya 30-letiya Pobedy sovetskogo naroda v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne (9 January 1975), TsDNIRO, fond 13, opis' 14, delo 11, list 16-22.

⁴⁰⁵ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 153.

time.⁴⁰⁶ It took another five years until a first public commemoration ceremony was held at the memorial on 11 August 1997, fifty-five years after the mass execution. According to *Rostov ofitsial'nyy*, Official Rostov, the event was attended by former eyewitnesses, veterans and - a novelty - representatives of the local and regional administration.⁴⁰⁷ The following year the memorial complex was declared a monument of local historical importance by the governor of Rostov *oblast*.⁴⁰⁸ Given the fact that it still lacked any information on the history of the site, the Jewish community urged the city council to attach a memorial plaque. In 2004 it was installed with the approval of the city's mayor.⁴⁰⁹ Its inscription read as follows: 'At this place on August 11 and 12 1942 more than 27.000 Jews were murdered by the Nazis. This is the largest Holocaust memorial in Russia.' Between 2007 and 2011 the memorial complex was reconstructed with public means which included a revision of the old exhibition.⁴¹⁰ While parts of it still displayed Soviet posters and slogans, it now distinctly informed the viewer about the extermination of the Jews in Rostov as part of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Archive material and photos of victims were presented as well as personal belongings found during the memorial's construction in the 1970s. A highly controversial incident however occurred in November 2011 after the refurbishment when the city's cultural administration had the memorial plaque removed and replaced by a new one which referred to the victims in Soviet style, speaking of 'peaceful Soviet citizens' without mentioning their nationality. The administration's main argument was the missing proof that the victims were indeed mainly Jews. The matter prompted an outcry among the local and national Jewish community and received attention in the local and even foreign press.⁴¹¹ It was taken to court where the question whether the Zmievka gulch is actually a Holocaust site was processed by an expert commission. A public debate arose

⁴⁰⁶ The film is accessible online:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r15tVdzkRyw&feature=player_embedded [accessed 14 January 2014]

⁴⁰⁷ *Rostov ofitsial'nyy*, no. 31(140), p. 1.

⁴⁰⁸ Voloshinova, 'Istoriya i sovremennost', p. 213.

⁴⁰⁹ I. Kozlova and A. Dunaeva, 'Evrei protiv mirnykh grazhdan', *161.ru* (14 December 2011), <http://161.ru/text/news/467076.html> [accessed 15 January 2014].

⁴¹⁰ Voloshinova, 'Istoriya i sovremennost', p. 213.

⁴¹¹ For Russian articles, see: I. Kozlova and A. Dunaeva, 'Evrei protiv mirnykh grazhdan', *161.ru* (14 December 2011), <http://161.ru/text/news/467076.html> [accessed 24 January 2012]. For international media responses see: 'Russia row over Nazi massacre site in Rostov-on-Don', *BBC Europe News* (24 January 2012), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16697485> [accessed 15 January 2014]; A. Ryvchin, 'Revisionism not remorse', *Jerusalem Post* (17 February 2012), <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Revisionism-not-remorse> [accessed 16 January 2014]; P. Ghosh, 'Russian Holocaust Memorial Removes Mention of Jewish Victims', *International Business Times* (24 January 2012), <http://www.ibtimes.com/russian-holocaust-memorial-removes-mention-jewish-victims-400060> [accessed 15 January 2014].

over Rostov's and, for that matter, Russia's treatment of its past. On the local level various interest groups discussed the question whether or not it is correct to only refer to the Jewish victims of the mass execution.⁴¹² The matter was also debated at one of Russia's most prominent radio stations, *Ekho Moskvy*, Echo of Moscow, where Jury Kanner, head of the RJC and Tamara Pletneva, vice-chair of the Duma's Committee on Nationality Matters responded to questions regarding the removal of the memorial plaque.⁴¹³ Pletneva pointed out that Russians suffered most of all nationalities during the war and argued that even in a city like Rostov a memorial should honour all victims, not only specific nationalities. It is this aspect why the removal of the memorial plaque and the Jewish community's protest against it prompted such an intense response, not only in Rostov. Pletneva's point of view was shared by many as a round table discussion titled '*Pomnite nas!*', Remember us!, at Rostov's public state library demonstrated. It brought together Jewish and non-Jewish historians, architects, lecturers and other people interested in the question how to shape public commemoration of World War II victims in the future.⁴¹⁴ Forest's and Johnson's comment on the question, why conflicts about memorials potentially escalate - as was the case with regard to the Holocaust memorial in Berlin - applies equally well to the case of Rostov:

Certain artefacts and events such as dead bodies, gravesites, and burial ceremonies have unique symbolic power because they invoke a sense of timelessness, awe, fear, and uncertainty. The power to transcend time, to bring historical events and personalities into the present, makes such objects especially effective in mobilizing national movements.⁴¹⁵

The seventieth anniversary of the mass execution three months after the event in Rostov's public library was characterised by a unique ceremony when about one thousand citizens of Rostov, from other parts of Russia and abroad performed a 'March of the Living' along the same route the victims took to the execution site.⁴¹⁶ The

⁴¹² M. Zolotareva, 'Geroev postavili v ochered', *Donskoy vremennik*, god 2013-y (Rostov-na-Donu, 2012), p. 211; D. Korvel', 'Zmievskaia Balka ushla ot evreyskogo voprosa', *161.1 ru* (18 January 2012), <http://161.ru/text/news/476300.html> [accessed 14 January 2014].

⁴¹³ "Skandal s Memorialom Zhertv Kholokosta v Rostove-na-Donu", *Ekho Moskvy* (24 January 2012), <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot-morning/851833-echo/> [accessed 15 January 2014].

⁴¹⁴ Zolotareva, 'Geroev postavili v ochered', p. 211.

⁴¹⁵ Forest and Johnson, 'Unraveling the Threads of History', p. 526.

⁴¹⁶ See for example: 'Russian march marks 70 years since Nazi pogrom', *Haaretz* (13 August 2012), <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/jewish-world-news/russian-march-marks-70-years-since-nazi-pogrom-1.457916> [accessed 15 January 2014]; 'Tropoi obrechennykh', *Rossoyskiy Evreyskiy Kongress* (12 August 2012), <http://www.rjc.ru/rus/site.aspx?SECTIONID=345556&IID=2154151> [accessed 15 January 2014]; I. Shvartsman, 'Marsh zhivvykh pamyati pavshikh', *Agenstvo evreyskikh novostey*, (14 August 2012),

participants of a subsequent international conference organised by Tsentr Kholokost adopted a resolution which was signed by representatives of the above mentioned thirteen countries and called upon the governments of those post-Soviet states who had not yet implemented UN-resolution no. 60/7 of 1 November 2005 to do so in order to promote Holocaust education.⁴¹⁷ The resolution also appealed to the local administration of Rostov to revise the text of the newly attached memorial plaque. The city's legal authorities however were not impressed: After nearly a year, on 15 October 2012, the Kirov district court announced its decision not to remove the new memorial plaque, thus reconfirming the neutral text of the new memorial plaque. Furthermore, the fact that the maintenance of the memorial was financed through the city's budget was mentioned as one of the main criteria why the complex was not officially a Holocaust memorial.⁴¹⁸ Months before the verdict was reached, the Jewish community of Rostov *oblast* had decided to put up its own Holocaust memorial and turned to the regional authorities for approval.⁴¹⁹ The request was endorsed in November 2012 however it could not be implemented on the local level: In April 2013 Rostov's joint Commission for the Definition of Communally Significant Places and Installation of Memorial Signs did not grant an area for the construction of a subsequent memorial on the territory of the memorial complex.⁴²⁰ This brought a temporary end to the public dispute.

In December 2013 an unexpected turn occurred when the Commission for the Definition of Communally Significant Places and Installation of Memorial Signs announced that the memorial plaque would once more be removed and replaced by another with a revised inscription:

http://aen.ru/?page=articleoftheday&article_id=3055&PHPSESSID=mh37jbhod7931mifvfcliq5tv1 [accessed 15 January 2014]; S. Petuchov, 'Sbor o Kholokoste v Rostove-na-Donu ili beda iz razdeleniya na etnosti', *Ria novosti* (13 August 2012), <http://ria.ru/analytics/20120813/722742997.html> [accessed 15 January 2014].

⁴¹⁷ For the full Russian text of the resolution please visit: <http://www.holocf.ru/news/706>.

⁴¹⁸ O. Dianova, 'Sud v Rostove-na-Donu rassmatrivaet isk o vozvrashchenii nadpisi o zhertvax Holokosta na memorial v Zmievskey balke', *Kavkazskiy uzel* (27 July 2012), <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/210333/> [accessed 15 January 2014].

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ The Jewish community had requested for a territory opposite the memorial which, according to the commission, was adjacent to the memorial's protected area and therefore neglected. 'Rostovskie chinovniki otkazalis' vydelit' zemlyu pod pamyatnyy znak zhertvam Kholokosta', *Bloknnot* (19 April 2013), <http://bloknnot-rostov.ru/news/more/rostovskiechinovnikiotkazalisvydelitzemljupodpamyatnyjznakzhertvamholokosta>, [accessed 16 January 2014].

Here, at the Zmievka gulch, in August 1942 more than 27 thousand peaceful citizens of Rostov and Soviet prisoners of war were murdered by the Hitlerite occupiers. Among the victims were representatives of many nationalities. The Zmievka gulch is the biggest site of a mass extermination of Jews by the fascist aggressors on Russian territory during the Great Patriotic War.⁴²¹

Concluding, the post-Soviet treatment of Holocaust remembrance in Rostov and particularly the recent dispute over the memorial complex Zmievskaya Balka can be interpreted as a local example for the fragile state of public Holocaust commemoration in Russia as a whole. For a period of seven years it figured as Russia's largest Holocaust site, approved by the local authorities. The highly emotional debate over the memorial illustrates that even at a place like Rostov, the largest Holocaust site in Russia, it is still perceived as breaking a taboo to focus on other victim groups than the ones usually honoured in connection with the GPW. If we return to the question why a compromise was nevertheless reached in Rostov, we may assume that the officials were driven by concern with the city's image. In May 2013, a local journalist pointed to Rostov's bad results of a performance level rating among regional authorities conducted by the Russian Ministry for Regional Development.⁴²² Another aspect needs to be considered: Local civil society initiatives promoting Holocaust remembrance have become stronger in their effort. The commemoration ceremonies of 2002, 2007 and 2012 at the Zmievskaya Balka memorial were conducted jointly by the leaders of the Jewish Community and the Russian Orthodox Church and were attended by hundreds of Jewish and non-Jewish citizens. Moreover, not only local and national Jewish organisations are engaged in Holocaust commemoration projects. The Russian Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments also takes an active part in the preservation of remembrance of the Holocaust in Rostov, as do local historians. Rostov therefore also exemplifies a process that is likewise taking place on the national level: Civil society institutions like Memorial, the RJC or Tsentri Kholokost are taking part in shaping memory cultures in a bottom-up process. The frame within which this process is tolerated by the local authorities or - as in the case of Victory Park - the federal government is however clearly marked and shifts, as the replacement of the plaque in Rostov or the renaming of the sculpture A people's Tragedy demonstrated. Given the

⁴²¹ Ya. Chevelya, 'Sila slova', *Rostov ofitsial'nyy* (18 December 2013), <http://rostof.ru/article.php?chapter=8&id=20135103> [accessed 16 January 2014].

⁴²² A. Rodionov, 'Oblastnaya vlast' ischchet prichiny katastroficheskogo obvala reytinga regiona', *Don news* (15 May 2013), http://donnews.ru/Oblastnaya-vlast-ishchet-prichiny-katastroficheskogo-obvala-reytinga-regiona_814 [accessed 15 January 2014].

outlined public debate about Rostov's local cultures of remembrance, the following analysis of oral history interviews on individual Holocaust memory and narratives about the annihilation of the local Jewish community represents an interesting counterpart insofar as the interviews were all conducted shortly before the replacement of the memorial plaque in November 2011.

Oral history study on Holocaust narratives and individual Holocaust remembrance

Introductory remarks

In the following chapters the categories and subcategories that have been extracted from the interviews are introduced. They have been condensed into two main thematic fields, *suffering* and *Holocaust*. This was done following Jensen's advice who points out, that the main criteria for defining a phenomenon as central or to the contrary peripheral, is the frequency of its appearance because it tells us how relevant the phenomenon is for the speaker.⁴²³ Another important factor that was relevant in this respect was the intensity speakers devoted to a certain topic. The analysis of the interviews generally revealed a spectrum of knowledge about the Zmievskaya Balka tragedy and of interpretation of this knowledge that proved to be broad, ranging from specific knowledge about victim groups and the preparation of the mass murder to less specific and no knowledge as well as, ultimately, the misinterpretation of history. Even though the methodological approaches differ, some of the topics addressed in Berno-Bellekur's aforementioned quantitative study on the correlation of tolerance and the level of knowledge about the Holocaust were also of interest in this study. This applies to the aspect of communication about the Holocaust as well as to the question how a respondent received this information.

The results of the studies can therefore at least partly be contrasted with each other as this permits to show possible differences persisting between the local and national level. Another characteristic of a qualitative interview study is that the output can naturally differ significantly if we compare various interviews. Not each person is talkative and even though the participants agreed to do the interviews, some were less open than others. Moreover, not everything that was discussed in the interviews was relevant in terms of the research interest. The selection of the topics for the final content is based on several considerations. First of all, narratives that contrast with the official narrative of the GPW were chosen as they appear most interesting when determining the relation between the official narrative and communicative memory. Even if only a small number of interviewees for instance spoke about collaboration of the local population, this is an aspect that is not part of the official narrative, and therefore received particular attention

⁴²³ O. Jensen, *Geschichte machen Strukturmerkmale des intergenerationellen Sprechens über die NS-Vergangenheit in deutschen Familien* (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 69-71.

as did, for instance, the topic of forced labour. In addition to that, some topics were discussed by the majority of the interviewees regardless of their age and we can draw conclusions from them regarding persisting narratives on both the Holocaust in Rostov and the city's occupation. Finally, a special emphasis lay on what the respondents said about the events of 11 and 12 August 1942.

As a result of this selection process, two main thematic fields have been extracted from the interview material, both of which consist of several subcategories. The first and largest of these thematic fields is the complex topic of *suffering* that refers to the many aspects of physical and psychological harm caused by the war and occupation period. Since the official narrative about the GPW mainly excludes this other side of remembrance of the war, it is notable, though not surprising, that all respondents, regardless of their age, clearly emphasised it instead of other aspects of the war. Due to the focus on occupied Rostov, mainly those aspects of the war and occupation that affected the local population were addressed by the respondents. The three subtopics *hunger and destruction*, *forced labour* and *psychological impact of war and occupation* subsume these aspects and form the main thematic field *suffering*. The second thematic field, *Holocaust*, encompasses not only what the interviewees said about the annihilation of the Jews in Rostov, but also what knowledge about the Holocaust in general is displayed in the interviews. The thematic field *Holocaust* consists of the five following subtopics: *Victims*, *scale of the crime*, *knowledge on the Holocaust*, *collaboration* and *view at occupants* the latter of which revealed a diverse view on then Germans.

SUFFERING

This chapter addresses the aspect of suffering as it is described by the interviewees. Regardless of the respondents' background, the concept of suffering is represented in diverse forms throughout all of the interviews and is reflected in the following subcategories or topics:

- 1.) *hunger and destruction,*
- 2.) *forced labour and*
- 3.) *psychological impact of war and occupation*

With few exceptions mainly among the youngest respondents, nearly all interviewees referred to the suffering of the civilian population under German occupation. Generally, suffering implied various stages ranging from sheer physical harm to traumatic impressions and death. It is not surprising that the respondents who belong to the oldest age group, from now on referred to as AG1, speak about the element of suffering more than younger interviewees, given the fact that all of them were affected personally in their childhood or adolescence. Most of them were children - the two youngest of the ten respondents were three years old during the second occupation of Rostov. The others were four, five, seven, and two interviewees were thirteen years old when the Germans invaded Rostov in 1942. However, not all of them literally witnessed what happened at the time. Five of the respondents were either evacuated with their families to other parts of the country, or grew up in neighbouring villages and only witnessed the events from a distance. But evacuation did not necessarily imply being safe, as some respondents describe in their interviews. The same applied to people who lived in the countryside near Rostov where the threat of starving was probably not as big, yet the danger of bombardments or raids by Germans in search for partisans was omnipresent.

Interestingly, it was not primarily the contemporary witnesses but mainly respondents of the second age group, AG2, (forty-five to sixty-five year-olds) to whom the aspect of suffering was most noteworthy when asked what they knew about the war and the occupation of Rostov whereas the youngest respondents hardly referred to it. Their parents, who had either been in the Red Army or stayed in the occupied city, had reported to them later about their experiences. Members of AG2 were also much more exposed to information about the war because Soviet propaganda reached its peak when

most of them grew up in the 1960s. Even though this official information was biased, the topic was nevertheless an essential part of the overall socialist education and omnipresent, quite contrary to the immediate post-war years when the majority of AG1-respondents grew up.

A clear cut however appears between the second and third age group, AG3, (twenty to thirty-five year-olds), as the interviews illustrate. None of the three youngest participants of this age group (all of them were twenty years old) mentioned the aspect of civilian suffering, which might be interpreted as an effect resulting from the lifespan of communicative memory. Those family members who had actively participated in the war or witnessed it as civilians had been these respondents' great grandfathers and -mothers whose personal stories, suffering, and memories were at best fragmentarily known and appeared only as facts. Thus twenty-year-old Anna knows very little about the horrors her great-grandfather had to endure in a German concentration camp and argues that it's better to leave the past alone and not ask an old man about his father's tragic past, unless he wanted to talk about it himself:

I hardly know why, well turns out, it was my great-grandfather from my mother's side of the family, and he told his son, my grandfather, but he himself is eighty years old, eighty-one, it's just ... well, why ask an old man to remember what he [the great-grandfather] had said.⁴²⁴

In the following passage, the main subtopic within the category *suffering* will be outlined. The interviews illustrated that the aspect of hunger was most often mentioned by respondents in connection with the occupation period.

⁴²⁴ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (28:10-28:39).

Hunger and destruction

The central topic within the category of *suffering* is the physical hardship the civilian population had to endure during the German occupation and the war as such. Hunger was the most fundamental physical experience for all of the ten respondents who were contemporary witnesses and all have specific stories to tell that illustrate how dominantly it shaped their memory of the war. Fedor, who was four years old when the war broke out in 1941, was not among the fortunate who had evacuated and had remained in the occupied city with his mother. His family story reflects the spectrum of suffering many Russian families had to endure during the war, including the loss of loved ones, and the traumatising resulting from the experience of bombardments. Fedor begins to tell his story unprompted, making it impossible for the interviewer to begin with the intended procedure to first hand him the information sheet and ask for his consent and signature. He begins to talk immediately after having sat down, and the illustration seems to flow out of him and yet obviously follows a fixed pattern as he begins his narrative with a typical introduction line 'when the war broke out I was four years old'. Most of the things he mentions are furthermore also brought up by his daughter Katya (AG3) whom the interviewer had interviewed two days before. Fedor describes how there was practically nothing they could live on, due to the heavy destruction of Rostov.

The regular bombardments are almost exclusively mentioned by respondents of AG1, the interviews with AG2- and AG3-interviewees hardly contain information on them. Even though this seems to indicate that the destruction of their home town was the most important element of memory, apart from one interviewee, who shall be referred to in the following section, this is not the case. Rather, the bombardments appear as a frame for the war stories the contemporary witnesses have experienced. Valentina (AG1), who was six when the war broke out, connects one particular story with the first bombardments of Rostov. She had seen a doll in a toy shop near the house where she and her family lived on Pushkinskaya street. The shop was hit by a bomb, thus also destroying the doll, and Valentina remembers how boys from her neighbourhood instead gave her a damaged metallic children's dish. She nevertheless remembers that even though she was only six at the time, she had had a sense that the situation was unique and dangerous.⁴²⁵ Another story Valentina mentions in connection

⁴²⁵ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (07:58-08:06).

with bombings is her family's dramatic evacuation with the last train that left Rostov just before the Germans captured it for the second time. Due to her mother's job as electrical engineer, the family spent months in Vladikavkaz. Their hasty departure is engraved into Valentina's memory because her mother almost stayed behind as the train was overcrowded. While she, her brother and father managed to get inside through the window, her mother did not and tried entering through the door: 'And this is how they hung these almost 400 kilometres, because the train didn't stop anywhere because it was bombarded all the time.'⁴²⁶

For those who stayed in occupied Rostov, life changed dramatically because the city was destroyed in large parts. Fedor remembers having to get water from the river Don because the local water supply system had broken down after heavy bombardments. Most of Rostov's housing and infrastructure was destroyed when the city was taken the second time on 24 July 1942. This is mentioned in several interviews. Fedor and his mother lived on Gorkiy street in the city centre, two kilometres away from the river, which not only meant carrying the water long distance, but also uphill. Timofey, who was seven at the time lived a few blocks further uphill than Fedor, on Krasnoarmeyskaya street. Carrying the water right up to his house with his parents is one of the things he remembers as clearly as Fedor.⁴²⁷ All in all, surviving in the occupied city was a struggle. In the first weeks after the German invasion diseases had spread and the occupiers tried to gain control of the situation. An order announced in Golos Rostova on 02 August 1942 called upon all citizens to remove bodies or carcasses immediately and keep houses and courtyards tidy.⁴²⁸ In October 1942, a cholera outbreak was announced in Golos Rostova and city commandant Major general Heinrich Kittel gave the order not to use water from the Temernik and Don rivers any more.⁴²⁹ Despite these generally threatening living conditions, hunger is however most strongly engraved into the memories and narratives of many of the people the author interviewed, regardless of their age. Apart from his above mentioned comment about the ever-present deprivation, one episode that had obviously made a deep impression on Fedor was when a German soldier offered him a slice of bread.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., (12:37-13:08).

⁴²⁷ TL, AG1, 05 October 2011, (17:01-17:09).

⁴²⁸ Golos Rostova (2 August 1942), TsDNIRO, fond R 3, opis' 2, delo 69, list 1ob.. See also: *Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten*, no. 16, p. 144.

⁴²⁹ Golos Rostova (17 October 1942), TsDNIRO, fond R 3, opis' 2, delo 69, list 27.

FS: He said "komm, komm", or "komm her" and I was scared, "ja, komm her", "ja, komm her, hab keine Angst", I went to him, he took a slice of bread for me and spread it with this ...

KS: jam

FS: jam, was it jam? Yes, it was probably jam, the Germans had canned jam.

Yes, all in all, spread it with with jam, jelly, or jam and invited me. At that time it was just incredible, we had no food.⁴³⁰

As previously mentioned, we have to distinguish between what the respondents told the interviewer unprompted and what was the reaction to a question as the latter might naturally not reflect the emphasis or severity the respondent devotes to a topic. Particularly the participants of AG 1, like Fedor, tended to share their war memories and the experiences of their family members without a previous trigger - the only one being the information they had got from the interviewer before the interview from which they could tell what the subject of interest would be. What is generally striking in the interviews, and particularly in the one with Fedor, is the vivid perspective many of the oldest respondents still have on these past events of their earliest childhood years. Even though the war is an episode in Fedor's life that goes back almost seventy years, he pictures his childhood memories very lively and still from the perspective of a child that does not grasp the danger of the situation, it seems. He stresses more than once that he does not remember much but nevertheless manages to transport much information into the interview. Yet, he hardly comments on those aspects of the war and occupation that were frightening or had long-term effects. Instead, he emphasises stories that demonstrate how the war was interesting from a boy's perspective. Jureit argues that it is particularly this rationalised representation in interviews with traumatised contemporary witnesses of World War II and the Holocaust that has to be interpreted as a protective mechanism. The interview produces a life's retrospect that is rich in detail and describes the traumatic incidents without being able to transport an emotional reference.⁴³¹ Straight at the beginning of the conversation, Fedor shares a very brief description of an episode with the interviewer where he and his mother were facing the immediate danger of death: Shortly after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa when Rostov was first approached and attacked by German warplanes, one plane loaded with bombs caught fire in the air and crashed only one hundred seventy metres from their house. The shock wave of the detonation hit Fedor and his mother who was hurled onto rubbish bins when she came running for her son. Fedor describes how he had watched the planes flying

⁴³⁰ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (11:31-11:36).

⁴³¹ Jureit, *Erinnerungsmuster*, p. 378.

and attacking when suddenly one of them went down. 'My mother (laughs) came running for me and she was thrown away by the wave - an about 100 metre-long wave - onto the bins, there were rubbish bins. That's what I remembered.'⁴³² By laughing when he describes how the plane crashed and his mother was most likely hurt, he fails to attach the 'correct' emotion to his story. Bearing in mind that he was only four years old at the time, it is hard to imagine that this incident did in fact amuse Fedor, rather we must assume that he was profoundly shocked by it. This assumption is further intensified by his daughter's remarks about Fedor's experiences during the war and how he coped with them.

During the interview Fedor's daughter Katya (AG3) was present as well since it was conducted at her office. Much of what Fedor told the author appeared to be extracted from the family narrative because his narration was occasionally interrupted by remarks that were addressed to his daughter: 'Did you already mention the episode how I ...?' Much unlike Fedor, Katya speaks about the harm her father suffered with a serious tone. She, too, mentions hunger and thirst among the most problematic aspects of the occupation and confirms that her father had told her about it: 'Why do I remember, because I remember that my father told me when I was a child how hard it was when the occupiers were there.'⁴³³ As we learn from her, rather than her father, Fedor was fortunate because his mother worked in a canteen and could provide her son with some food. Katya stresses that this was a very serious situation and that many people died merely of starvation. She reasons that children of the war such as her father sometimes also 'had fun at that time' and tells the same story about the slice of bread with jam that her father described in his interview but she also adds that 'he kept very intense memories.'⁴³⁴ Not only her father but also Katya's maternal grandmother told her about how hard life was during the war and afterwards. Hunger and other forms of physical hardship endured for a number of years after the war had ended, Katya knows from her grandmother in Odessa.⁴³⁵ Katya's example illustrates well how communicative memory of the war is in the process of fading. The generation of young Russians in their late twenties or older could theoretically have been informed about the war by relatives who belonged to the generation of war participants whereas the aforementioned

⁴³² FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (01:22-01:36).

⁴³³ KS, AG3, 19 September 2011, (03:28-03:36).

⁴³⁴ Ibid., (05:22-05:25, 07:48-07:59)

⁴³⁵ KS, AG3, 19 September, (12:18-12:50)

twenty-year -old Anna (AG1) argued that she only heard stories about the war from her grandfather who was twelve at the time of Rostov's second occupation. Although the age gap between the two women is only nine years, Anna's grandfather was only seven years older than Katya's father Fedor in 1942.

Lyubov (AG1) also remembers that until 1949 the immediate post-war years were characterised by a 'terrible hunger'.⁴³⁶ Indeed, Rostov was one of the large cities in the Russian south that was affected by the famine in southern parts of the Soviet Union that resulted from Stalin's forced collectivization policy of the early 1930s.⁴³⁷ Large parts of the Soviet population had therefore faced hunger and the risk of starvation not only during the war years. This experience has been engraved into collective memory and could therefore also explain why hunger is mentioned by so many respondents as one of the main characteristics of the occupation period. It explains why it is also referred to by the majority of respondents in AG3 when asked about their families' situation during the war. In terms of the importance of the occupation period in Rostov today, Timofey (AG1) thinks it is mainly relevant for the elderly who have witnessed the hunger and deprivations themselves and cannot forget them. His distressing explanation forms the headline of this chapter and illustrates the extreme indigence of the civilian population. It remains unclear whether Timofey witnessed the starvation of his own grandparents or people in general. However it is likely that he is talking about members of his own family because the experience of hunger evidently shaped his memory of the occupation period.

Fedor's almost belittling way of talking about his personal experience of hunger and thirst therefore contrasts sharply with Timofey's memory or the stories members of the second age group have to tell. Vika (AG2) speaks about scenes her father who had fought near Rostov and was among its liberators and Rostovians who had personally experienced the period of occupation had told her about. Even decades later, at the time of the interview, Vika is still very upset as she describes the harsh conditions in a bombarded city and how people tried to survive. Hunger, she explains, was so devastating that people produced soap from human and animal bones in order to sell it and thereby survive⁴³⁸ Nadezhda's (AG2) then twelve-year-old mother had stayed in occupied Rostov with her mother and was among those who exchanged soap for some

⁴³⁶ LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (0:48-01:00)

⁴³⁷ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, pp. 43-79.

⁴³⁸ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (17:32-17:45).

food at a nearby kolkhoz. During the interview, Nadezhda, who was born in the late 1950s in post-war Rostov, points out repeatedly that her mother always spoke about the war but Nadezhda never listened to her stories and today regrets having done so. Some of her mother's stories have however obviously made their way into the family narrative and left a deep impression on the daughter, because she, too, mentions a situation her mother had to face as one of the first things during the interviews: A German soldier had helped her mother who had fainted out of sheer hunger by offering her some ammonium chloride. Nadezhda recalls 'I saw her photo, she was so thin, and she lost conscience.'⁴³⁹

Apart from the aforementioned youngest participants of AG3 who did not refer to the aspect of hunger, the other members of this age group also see it as one of the most fundamental aspects the civilian population had to deal with during the war. Petr mentions a story extracted from his family narrative that refers to his great aunt who walked 400 km in order to exchange soap for bread:

PV: I remember one of the facts she talked about. Her older sister, well, she went to Starominskaya for bread, we have this village

CW: Is that...

PV: It's very far! On foot. They carried the soap from here and exchanged it for bread.

CW: I have also...

PV: Four hundred kilometres. To walk 400 kilometres. What kind of bread she brought with her, I cannot even... Some crumbs. That's what the hunger was like. In short: horror. Like during the blockade.⁴⁴⁰

Here, as well as in Nadezhda's (AG2) narration about her mother, pity mixes with admiration for having survived these hard times. Indeed, a connotation of the narrative about suffering was the ability to withstand. Some respondents attached a specific note to their narratives when referring to the physical hardship their relatives and people in general endured at the time. This aspect can be found in various forms within the interviews. The respective family narratives differ, of course, but sometimes similar storylines, as for instance regarding the common practice to change soap for food, appear about how families withstood and managed to survive the hostile conditions. This notion appears throughout the second and occasionally the third age group, but interestingly not among the contemporary witnesses. Sometimes the stories contrast sharply, however the general message that is conveyed is that the suffering had an

⁴³⁹ NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (03:32-03:36).

⁴⁴⁰ PV, AG3, 4 October 2011, (02:43-03:22).

inherent, nearly sacred element. Petr's comparison of the situation in occupied Rostov to what is engraved into Russian collective memory as the ultimate tragedy of the GPW, the blockade of Leningrad, is a good example for that and underlines the meaning of suffering in his family narrative. Bogdan (AG3), on the other hand, is convinced that hunger was not as crucial in Rostov as it was in Leningrad at the time. Unlike Petr, he cannot rely on information from the family narrative in this context and his assumption is based on what he has read, however he also points at the ability to withstand: 'Terrible inconveniences, to put it mildly. Well, somehow they withstood, somehow people withstood.'⁴⁴¹

A different kind of heroism is displayed in the strong community spirit some respondents ascribe to their relatives. Aleksandra (AG3) mentions the hunger people suffered only en passant and in the context of a stronger solidarity among people compared to today's Russian society. She uses the example of her grandmother who was in a privileged situation because she worked at a strategic plant and received more bread than others. She helped neighbours by smuggling more bread out of the factory.⁴⁴²

Concluding, hunger played a central role in many respondents' remembrance and / or knowledge about the war and occupation. This was often added by accompanying narrative components. The picture of people who suffered but stood closer together with their fellow citizens or managed to survive the harsh living conditions because they found ways to cope for instance by producing soap and exchanging it for food was mentioned several times by various respondents. These examples or the ability to mobilise nearly supernatural strength as in Petr's example of his great aunt who walked 400 kilometres fit well with the final two items in Wertsch's model of the superordinate Triumph-Over-Alien-Forces Schematic Narrative Template: 'A time of ... great suffering which is [o]vercome by the triumph over the alien force by the Russian people, acting heroically and alone.'⁴⁴³ The following passage addresses forced labour as another subject within the thematic field of suffering. Although not many respondents mentioned forced labour, it is a topic offside the broader narrative of the 'heroic' struggle, as Wertsch terms it and therefore deserves particular attention.

⁴⁴¹ BG, AG3, 28 September 2011, (41:09-41:38).

⁴⁴² KN, AG3, 28 September 2011, (16:19-17:10).

⁴⁴³ Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, p. 93.

Forced labour

The causes and perception of suffering named by the respondents varied slightly depending on where the interviewees and/or their families lived during the occupation of Rostov. While all aforementioned contemporary witnesses and their family members were born in Rostov and witnessed either the city's occupation or the imminent threat of it and consequently evacuation, some interviewees who themselves or whose relatives had not experienced occupation emphasised other aspects of suffering than hunger and bombardments. Konstantin's (AG2) grandmother had lived in a village near Rostov when the Germans occupied the territory and he describes a situation much different than the one in Rostov. Life had been quiet and normal, according to Konstantin, for the first one or two months after the Germans had taken Rostov. Only when patrols began and soldiers came to her village, this began to change.⁴⁴⁴

Konstantin read many books about the war and learned much about the occupation of Rostov *oblast* from his grandmother. Although he also mentions hunger as a characteristic of the time, he points at the fate of the 'healthy and young' who were deported to the *Reich* for forced labour. He names his friend's mother as an example who was taken to Germany at the age of sixteen and had to work in a village.⁴⁴⁵ 52,991 Rostovians, roughly every fourth civilian among those who had not evacuated, were deported for forced labour during the two occupations. All in all, 84,030 people were brought to Germany from Rostov *oblast* during that time.⁴⁴⁶ Despite this large number, forced labour does not seem to be an inherent part of the narrative about the period of occupation. With one exception only few respondents whose relatives or who themselves had personally known former forced labourers address this side effect of occupation. Regarding the large scale and impact forced labour had on Rostov and Rostovians it is surprising that the subject is not brought up by more respondents, particularly since two of the questions posed during the interviews addressed the behaviour of the occupiers towards the civilian population and the most important facts of the occupation. It is hard to imagine that this unifying element in so many Rostovians' private wartime stories was considered not important and is underrepresented for mainly this reason. This rather indicates that forced labour still is

⁴⁴⁴ KR, AG2, 12 October, (16:27-16:35).

⁴⁴⁵ KR, AG2, 12 October, (27:43-27:50; 28:25-29:21).

⁴⁴⁶ Rezul'taty okkupacii oblasti nemecko-fashistskimi zakhvatchikami, TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 22, list 9.

what Wertsch speaks of as a blank spot in memory. The causes of blank spots can naturally be manifold. In this case, it is a topic that was silenced for decades because instead of acknowledging them as victims of Nazi rule, former slave labourers were considered Nazi collaborators in the Soviet Union.⁴⁴⁷ On arrival home, therefore a continuation of suffering awaited them as many were sent to Gulag camps. Even after spending years in those camps, their suffering continued because society treated them as outcasts and their stories remained unheard for decades. This may have particularly applied to those Rostovians who voluntarily applied for work in Germany following public calls for application in *Golos Rostova*.⁴⁴⁸ The double experience of physical harm, shame and isolation could explain why even today and despite for example Memorial's effort to make their stories heard, the fear that mainstream society is still biased against this particular victim group is predominant. In this respect, the interviewer's culturally different background and socialisation might have been an advantage in terms of the interviewees' willingness to address the topic. Only very little information is however relinquished.

Lyubov is the only AG1-respondent who personally witnessed forced labour in her family and talks about it. Her cousin was deported straight from the streets of Rostov to Germany at the age of approximately twelve to fourteen and returned with his health ruined: 'Even though he was young, after all there was also hunger plus the beating, well all that, all in all, he also began to stutter.'⁴⁴⁹ Lyubov's outcry 'and how many women and children they sent to Germany to work!' underlines how severe the subject was at least from her point of view and obviously her family's.⁴⁵⁰ Mariya (AG1) has quite a different story to tell. Her former colleague was deported to Germany at the same age as Lyubov's cousin however she told Mariya that '[e]ven though they took her, stole her away ... [s]he says 'I only have nice memories. I was treated well', she says'⁴⁵¹ Mariya stresses that her colleague was hardworking and had even been asked to stay with the family upon liberation - and only the thought of her parents had compelled her to return home. Even if in this particular case the relationship between forced labourer and the German family was indeed positive, this woman's life story exemplifies what

⁴⁴⁷ Jones quotes a woman who was for instance reporting about her problems to be accepted at Rostov State University because of her status as a former forced labourer. 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 768-9.

⁴⁴⁸ *Golos Rostova* (8 August 1942), TsDNIRO, fond 3, opis' 2, delo 69, list 2ob., 3, 3ob..

⁴⁴⁹ LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (18:10.18:40).

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, (17:56-18:03)

⁴⁵¹ FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:36:40-1:36:52).

Jureit refers to as a central aspect in many former forced labourers' life stories. As she points out, the conclusion that their survival was a direct consequence of the ability to work and function effectively led many members of this victim group to ascribe particular importance to this capacity and view it as the central element of their life story. Even after the war had ended, work and the ability to work was internalised as the key strategy to meet all requirements they were confronted with.⁴⁵² Mariya's colleague is an example for this strategy as we learn from her description. 'I worked with this woman in the same brigade - she is very quick, nimble. She says 'I've worked for the masters. ... I did everything there, everything they told me to.'⁴⁵³

Apart from these two examples that deliver some insights into the lives of Rostovians who experienced forced labour, the remaining three interviews where the topic is mentioned are rather rudimentary and merely hint at forced labour, even though in Valeriya's (AG2) case it obviously affected close family members. If it had not been for the Red Army to recapture the city, her mother would have almost been abducted to Germany during the first occupation of Rostov. According to Valeriya, 'mama's friend was displaced to Germany for work, ...it hit her, they displaced her....They didn't manage [to displace] mama.'⁴⁵⁴ Her mother and grandmother had stayed in Rostov during both occupations and witnessed the bombings, hunger and killing of civilians about which they later told Valeriya.

Summing up, the topic of forced labour was only addressed by few respondents, even though it affected Rostov at a large scale. In terms of the underlying causes we can only speculate - one possible explanation beside the option that the other respondents were not personally affected could be the taboo that was attached to the subject for decades. The following passage addresses an equally underrepresented topic, the long-term psychological effects of war and occupation. Throughout several interviews and age groups, respondents argued that unprocessed effects of the trauma that resulted from the GPW have an impact on today's society as nearly every family was affected.

⁴⁵² For further information and the full interview with Ulrike Jureit, see: <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/projekt/experteninterviews/jureit/index.html>, (03:15-04:02).

⁴⁵³ FI1/SE, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:35:38-1:35:51).

⁴⁵⁴ VT, AG2, 19 October 2011, (03:50-03:58).

Psychological impact of war and occupation

The importance of the place of residence during the war or thereafter in terms of the general experience of the war and the perception of different aspects of suffering is illustrated very well in the interview with eighty-two-year-old Raissa (AG1). While she, too, recalls suffering hunger and cold, the first thing she mentions in the interview is how she spent years of her childhood in the cellar because her parents' house was constantly bombarded. It was only fifteen kilometres from the frontline at the river Mius, forty-five kilometres from Rostov. The Mius frontline is mentioned by several other interviewees throughout all age groups and plays an important role in the local history of Rostov *oblast*.⁴⁵⁵ In the interviews, it is referred to mainly for its high number of mainly Soviet but also German losses and the brutal warfare it involved. Raissa and her family were evacuated twice for a certain period, but they returned home and witnessed the constant bombardments. Everyday life during those days was dominated by the attacks, she explains.⁴⁵⁶ The bombardments were so heavy that Raissa remembers being able to tell the difference between bombs that had a huge destructive power and those less destructive merely by the sound they produced as they dropped. It is obvious that this experience has had a formative and most likely traumatising effect on her, as had other experiences connected to the war and occupation of Rostov *oblast* where she grew up. Hunger is but one of them. Towards the end of the interview, Raissa describes how she witnessed the execution of a Soviet prisoner of war when returning to her village together with other members of her family. The man was too weak to walk and had to be carried by fellow prisoners. This was noticed by one of the German guards who shot him right in front of the civilians, among them thirteen-year-old Raissa. The memory of this incident and of the inability to help him - some women among the evacuees had begged the German to spare the man's life - overwhelms Raissa during the interview.⁴⁵⁷ Other tragic events connected to the war likewise shaped Raissa and her family, including mainly the loss of her older brother. In the course of the conversation, particularly while talking about her brother, Raissa is under great emotional distress that culminates when she tells the interviewer how the death notification came with the mail.

⁴⁵⁵ For further information see for example: K.-H. Frieser, *Die Ostfront 1943/44* (Munich, 2007), pp. 340-344. M. Zhirokhov, *Srazhenie za Donbass Mius-Front 1941-1943* (Moscow, 2011).

⁴⁵⁶ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (02:35-02:56).

⁴⁵⁷ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (2:05:22-2:08:10).

The interview with Raissa is the most problematic in terms of the emotional pressure it causes both respondent and interviewer. The suggestion to end the conversation is however declined by Raissa. Being one of the two oldest contemporary witnesses among the interviewees - Raissa and Evgeny were thirteen during the summer offensive and occupation of Rostov *oblast* - she clearly has the most vivid memories and had a different understanding and perception of the war while it was ongoing than her fellow respondents from AG1. The death of her older brother as well as all other incidents described above occurred during her adolescence whereas the other respondents were children during the occupation of 1942. Almost in passing, yet most important in terms of collective memory in Russia, Raissa mentions an aspect that is also addressed by members of AG2 and AG3: The experience of traumatic loss, 'the grief affected nearly every family. Everybody had lost somebody.'⁴⁵⁸ One of the youngest respondents, twenty-year-old Vadim in this context argues that 'the war is perceived through the prism of family grief in particular, that is as a trauma, and memories are transmitted namely through this key.'⁴⁵⁹

Oksana (AG2) is also convinced that today's Russian population suffers from the psychological aftermath of the war. Although she, too, was born in another region of Russia and only moved to Rostov at the age of seventeen, she knows the city's tragic history very well. Members of her family lived in Rostov during the war and died when their house in the city centre was bombarded. Similar to Raissa, she argues, 'each native Rostovian had someone who suffered during occupation. ...This was handed over genetically, this is absolutely clearly perceptible.'⁴⁶⁰ Native Rostovian Vika (AG2) also thinks that the war shaped her (post-war)generation and explains it by the constant presence of its most horrible impact: To her, the mere existence of the many mass graves on which Rostov was (re)built has had a strong effect on those born after the war.⁴⁶¹ An interesting parallel to German post-war silence is drawn by twenty-six-year old Evgeniya from Taganrog who reckons that the post-war Soviet society had to actively silence the traumatic experiences endured during the war in order to function. She questions the success of this strategy:

⁴⁵⁸ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (1:13:02-1:13:07)

⁴⁵⁹ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (18:37-18:48).

⁴⁶⁰ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (02:59-03:05; 10:59-11:04).

⁴⁶¹ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (13:01-13:06).

preserving, keeping in mind would have meant to go through the pain up to now. Therefore the attempt, this can be regarded as an attempt, right, to just start a new life, anew, from scratch, right, and to go on with those people who had remained with you.⁴⁶²

The pattern Evgeniya describes is comparable to German post-war society's silence and what Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich termed an inability to mourn, albeit, of course, from the opposite perspective.⁴⁶³ Most of the respondents from the generation of contemporary witnesses interestingly do not refer to the psychological impact the war had on them in the form of traumas or memory suppression. In one of the family interviews, Sergey (AG1) argues that the war did not affect them and immediately notices how this contradicts his personal life experience of growing up without a father.⁴⁶⁴ Like Sergey, Fedor (AG1) at first neglects a possible need for suppressing memories. Although he reflects on the immediate post-war years as being a nightmare because 'how many wounded there were in town, without arms/hands, in wheelchairs',⁴⁶⁵ he is convinced that his generation is not affected by the war anymore and that young Russians have forgotten about it.⁴⁶⁶ At the same time, Fedor admits escaping World War II films and says the war was terrifying.⁴⁶⁷ In the interview with his daughter Katya, the twenty-nine-year-old to the contrary classifies her father's psychological harm as a trauma. She mentions a situation when her father was praying for his life during a heavy bombardment and was stuttering for a while afterwards.⁴⁶⁸ Interestingly, unlike Fedor, his daughter describes a compulsive restlessness in her father's behaviour:

He remembers all the time, up to now he listens to the radio and says: "why am I always listening to the radio and television, because I fear that the war might begin again. If it begins, I have to know".⁴⁶⁹

Katya's last remark illustrates how much her father's life is still shaped by the wartime experience even though it was not as apparent in the interview with him. It is mainly the daughter who highlights the traumatic wartime experiences, such as the

⁴⁶² EK, AG3, 28 September 2011, (17:10-17:34).

⁴⁶³ A. and M. Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, 23rd ed. (Munich, 2012), pp. 36-57.

⁴⁶⁴ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (45:11-46:03).

⁴⁶⁵ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (21:10-21:18).

⁴⁶⁶ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (28:25-28:43).

⁴⁶⁷ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (20:55-21:08).

⁴⁶⁸ KS, AG3, 19 September 2011, (05:24-05:53; 06:05-06:11).

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., (03:45-04:15)

bombardments or Fedor's missing father whose fate up to the day of the interview was unknown. Katya points to the aspect of trauma-transmission that, to her, affected not only her father's but also succeeding generations, including hers, and stresses that a second traumatising even layers the one resulting from the war - the experience of the Stalinist repressions that continued after the war: 'It seems to me that these traumas are transmitted over many generations, and (stresses) also to us.'⁴⁷⁰ Katya is not the only member of AG3 who addresses the long-term effects of Stalinism. So does Vadim, who was recruited spontaneously during one of the author's archive visits. He specialises in this thematic field in his studies and thinks that 'in today's Russian society remnants of Stalinism and this authoritarian mentality of the what is called homo sovieticus, have remained.'⁴⁷¹

Summing up, the aspect of suffering is addressed throughout all three age groups and in many stories or personal memories of life under occupation. Suffering not only forms a concise element of contemporary witnesses' personal memories but it is also a strong characteristic in younger respondents' narratives about wartime Rostov. While hunger is mentioned as its main manifestation in AG1 and AG2, the very youngest respondents bring up less and other, broader aspects of suffering such as the long-term psychological effects war and the occupation of Rostov have on society. This might be ascribed to the lifespan of communicative memory, bearing in mind that the three youngest respondents were twenty years old at the time of recording. Their knowledge was based on books and films as well as on multiply filtered family memories which at least in their cases resulted in a factual, seemingly reduced emotional access to the topic. The older respondents of AG3 however tended more towards interpreting the past through the family memory and communication with veterans like members of AG2. A clear cut therefore appears between participants who were socialised mainly during the Perestroika years and the immediate end of the Soviet era and those who were socialised completely in the post-Soviet years. It is difficult to determine to what extent this is a result of the political upheaval of 1991 or whether it illustrates a fading communicative memory, most likely both factors complement one another.

Compared to the official narrative of the GPW, two main differences stand out: The fact that forced labour is discussed by some respondents throughout all age groups is the most apparent deviation. Most of those interviewees who brought up the topic, referred

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., (44:08-45:02).

⁴⁷¹ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (0:35:0:46).

to personal affiliations with former slave labourers which demonstrates that it is rather a component of communicative than local cultural memory. The other aspect that clearly deviates from official remembrance of the war is that the psychological impact of the war is addressed by representatives of all age groups. While official memory emphasizes the heroic part of the joint struggle against Nazism, the interviews deliver examples of both traumatised contemporary witnesses, and younger Russians who are aware of the mental aftermath and its effect on themselves. Sometimes this also included an awareness of the still ongoing, additional traumatic effect the Stalinist repressions have on today's society. The following second chapter of the oral history study presents the findings on individual remembrance of the Holocaust and narratives thereof. Despite being a qualitative study, it demonstrates that cities like Rostov have served as exceptions to the (Soviet) rule in several ways that will be outlined in the chapter.

HOLOCAUST

This chapter describes how the interviewees referred to the annihilation of the Jewish community in their hometown Rostov and the Holocaust in general. The thematic field consists of the following subtopics:

- 1.) *Victims*
- 2.) *Victim numbers*
- 3.) *Knowledge on Holocaust*
- 4.) *Perceptions of Collaboration*
- 5.) *View on Occupants*

Generally, the analysis of the interviews revealed a spectrum of knowledge about the Zmievskaia Balkatragedy and of interpretation of this knowledge that proved to be rather broad. It encompassed a span between specific knowledge about victim groups and the preparation of the mass murder to less specific and no knowledge as well as, ultimately, the misinterpretation of history. Even though the approaches differ, some of the topics addressed in Berno-Bellekur's aforementioned quantitative study on the correlation of tolerance and the level of knowledge about the Holocaust were also of interest in the existing study. This applies to the aspect of communication about the Holocaust as well as to the question by what means respondents acquired information on the Holocaust. The results of the studies can therefore at least partly be contrasted with each other. This allows showing possible differences persisting between the local and national level. Beginning with the topic *victims*, this will be specified in the following passages of the chapter.

Victims

One of the main categories regarding the overall research interest refers to the question of victim groups. The interviewee's perception of specific victim groups gives an insight not only into the respondent's individual interpretation of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity and the selection process that preceded it. It furthermore permits drawing conclusions about the relationship between 'private memory' and those interpretations of the past constructed by history politics. The events in Rostov exemplify how the Nazi ideology was implemented in the field. This not only included the annihilation of the main target groups, communists and Jews - in the case of Rostov also locals who were considered as half-Jews within the Nazi racial theory - but also the implementation of the Euthanasia programme. The topic victims forms one of the main categories in this analysis because the majority of the victims who were murdered in Rostov have not been part of the official narrative of the GPW.

A first important aspect in terms of the question how people assessed the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity is whether or not they knew about the specific public announcement that applied only to Jews. Like Vika (AG2), who in her remark refers to the order that was put up throughout Rostov, Fedor (AG1) remembers learning that the Jews of Rostov were addressed to gather at certain places in the city in order to be resettled.⁴⁷² According to him, the Germans first asked the population to appear at a central place in the Rabochiy Gorod district for a public announcement straight after the city's capture. Neither the Soviet nor the German documents analysed for this study mention such a public speech therefore Fedor's statement cannot be verified.⁴⁷³ Fedor sums up that the public speech was mainly about reassuring the population that nobody had to be afraid and order would soon be restored.

And after that, I know this from stories, that all Jews were asked to bring with them a minimum of some things that are necessary for two or three days, I don't remember exactly, and gather somewhere and they were collected on cars, taken away.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (10:27-10:43); FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (13:10-13:34).

⁴⁷³ It is however possible that a first approach towards the local population was conducted in this manner. The first written document was the aforementioned announcement by the *Feldkommandantur* from 2 August 1942 which contained a list of general orders and was also published in *Golos Rostova*. *Obъyavlenie naseleniyu goroda Rostova* (2 August 1942), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 19, list 2. See also *Golos Rostova* (8 August 1942) TsDNIRO, fond R 3, opis' 2, delo 69, list 1ob..

⁴⁷⁴ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (13:10-13:35).

Fedor thinks that only Jews were the victims of the mass killing because no-one else would have appeared at the gathering points, even though the announcement did not indicate any danger - people nevertheless felt that there was something behind it, Fedor argues.⁴⁷⁵ The fact that the Jewish population was following an order that exclusively applied to it is mentioned also by Valentina (AG1), to whom her grandmother spoke a lot about the annihilation of the Jews of Rostov. Her grandmother had lost Jewish friends who had told her that they were to be resettled.⁴⁷⁶ It is not only members of the oldest and middle-aged group of respondents, however, who know about the gathering of the Jews before their deportation to the execution site. Throughout the youngest interviewees we find similar statements. Vera (AG3) who, like Vadim (AG3), was recruited spontaneously in the city archive, straight away mentions the mass killing of the Jewish population when the first question about the occupation period is posed. The interview with her illustrates the importance of communicative memory: Vera turns out to be one of the best informed respondents regarding the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish community. During the interview she reveals the origin of this broad knowledge - a general interest in the topic and long conversations with one of the archivists have contributed to it but also conversations with 'well my relatives, those who were native Rostovians, who lived in the centre, they, old women told them, that is, somehow like that, more or less, this was passed on.'⁴⁷⁷ Regarding the gathering of the Jews, Vera mentions an aspect that could not be verified in the sources stored at the GARO and GARF, although the main context is in line with the historical facts: 'As far as I understand, all Jews were given documents to appear at a certain hour of a certain day, there were assembly points, from where they were simply removed and shot.'⁴⁷⁸ It is possible that during the registration process the registrars received such a document, the order to appear at the gathering points and that an additional announcement appeared a few days later. However, the relevant sources only mention the public appeal that was published in *Golos Rostova* and was additionally attached to houses and churches, according to the aforementioned contemporary witness Lina Pravdneva who reported to the ChGK.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., (22:39-23:41).

⁴⁷⁶ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (16:49-17:13).

⁴⁷⁷ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (05:24-05:37).

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., (03:42-03:53).

⁴⁷⁹ 'Dokladnaya zapiska', list 5.

Vadim (AG3) knows where exactly in the city centre one of the collecting points mentioned in the announcements was situated. He refers to a school near *Gazetnyy pereulok*, where today the main synagogue of Rostov's Jewish community is still located and knows that people walked from there to the Zmievskaia Balka. Asked about the origin of this knowledge, Vadim says that a local historian had told him about it. His school had furthermore invited war veterans who then told him and his classmates about how the Jews had been addressed as evacuees by the occupiers.⁴⁸⁰ Even though he is one of the youngest respondents and his family lived in Baku during the war, Vadim is also well informed in terms of the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish community, as will be further illustrated in the part on knowledge about the Holocaust within this chapter. Other interviews demonstrate how personal and relevant the historic events can continue to be for Rostovians today, as the second family interview demonstrates: During the lively discussion, Galina (AG2) and Lidiya (AG1) first of all also deliver important details regarding the gathering process and how they interpret it. According to them,

GZ: at the bank, that is, on the territory of today's bank, ehm, was the commandant's office. And the first command which was: All Jews have to appear there. Ehm, that is....

LA: Jews with their valuables and documents.

GZ: With their children and belongings. That is, that was the first of the commands. And that is why here they speak of Rostov's Holocaust in particular. Because the Jews were shot and that is why all were brought there to the ravine.⁴⁸¹

It is only in this interview that a respondent specifically refers to the events as the 'Rostovian Holocaust'. Galina adds that she spoke with contemporary witnesses a lot and received much of the information she and her family members share during the interview from them.⁴⁸² Her family was also personally affected by the annihilation of Rostov's Jewry, Galina stresses: Her aunt who had married a Ukrainian from Rostov moved to Rostov in 1941 while the rest of the family, including Galina's grandparents and father, stayed in the Far East. According to Galina and her father Grigoriy, her uncle was murdered at the Zmievskaia Balka because he was Jewish, as Galina remembers learning from her grandmother. Her younger sister Marina (AG2) was told a different story about their uncle and during the interview, Galina, Marina and their

⁴⁸⁰ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (09:12-09:34).

⁴⁸¹ FI2/GZ, AG2, LA, AG1, 22 October, (17:51-18:11).

⁴⁸² FI2/GZ, AG2, 22 October, (20:06.20:11).

father are unsure which story of the family narrative is correct. All three agree that the uncle had not been drafted for military service when the war broke out because of his ill health and was therefore in Rostov when the city was occupied by the *Wehrmacht*. Marina argues he was then picked merely by coincidence because of what she terms his 'Jewish' looks. 'There weren't any Jewish relatives. I don't know if he had some distant blood, he was taken because of his looks. ... Because he was dark-skinned, dark, curly and tall. Only because of these features.'⁴⁸³

The assumption that non-Jewish Rostovians were falsely identified by the Germans as Jews is insinuated in other interviews as well. Oksana (AG2) suggests that 'it hit Armenians, Jews, and just brunettes as well, who didn't match the phenotype, the image of what a representative of the Aryan race should be.'⁴⁸⁴ At a later stage of the interview she stresses this racial aspect once more and argues that apart from Jews, other Rostovians who likewise did not match the criteria of the racial theory fell victim to the occupiers.⁴⁸⁵ Vika's (AG2) theory, on the contrary, is that it might have been an advantage that there were many 'Jewish-looking' Rostovians: 'Many were saved because the city is half Armenian. That is dark-skinned and black-haired were present, dark-eyed.'⁴⁸⁶ Vika refers to the reported cases when non-Jewish Rostovians helped their Jewish neighbours or friends that seem to be inscribed into the local collective memory.⁴⁸⁷ The opposite case of Rostovians who betrayed Jews, however is also part of the narratives described in many interviews. Given the fact that the topic of how the mainly Russian population of Rostov behaved towards the Jews by either hiding them or otherwise delivering them to the enemy proved to be rather ambivalent during the interviews, it will be discussed in an individual part on collaboration within this chapter.

Awareness of the public appeal addressed to the Jewish population did not always have an influence on who respondents termed to be the victims of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity. Valeriya (AG2) straight away speaks of the mass killing of Jews without mentioning the public announcement. She points out that the Germans generally behaved brutally towards the civilian population and arbitrarily shot one hundred Rostovians for one dead German soldier and mentions the mass atrocity against

⁴⁸³ FI2/MF, AG2, 22 October, (16:32-17:07).

⁴⁸⁴ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (03:51-04:06).

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., (13:29-13:44).

⁴⁸⁶ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (09:52-10:05).

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., (23:09-23:19).

Jews separately.⁴⁸⁸ Nadezhda (AG2) is also aware that the Zmievskaia Balka is an area where the execution of Jews took place. Asked what she would term the main facts about the occupation period, her answer is 'well, first of all there is of course our, what's the, ... this, in Ukraine there's Babi Yar, you probably know, where a lot of Jews were shot here, some ravine, I forgot what it's called.'⁴⁸⁹ The reason why she is sure that mainly Jews were shot in the ravine outside the city is revealed in the course of the interview: Nadezhda recalls the story of a Jewish woman who had shared a *komunalka*-flat with Nadezhda's grandmother when the Germans captured Rostov and Nadezhda had lived in the same flat as a child:

Mama lived on Sadovaya street with grandmother, in the city centre, the house is still there now, with the big balcony, it was a big communal flat, and there lived a Jewess, a woman, and mama said, I remember it like this. And mama and grandmother, they were Russian, when they came to get them, the Germans came straight away, well, I don't know, somebody had betrayed them, because they went from address to address straight away, very targeted, and picked up the Jews. And mama said when they came and she understood that they came for her, she said, she cried so loud and said: "Dusya!" my grandmother was called Dusya, "Dusya, Dusya, well tell them I'm not at all Jewish!" ... Mama said, "I was little, I remember so well how she cried "well tell them, well tell them that I'm not a Jewess"." But they took her away nevertheless.⁴⁹⁰

The interview with Nadezhda illustrates very well how through communicative memory historical information is transported in an emotionally framed narrative from one generation to another. The story about her grandmother's Jewish neighbour has shaped her entire interpretation of what happened to the Jews in occupied Rostov. She reckons, 'I think that these memories, they are somehow in me and I think that that is good.'⁴⁹¹ Her school education also had an important part in shaping her view on the past, Nadezhda adds. Each year on Victory Day and 21 June meetings with veterans were organised by her school. It was on such an occasion that Nadezhda learned what had happened at the Zmievskaia Balka, she recalls: 'We had these thematical talks ... these veterans, ehm, they told us, told us about this horror, about this execution.'⁴⁹²

Concluding, Nadezhda clearly interprets the mass killing at the Zmievskaia Balka as a crime committed in the context of the Holocaust. Her story and a few more that were

⁴⁸⁸ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (03:17-03:34).

⁴⁸⁹ NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (09:02-09:17).

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., (09:27-10:32).

⁴⁹¹ NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (07:19-07:34).

⁴⁹² Ibid., (11:39-12:10).

described by other respondents are as close as any of the interviews conducted for this study could get to the history of the Holocaust in Rostov. They are able to transport the victim's perspective and illustrate that, at least in this case, the victim was aware of the imminent danger. The same applies to the story Konstantin (AG2) recalls in his interview. During the occupation, his grandmother had hid a Jewess she had worked for as a maid since the early nineteen-thirties, thus saving this woman's life. The two women had a close relationship after the war when Konstantin's grandmother took care of the older woman. Konstantin still refers to her as 'Baba Franya', granny Franya. His home, a house not far from the Zmievkva ravine, where the interview was conducted, was also the place where his grandmother hid Franya for the entire occupation period:

KR: But the war began and she hid her. And she took her to her home, she lived here with her. She hid her, hid her.

CW: During the occupation?

KR: Yes, during the occupation.

AL: Well, they murdered the Jews.

KR: Well yes, that's what I'm saying. We have this, well this, at the Zmievskaia Balka, have you been there?

CW: Yes, of course.

KR: You were? Many died... And well, she, this aunty ran away, went into hiding here at her place.⁴⁹³

According to Konstantin, Franya managed to escape to his grandmother's house which at that time was near the zoological garden, one of the execution sites, after her husband, a medical doctor, had been arrested. Because his knowledge is mainly based on communicative memory, Konstantin knows that the Zmievskaia Balka is an area where Jews were murdered but he does not know exact facts, for instance how the victims were identified as Jews. Asked how, to his knowledge, the crime was prepared he does not mention the public appeal and reckons that the Jews were identified by their documents and due to denunciations. The latter aspect will be commented in-depth in the chapter *Holocaust*.

Konstantin's and Nadezhda's interpretation of the mass killing in Rostov as a part of a genocide demonstrates the strong impact of communicative memory because both grew up at a time when the official narrative neglected this historic truth. Konstantin's knowledge is mainly based on the fact that he grew up with this personal story of a survivor, which then generated a general interest in the subject and in the history of

⁴⁹³ KR, AG2, 12 October, (05:18-05:37).

World War II as well as the Stalin era. Konstantin's daughter Aleksandra (AG3) who was interviewed several days before her father shares his interest in history and the history of the Holocaust in her hometown. Originally an accountant, she attended a special history course at Rostov State University. Aleksandra is also present during the interview with her father and assumes that it was only due to the memorial plaque that people found out who the majority of victims of the mass killing were. Her father argues that he knew before the plaque was installed and points to the fact that the Holocaust was silenced for a long time. Similar to her father, much of Aleksandra's knowledge about the war period is based on communicative memory, mainly from the family narrative. Conversations with old neighbours of hers who lived near the house where her great-grandmother hid Franya added to this knowledge. Her great-grandmother, who died when Aleksandra was a teenager, did however not tell her about the horrors of the occupation period, 'maybe she didn't want to because after all I was a child', as she puts it.⁴⁹⁴ Aleksandra also points to the aspect of traumatising during the interview and thinks her great-grandmother, like other contemporary witnesses, did not talk about the atrocities to protect others.⁴⁹⁵ In spite of that, the old woman shared some memories with her great-granddaughter such as the aforementioned story about people helping each other by sharing food and the strong solidarity the occupation brought about among ordinary Rostovians. Aleksandra also knows through communicative memory that particularly Jews were selected or betrayed to the occupiers by people who collaborated with the Nazis. Much of her knowledge regarding the annihilation of the Jewish population is however also based on the university class Aleksandra is attending. Given her unique family history, her professor encouraged her to write a paper about the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity and many of the historic facts she presents in the interview are based on her research for this paper, whereas her school education is not relevant in this respect. Aleksandra grew up at a period of transition which at the end was marked by the collapse of the Soviet political system. Even years after the end of the Soviet Union, teachers still had to use Soviet school books, therefore history lessons still focused on the Soviet narrative and Volgograd, she argues. School education at least in her case therefore did not have any impact on Aleksandra's knowledge about the Holocaust, particularly because it was, as she puts it, something that did not affect anyone: 'When I was sent to school, the Soviet Union still existed, history was narrow-

⁴⁹⁴ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (01:11-01:15).

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., (09:00-09:10).

mindful and the Jewish question didn't concern anyone, we learned how great our soldiers were, that Stalin was great and all the rest.'⁴⁹⁶

Interestingly, Yuriy, (AG3) who is only one year older than Aleksandra and also remembers that at his school old Soviet school books were still used in the mid-1990s, argues that even though the occupation of Rostov was still silenced during his school years, the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity was not. He learned about it during a school visit to the memorial:

YI: Well, at that time it was and stays a big monument, therefore you couldn't escape it, there certainly was no chance. They told us about it.

CW: The teacher?

YI: Yes, the teacher. This, this wasn't in the textbooks. It was one, two hours, or three, I don't remember.⁴⁹⁷

Yuriy knows that Jews were one of the main victim groups and he thinks 'that anyone who has read a little bit, at least a tiny bit about it, yes, I'm one hundred percent sure', knows this as well.⁴⁹⁸ He has watched Schindler's list and thinks it was 'one of the truest films about the war.'⁴⁹⁹ Although he heard a lot about the war from his relatives and others, like, for instance, a former veteran who was one of his colleagues at a construction site, Yuriy says, most of his knowledge is based on books.⁵⁰⁰ Only later during the interview he mentions a former close friend of his, a Jewish girl he went to school with. Yuriy's mother Mariya (AG1) adds that some of the girl's family members were among the victims of the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy, as the girl's grandmother, a friend of the family, had told her: 'I don't know who, whether it was the grandfather, the grandmother or the aunt. Well. But they shot them, because she told me. That's a family I was friends with.'⁵⁰¹ It is likely that this knowledge was also shared in the family, as a particular episode Yuriy's mother mentions illustrates: The Jewish girl's grandmother had called Maria to tell her that her granddaughter had received a new passport: 'When she received the passport, she called me: "You know what, Masha, they wrote 'Russian' into Zhenya's passport." It was kind of such a joy

⁴⁹⁶ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (14:02-14:07).

⁴⁹⁷ FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:14:26-1:14:48).

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., (1:20:10-1:20:29).

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., (1:37:46-1:38:04).

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., (1:26:35-1:26:56).

⁵⁰¹ FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:32:23-1:32:31).

that they didn't write 'Jewish'.⁵⁰² Yuriy's immediate question if fear was still the reason is followed by Maria's response 'Well, all of this, after all, she's an old woman, do you understand?'.⁵⁰³ This mother-son-dialogue illustrates very well how knowledge about the special status of Jews in the Soviet Union and about their fate under the Nazis is something both are aware of.

In the depicted cases of Konstantin's, Marina's and Yuriy's family, personal contacts with Jewish Rostovians have played an essential role in shaping these respondents' conception of the history of the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy in terms of the victim groups. Vika (AG2) is yet another example. Her Jewish neighbour, with whom she has been friends for a very long time, survived the war as a teenager because she and her family evacuated before the occupation of Rostov. According to Vika, it is not only from conversations with her but also through her lecturer who witnessed the entire occupation, and other contemporary witnesses that Vika knows so many details about the annihilation of Rostov's Jews. She also names Evgeniya Ginzburg's book *Krutoy marshrut*, Harsh route, about the Stalinist terror as an important source in terms of Jewish suffering in the USSR. According to her, she is so well informed about this tragic part of history because of her interest in history, 'if it is connected to Rostov, fate has connected me to it, I am from Rostov, and around me are different people, Jews among others'.⁵⁰⁴ Valentina (AG1) also had a Jewish friend, a girl the same age who survived because family and neighbours hid her.⁵⁰⁵ Valentina is Armenian and her ethnic background clearly has an influence on her interpretation of the mass atrocity because she demonstrates a greater awareness of its genocidal aspect than other respondents and also links the crime directly to the Armenian genocide. To her, what happened in the Zmievka ravine was a part of the Holocaust and she is convinced that there were few non-Jewish victims, 'a few people, the rest were Jews'.⁵⁰⁶ She mentions other Jewish friends of hers, all of whom lost relatives at the Zmievskaia Balka: 'I had a friend, she played the violin in our symphonic orchestra. Twelve of her father's people perished, and they all did there, at Zmievka. My boss, he was also Jewish, ... he also lost many'⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰² Ibid., (1:31:22-1:31:35).

⁵⁰³ FI1/MR, AG1, YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:31:35-1:31:41).

⁵⁰⁴ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (27:50-28:02).

⁵⁰⁵ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (21:05-21:19).

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., (18:41-19:00).

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., (36:23-36:50).

Greater awareness or knowledge of the Holocaust is not causally linked to the mere contact with Jews, the interviews demonstrate. Sometimes, to the contrary, the topic is deliberately ignored in Jewish-non-Jewish acquaintances, as in the case of Valeriya (AG2) who does not talk about the annihilation of the Jews with her Jewish friend, 'even though she was born before the war.'⁵⁰⁸ Valeriya nevertheless knows that her friend's family evacuated before the invasion of Rostov. She does not go into further detail why they disregard the Holocaust but argues 'well, let's put it this way, it happened, yes, well it happened, but...no, we don't touch on these questions.' Her motives for not wanting to talk about the Holocaust with her friend remain unclear during the interview. As previously outlined, Valeriya mentions the mass killing at the beginning of the interview before talking about her friend, and leaves no doubt that she interprets it as a crime against mainly the Jewish population. Therefore one possible motive for not addressing the subject is the wish to protect her friend. Mikhail (AG2) who met his Jewish friends through work, also never talks about the war and Holocaust with them. 'Well, and why should we?', he argues.⁵⁰⁹ In the course of the interview he does at first not seem to know what happened in the Zmievka ravine and reckons it is a place where combat actions took place. Only when the interviewer addresses the number of Jewish victims killed in the ravine, Mikhail says he knows that it is a place where Jews were executed. He stresses that he also visited the memorial and read the inscription of the plaque which speaks of 27,000 Jewish victims. Mikhail's interview is however interesting for two reasons. First of all, he is the only respondent who does not refer to the suffering of the civilian population during the occupation of Rostov. Unlike the other respondents, he instead stresses that the Soviets did much harm, too. During the interview he explains how his knowledge about the war was formed, which partly explains his differing point of view. His mother, a local historian, had told him a lot, yet for Mikhail another aspect evidently shaped his view on history, as the following passage illustrates:

⁵⁰⁸ VT, AG2, 19 October 2011, (13:45-13:52).

⁵⁰⁹ MK, 16 October 2011, (24:00-24:04).

CW: That means, you, you, those things you know, you know them because you heard about them, correct?

MK: Well, of course, simply, yes. Well, first of all, my mother is a local historian from whom I could hear these things. And secondly, sort of...and later... generally speaking, the family was persecuted. My grandfather sat in Kolyma for nineteen years.⁵¹⁰

Mikhail's grandfather was German, yet he refers to this part of the family history only once and indirectly during the interview. The experience of oppression within the family and consequently its presence in the family memory shaped his entire view on the war, as several examples within the interview illustrate. As was mentioned before, Mikhail does not speak of any of the aspects of suffering described previously. Instead, he gives examples that belittle German guilt and names contemporary witnesses as the sources of this knowledge. Particularly his interpretation of the perpetrators' behaviour and the assumption that they had no choice but to obey orders demonstrates an inner disunity that is displayed several times during the interview: Knowing that the Germans were perpetrators who killed innocent civilians in Rostov and elsewhere, confronts him with an opposing picture of Germans who can no longer be seen as victims as in his family's case.⁵¹¹ He dissolves the conflict by arguing that the soldiers had to follow orders, thereby implying a widespread excuse of then perpetrators who argued that they did not act upon their own decisions. Hereby, it was possible for him to stick to a narrative that shed a different and more positive light on German occupation policy. His example shows the influence family memory can have in terms of a persons' perception and interpretation of the past even if the collective memory of the society that person belongs to is much contrary.

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Mikhail's interpretation of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity is but one example how many respondents did not view the mass killing as a crime that was first of all a part of the Holocaust. Indeed, various interpretations in terms of the victims of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity are expressed in the interviews. Throughout all three age groups, respondents argue that apart from Jews, 'communists' or 'civilians' were targeted by the Nazis, some also speak of 'Russians' or 'Slavs' instead of civilians.

⁵¹⁰ MK, AG2, 16 October 2011, (17:29-17:52).

⁵¹¹ Ethnic Germans were considered collaborators by the Soviet authorities and faced long prison sentences, as is exemplified by Mikhail's grandfather's time in Kolyma, one of the country's Gulags which was situated in Siberia.

Only few interviewees, yet also from all three age groups, mention Soviet prisoners of war, the very first victims who dug the ditches a few days before the mass killing and were shot upon completion. Thus, although she is well informed about the Holocaust and does not question that it was also implemented on Russian territory, Lybov (AG1) does not link the Zmievskaia Balka mass killing to it and instead argues that it was probably an act of retaliation that raids were carried out and Rostovians were arbitrarily arrested and then brought to the ravine to be shot there.⁵¹² Interestingly Lyubov nevertheless gives a description of how the annihilation of the Jews of Kiev at the Babi Yar ravine was prepared, including the announcement that Jews had to gather bringing their valuables in order to be resettled. She either does not seem to know or mixes the facts that in Rostov, too, a similar public announcement was made [l]ike they did it in Ukraine. ... They announced it and hung up lists everywhere. 'Tomorrow you will be brought to some town, bring your things with you.'⁵¹³

Indeed, raids and arbitrary executions characterised both the first as well as the second occupation of Rostov. Members of *Sonderkommando* 10a searched for partisans, Jews and communists throughout Rostov and in the POW-camp on Tonel'naya street and selected approximately seventy people for execution. The shootings were conducted in the former sandpit.⁵¹⁴ Lyubov's description of raids are akin to Angrick's findings, therefore it could be this initial phase of the occupation her account refers to. Eyewitness testimonies the ChGK collected also name shootings before and after the mass killing in August 1942 and speak of a period of constant smaller executions that lasted until December 1942.⁵¹⁵ Lyubov's depiction could therefore also refer to those later executions. In terms of the origin of her knowledge, she argues that she read many books and watched films about the war. She also refers to communicative memory because she is convinced that everybody in Rostov knows what happened at the Zmievskaia Balka. 'Well, everybody here knows this ... I simply think that's how it is. Of course, I'm not sure but I think that everybody knows.'⁵¹⁶ Lyubov is not the only respondent who argues that the victims of the mass execution were 'simply

⁵¹² LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (07:25-07:35).

⁵¹³ Ibid., (10:45-11:10).

⁵¹⁴ Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 561.

⁵¹⁵ See for instance testimony of Mariya Trufanova (24 November 1943): 'This nasty barbaric evil deed began on 2 August 1942 and went on on a daily basis until December 1942.' GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 18.

⁵¹⁶ LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (12:10-12:21).

townspeople'⁵¹⁷, as she puts it. Since her family evacuated to Baku until her hometown was liberated, neither she nor her relatives witnessed the occupation of Rostov. Lyubov was therefore informed about what happened during the occupation mainly through Soviet books and films that usually complied with official Soviet propaganda, and most likely through contemporary witnesses who had stayed in Rostov when the Germans invaded. Moreover, she has no personal contact with Jews. This could be a possible explanation for her interpretation of the events which is more or less in line with the neutral Soviet paraphrase. In this respect, her case seems to confirm Mannheim's postulation, that 'the older generation cling to the re-orientation that had been the drama of *their* youth'⁵¹⁸. Yet Lyubov's interview should rather be interpreted as an example for the mere continuity of a particular Soviet terminology used by people who lived most of their lives under Soviet rule. The fact that Lyubov mentions important details about the Babi Yar massacre leaves no doubt that she knows of the persecution and annihilation of Jews on Soviet territory and in Rostov: 'Well, Jews were shot everywhere. Why only in Rostov?'⁵¹⁹

To other respondents the Nazi racial policy served as the main explanation why Jews and other victim groups were targeted. Oksana's (AG2) aforementioned assumption that other victim groups of the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy included, apart from Jews, Armenians, Russians, gypsies as well as Tatars is based on her interpretation that the victims were picked according to racial aspects. She recalls learning about the Nazis racial ideology at school. As previously outlined, non-Jewish Rostovians were indeed likewise killed in the gulch near the village Zmievska as the Nazis implemented the racial doctrine in the field by targeting also at children of mixed marriages. Often, non-Jewish spouses joined their Jewish husbands or wives in the alleged transport to a safe place, as announced by the Germans, and died with them.⁵²⁰ Yet Oksana's perception of what happened is based on the assumption that people were picked not only because they were Jews but also randomly because their appearance resembled what the occupiers determined typically Jewish or not according to Aryan racial standards. When the question is posed by the interviewer, how the victims were selected, she additionally mentions communists: 'They processed all the documents. They worked very neatly

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., (07:41-07:45).

⁵¹⁸ K. Mannheim, The problem of generations, in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), *Karl Mannheim: Essays* (1952). pp. 300-301.

⁵¹⁹ LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (08:26-08:53).

⁵²⁰ Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR*, Entsiklopediya (2011), p. 868.

with the *politsay*. They processed the phenotype very neatly. Not only Jews. Communists were also targeted⁵²¹ Although Oksana's point of view regarding the victim groups is verified at least indirectly by the fact that the non-Jewish spouses may have been Armenians, Russians or Tartars, the core of hers as well as Marina's and Vika's assumption - that the victims of the Zmievskaia Balka mass killing were chosen for racial reasons merely because of their phenotype - could not be verified in any of the perpetrator sources or the Soviet Extraordinary Commission's files. This, however, is not necessarily proof that the occupiers did not proceed as suggested by Oksana and the other two respondents. According to Angrick, members of *Einsatzkommando* 6 of *Einsatzgruppe* C searched for Jews and others marked *Reichsfeinde* once *Sonderkommando* 10a had left Rostov shortly after the mass killing at the Zmievskaia Balka.⁵²² A possible explanation for this perception according to which not only Jews but various ethnical groups were among the victims is therefore that relatives of those non-Jewish victims communicated about the fate of their family members, thus establishing the narrative. This also applies to other respondents' assumptions like for instance Timofey's or Raissa's - that Russians or, more general, civilians belonged to the victims of the mass atrocity. Yet, unlike Timofey (AG1) who does not go into detail why Russians were executed together with Jews, Raissa (AG1) reckons that the civilians murdered at the Zmievskaia Balka were no arbitrary victims 'but they first of all shot those under suspicion of being in the partisan movement and (pause) Jewish nationals.'⁵²³

Evgeniya (AG3), a history graduate, to the contrary thinks the civilian casualties were killed for different reasons and argues 'that these weren't only Jews, yes, but also others, who basically weren't of any use at that time to the power that had come to the Don.'⁵²⁴ Asked what exactly these reasons might have been, Evgeniya stresses that it was mainly one reason why the civilians were executed - because they were considered unnecessary for different reasons among which Jewishness was only one. Interestingly, she also mentions the announcement and the gathering process that preceded the execution, however to her knowledge, which, according to her, is based on university lectures in history, the announcement did not apply exclusively to Jews: 'I think that, why were they gathered at one place, at one time the order was announced and they

⁵²¹ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (15:22-15:37).

⁵²² Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord*, p. 565.

⁵²³ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (24:19-24:44).

⁵²⁴ EK, AG3, 28 September 2011, (05:30-05:37).

were all killed.⁵²⁵ Evgeniya admits not knowing as much about the Holocaust on Russian territory as she knows about the annihilation of European Jewry in general. Her interpretation of the events in Rostov and her home town Taganrog where a similar, yet smaller massacre of the Jewish population was conducted is adjusted to her overall understanding of the Holocaust which, as she stresses, cannot be reduced to merely the annihilation of Jews:

I was talking about gypsies, about Jehova's witnesses, about homosexuals and the mentally ill. That is, individual principles applied to each of the victims according to which they were treated, that is either total annihilation, or the impossibility to reproduce.⁵²⁶

Vera also notes that 'apart from the Jews patients of the psychiatric hospital were also killed there.'⁵²⁷ Similar to Oksana's and Evgeniya's approach, Vera reasons that it was therefore not only a matter of their Jewish nationality why people were exterminated but that the killings partly also underlay the Nazi eugenics programme.⁵²⁸ Oksana (AG2) who works in a medical research centre also mentions patients of a clinic who were murdered by the occupiers. It remains unclear whether she refers to the mentally ill from the local psychiatric clinic who died in German gas vans or to the patients of a military hospital whose suffering is described in a ChGK-file from 27 October 1943.⁵²⁹ Oksana notes that the victims were shot to death which hints at the patients of the military hospital, many of whom were executed:⁵³⁰

My students did a test about the hospital and when I posed the question "and when the Germans came, where were these sick people unable to walk brought?" Nowhere, they simply shot them and that was it.⁵³¹

Concluding, we can identify three main interpretative approaches regarding the non-Jewish civilian victims of the Zmievskaia Balka mass execution: Respondents either assumed 1. that these civilians were chosen for execution because they did not comply with the Nazi's (racial) ideal and were considered unnecessary or unworthy of living, 2. the victims had helped partisans or 3. that civilians were randomly gathered during raids and executed as an act of retaliation. Throughout all age groups a small number of

⁵²⁵ Ibid., (06:15-06:24).

⁵²⁶ EK, AG3, 28 September 2011, (08:01-08:17).

⁵²⁷ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (04:24-04:31).

⁵²⁸ Ibid., (04:31-04:45).

⁵²⁹ 'Akt no. 1706', TsDNIRO, fond 1886, opis' 1, delo 22, list 73-5.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., list 74.

⁵³¹ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (08:40-08:56).

respondents also named communists as a victim group apart from Jews thus rather stressing the ideological-political component of the crime. Thus, like Oksana, Tamara (AG2), who is convinced that first and foremost Jews were persecuted and executed in Rostov merely because of their Jewish nationality, argues that to her knowledge communists or those thought to be communists were also among the victims.⁵³²

Tamara has no doubt that many other Rostovians also know that mainly Jews were shot in the former sandpit and argues that everybody who was in the Soviet youth organisation Young Pioneers learned about the history of the site at school and during regular visits to the memorial at the *subbotniks*, Saturday volunteer work before the main parade on 9 May, which were part of the socialist education.

TO: We worked there, tidied up and on 9 May we always lay flowers there.

That's why, all in all, every pupil knows about this here.

CW: And were you also told there...

TO: of course...

CW: ...that these were Jews?

TO: Yes.⁵³³

Hereby, Tamara mentions a very important aspect that affected generations of Soviet pupils who engaged in the Young Pioneers movement from the mid-1960s onwards. Like her, other respondents mention school or even kindergarten visits to the memorial and remember learning about the mass killing including its victims there, contrary to the usual Soviet practice of silencing the victims of the Holocaust. Nadezhda's (AG2) example was already introduced earlier and resembles Tamara's experience. It underlines the uniformity of the educational system because the two women are nearly of the same age and both experienced the same commemoration practices including meetings with World War II-veterans. Katya (AG3), who is at first unsure about the victims and speaks of 'locals', later in the interview with her father Fedor says that the interview situation had brought back memories of a preschool visit to the memorial where she and the other children learned that it is a place where Jews were killed.⁵³⁴

Katya is the not only study participant who has visited the memorial during an organised visit in post-Soviet Russia. Vadim (AG3) reports about a 2007 visit to the memorial organised by his school to mark the anniversary of the mass execution. The event had taken place four years before the interview was conducted and was hosted by

⁵³² TO, AG2, 4 October 2011, (11:16-11:33).

⁵³³ Ibid., (12:23-12:37).

⁵³⁴ KS/2, AG3, 21 September 2011, (00:03-00:19).

the Jewish community of Rostov. According to Vadim, it involved an oecumenical service held by the city's Chief Rabbi Chaim Friedman and a Russian orthodox priest. Vadim's statement underlines an important aspect both in terms of the official treatment of the mass atrocity by religious communities in Rostov and how twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union certain educational aspects and commemoration practices that have its origin in Soviet times have endured. Even though Vadim is unsure during the interview if a Russian orthodox priest attended the ceremony, the author can confirm that the 2012 anniversary included an oecumenical ceremony and service as she attended the event herself. In addition to his visit to the memorial, he attended meetings with World War II-veterans also organised by his school where he learned about the mass execution, 'they told us at school when they came for the *veteranskiy*'.⁵³⁵

Only few interviewees name Soviet prisoners of war as another victim group. This is interesting insofar, as it is de facto the only victim group that was commemorated officially immediately after the war and thirty years before the memorial complex was erected that honoured the predominantly civilian victims of the massacre as 'victims of Nazism'.⁵³⁶ As was mentioned earlier, the first Zmievskaia-Balka-memorial was a sculpture in the form of two Red Army soldiers, yet none of the respondents refer to this former monument. Aleksandra (AG1), who also participated in an organised visit to the memorial with her school class, had likewise argued that the Zmievska ravine is a place where the occupiers killed 'not only Jews. There was also a regiment of soldiers'.⁵³⁷ She explains that her grandmother had told her how soldiers and Jews were shot in the ravine by the Germans:

No, well I know about the Zmievskaia Balka since my childhood. When I was little, I thought that soldiers were shot there but then my grandmother explained that not only soldiers but also Jews were shot, as it turns out only civilians.⁵³⁸

Vika (AG2) not only knows of the prisoners of war who had to prepare the ditches for the mass execution, she also mentions a POW-camp from where the soldiers were brought to Rostov.⁵³⁹ In an interrogation with former *Sonderkommando* 10a-member

⁵³⁵ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (09:12-09:26).

⁵³⁶ L. Voloshinova, 'Istoriya i sovremennost' Zmievskey balki', p. 213.

⁵³⁷ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (22:26-22:30).

⁵³⁸ Ibid., (28:52-29:11).

⁵³⁹ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (11:09-11:39). The information about the POW-camp does not correspond with the ChGK-files as these refer to the camp within the city of Rostov. Kurt Nachtigall, a former member of *Sonderkommando* 10a also refers to a camp in Rostov in his interrogation by public

Esskov during the Krasnodar trial of 1963, a POW-camp near Rostov is indeed mentioned. The distance between the two cities of Rostov and Novocherkassk is only 30 kilometres, it is therefore possible that the Soviet POWs who dug the ditches in the Zmievska ravine were brought to Rostov from there, as suggested by Vika. As outlined earlier, documents from the local ChGK nevertheless mention the POW-camp on *Tonel'naya* street which is within short distance from the execution site. One potential reason why Vika is so well informed about the complexity of the aspect of the victim groups is because she received her information from contemporary witnesses such as her lecturer, and her father who was among the liberators of Rostov. He also depicted the military perspective to her. Yet another aspect also needs to be considered: Born in the immediate post-war years, Vika was six years old when Stalin died and was consequently mainly socialised in the Khrushchev Thaw era, a time characterised by its critical view on Stalin. Furthermore, her family history reveals that some of her relatives were personally affected by the Stalinist repressions. As a result of this, Vika is very critical not only about the Soviet political era but also about today's political elite. This is reflected also in her interview: She makes several critical remarks such as pointing to the deliberate misinformation of the Soviet population during the German invasion due to which many Rostovians did not evacuate. As other interviews within this age group have demonstrated, challenging the official version of the Soviet narrative in terms of the victim groups was to some degree practised in the private sphere but also in semi-official situations such as the meetings with veterans or during visits to the Zmievska Balka memorial and museum. Vika's knowledge is historically correct and notably rich but it merely illustrates one end of the spectrum of what people *could* know about the Holocaust in Rostov. Her interest in the wartime period and close relationship with her father is apparent throughout the entire interview and she stresses that both aspects depend on each other. Remembering the war and honouring what happened is 'holy', she argues, 'because for me this is attached to daddy, daddy told me a lot, me and my sister.'⁵⁴⁰ Konstantin is comparably well informed and draws from the same sort of sources as Vika, that is, conversations with contemporary witnesses and, in his case, even a survivor. The two also have in common that they were critical towards the Soviet system when it was still in place.

prosecutor Gäbhard in 1969. Testimony of Kurt Nachtigall (24 January 1969), Central Office, USHMM 14.101 M, B 162/1.232, p. 4293.

⁵⁴⁰ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (37:31-37:43).

Stereotypes

Two interviews stick out regarding the aspect of the victim groups and thus deserve a closer analysis. Both contain a subtle undertone that becomes more intense in the course of the interviews and can best be described as expressions of a revisionist and anti-Semitic tendency. Like other interviewees from all age groups, Alena (AG2) and Bogdan (AG3) both note that Jews and Russians or Slavs were the victims of the mass killing near the village Zmievka. Yet, both stress that Russians were the main victims. Bogdan is convinced that 80 per cent of the victims were Russians who were thought to be Jews.⁵⁴¹ He assumes that there was probably no selection but instead anyone opposing was shot. In his interpretation of the historic events he questions the implementation of the Holocaust on Soviet territory: 'All the more, there was no such idea as the Jewish question for the Germans on Soviet territory, as far as I know, or heard or read.'⁵⁴² In terms of the mass atrocity committed in his home town, he is also not convinced that there is sufficient proof that the victims were Jews. When the interviewer assures him that she studied files stored in the State Archive of Rostov Oblast, he is nevertheless not convinced, and argues that it was impossible to kill such a large number of people as is mentioned in the documents. Instead, he thinks that 3,000 Rostovians were shot in the Zmievka ravine.⁵⁴³ Bogdan argues that

BG: there was an order for total annihilation.

CW: Whose annihilation?

BD: Annihilation of the Slavs. That is Slavs, not specifically Russians, but also Belorussians, Poles, people from the Balkans, and so on.⁵⁴⁴

Asked about the origin of his knowledge, Bogdan's reply shows that his perception of the past is influenced by many factors. He read a lot and watched many Russian and western documentaries. He also mentions a neighbour of his whom he knew as a child and who had a number tattooed on his arm. Even then as a six-year-old Bogdan sensed that this was a delicate subject and therefore did not ask any questions about the man's wartime-experiences, he says. He argues that it is impossible to form an objective opinion, particularly at a time when the majority of veterans have passed away and the remaining number decreases each day. Bogdan concludes that 'it is hard to pass a judgement on this, it would simply be easier for me to form my own opinion if I was

⁵⁴¹ BG, AG3, 28 September 2011, (07:02-07:14).

⁵⁴² Ibid., (12:15-12:40).

⁵⁴³ Ibid., (43:26-43:48; 45:51-47:15; 07:02-07:14).

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., (12:50-13:04).

given some sort of direction in this context.⁵⁴⁵ Unlike the majority of the other interviewees, Bogdan questions the existence of the Holocaust on Soviet territory, although he is nevertheless convinced of its implementation elsewhere. To him, the focus of this war was however the attempt to annihilate the entire Soviet population, regardless of peoples' nationalities, which caused the high number of Soviet human losses, as he stresses during the interview.⁵⁴⁶ A possible explanation for his latent neglect of a specific Soviet-Jewish suffering during the GPW is his family history, though. Of aristocratic descent, his relatives were persecuted by the Soviet elite in the 1930s: 'My grandfather, in 1937 the NKVD took him away ... for a whole year. When he got out his hair had turned grey. But he nevertheless stayed a convinced communist ...'.⁵⁴⁷ It would seem only natural if Bogdan held a critical view of the policy and political elite of the time, given his grandfather's fate, yet he does not address this topic in greater detail. Earlier in the interview he nevertheless argues 'it seems funny to me that, if we delve just a little bit into a little part of history, ok, practically the entire leadership of the USSR were Jews.'⁵⁴⁸ Bogdan further notes that throughout Russia's history, Jews always had a large share of the overall population, and still have.⁵⁴⁹ Bearing in mind that Rostov was home to the third-largest Jewish community in Soviet Russia, his impression might be based on this heritage, yet compared to the city's total pre-war population, the share of Jews was not large (5,38 per cent) even before the Holocaust.⁵⁵⁰ The parallel Bogdan draws between the Soviet political elite and Jews, the myth of a Jewish Bolshevism, is however a common anti-Semitic prejudice first constructed by the Nazis, and recently repeated even by Russian president Vladimir

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., (14:48-14:59).

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., (34:10-35:00).

⁵⁴⁷ BG, AG3, 28 September 2011, (33:33-33:55).

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., (03:10-03:21).

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., (02:43-02:50).

⁵⁵⁰ Movshovich, *Ocherki istorii evreev na Donu*, p. 134. Today, the Jewish community of Rostov has about 12,000 members. A look at the statistics for the entire country illustrates that Jews always formed a minority both in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The census of 1897 concluded that 5,189,401 Jews lived in Tsarist Russia of the population, compared to an estimated 800,000 roughly one hundred years earlier in 1798, shortly after the third Polish partition of 1795. The number of Jews in the Soviet Union dropped to below two per cent of the total population between 1926 and 1939. Twenty years later, the first census after the war concluded that the number had decreased to 1,1 per cent of the total population, by 1980 it had even dropped to 0,7 per cent. The Aliya of the post-Soviet years led to a further decline. In 2008, Berl Lazar, Chief Rabbi of Russia, estimated the number of Jews in Russia was 1,2 million. <http://jewish-info.ru/site.php?id=1950&sid=692> (accessed 18 September 2011). 'Naselenie po natsional'nosti i vladeniyu Russkim yazykom po sub'ektom Rossiyskoy Federatsii', *Federal'naya Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoy Statistiki* (2010), http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-04.pdf [accessed 18 September 2014], p. 75. See also G. Stricker, 'Bleiben oder Gehen? Juden in Russland', *Ost West Europäische Perspektiven*, 3 (2008), pp. 209-216, 209.

Putin.⁵⁵¹ It is also brought up by Anna (AG3). The young student insinuates that it is unclear how many members of the Communist Party may have been Jews who changed their names such as Julius Martov whom she names an example. 'Jews always change their names, for example the name Tsiderbaum, they changed the name, we have Martov, a well-known political party figure, but he was actually Tsiderbaum, a Jew!'⁵⁵²

Concluding, Bogdan's opinion regarding the victims of the mass killing can at best be described as close to the Soviet narrative according to which civilians of various nationalities fell victim to the Nazis. He stresses several times that he does not distinguish between nationalities and speaks of 'Russians' as the main victim group. As has been demonstrated, he nevertheless also holds anti-Semitic views and this could partly explain why he is convinced that there was no specific persecution of Jews on Soviet territory as this would highlight the uniqueness of Jewish suffering compared to the suffering of the Russian population.

Like Bogdan, Alena (AG2) argues that Slavs formed the main victim group of the Zmievskaia Balka mass execution. She grew up in Taganrog near Rostov and is familiar with the annihilation of the city's Jewish community which happened on 29 October 1941. It was conducted in the same manner as in Rostov - people followed an order to gather at a public place, school no. 26, where they had to hand in their belongings and from where they were brought to the crime site *Petrushanskaya Balka*. A memorial was erected on the site after the war.⁵⁵³ Like other respondents did in terms of the memorial in Rostov, Alena remembers a school visit to the monument in Taganrog and being informed about the mass killing there. Although she is not informed about the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity, she does not question that Jews were also killed there. To her it is even logical that Rostov was not spared because 'the Germans did this everywhere, the fascists, I mean, in all the cities, why should our city be an exception?'⁵⁵⁴ Yet, she insists that Slavs were also victims of a specific genocidal policy.⁵⁵⁵ In this respect Alena's interpretation of the past equals Bogdan's as both speak of a genocidal intent that targeted Slavs. Still, contrary to Bogdan, Alena does not question the implementation of a distinct anti-Jewish policy on Soviet territory and

⁵⁵¹ Y. Yanover, 'Putin Perpetuates Antisemitic Lie of First Soviet 'Mostly Jewish'', *The Jewish Press* (20 June 2013), <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/putin-perpetuates-antisemitic-lie-of-first-soviet-mostly-jewish/2013/06/20/> [accessed 18 September 2014].

⁵⁵² AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (18:23-18:36).

⁵⁵³ Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 961-962.

⁵⁵⁴ AF, AG2, 18 October 2011, (07:58-08:08).

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, (10:00-10:09).

argues 'I know that the Jews were treated specially in this plan.'⁵⁵⁶ For one reason Alena's interview is however very special when compared to the rest because she exemplifies an ultra-Orthodox view on history. Like other respondents she names Jews and Slavs as victim groups but her attitude towards the victims differs very much from the rest of the interviewees. What does this mean concretely? Alena is a practising member of the Russian Orthodox Church and as such has a specific explanation for the Soviet war against Nazi-Germany. To her, communism was a sin because it banned religion. She therefore interprets the GPW as a punishment of God:

Well, the thing is, I am christian. I don't approach history from the point of view of providence, but considering that there is a God who is a living creature, who has his will. And he participates in our history. Correspondingly, what happened to us, to Russia, was not futile. Why - there was a massive defection and богоборчество and God simply left us.⁵⁵⁷

At a later stage of the interview, Alena explains in more detail how she interprets the history of the GPW, which to her has to be understood as a direct consequence of the disturbed relationship between God and the Russian people. Alena's interpretation is that the war, including its millions of victims, is causally connected to the Soviet state-atheism and elimination of religion which resulted also in the physical destruction of churches throughout Russia. In this interpretative approach, the Soviet decision to revive the Orthodox church (as a patriotic tool) is the reason for the defeat of Hitler-Germany, Alena explains.⁵⁵⁸ Alena's view on Jewish victimhood follows the same pattern, to her the Israeli people was punished whenever it receded from God.⁵⁵⁹ Even though she does not specifically say that she also interprets the Holocaust as a punishment of God, it is therefore apparent that Alena defines it as such

The two interviews with Bogdan and Alena illustrate another important aspect in terms of Holocaust remembrance. It is a form of everyday anti-Semitism reflected in classical anti-Jewish stereotypes and prejudices such as the already mentioned Jewish Bolshevism or Jews controlling the media, and insisting too much on their specific victimhood during the Holocaust while the Russian victim number is much higher. The latter aspect is highlighted particularly emotionally by Alena:

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., (09:00-10:09).

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., (17:29-18:01).

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., (18:50-19:22).

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., (18:34-18:46).

Everybody knows about this Holocaust! Everybody heard about it! ... It's imperative that there is something about the Holocaust on the TV screen ... they take every opportunity to mention the war so that they can talk about the Holocaust.⁵⁶⁰

The same stereotype appears in the interview with Anna (AG3). Like Alena, she thinks that even though Hitler's policy of annihilation targeted Russians as well, there is not enough commemoration of the war nowadays. The Holocaust to the contrary seems omnipresent to her because of a very active Jewish community that promotes the topic, she argues.⁵⁶¹ Alena's and Anna's perception does not coincide with the actual coverage of the Russian central press and their use of the word Holocaust, though. The numbers presented in the table below are based on research with the help of Integrum World Wide, a database for mass media monitoring that specifies in Russia. Table 2 presents the frequency of the terms Holocaust, Great Patriotic War and World War II in those years that included milestone anniversaries of the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of World War II. The increase in print media is accompanied by an increase in the use of all three terms between 1995 and 2010. The term Holocaust was however not used remotely as often as the other two terms which clearly indicates that the press coverage on the Holocaust was far smaller than the press coverage on war in general.

Table 2: *Increase in use of terms 'Holocaust', 'GPW', 'World War II'* in Russian central press, 1995-2010**

| | No. of documents central press | Use of word 'Holocaust' in cp documents | Use of word 'GPW' in cp documents | Use of word 'WWII' in cp documents |
|------|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1995 | 40,651 | 5 | 509 | 223 |
| 2000 | 270,279 | 198 | 5,406 | 2,332 |
| 2005 | 416,415 | 468 | 14,284 | 7,035 |
| 2010 | 612,823 | 507 | 19,773 | 11,192 |

Source: *Integrum World Wide*

* Two different ways of spelling were taken into consideration following the Russian standard spelling of proper nouns.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., (21:45-21:52).

⁵⁶¹ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (14:49-14:59).

The results also illustrate the dominance of the specific Russian view on World War II which is reduced to the period of 1941-1945 and the war against Nazi-Germany. Applied to regional print media, the results show a similar effect, although the increase in the use of all three terms is not as dynamic when compared to the overall increase of regional media that were included in the analysis.

Table 2.1: *Increase in use of terms 'Holocaust', 'GPW', 'World War II'* in Russian regional press, 1995-2010**

| | No. of documents regional press | Use of word 'Holocaust' in rp documents | Use of word 'GPW' in rp documents | Use of word 'WWII' in rp documents |
|------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1995 | 8,705 | 1 | 110 | 11 |
| 2000 | 538,162 | 75 | 17,274 | 1,534 |
| 2005 | 1.187,908 | 177 | 63,605 | 8,367 |
| 2010 | 1.759,790 | 372 | 101,003 | 13,406 |

Source: *Integrum World Wide*

* Two different ways of spelling were taken into consideration following the Russian standard spelling of proper nouns.

Finally, if we conduct the same search using option 'Central TV and Radio stations' instead of regional or central newspapers, the differences are not as grave as with regards to the print media. The results nevertheless also demonstrate a far smaller number of Holocaust-related shows when compared to the coverage of the war in general. Unfortunately, only one central radio station, *Ekho Moskvyy*, Echo of Moscow was actually gathered in this search, therefore no information was available on the TV-coverage.

Table 2.2.: *No. of TV and radio* coverage on Holocaust, GPW and World War II*

| | No. coverage on Holocaust | No. coverage on GPW | No. coverage on WWII |
|------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1995 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2000 | 1 | 27 | 51 |
| 2005 | 31 | 141 | 306 |
| 2010 | 43 | 290 | 472 |

Source: Integrum World Wide

*referred only to Ekho Moskvyy national radio station

The database results nevertheless prove that Alena's and Anna's impression regarding a disproportional coverage of Holocaust-related topics could not be verified in the data. Their perception that Jewish suffering is stressed too much compared to the far higher victim number of Russians or Slavs determines their opinion regarding the victim groups - and it seems to be shared by a large part of the Russian public: Berno-Bellekur's representative study concludes that 76 per cent of the study participants thought, Jews were interested in drawing attention to the Holocaust.⁵⁶² As was mentioned before, Berno-Bellekur's study also demonstrates that Alena's impression according to which everybody in Russia knows about the Holocaust does not correspond to the facts, both in terms of the victims and their numbers as well as the general knowledge what the term stands for.

Concluding, the question of the victims of the Zmievskaya Balka mass atrocity is split into two main interpretative approaches: While one group of respondents assesses it as a crime mainly against Jews, a (larger) group of respondents argues that Jews were shot in the Zmievskaya Balka, but so were representatives of other nationalities, as well as communists and Soviet prisoners of war. Depending on whether respondents had learned about the fate of Rostov's Jews through communicative memory or personal contacts with Jews, an interpretation in the Holocaust context proved to be more likely. Other factors such as the respondent's own familial history had a similar effect in terms of how the question of victims was assessed, Mikhail's and Bogdan's examples

⁵⁶² Berno-Bellekur, *socialno-psikhologicheskii analiz*, p. 33.

demonstrated. Bearing in mind that only Jews were addressed in the public appeal, yet many non-Jewish family members died with them, both approaches are correct in terms of the historical facts and therefore rather reveal generally different perceptions of the Nazi extermination policy.

Apart from the question who the respondents perceived as the victim groups of the mass atrocity, an equally difficult question is how many people were murdered in the Zmievka ravine. As we could see in the historiography chapter, the victim numbers are very difficult to determine in this case. The following passage illustrates how the interviewees assessed the scale of the crime.

Scale of the crime

Even though the public dispute about the replaced memorial plaque and the number of Jewish victims arose nearly two months after the completion of the interviews, the question of the victim numbers and share of Jewish victims among the overall victims has been difficult to answer since it first became debatable. To illustrate that this is not only restricted to scholarly work on the Holocaust in Rostov, the aspect of victim numbers is discussed separately and not as part of section three, *knowledge on Holocaust*. Even though the opening of archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed a first analysis of the ChGK-files that had hitherto been inaccessible, it was only in 1997 that the local media addressed the event. A first concrete figure appeared in the newspaper *Rostov ofitsial'nyy*. According to the already mentioned short note about a memorial event in the newspaper's August edition, 17,000 Jews were among the victims of the mass execution.⁵⁶³ Other figures included in an aforementioned ChGK-file were quoted in Jury Kalugin's film *Svobodno ot evreev - judenfrei* which was broadcast several times at a local TV station.⁵⁶⁴ The sixtieth anniversary of the mass killing in 2002 marked the beginning of regular press reports in some of the already quoted local newspapers *Molot*, *Rostov ofitsial'nyy* and *Vechernyy Rostov*. The newspapers quoted wide ranging numbers: Between 13,000 to 18,000, 20,000 and 27,000 were classified as Holocaust victims.⁵⁶⁵ *Molot* drew the comparison between

⁵⁶³ *Rostov ofitsial'nyy* no. 31 (August, 1997), p. 1.

⁵⁶⁴ The film quotes a ChGK-file which concludes that 15,000 to 18,000 'people' were murdered. The film with the specific sequence can be watched online on the website of the project '*Utrachennye imena*': <http://holocaust.su/video>, (23:24 min.) [accessed 27 January 2015].

⁵⁶⁵ I. Savitskaya, Zmievskaya Balka - eto vechnaya bol', *Vechernyy Rostov* (14 August 2007). V. Podozhnороva, 'Massovoy rasstrel evreev v Rostove', *Rostov ofitsial'noy* (14 August 2002), p. 2. N. Mirzabekova, 'Urok na poslezavtra', *Molot* (14 August 2007), p. 3.

Rostov and Kiev's Babi Yar and informed readers that no other place on the territory of the Russian Federation suffered this many Jewish losses. The fact that the above mentioned newspapers have a low circulation⁵⁶⁶ allows concluding that their impact on the respondents' knowledge or conjectures about the number of Jews who fell victim to the Nazi persecution, both locally and in general, was not high. Nevertheless, the media are an important potential source of information and their influence had to be taken into consideration for the results of the question on the victim numbers.

Throughout all three age groups respondents mentioned figures regarding the death toll of the mass killing on 11-12 August 1942. Most interviewees were however reluctant to name numbers because they feared these could be wrong or because they did not have any specific information. The numbers that appear throughout the interviews vary, some correspond with those mentioned in the press and the official victim number of 27,000 stated on the (former and current) memorial plaque, others appear very unrealistic and clearly below or above the victim numbers assumed by historians. Within the oldest age group, only Fedor and Valentina name numbers. Fedor at first seems unsure about the death toll, 'I don't know, how many. Well, there, maybe twenty, maybe thirty thousand. Thousands.' According to him he has heard the number from someone, 'everybody, everybody was talking about it.'⁵⁶⁷ Valentina straight away knows about the real size of the crime: 'You know this number, 27,000 thousand Jews, don't you?'⁵⁶⁸ Valentina's case stands out however because during the interview she reveals that there is a family connection to the Zmievskaia Balka monument. Her brother was the author of the memorial complex⁵⁶⁹ and told her about the history of the site during the construction preparation and one particular incident:

You see that there is this hilly place...they wanted to flatten it and put up the monument. And my brother said, "when they began digging, there were so many bones that I said: No, I'll remodel the project but in such way that these bones are not touched, that's impossible".⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Circulation *Molot*: 38.000, *Rostov ofitsial'nyy*: 5,000, *Vechernyy Rostov* 30,000.

⁵⁶⁷ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (14:58-15:16).

⁵⁶⁸ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (19:00-19:07).

⁵⁶⁹ The interviewer was not informed about this specific aspect before the interview, yet, given the circumstances that due to her brother's expert-knowledge Valentina, too, possessed information which was strictly confidential at the time, the interviewer nevertheless decided to continue.

⁵⁷⁰ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (19:25-19:45).

Konstantin (AG2) appears to be certain about the victim number at first ‘well I know that Jews were brought there and as far as I know more than 35,000’ but then discusses it with his daughter Aleksandra who mentions the number 27,000. Bot in the end agree that it may have been more than 30,000.⁵⁷¹ At a later stage of the interview, Konstantin repeats this number and assumes he heard it from the Jewish woman his grandmother had saved and who lost all of her relatives during the Holocaust, according to Konstantin.⁵⁷² Stepan, a friend Galina and Marina invited together with his wife Tanya to participate in the family interview notes that he, too, heard of 36,000 victims but thinks that 27,000 is unrealistic insofar as Rostov's infrastructure was destroyed during the occupation, including registration offices, and it was therefore not possible to define exactly who was missing and why. Galina agrees with him and notes that the number of 27,000 was established after the city's liberation based on the number of those reported missing or who were known to have been deported. She concludes ‘that means, these were deemed to be approximate loss indexes. That actually means there are no detailed numbers’⁵⁷³ Tanya, Stepan's wife, some of whose Jewish relatives perished in the Holocaust, remains silent over the death toll and generally makes few comments during the interview as does her husband.

Similar to the aforementioned respondents Vadim (AG3) also knows ‘one number, well what people say, that about thirty thousand were shot, that's one of the numbers.’⁵⁷⁴ As was mentioned before, the young student is very well informed about the annihilation of the Jews in his home town, partly because he spoke with local historians, and partly because he attended commemoration ceremonies and meetings with veterans where he learned about the scale of the crime. He mentions the existence of other figures, yet it remains unclear whether he refers to those stated in the press or what he knows from hearsay. One of these ‘other numbers’ that appeared in the local press is introduced by Vika (AG2). ‘Well, twenty-thousand died’ she argues.⁵⁷⁵ Another number is named by Petr who mentions the mass killing straight at the beginning of the interview and speaks of 15,000 victims.⁵⁷⁶ Nadezhda (AG2), to the contrary, does not name a specific figure, but she compares the Zmievskaya Balkatragedy to Babi Yar and

⁵⁷¹ KR, AG2, 12 October, (16:27-16:35).

⁵⁷² Ibid., (30:11-30:26).

⁵⁷³ FI2/GZ, (AG2), 22 October, (1:04:42-1:04:49).

⁵⁷⁴ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (07:25-07:36).

⁵⁷⁵ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (27:30-27:36).

⁵⁷⁶ PV, AG3, 4 October 2011, (03:22-03:31).

notes that the mass killing in Rostov caused less victims than in Kiev.⁵⁷⁷ Other interviewees also prefer rating the mass killing instead of naming victim numbers. Oksana (AG2) speaks of ‘thousands of people’ and notes there are other places in Rostov where other, smaller executions were conducted such as an execution of forty-five civilians who were shot ‘merely because they were Jews.’⁵⁷⁸ Vera (AG3) notes that ‘the numbers change all the time, so far, until today no lists of those shot are known, nothing. But as is well known, it was a large amount of people.’⁵⁷⁹

The depicted examples demonstrate that not only for scholars the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy is difficult to assess with regards to the victim number. All of the examples show that it is perceived as an execution of large scale by the respective respondents. The following passage depicts the level of knowledge respondents had about the Holocaust and where this derives from. It adds to a clearer understanding what prompted the affiliation with either of the two groups. Knowledge about the Holocaust is to be understood as knowledge about the annihilation of the European Jews in general as well as particularly knowledge about the events in Rostov-on-Don.

⁵⁷⁷ NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (09:01-09:13; 16:41-16:47).

⁵⁷⁸ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (14:27-14:56).

⁵⁷⁹ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (04:08-04:17).

Knowledge about the Holocaust

Knowledge about the Holocaust subsumes any information which adds to an understanding what respondents knew about the Holocaust and how the annihilation of the Jewish population of Rostov was perceived by the interviewees in its context. Many respondents throughout the three age groups had specific information on how the Holocaust was organised in their hometown and beyond. They knew – more or less detailed - how the victims were taken to the Zmievka ravine after the summoning and were aware of what happened there. Some even possessed specific knowledge regarding the execution itself such as the use of mobile gas vans or the involvement of local collaborators. All in all, the range of knowledge, and thus the range of how the crime was perceived, proved to be rather broad, though. Unlike in Berno-Bellekur's national study, all interviewees knew what the term Holocaust stands for and who it affected. This points to a greater awareness of the persecution of Jews by the Nazis than on the national level. Furthermore, many respondents throughout all age groups mentioned that Jews also suffered repressions by the Soviet state. Partly, this can possibly be explained by Rostov's historically large Jewish community that has experienced a revival after the war and despite the Aliyah of the 1990s which allowed for more intense inter-ethnic relations than in other regions with a smaller or no Jewish community.

Generally, the interviews illustrated a consistent level of basic information throughout all three age groups. The Zmievskaya Balka mass atrocity can therefore be considered an inherent part of remembrance of the war and occupation within the sample. The interviews nevertheless brought to light severe differences in terms of what people knew aside of the well-established facts and this applied regardless of the respondents age or educational background. It rather proved to be important whether or not respondents had personal ties to either contemporary witnesses or Jewish fellow citizens and thus once more confirms the importance of communicative memory as against institutionalised or media-based knowledge transfer. The interviews with Vera (AG3) and Anna (AG3) demonstrate this very well. Like Anna, Vera belongs to the youngest group of respondents and holds a Master's degree in economics however she is among the best informed interviewees in terms of what happened in the Zmievskaya Balka. As outlined before, in her case conversations with her relatives and local contemporary witnesses have played an important part. Mainly those personal memories for instance about local collaboration and, to the contrary, resistance form the basis of

Vera's knowledge and shaped her understanding of the social dynamics at the time.⁵⁸⁰ She reflects on the importance of these conversations and argues that the transferred information would otherwise have been lost, since, to her knowledge, it is not documented anywhere.⁵⁸¹ Vera additionally obtained detailed information about the course of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity by an expert on the subject with whom she conferred on questions related to her work as a genealogist.⁵⁸² She owns a small genealogy business that meets the growing interest people have in their own family history that has often been silenced for decades during the Soviet period, she notes.⁵⁸³ To some extent her advance in knowledge might therefore also be job-related, although she does not lay a particular focus on Jewish clients.

Examples of respondents with a specific academic background in historical studies on the other hand demonstrate that this need not necessarily be accompanied by a more extensive knowledge about the Holocaust in Rostov, if communicative memory is missing as an additive factor. Anna (AG3), a young history student grew up in a village in Rostov *oblast* and moved to the provincial capital three years before the interview was conducted. Her great-grandfather who died before she was born, was a prisoner of war in two concentration camps and she has heard stories about his suffering from her grandfather. Anna argues that she does not know what happened in the Zmievskaia ravine apart from the fact that it is connected the wartime period. She explains 'well, you have to understand, I'm sort of no Rostovian ... that's why I know, I don't even know much about my home region.'⁵⁸⁴ Within the sample, she is the only respondent who was not aware of the specific Holocaust-related aspect attached to the Zmievskaia Balka tragedy, apart from having heard of a place by that name. Anna's case therefore illustrates another important determinant in terms of knowledge about the Holocaust in Rostov: If respondents were not native Rostovians, the place of birth or residence, and particularly the time period these interviewees lived elsewhere indeed turned out to be a crucial factor. The fact that Anna did not yet obtain information about the mass killing in Rostov contrasts with her knowledge about the Holocaust which is based on books

⁵⁸⁰ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (04:47-05:38).

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid., (02:55-03:00).

⁵⁸³ Ibid., (00:41-01:06).

⁵⁸⁴ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (22:18-22:27).

such as 'The boy in the striped pyjama' and her studies.⁵⁸⁵ She also recalls how a friend of hers had brought back non-fiction books about Auschwitz after a visit to the death camp, which Anna had read shortly before the interview. Anna furthermore remembers having attended a conference about a Holocaust-related topic during her first semester. The interview illustrates that Anna knows about important basic information such as the death camps and the implementation of the Final Solution in the occupied Soviet territories while at the same time lacking awareness that her place of residence was affected. The reasons for this absence can be manifold and of course remain speculation to some degree. Yet one aspect appears important and needs to be considered. Anna has only heard stories about the war by her grandfather who himself witnessed German occupation as an adolescent. He grew up in a village in Rostov *oblast* and was thirteen at the time of the invasion. Anna recalls his story of how ten citizens of their home village were killed during a raid by a group of German soldiers. The information as passed on to her consequently focuses on events her grandfather witnessed and on the concentrations camps where her great-grandfather was imprisoned. Her example illustrates that the lack of communicative memory cannot necessarily be compensated by other forms of information transfer as in books or films since these appear less sustainable, as argued by Harald Welzer in his study *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi*:

Knowledge and the assimilation of knowledge on a personal basis are two very different things. History lessons are but one source among many. Formal courses aim to pass on knowledge, but cannot compete with the emotional impact of images from the past offered by more immediate sources. Cognitive knowledge of history pales beside the emotional relationship to the past that come from one's own grandparents talking about their lives "before our time".⁵⁸⁶

Anna's interest in concentration camps confirms this finding, as it is driven by her family history that has clearly had an emotional impact on her, as she notes herself: 'Basically, it turns out this affects me, even my family, my relatives.'⁵⁸⁷ Her interest in books about Auschwitz is therefore rather to be explained in the context of her family history and her grandfather's fate as a prisoner of war than an interest in the Holocaust, although it has added to her knowledge about the latter.

⁵⁸⁵ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (15:31-15:35).

⁵⁸⁶ Welzer, *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi*, p. 1.

⁵⁸⁷ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (06:02-06:08).

The Holocaust in Rostov

Throughout the sample, respondents mainly referred to the initial phase of the crime that included events within Rostov whereas little information was delivered in terms of the course of events at the crime scene. Partly, this could be explained by the fact that the killing site was situated approximately five kilometres⁵⁸⁸ away on the city outskirts, next to the neighbouring village Zmievka. At the time, the area in between was scarcely inhabited. It could have functioned as a natural barrier for information transfer, let alone when considering that the occupiers made arrangements for the crime's concealment as did the Soviet leaders in the post-war years. Knowledge about the mass atrocity most likely could not be obtained other than through eyewitness accounts until the first official statements, for instance after the city's liberation in Pravda. Still, the basis for any communicative memory, the initial experiencing or witnessing and remembering of an event, in this particular case mainly focuses on the first stages of the crime within the city centre. Bearing in mind the time span of seven decades that lie between the event itself and the interviews, it is not surprising that remembrance of the Holocaust has faded. The knowledge about it that is presented in the interviews is, with reservations, of a factual nature. While the mass atrocity is a well-known historic event within the sample, details offside the general narrative according to which Jews and other nationals were murdered in the gulch near Zmievka prove to be scarce. This may partly also be due to the long period when the city's occupation was tabooed for political reasons. Thus, hardly any of the interviewees knew how the Jews were identified - that they had to register before the appeal to summon at certain collecting points was published. This lack however revealed a number of interpretative approaches that are introduced in the following passage in order of their frequency. The main narrative respondents mentioned regarding the identification of Jews was collaboration of the local population. Civilian collaboration indeed existed in various forms and resulting from various motives, as Boris Kovalev's study illustrates. He generally distinguishes three spheres of collaboration: 1. military and political, 2. administrative, 3. civilian and economical collaboration. The number of those who supported the German armed attempt to conquer the Soviet Union is controversial among scholars.⁵⁸⁹ Boris Sokolov

⁵⁸⁸ Minutes of crime scene inspection (3 December 1960), Ermittlungsakten Jahrgang 1959, Sonderbände zum Teilkomplex Sonderkommando 10a, BArch, B162/1.262, p. 10.

⁵⁸⁹ Klaus-Dieter Müller speaks of about 1,5 million Soviets (800,000 Russians, 260,000 Caucasians, 250,000 Ukrainians, 100,000 Latvians, 60,000 Estonians and 47,000 Belorussians) who fought against the Red Army on the side of the Wehrmacht, SS, police or in local pro-German paramilitary formations.

notes that in autumn 1942, 55,562 locals and 4,428 Germans served in the *Ordnungspolizei* of *Reichskommissariat Ostland* thus participating in the Holocaust whereas in *Reichskommissariat Ukraine's Ordnungspolizei* 70,759 locals were faced by 10,194 Germans. Martin Dean speaks of more than 300,000 collaborators who were arrested and put on trial in the post-war Soviet Union.⁵⁹⁰

Perceptions of collaboration in Rostov

The way the subject was commented by many respondents confirmed Dean's aforementioned statement that the local collaborators generated more hatred within their communities than the occupiers who were perceived as anonymous. Jones concludes that many Rostovians were charged with collaboration with the Germans after the city's liberation.⁵⁹¹ In the Rostov region alone 12,196 people, including a large number of party members who had not obeyed the order to evacuate, were arrested between 1943 and 1953 and accused of co-operation with the enemy. In Rostov *oblast* between 1943 and 1945 11,429 cases were heard involving party members who had not evacuated. Jones describes the various facets of collaboration in occupied Rostov-on-Don - apart from aiding in mass atrocities against the Soviet population, from the party's point of view, assisting the enemy ranged from staying in the occupied territory to the common procedure of sharing one's home with German soldiers or collaboration in the public administrative sector. Jones reports about cases of alleged collaboration in Rostov's housing organs that involved the handing over of lists of Jews and communists. Other spheres of public life affected were the city's education, financial and trades sectors. Due to protectionism and a lack of qualified personnel in the immediate post-liberation and post-war period, not all of the accused were later expelled from their positions, though. They remained party members, plant workers, administrative personnel, teachers, not least because the party feared for its image had the true amount of collaborators in its ranks become publicly known. In contrast to the need for playing down the problem, the myth of the foreign agent as an inner enemy was similarly evoked by the regime straight from the immediate post-liberation period: Rostov's local

Müller, *An der Seite der Wehrmacht*, p. 242. Russian historians however argue that the number of Soviet military collaborators was within a range of 100,000 and one Million. For an analysis of the various Russian studies see Kovalev, *Kollaboratsionizm v Rossii*, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁹⁰ B. Sokolov, *Okkupatsiya - Pravda i mify* (Moscow, 2002), p. 117. M. Dean, 'Where did all the collaborators go?' *Slavic Review*, 64, no. 4 (Winter, 2005), p. 791

⁵⁹¹ Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 747-70. See also: M. Vdovin, *"Rostov-gorod, Rostov-Don..."*. *Istoricheskoe povestvovanie* (Rostov-na-Donu, 1999), p. 139.

press consequently reported about former collaborators as an imminent threat, thus causing an atmosphere of suspicion in which former forced laborers and prisoners of war were first and foremost targeted as well as women who had stayed in occupied Rostov and whose 'faithfulness' was thus questioned.⁵⁹² Due to the media attention, particularly the middle aged and oldest respondents might therefore have been aware of the subject and informed about collaboration in Rostov.

Indeed, the topic was mainly addressed by respondents who were fully socialised in the Soviet Union which is interesting insofar as these interviewees also represented a group that was exposed to the other side of Soviet propaganda which mainly tabooed collaboration. It is important in this context to point to the remains of a specific Soviet terminology in some of the respondents' wording - Kovalev notes that the word *kollaboratsionizm*, collaborationism only recently found its way into the Russian language and stems from the French term *collaboration*. Before, people who collaborated with Nazi Germany were referred to as *predateli* or *izmenniki Rodiny*, traitors or betrayers of the fatherland.⁵⁹³ The term *predatel* appears in three interviews⁵⁹⁴ with members of age group one and two, the youngest respondents however neither use one or the other of the two terms. In four cases, apart from *predatel* the word *politsay* was used to describe collaborators. The latter was commonly used as a synonym for *predatel*, 'traitors from the local population' in Soviet times, as was the term *politseyskiy*.⁵⁹⁵ Aleksandra (AG3) uses it once to describe how she could not understand as a child why adults around her referred to one of their neighbours as a *politsay*. The man had, as she paraphrases it, 'switched to the German side.'⁵⁹⁶ This paraphrase was in fact used by other respondents as well, as was additionally the term *donoschik*, denouncer.⁵⁹⁷

What do the interviews tell us about the perception of collaboration? Asked how the victims were identified as Jews, Sergey (AG1) and his wife Mariya are at first unsure. Sergey argues that the Jews 'were marked straight away'⁵⁹⁸ and were therefore easily

⁵⁹² Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 753-7, p. 759. Penter, 'Collaboration on Trial', p. 783.

⁵⁹³ Kovalev, *Kollaboratsionizm v Rossii*, pp. 8, 9.

⁵⁹⁴ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (15:04-15:18); OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (03:15-03:18; 18:20-18:25; 20:12-20:15); KR, AG2, 12 October, (08:57-09:03; 13:47-13:55; 15:30-15:35; 25:38-25:43; 38:59-39:12; 45:32-45:43); FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (02:31-02:45); FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:23:35-1:23:48); AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (09:30-09:49).

⁵⁹⁵ S. Ozhegov, *Slovar Russkogo Yazyka*, 16 (Moscow, 1984), p. 478.

⁵⁹⁶ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (09:43-09:54).

⁵⁹⁷ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (40:16-40:37).

⁵⁹⁸ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (11:26-11:28).

detectable, a fact that was also mentioned by Rostovians following liberation.⁵⁹⁹ At the same time Sergey argues that the identification was easy as 'in the past, the passport, everybody's passport would be controlled and in the passport stood – Jew.'⁶⁰⁰ Sergey's wife Mariya (AG1), who is in the kitchen when her husband mentions the passports and has obviously not heard what he had said, holds a different view: Upon her return from the kitchen, the interviewer repeats the question how the occupiers knew who was Jewish and who was not. Mariya's intuitive reaction is 'well, our people probably cooperated with them.'⁶⁰¹ The intensity of Sergey's reaction to his wife's assumption ('Why, no! Masha, by the passports!')⁶⁰² is notable and reveals an elementary difference in both of their views on the aspect of local collaboration. While Sergey argues that Russians did not betray Jews to the enemy, Mariya is convinced of the opposite. Her sceptical view on the local population's liability at the time might be founded in her family history: Originally from Voronezh *oblast*, her grandparents, *kulaks* whom the regime dispossessed, were deported to the Far East. Her parents met there and had Mariya. The family moved to her father's home town Rostov in 1946. Supposedly because of her family member's personal fate, Mariya is very critical towards the Soviet system. She notes that a lot of people were sceptical at the time and therefore decided to collaborate with the Germans:

I want to say something else. Where did they take the *politsay* from, where did the discontent come from? ... They hated the *kolkhos*. They hated it so much that they were ready to co-operate with the Germans. They thought that ... the Germans will bring freedom and will disinvent all the *kolkhoses*, rebuild the churches That is why people co-operated with the Germans, so that our government, the Soviets, wouldn't return. But it returned.⁶⁰³

Mariya's case exemplifies how not only she but other respondents, too, assumed that many Jews would not have been identified, had non-Jewish locals not denounced them. Mariya's son Yuriy (AG3) adds: 'Who was a Jew and who wasn't. ... One *politsay* could talk about an entire quarter or the entire region - who, where and what nationality.'⁶⁰⁴ Eighty-two-year-old Raissa is also convinced that many locals who had been

⁵⁹⁹ Eyewitnesses confirmed that Jews were ordered to wear a yellow star in the first days after the city had been taken on 24 July 1942. Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), p. 867.

⁶⁰⁰ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (13:44-13:51).

⁶⁰¹ FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (13:32-13:37).

⁶⁰² FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (13:37-13:39).

⁶⁰³ FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (04:44-05:30).

⁶⁰⁴ FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:23:35-1:23:48).

dispossessed by the Soviet regime figured as collaborators because they were seeking revenge for the wrong they had suffered.⁶⁰⁵ She recalls: 'They were called *politsay*, ehm, they were traitors, all of them. And there were many of them.'⁶⁰⁶ Vika (AG2) thinks that many Rostovians denounced Jews for mere envy: '[E]nvy, denunciations, denunciations of party members, denunciations because of flats, all of this existed, Christina, all of this existed.'⁶⁰⁷ In the second family interview, Galina (AG2) is also convinced that people acted as collaborators because they sought to ensure their own well-being. As previously outlined, she and her sister Marina (AG2) assume that people were arrested merely for looking Jewish. In their view, the fact that non-Jewish Rostovians were falsely identified as Jews raised the level of anti-Semitism and ultimately led to denunciations.⁶⁰⁸ Another aspect is important from Galina's point of view. To her, the fact that people denounced their fellow citizens needs to be interpreted as a result of the denunciation culture established during the Stalinist terror: '[T]hat's why those who, hypothetical, feared for their own skin, they might have denounced so that nobody lays a finger on them.'⁶⁰⁹

The most contradictory example of collaboration that is described in an interview also refers to the question how Jews were identified as Jews and most likely needs to be interpreted within the same frame Galina suggests: Valentina (AG1) reports about a former Jewish neighbour of hers on Pushkin street. The man, who was the conductor of Rostov's symphonic orchestra, stayed in town when his wife and daughter evacuated and his son was drafted for military service. Valentina was told by her grandmother who had not evacuated with her family that the former neighbour denounced her because Valentina's parents were communists. The old woman only survived because she could prove that her daughter was away on duty, yet she noticed that the man also delivered other Jews to the enemy.⁶¹⁰ 'And grandmother said, 'if it wasn't for him, many Jews,' she said, 'could have gone into hiding. But he went and ehm, so ... betrayed them'⁶¹¹ Denunciations, Valentina concludes, existed on all sides, including Jews.⁶¹² Bearing in mind what Galina suggested - that people at the time felt threatened because of the impression that anyone was in danger, regardless of their nationality, and that this was

⁶⁰⁵ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (39:09-40:13).

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., (40:30-40:42).

⁶⁰⁷ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (14:41-14:51).

⁶⁰⁸ FI2/GZ, AG2, 22 October, (37:40-37:48)

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., (37:50-38:15).

⁶¹⁰ VS, AG1, 18 October 2011, (21:48-22:42).

⁶¹¹ Ibid., (16:07-16:26)

⁶¹² Ibid., (15:01-15:06).

an important motive for denunciations - this possibly also applied to Valentina's Jewish neighbour. Other examples of Jewish collaborators are described in the encyclopedia *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* for the cities of Smolensk and Dubrovits. In some cases Jews even joined SS units as for instance in Smolensk.⁶¹³

Interestingly, later during the aforementioned family interview with Yuriy, Mariya, and her husband Sergey (AG1), the latter also speaks of another category of local aiders to the Germans, the aforementioned *politsay*, whom he clearly distinguishes from what he terms 'ordinary Russians'. The difference, to him, is that members of the *politsay* used their knowledge about fellow citizens, both Jews and communists, and betrayed them to the enemy.⁶¹⁴ The example illustrates that the aspect of local collaboration is a highly delicate matter in the context of the GPW-narrative and the overall Russian self-image. In the aforementioned 2012 *Ekho Moskvy* interview Tamara Pletneva, vice-chairperson of the Committee on affairs of nationalities of the State Duma, argued:

We saved the Jews. This has to be said. We saved them. And it was primarily Russians who saved them. They helped as much as they could. That is why singling out one nationality today does not seem right to me. Especially in Rostov. There are more such places where really, not only Jews were murdered.⁶¹⁵

Sergey's change of mind during the interview and the fact that he agrees with his wife at a later stage of the conversation might therefore have resulted from an initial discomfort that the topic was brought up which was then replaced by his decision to speak openly. Since Mariya had brought up the notion that collaboration was an issue regarding the question how the perpetrators managed to identify the victims, Sergey may have accepted that there was no longer a possibility to avoid the subject. In this context, one aspect needs to be considered in terms of the family interview with him, Mariya and Yuriy. Since the topic is still perceived very emotionally and controversially, as seen in the comment by Pletneva, it may have been difficult for Sergey to openly address it in front of a German and probably even his family. His comment 'for me, this word [*politsay*] equals a swear word'⁶¹⁶ and his description of

⁶¹³ Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), pp. 442-443.

⁶¹⁴ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:23:18-1:23:35).

⁶¹⁵ The full transcript of the interview is available on *Ekho Moskvy's* website: 'Skandal s memorialom zhertv Kholokosta v Rostove-na-Donu', *Ekho Moskvy* (24 January 2012), <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot-morning/851833-echo/> [accessed 17 October 2014].

⁶¹⁶ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:22:40-1:22:44).

these collaborators whom he considers 'the most atrocious people' suggest that this may be the case.⁶¹⁷

Not each interviewee who addressed the aspect of collaboration did so with equal discomfort. Most of the other interviews were conducted one-to-one which might have been an essential difference for the interviewees as it may not have been perceived as a situation that involves any risk when sharing one's own viewpoint. Since the respondents knew that the study was anonymous and would be published outside of Russia, and in English, above all, the willingness to speak openly might have been greater in individual interviews than in group interviews with the presence of the other respondents. As was mentioned earlier, the works of Berteaux, Shcherbakova, Thompson and other oral historians have shown how often even family members kept information about their Soviet past to themselves. This reluctance may have also applied to taboos such as collaboration. Having such a strong opinion about the subject, Sergey would have probably brought it up in the first place, had he not been in the interview together with his wife and son. In this context, age is also an important aspect and it is likely that Sergey who was socialised in the Stalin era is more alert regarding taboos such as collaboration than younger respondents. Thus, even though - or probably because - the topic was not abstract since their former neighbour had worked for the occupiers as a guard, Konstantin (AG2) and his daughter Aleksandra (AG3) were open to talk about the subject of collaboration and even addressed it themselves.⁶¹⁸

Collaboration was however not only addressed with reference to denunciations, as the following examples illustrate. Several respondents identify general motives for collaboration, such as revenge for injustice suffered and the will to oppose the Soviet power resulting thereof. Like Mariya (AG1) and her husband Sergey (AG1) who at first disagreed with her on the subject, some respondents were convinced that locals assisted in mass killings by voluntarily joining *SS Sonderkommandos*. Jews were often equalled with the Soviet apparatus by those not in favour of the political system which Sokolov identifies as one reason why many locals were hostile towards them and actively supported the German policy of annihilation.⁶¹⁹ Cossacks are often named in this

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., (1:22:53-1:23:03).

⁶¹⁸ KR, AG2, 12 October, (00:00-01:10); AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (09:32-10:14)

⁶¹⁹ Sokolov argues that a distinct anti-Jewish sentiment facilitated recruiting locals, for example for the participation in the Babi Yar and Kovno mass atrocities. Around 34,000 Jews were murdered in the massacre of Babi Yar on 29 and 30 September 1941 in Kiev, Ukraine. In the Lithuanian city of Kovno, around nine thousand Jews fell victim to a large number of local collaborators and German SS in the

context and as an entire ethnic group of collaborators. Rostov *oblast* is home to the Don Cossacks, one of the largest minorities in the region that suffered deportations and persecution in the early Soviet era. Anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet views were widespread among Cossacks and led many to aid the occupying force in the fight against partisans and the killing of Jews and communists.⁶²⁰ Vika (AG2) reckons that many of them switched sides during the war and aided in the killing of Jews and others not only in Rostov.

Yes, I know that Cossacks were shooting at the Zmievskaia Balka. I know that Cossacks participated in this. That is Cossacks, this has to be verified, of course. I know that Cossacks also participated at the Myus front against our troops. There were Cossack units.⁶²¹

The notion that many Cossacks collaborated is brought up in several interviews, sometimes as an example for anti-Soviet resistance. Fedor, who thinks that Russians also delivered Jews to the enemy, argues that Cossacks were particularly against the Soviet political elite due to the repressions and persecution they suffered under Stalin.⁶²² Raissa (AG1) to the contrary draws a parallel between Cossacks and an alleged fascination for the National Socialist racial ideology by describing an incident she and her mother witnessed in evacuation. Both stayed at a wealthy family's home in a Cossack village. Valentina's mother advised the landlord to hide his food supplies because she feared the Germans might confiscate them. The landlord, a Cossack, Raissa

largest mass killing conducted in Lithuania on 29 October 1941. Sokolov, *Okkupatsiya - Pravda i mify*, p. 121. See also Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR*, p. 394.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., pp. 440-1. The lower Don region and particularly the Cossack capital Novocherkassk near Rostov was a centre of opposition during the Russian Civil War. This was the main reason why Cossacks were identified as enemies of the Soviet power and persecuted as such. Around 10,000 Cossacks throughout the Soviet Union were executed in 1919 following a party de-Cossackisation decree. Many were deported to northern Russia. Large numbers of Cossacks therefore fled the country and returned when the Soviet power granted them amnesty in 1921. In the 1930s they again faced repressions and deportations when 200,000 to 300,000 thousand Cossacks mainly from the Don-, Kuban-, and Ural regions were taken to Northern Russia and Siberia in 1932 as a consequence of the forced collectivisation. Even though many Cossacks had fought in the Red Army in the civil war, the Soviet state continued to view Cossacks in toto as a counterrevolutionary force, Holquist concludes. Based on these experiences, many Cossacks decided to fight for the *Wehrmacht*. It was for those reasons that they were per se perceived as disloyal and potential collaborators also by many locals during World War II, an interpretation that was partly based on facts but partly also the result of twofold Soviet propaganda. Jones delivers several examples for Rostov where the party organ *Molot* described Cossacks as loyal to the Soviet idea while simultaneously casting doubt on their loyalty. Jones, 'Perceptions of Collaboration', pp. 759f, 762. P. Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis 1914-1921* (2002), pp. 174-5. A. Kappeler, *Die Kosaken*, (2013) pp. 78-82. Müller, *An der Seite der Wehrmacht*, p. 207.

⁶²¹ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (23:38-24:01).

⁶²² FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (17:48-18:17).

stresses, defended the Germans, arguing they were ‘such pure-blooded Aryans.’⁶²³ Vera (AG3) also addresses Cossack collaboration: ‘It’s probably no secret to you that they organised...that they served under the sign of the Wehrmacht, a Cossack unit...’⁶²⁴ In the course of the interview, Vera argues that many of her clients are Cossacks who assign her because they try to find out about their (family) history and Vera has therefore become an expert on the history of the Don Cossacks. To her, their persecution in the 1920s explains why many joined the occupying force and retreated with the *Wehrmacht*.

Oksana (AG2) is the only respondent who holds a different view than the other respondents who comment on the subject. From her point of view, Cossacks did not per se defect to the enemy as they were not only opponents of the Soviet power but also neglected German rule.⁶²⁵ Summing up, not only Cossacks are mentioned as collaborators, yet they form the singular ethnic group respondents name in connection with the subject of collaboration. This is also reflected in Mikhail’s (AG2) view on local collaborators: ‘Let’s put it this way, all I can say about the occupation period ...is that Rostov is not a city of heroes because the Cossacks went to the Germans’, Mikhail begins the interview.⁶²⁶

Concluding, the question how the Jews were identified was connected with the topic of collaboration by a number of respondents throughout all age groups. Only few respondents mention registration lists or assume that the victims were identified with the help of such lists.⁶²⁷ Notwithstanding this and as was outlined before, many interviewees were aware of a specific summoning order addressed to the Jews. In this context some remember individual cases of Jews who did not follow the gathering order but went into hiding. Renata (AG1) tells the story of a Jewish acquaintance of hers. During the occupation, the woman and her little son lived near one of the collecting points in *Nakhitshevan*, the Armenian part of town. She told Renata how she and her child managed to survive:

⁶²³ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (43:08 - 43:55).

⁶²⁴ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (07:52-07:59).

⁶²⁵ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (18:

⁶²⁶ MK, AG2, 16 October 2011, (01:08-01:15).

⁶²⁷ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (18:58-19:11). VT, AG2, 19 October 2011, (05:28-05:39). VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (04:08-04:17; 09:28-09:44).

When they searched all the houses for Jews, she went out to the market of Nakhichevan and wandered around there for entire days so that they wouldn't get her. Well, and neighbours hid the son, the boy.⁶²⁸

Raissa (AG1) recalls an example of Jews who went into hiding with the help of non-Jewish locals. Her close friend in Taganrog had told her about the case of a Jewish family in her neighbourhood who was denounced.⁶²⁹ Such stories of individual fates are hardly found among the interviews with AG3-participants which once more confirms Assmann's theory on the lifespan of communicative memory and illustrates how memory of the war and occupation was in the process of fading when the study was conducted. Aleksandra (AG3) is one of the few young respondents who possesses first-hand knowledge of an individual fate because her family narrative is strongly tied to the story how her great-grandmother saved her Jewish employer and took care of the old woman after the war. This fact alone would probably not have produced the strong narrative Aleksandra grew up with. The specific emotional tie between the Jewess and Aleksandra's great-grandmother, and particularly her father Konstantin (AG2) was however obviously a central element and contributed to the dominance of this story in the family narrative. Welzer has pointed to the important role of emotion in the question what is remembered. Of equal importance, he argues, is the narration's plot that transports the story's underlying morale and values, its main meaning. He argues that emotional involvement generates different starting conditions for what is perceived, remembered and passed on.⁶³⁰ In Aleksandra's family, the aforementioned story of granny Franya formed an important element with regards to what is remembered about the war and occupation because both of the aspects Welzer names are part of it, the ethical component and emotions resulting from Franya's survival and overall fate. Compassion and the lack of human kindness on the other hand form the basic elements in the other stories about collaboration mentioned above and partly explain why such stories in particular are remembered and passed on - they address elemental and universal values in human behaviour, or the lack thereof. As Dean points out 'for local inhabitants the collaborators whom they knew personally often generated more hatred than German officials they were unable to name.'⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ RK, AG1, 25 October 2011, (30:46-31:08).

⁶²⁹ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (54:02-54:43).

⁶³⁰ Welzer, *Opa war kein Nazi*, pp. 81, 209.

⁶³¹ Dean, 'Where did all the collaborators go?', p. 793.

While all aforementioned examples referred to the topic of the victims' identification - or the prevention thereof - a different aspect regarding the preparation of the mass atrocity is addressed by Aleksandra and her father Konstantin. The two are the only respondents who assume that not only Jewish residents and refugees from Rostov were murdered in the ravine near Zmievkka, but also Jews from other parts of Rostov *oblast*. Aleksandra argues she was told by her great-grandmothers who reported that people were brought to Rostov by train and then killed in the Zmievkka ravine. They told her that the victims

were not only led there, ehm, they went there on foot from the city centre, but that they were also brought there on trains, there's a railway line, and echelons walked from this railway line, they were taken out of the trains and shot.⁶³²

Konstantin thinks that Jews from the entire *oblast*, including the neighbouring Krasnodar region, were brought to Rostov by train and were killed there. 'I know that they were rounded up from the entire *oblast* ... From the entire *oblast*, even from the Krasnodar region, in my opinion.'⁶³³ Aleksandra's and Konstantin's assumption that Jews from the neighbouring Krasnodar region were murdered in Rostov could theoretically be true insofar as Jewish evacuees were situated in both regions and Krasnodar was occupied on 12 August 1942 when the mass killing in Rostov was still ongoing. The usual procedure of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the occupied Soviet territories to kill the victims near their homes appears to speak against such a step, though, as does the distance between the Krasnodar region and Rostov that would have included a logistical challenge. Occasionally there were however variations in the *Sonderkommando's* killing procedure. Arad has pointed to the use of trains for other murder actions in the Caucasus region. He refers to killings in Mineralnye Vody where all together about 6,300 Jews from the neighbouring cities Esentuki, Kislovodsk, and

⁶³² AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (08:27-08:48).

⁶³³ KR, AG2, 12 October, (18:12-18:23). The city of Krasnodar was no exception with regard to the general procedure of the execution, as described by Otto Ohlendorf during the Nuremberg war crimes trial. The Krasnodar-trial of 1963 against former collaborators and *Sonderkommando 10a*-members as well as testimonies of German members of this *Sonderkommando* produced in the 1960s illustrate that the Jewish population of Krasnodar, including Jewish evacuees residing there, were murdered on 21 August 1942. The people followed a similar summoning order as in Rostov signed by a *Judenrat* that had been established shortly after the city had been taken on 12 August 1942. See: Testimony of Nikolai Vinokurov [Nikolaus Winokurow] (17 October 1964), BArch, B162/1262, pp. 18-20, testimony of Kurt Nachtigall (24 January 1969), BArch, B162/1232, p. 4295, testimony of Mikhail Skripkin in second Krasnodar trial (10 October 1963), USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1257, p. 4/48. See also: German translation of local ChGK-report (undated), Central Office, USHMM RG 14.101 M B 162/1257, pp. 5/62-63, Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR*, p. 474.

Zelevnovodsk were brought by train and killed between 1 and 10 September 1942.⁶³⁴ Moreover, the parallel between Mineralnye Vody and Rostov is striking in terms of the infrastructure near the crime scene which these sites were particularly chosen for in the first place. Arad quotes *Einsatzkommando 12* member R. Pfeifer who testified about the crime scene in Mineralnye Vody at a trial held in Pyatigorsk in 1968: 'A road and a railroad led to the site. It was an open area, easy to cordon off and difficult to escape from.'⁶³⁵ The same applies to the Zmievskaia Balka. The railway line Aleksandra mentions is even in use today and runs next to the former sand pit. The information Aleksandra and Konstantin share during the interview should therefore be considered for further investigation as it may lead to new findings about the mass atrocity in Rostov.

Zmievskaia Balka

Apart from the above mentioned example regarding possible victims of neighbouring villages, the interviews deliver little information on the actual course of events in the Zmievskaia ravine. Hearsay and rumours about what happened at the killing site are mentioned by some respondents, yet the most quoted fact interviewees mentioned was that the victims suffered death in the former sandpit by being shot. In some interviews with respondents from AG1 and AG2 we nevertheless learn details regarding the course of events at the killing site and, again, these respondents have come to know those details through family memory or hearsay. Comparable to the eyewitness accounts collected by the ChGK, these details convey images with a highly emotional impact, such as the story Sergey (AG1) tells. During the second occupation, he lived in a settlement in the north of Rostov, near the village Zmievskaia. Sergey was five years old at the time and remembers that the occupation was silenced after the war: 'I learned at school, right, Yuriy [his son] already [went to school] later, it was like a taboo.'⁶³⁶ His knowledge is to a great extent based on hearsay and he remembers having heard the story of someone who tried to escape from the killing site:

⁶³⁴ Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, p. 294.

⁶³⁵ Ibid. See also: Arad, *Unichtozhenie Evreev SSSR v Gody Nemetskoi Okkupatsii 1941-1944*, p. 242.

⁶³⁶ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:12:50-1:13:00).

The story goes that a young girl ran away, people say, from there, but they caught her. They tied her leg to a motorcycle and pulled her to the ravine, until they shot her there.⁶³⁷

In some of the eyewitness testimonies of 1943, similar cases of attempted escapes are described.⁶³⁸ Having grown up near the gulch, Sergey remembers the ravine including its barely populated surrounding area and adds important information: 'By the way, it is even said that this memorial is not at that place, but somewhere further.'⁶³⁹ Sergey's son Yuriy (AG1), to the contrary, remembers learning about the Zmievskaia Balka mass killing at school whereas the occupation of Rostov was not addressed, as was the case roughly forty years before when his father was a pupil. Yuriy remembers that '[t]here wasn't even a hint at how the population acts, acted during occupation, in particular the Rostovian, particularly in this town.'⁶⁴⁰ Yuriy also remembers being taught that the mass atrocity was 'an execution of a very large number of people. I don't remember the exact number but I do remember that very many, they say, were shot there with machine guns.'⁶⁴¹ Unlike his father, however, Yuriy does not mention stories about what exactly happened at the killing site. Neither do any of the other AG3-respondents.

Some older interviewees have heard stories about the course of events in the ravine, though. Oksana (AG2) notes that 'the entire ditch was filled with people. Those who lived near [the killing site] say that the ground was moving for a very long time' after the mass killing as some victims were not injured deadly.⁶⁴² Fedor (AG1) knows from hearsay that the Germans also used gas vans to kill their victims: 'Well they, the Germans, also had gas vans. ... Some were immediately dead in the van, some were brought there that way [to the killing site] and they shot them there.'⁶⁴³ When Fedor mentions the vans, Katya, his daughter who is present during his interview, asks her father to explain how exactly the people were killed.⁶⁴⁴ It is apparent that she has not heard of the *dushegubki*, gas vans, and their use in Rostov before. Regarding the origin of Fedor's knowledge, he argues that everybody spoke about it. He mentions a Jewish

⁶³⁷ Ibid., (12:13-12:25).

⁶³⁸ See testimony of Anna I. Tolstykh (25 November 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 23. Testimony of Evdokin A. Babak (24 November 1943), GARO, fond 3613, opis' 1, delo 30, list 16.

⁶³⁹ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (13:10-13:20).

⁶⁴⁰ FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:13:15-1:13:25).

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., (1:12:24-1:12:36).

⁶⁴² OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (14:05-14:17).

⁶⁴³ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (14:13-14:50).

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

neighbour named Kolberg in this context who did not follow the order to appear at the collecting points and thereby managed to survive.⁶⁴⁵

Valentina (AG1) whose grandmother lost Jewish friends in the Zmievskaya Balka mass killing, notes that the victims had to dig their own graves before being shot: 'Well, they were shot there, they dug these trenches for themselves, and they were shot and they fell into this, (pause) they fell into this, well.'⁶⁴⁶ While the second part of this description of the killings conforms to eyewitness accounts on the situation at the crime scene, Valentina is unaware of the crime scene preparations preceding the mass atrocity and the role Soviet prisoners of war had in the preparation of the ditches. She is very well informed about the Holocaust as such and interprets the events in Rostov as being in line with other occupied cities where the Jewish population was annihilated. Indeed, in many places of mass killings in the Soviet Union, the victims had to dig their own graves before being shot. Browning speaks of a standardised killing method that had been established soon after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa and that involved the victims' enforced activity at the crime scene. Contemporary witnesses of mass killings in Ukraine also reported about such procedures in interviews conducted by Desbois.⁶⁴⁷ Valentina therefore possibly mixes information on - and images of - other atrocities committed on Soviet territory with the events in her home town Rostov. James Fentress and Chris Wickham point to the role of images in social memory and argue that 'images and words are two of the most important components in our memories of narrative.'⁶⁴⁸ They underline that contrary to individual memory, images conveyed in social memory often refer to events or situations witnessed by others that cannot be contextualised. It is therefore not possible to know if these images refer to a real event or not.⁶⁴⁹ Valentina was told by her grandmother who had not witnessed the Zmievskaya Balka mass killing that the victims dug their own graves. Both might have adopted an image of events that took place elsewhere in the occupied Soviet territory and mixed it with the information on the mass atrocity in Rostov, thereby construing a narrative that seemed logical to them but did not correspond with the real event.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid, (15:13-15:17; 16:20-16:25).

⁶⁴⁶ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (17:39-17:51).

⁶⁴⁷ Browning, *Die Entfesselung der "Endlösung"*, p. 382. Desbois refers to Yaroslav Galagne's account. Galagne witnessed the annihilation of about thirty Jews from his home village. Desbois, *Der vergessene Holocaust*, p. 92.

⁶⁴⁸ J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (Oxford, Cambridge, 1992), p. 51.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 49.

In some cases, the information respondents share conveys new facts about the logistical side of the crime. Galina (AG2) remembers having heard the story of a boy who witnessed the mass killing. During a visit to the museum near the memorial as a Young Pioneer, the boy's story was told, Galina recalls:

One boy, well like the mother later said, ran away from the mother and observed everything that happened from behind the bushes and then returned. That is, it was sort of a child's story about what he saw, that they arranged everyone and mowed them down up to the point until people were simply stacked and pressed down with tanks⁶⁵⁰

The information that tanks were used at the killing site is not mentioned in any of the eyewitness accounts the Soviet Extraordinary Commission collected, nor is it noted in the interrogations of former *Sonderkommando 10a*-members. In an interview for *Utrachennye imena*, the aforementioned project by the Jewish community that aims at identifying the victims' names, Rostovian historian Vladimir Afanassenko speaks about the course of events at the Zmievka ravine. He notes bulldozers were used at the crime scene. Afanashev's information is based on protocols of a public military tribunal held in Rostov in the late 1960s by the North-Caucasian military district, on files produced by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission, as well as his own conversations with eyewitnesses of the mass killings.⁶⁵¹ Another important detail about the mass atrocity that is mentioned in the ChGK-files is addressed by Vera (AG3). Due to her conversations with an archivist, she knows that the child victims were killed by using poison: 'They didn't even waste bullets to kill the children but simply applied poison to their lips.'⁶⁵²

Apart from these examples, no information on the immediate course of events at the crime scene was provided during the interviews. Renata (AG1) however mentions an aspect that illustrates how narratives about the tragedy possibly evolved in post-war Rostov: Her mother had several Jewish colleagues who had evacuated before the second occupation of Rostov and upon return to their homes learned that their family members were among the victims of the mass killing.

⁶⁵⁰ FI2/GZ, AG2, 22 October, (18:27-18:54).

⁶⁵¹ 'Informatsiya po aktsii v period 11-13 avgusta 1942 goda, kotoraya provodilas' v period okkupatsii g. Rostova-na-Donu protiv evreyskogo mirnovo naseleniya i evreyskikh bezhentshev', *Utrachennye imena*, <http://holocaust.su/rubric16/article56> [accessed 12 October 2014].

⁶⁵² VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (10:45-10:49).

Some of those who returned from evacuation, relatives of those who lay in the ravine, knew about this and talked about it. As did those locals who lived right there [near the ravine]. Therefore, this, well, (pause) it's not fiction, it really was like that.⁶⁵³

Concluding, while little information was available on the events at the killing site, remembrance of the Holocaust in Rostov is strongly tied to what happened before the actual mass execution. The aspect of collaboration, particularly Cossack collaboration, proved to be a topic many respondents were generally aware of. Partly, this might be explained by the public attention the subject received after the city's liberation when a large number of people were charged with collaboration. Their long absence and prison sentences were noticed by others as was the case with Konstantin's (AG2) former neighbour. Contrary to collaboration, some participants also refer to the aspect of resistance, the following examples illustrate.

Resistance

Fedor notes that a general lack of resistance against the German occupation characterised Soviet society at the time as many people were not in favour of the Soviet system. 'I don't know but here in Russia nobody opposed in principle. Many were annoyed by the Soviet power.'⁶⁵⁴ Although Fedor refers specifically to civilian counteraction, Kovalev nevertheless points out that resistance existed on a large scale, both in the form of partisan and underground movements. He speaks of 700,000 to 1,3 Million people who became actively involved in the fight against the *Wehrmacht*.⁶⁵⁵ Partisans are mentioned in a number of interviews, Konstantin for instance notes that partisan units fought in the neighbouring districts of Rostov.⁶⁵⁶ He recalls that his grandmother helped partisans by bringing them food and notes that she was denounced by somebody in the neighbourhood but managed to escape to relatives in time, taking her child with her.⁶⁵⁷ Occasionally, interviewees refer to partisans in connection with the killing of civilians who were suspected of supporting them. Thus Raissa (AG1)

⁶⁵³ Ibid., (32:05-32:13).

⁶⁵⁴ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (17:43-17:48).

⁶⁵⁵ Kovalev, *Kollaboratsionizm v Rossii*, p. 18. For further information on mainly Jewish resistance and partisan movements in the occupied parts of the Soviet Union see Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, pp. 482-506, 530-1; N. Tec, Jewish Resistance Facts, Omissions, and Distortions, in P. Henry (ed.), *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis* (2014), pp. 43, 53-6, 64; Al'tman, *Kholokost na territorii SSSR* (2011), pp. 725-32.

⁶⁵⁶ KR, AG2, 12 October, (24:44-24:47).

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., (01:57-02:31).

remembers learning after the war that partisans were executed in Rostov just as they were in her home village in Rostov *oblast*.

Alena (AG2) is the single respondent who mentions an underground movement, the *Molodaya gvardiya*, Young Guard, founded by members of the Soviet youth organisation *Komsomol*.⁶⁵⁸ She first heard about their activities at school and argues that they have to be interpreted as one side of the coin since people also 'behaved loyal' towards the Germans. To illustrate what this implicates, she tells the story of her great-grandmother's sister who was in a romantic relationship with a German soldier. 'She had a romance. That is these officers stayed at their house.'⁶⁵⁹ Alena's great-great-aunt's case exemplifies an aspect of occupation that is likewise excluded from the official culture of remembrance although studies show that it existed on a broad level. For her book *Eroberer* (conquerers), Regina Mühlhäuser analysed the manifold causes and motives of intimate relations between German soldiers and female civilians in the occupied eastern territories.⁶⁶⁰ Based on diaries, personal testimonials, *Wehrmacht*-documents as well as witness testimonies, Mühlhäuser describes cases of voluntary or involuntary sexual relationships. They illustrate that romantic relationships such as the one Alena briefly describes regarding her great-great-aunt were not seldom. The true nature of these relationships may however have been based on the attempt to minimise the danger of starvation, Sokolov points out.⁶⁶¹ This gender-related aspect of war and occupation will be further analysed in the passage *view at occupantss*.

As the *Ekho Moskvy* interview with the vice-chair of the Duma's Committee on Nationality Matters demonstrated, the image of Russians who rescued Jews forms an integral part of the official narrative on the Holocaust. In the existing study interviewees comment on specific stories of Russians who helped Jews, albeit without particularly pointing to the aspect of resistance. Lyubov reckons that many people knew about the danger their Jewish fellow citizens were in because they had heard rumours about mass killings in other occupied regions of the Soviet Union. Many therefore decided to help, Lyubov argues, because 'all of this spreads very quickly'⁶⁶² and people feared for their Jewish acquaintances. 'The people tried to send them somewhere, well, disguised them

⁶⁵⁸ It is likely that Alena did however actually refer to the Taganrog Resistance Movement which was founded in 1941 as the Young Guard mainly operated in the city of Krasnodon in the Lugansk region. Alena mentions a monument dedicated to the resistance movement in her home town Taganrog.

⁶⁵⁹ AF, AG2, 18 October 2011, (06:02-06:08).

⁶⁶⁰ R. Mühlhäuser, *Eroberer, Sexuelle Gewalttaten und intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1945* (Hamburg, 2008), p. 252-60.

⁶⁶¹ Sokolov, *Okkupatsiya - Pravda i mify*, p. 324.

⁶⁶² LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (16:25-16:27).

somehow, so that it wouldn't be possible to denounce them ...'.⁶⁶³ Vika heard of similar cases of people who tried to help Jews by hiding them or falsifying papers for them that identified them as Armenians.⁶⁶⁴ Respondents of the youngest age group likewise report about stories of non-Jewish locals who saved Jews. Aleksandra (AG3) read many eyewitness accounts and other documents for a coursework at university and she concludes that apart from those who decided to work for the Germans which involved aiding in detecting Jews, 'very many people hid Jews.'⁶⁶⁵ Vera (AG3) holds the same view and gives an example she heard from contemporary witnesses who reported to her about Jewish children who were saved by non-Jewish Rostovians: 'People took the children and brought them up under different surnames, names and later couldn't even clarify who and how'⁶⁶⁶

Summing up, the interviews convey a blurred image of the Holocaust in Rostov in terms of what happened in the Zmievkra ravine. Other aspects of the crime proved to be remembered more clearly throughout the three age groups. Respondents argued that the local population's behaviour in terms of the fate of their Jewish fellow citizens was of a twofold character. It implied either betrayal in the form of collaboration with the enemy or various supporting measures. None of the respondents who report about acts of opposition against the occupying force however does so with reference to resistance. While the outlined examples of this section all referred to remembrance and knowledge about the Holocaust in Rostov, the following passage introduces the findings how the annihilation of the European Jews in general was remembered or perceived within the sample.

Overall Knowledge on the Holocaust

In each interview, the interviewer posed the question what the respondent generally knows about the Holocaust and what the term stands for. All participants knew that it defines the implementation of the National Socialist racial policy during World War II. Regarding the term Holocaust, several respondents who were socialised in the Soviet Union pointed out that it was not used until the *Perestroika* era. Timofey (AG1) notes that he was unaware for a long time about the genocide of the Jews until he read about it in a book:

⁶⁶³ Ibid., (16: 32-16:46).

⁶⁶⁴ VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (23:12-23:19).

⁶⁶⁵ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (10:15-10:27).

⁶⁶⁶ VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (05:02-05:12)

First of all, I comparatively late learned what the Holocaust was. I simply knew that the annihilation of the Jews was the same as the annihilation of the Gypsies, or the annihilation of the Komsomol members, or the annihilation ... ehm, I'll show you a book, *Hitler and Stalin*, you have to read it.⁶⁶⁷

Timofey was not the only respondent who noted that the term Holocaust appeared only recently in Russia. Indeed the lack of a common term for the genocide proves that the fate of the Jews was concealed effectively in Soviet Russia. Konstantin (AG2), however, argues that despite the lack of distinct information about the Holocaust in Soviet times which according to him changed in the late 1970s, there actually was an expression for the extermination of the Jews: 'Until then it was simply the genocide of the Jews, you know, everybody described it like that, then the expression Holocaust took its place....'⁶⁶⁸ In the second family interview, Galina (AG2) and her friend Ivan (AG2) agreed that the term Holocaust only appeared in the post-Perestroika era, whereas they before the genocide was referred to as the 'annihilation of the Jews.'⁶⁶⁹ None of the respondents belonging to the youngest age group however noted that the term Holocaust appeared only recently. Bearing in mind that most of these participants were between twenty and thirty years old, the majority of them were in their school years when the term Holocaust was already established, therefore it might have been perceived as common.

The most important result in terms of the respondents' overall view of the Holocaust was that knowledge about the mass atrocity in Rostov was often combined with an awareness of other Soviet Holocaust sites on the one hand and the death camps on the other. Furthermore, the anti-Jewish emphasis behind the Nazi racial policy was named by many as the underlying cause for the mass killings. This indicates that the respective respondents were aware of the distinction between how the Holocaust was implemented on Soviet territory as opposed to the death camps or ghettos that existed outside the Soviet Union. Renata (AG1), Oksana (AG2) Aleksandra (AG3) and Yuriy (AG3) argued that throughout the Soviet Union Jews were shot in any occupied city as in Rostov and the other interviews generally showed that the majority of respondents likewise knew about the destruction of Jewish communities elsewhere.⁶⁷⁰ When asked if they could name other places in the previous Soviet Union where mass atrocities

⁶⁶⁷ TL, AG1, 05 October 2011, (38:36-38:54).

⁶⁶⁸ KR, AG2, 12 October, (26:47-27:04).

⁶⁶⁹ FI2/GZ, IK, (AG2), 22 October, (1:09:59-1:10:04).

⁶⁷⁰ RK, AG1, 25 October 2011, (55:23-55:28); OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (12:39-12:53); FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:24:08-1:24:15); AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (06:02-06:09).

comparable to the one in Rostov were committed, interviewees from all age groups predominantly mentioned the Babi Yar ravine in Kiev.⁶⁷¹ It is mainly respondents who were socialised during the Stalin era who name the largest mass killing of Jews on Soviet territory, followed by a smaller number of representatives from the second and finally interviewees of the third age group. Contrary to the official Soviet concealment of the Holocaust, the Babi Yar mass atrocity received public attention when Russian poet Evgeniy Evtushenko published his critical same-named poem in the high-circulation newspaper *Literaturnaya gazeta* in 1961. He had composed the poem after visiting the crime scene with author Anatoliy Kuznetsov, an eyewitness to the events whose novel *Babi Yar* was first published in the Soviet literary magazine *Yunost* in censored form in 1966,⁶⁷² an uncensored form was published in Great Britain in 1970. The famous Russian composer Dmitriy Shostakovich asked for Evtushenko's permission to set the poem to music after reading it in *Literaturnaya gazeta*. The premiere of Shostakovich's *Babi Yar* symphony was conducted with great difficulties but was celebrated by the audience with standing ovations and fostered Evtushenko's recognition as one of the leading Soviet poets of his time. The media also commented extensively on the premiere of Shostakovich's masterpiece and it is therefore possible that respondents belonging to the oldest age group remember Babi Yar mainly for these reasons. Despite this, the mass killing was however also mentioned by participants from the other two age groups when asked about other places of mass atrocities on Soviet territory.⁶⁷³ Aleksandra (AG3) has read about it on the internet and in books and recalls: 'That's a place where really many, in my opinion several thousand, I passed by it, Babi Yar.'⁶⁷⁴

Apart from Babi Yar in Kiev, Belorussia, the Baltic Republics and Ukraine were named in connection with other mass atrocities and the Holocaust.⁶⁷⁵ The awareness that Jews were persecuted throughout the occupied Soviet territories applied to

⁶⁷¹ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (19:07-19:43); TL, AG1, 5 October 2011, (29:13-29:32); LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (11:29-11:36); RK, AG1, 25 October 2011, (42:19-42:32); NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (09:05-09:09); VZ, AG2, 11 October 2011, (28:35-28:37); AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (13:17-13:29); VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (10:15.10:34).

⁶⁷² A. Kuznetsov, *Babi Yar. Roman-dokument*, *Yunost*, 8 (August 1966), pp. 7-45.

⁶⁷³ NP, AG2, 24 September 2014, (09:01-09:17). VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (10:15.10:34).

⁶⁷⁴ AL, AG3, 28 September 2011, (13:17-13:29).

⁶⁷⁵ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (34:37-34:57); LO, AG1, 25 October 2011, (13:01-13:13); FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (30:32-30:52); TO, AG2, 4 October 2011, (08:19-08:28); VT, AG2, 19 October 2011, (05:59-06:05); OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (19:24-19:33; 20:21-20:29); KR, AG2, 12 October, (29:20-29:49; 49:55-50:05); FI2/GZ, (AG2), 22 October, (1:08:49-1:09:42); VM, AG3, 19 October 2011, (12:05-13:10).

respondents throughout all age groups, however with a clear emphasis on participants from the generation of contemporary witnesses and thereafter. Valentina (AG1) argues that apart from Russia, many Jews from western Ukraine and Belorussia fell victim to mass killings.⁶⁷⁶ She recalls a visit to a Holocaust memorial in Lithuania in the 1980s and has the impression that young Russians today are probably even better informed about the Jewish fate than people in the Baltic States where Holocaust memorials have vanished, according to her.⁶⁷⁷

Like Nadezhda (AG2), who equalled the Babi Yar and Zmievskaya Balka tragedies, Vika (AG2) draws a connection between the events in Rostov and the annihilation of the Jews in Kharkov: 'The second occupation was already after Kharkov, there, too, ... in Ukraine. There the Jews were dealt with very brutally.'⁶⁷⁸ Vika nevertheless also names Babi Yar and thinks that the mass killing 'was tolerated by the government.'⁶⁷⁹ As was outlined before, she holds a very critical view of the Soviet power and argues that many victims could have been spared had the Soviet information and evacuation policy been different.

Apart from Kharkov and Kiev, few Soviet Holocaust sites are explicitly named such as Odessa and Salaspils, Bobruisk, Krasnodar and Zhytomir.⁶⁸⁰ Renata (AG1) for instance recalls hearing about the ghetto in Salaspils by a Jewish guide who showed her around the Salaspils former concentration camp site. Occasionally, Rostov's neighbouring cities Azov and Taganrog are also mentioned whose Jewish population was likewise annihilated by *Sonderkommando 10a*.⁶⁸¹ Raissa (AG1) remembers that inhabitants who had witnessed the events in the Petrushina ravine told her what happened to the Jews of Taganrog. She was told that people lost their minds because of what they witnessed or survived.⁶⁸² Having grown up in Taganrog, Alena (AG2) knows that Jews visit the *Balka Smerti* (ravine of death) memorial, the Petrushina ravine's unofficial name.⁶⁸³ Ekaterina (AG3) also mentions her home town Taganrog and argues that it is merely one further example for how the Holocaust was conducted in the occupied territories, such as Rostov. She recalls being taken to the memorial as a pupil

⁶⁷⁶ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (34:37-34:57).

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., (38:06-38:25).

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., (09:34-09:42).

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., (28:35-28:45).

⁶⁸⁰ VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (13:01-13:07); RK, AG1, 25 October 2011, (44:41-44:51); FI2/GZ, IK, AG2, 22 October, (1:08:49-1:09:42); KR, AG2, 12 October, (29:32-29:36).

⁶⁸¹ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (49:01-50:02); OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (16:59-17:10);

⁶⁸² RK, AG1, 25 October 2011, (55:02-55:35).

⁶⁸³ AF, AG2, 18 October 2011, (09:28-09:38).

just as pupils from Rostov were taken to the Zmievskaia Balka memorial. 'That is, there were excursions when I was a child, that is we were also told about this in our childhood, we were there.'⁶⁸⁴

Except for these specific examples, in the majority of cases respondents however quote geographic regions rather than cities or villages. Seldomly, awareness of the persecution and annihilation of Jews in the occupied Soviet territories was also accompanied by a lack of knowledge of specific geographic areas or cities where the Holocaust took place or unawareness that Jews were persecuted on Soviet territory at all. Thus, as a history student, Anna (AG3) has a correct understanding of German occupation policy, yet she is unaware of Babi Yar's existence and cannot name similar places in the former Soviet Union. Even though Marianna (AG3) knows of the Jewish victims of the mass atrocity in Rostov because she regularly passes the memorial, the architecture student argues that her knowledge about the Holocaust is little because she was never particularly interested in the topic. She therefore does not know of other Holocaust sites on Soviet territory, although she is aware of the persecution of Jews in Poland during the war. Her family history however explains this focus and again what Welzer describes regarding communicative memory and its effect on an individual's view on history: Marianna's parents divorced when Marianna was a child and she lost contact with her father whose family has lived in Rostov for generations. Her mother's family, to the contrary, is Polish and her great-grandfather had a special mission during the war, Marianna explains: 'My great-grandfather ... who fought during the Second World War, he was a spy. He was thrown out in Germany with tasks. They saved these Jews. Well. That's why I am well informed, yes.'⁶⁸⁵

In some interviews, respondents also named places on former Soviet territory that do not fall within the category of Holocaust sites. Thus, Tamara (AG2) mentions the Khatyn massacre in Belarus, whereas she also names places that are linked to the Holocaust, such as Belaya Tserkov' in Ukraine and the Baltic countries.⁶⁸⁶ Petr (AG3) refers to the battle of Stalingrad and the Leningrad blockade when asked which other places in the former Soviet Union he knows where mass atrocities took place.⁶⁸⁷ All in all, the interviews nevertheless demonstrated an awareness of the dual nature of the

⁶⁸⁴ EK, AG3, 28 September 2011, (04:33-04:37).

⁶⁸⁵ MB, AG3, 26 October 2011, (04:53-05:10).

⁶⁸⁶ TO, AG2, 04 October 2011, (08:19 -08:41). D. Bergen, 'Between God and Hitler: German Military Chaplains and the Crimes of the Third Reich', in O. Bartov and P. Mack, *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (2001), p. 123.

⁶⁸⁷ PV, AG3, 4 October 2011, (16:22-16:53).

Holocaust and its different implementation in the occupied Soviet territories as opposed to the death camps and large ghettos that characterised the annihilation of the Jews of Western Europe and Germany.

An important finding was that while other mass atrocities on Soviet territory were associated with the Holocaust by many many respondents within the sample, concentration and death camps were not mentioned as often. Auschwitz and Treblinka were predominantly mentioned in this context, followed by Buchenwald, yet, as outlined above, all in all these cases were rare.⁶⁸⁸ In this context many respondents mentioned the role of literature, the media, including the internet and Holocaust films as a source of information. Apart from the aforementioned books Krutoy marshrut and Hitler and Stalin, two foreign publications, *The Reader* and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjama*, are also named.⁶⁸⁹ In terms of films, particularly Schindler's list was mentioned by several interviewees, followed by films such as *The Pianist* and *The Reader*, all of which were foreign productions.⁶⁹⁰ Soviet films addressing the Holocaust are not mentioned throughout the interviews. Olga Gershenson's and Jeremy Hicks' film historical studies on the Holocaust in Soviet cinema and early film illustrate that although films and documentaries were shot by Soviet filmmakers, they too presented the Jewish victimhood only subtly, thus reflecting the general under-representation of the topic in the Russian public.⁶⁹¹ Both scholars however conclude that, although concealed, the fate of the Jews was documented in these films therefore they could have theoretically served as a source of information.

Summing up, the interviews demonstrate that throughout the three age groups the majority of respondents were well informed about the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish population as well as the Holocaust in other parts of the occupied Soviet Union and in the camps. Many interviewees remembered or knew about local collaboration in the context of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity. In the majority of cases these narratives about collaboration referred to the denunciation of Jewish citizens. Stories of gentiles who saved Jews formed another narrative about reactions of the non-Jewish local

⁶⁸⁸ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (18:29-18:40); FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:24:28-1:24:40); FI1/YI, AG3, 20 October 2011, (1:24:21-1:24:42); AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (12:00-12:15).

⁶⁸⁹ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (15:31-15:55); VG, AG3, 18 October 2011, (23:32-23:37);

⁶⁹⁰ FI1/MR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (1:37:45-1:37:57); FI2/IA, AG2, 22 October, (1:11:46-1:11:58); FI2/IK, AG2, 22 October, (1:23:57-1:24:15).

⁶⁹¹ O. Gershenson, *Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (2013), pp. 223-4; J. Hicks, 'Znachenie sovetskikh dokumental'nykh fil'mov o natsistskikh prestupleniyakh: primer Rostova', in *Rossiyskaya biblioteka Kholokosta: Materialy 7-y Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii 'Uroki Kholokosta i sovremennaya Rossiya'* (Moscow, 2013), pp. 120.

population to the persecution of the Jews. Several respondents however also knew or remembered that collaboration included aiding the perpetrators in the killing. The role of these *politsay* was ascribed to Cossacks throughout several interviews. Regarding the course of events in Rostov, knowledge on the events at the crime scene was mainly reduced to the fact that it was a mass execution. In a few cases respondents however knew or remembered unique details that allowed insights into the victims' perspective even 70 years after the original event. These stories about successful hiding or to the contrary the physical abuse of a victim at the killing site almost exclusively existed in the age group of contemporary witnesses and participants of AG2. All in all, communicative memory played an essential role in most of the cases and various examples demonstrate how communication not only within the family but generally within the social groups respondents belong to has shaped their view on the events in 1942. The following last segment introduces the respondents' perception of the German occupants and reveals a variety of interpretations regarding perpetrators' and ordinary soldiers' actions.

View at occupants

Ever since Christopher Browning's groundbreaking 1992 study *Ordinary men* the question what turns people into mass murderers has been examined within a set of research projects, among which Daniel Goldhagen's 1998 *Hitler's willing executioners* was probably the most controversial. While many of the pioneer publications about perpetrators of the Holocaust have focused on perpetrator psychology and the social framework that facilitated their deeds, the question how these ordinary Germans and their crimes are perceived today has been the focus of a number of studies of the past years.⁶⁹² The aforementioned German study *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi* and its follow-up multi-national comparative projects about intergenerational and generational memory transfer and making sense of history kicked off more or less comparable studies elsewhere, among them the study at hand. McKay's aforementioned British oral history study illustrated an important aspect in today's interpretation of the Holocaust and its perpetrators. The multi-generational oral history study on British collective memory of World War II and the Holocaust showed that respondents tended towards an apologetic

⁶⁹² For instance L. Breuer, *Deutsche und polnische Erinnerung von unten. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Rollenzuschreibungen in den Vergangenheitsbildern von Deutschen und Polen* (2013); Heinrich, *Kollektive Erinnerungen der Deutschen*; Jensen, *Geschichte machen*; S. Rauch, *Making Sense of Holocaust representations: a reception study of audience responses to recent films* (Leicester, 2014).

view on the Germans who participated in war crimes. Mc Kay identified three themes suggested by his interviewees that, from their perspective, paved the way to the Holocaust. The first and main criterion named by his respondents in terms of the motives perpetrators had at the time was fear of suffering severe punishment or even death if orders were not followed. Secondly, McKay's interviewees distinguished between the majority of ordinary Germans and ideologically motivated fanatics who were striving for the extermination of the Jews. The third criterion named in McKay's interviews is the influence of propaganda.⁶⁹³

Variations of these three themes also appeared in the present study. Apart from the picture of brutal German fascists who killed 100 Rostovians for one dead German⁶⁹⁴ and withheld medical aid to Soviet prisoners of war, the participants' view on then Germans was characterised by ambivalence. The perception of the German occupants was one of the questions posed during each interview, bearing in mind that the local population was directly affected by the occupation as soldiers were often billeted in Rostovian households. The majority of contemporary witnesses therefore either remembered Germans in their immediate environment or, in terms of the younger participants, heard stories in their immediate social environment which influenced their view on then-Germans in one way or another. In his book on German occupation and the relation between occupiers and local population, Pohl points to the officially forbidden practice of accommodating soldiers in Russian households.⁶⁹⁵ He notes that thousands of citizens had to abandon their houses in cities that were close to the frontline. It is unknown how many Rostovians were affected but in the 33 individual cases examined within the study at hand, five respondents reported about Germans who had resided with them or their family members. Raissa (AG1) remembers how several times Germans were billeted at her family's home, sometimes for weeks. According to her, it was common practice to accommodate soldiers with the local population during the winter period and this applied both to Germans as well as soldiers of the Red Army.⁶⁹⁶ Even regardless of the aspect of housing, the period of occupation between July 1942 and February 1943 implied constant contact between occupiers and locals.

Generally, three main positions as to the perception of Germans at the time could be extracted from the interviews, named in the following in order of their frequency. The

⁶⁹³ McKay, *A multi-generational oral history*, p. 186.

⁶⁹⁴ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (09:32-09:57); FI2/SO, AG2, 22 October, (1:03:34-1:03:54).

⁶⁹⁵ Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht*, p. 131.

⁶⁹⁶ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (30:05-30:25).

first characterised an unexpectedly positive view on ordinary German soldiers whom many interviewees ascribed a general understanding for the overall population's indigence. As was outlined in the first chapter of the interview analysis, hunger was the most dominant aspect respondents of all three age groups mentioned in connection with remembrance of the city's occupation. One of the central elements in respondents' perception of Germans at the time that is mentioned throughout all age groups is how soldiers demonstrated empathy by sharing food, mainly with hungry children. The exposed role of hunger in collective memory could explain why stories addressing this subject are particularly fixed in remembrance. Representing the enemy, those German soldiers who shared food with locals or tried to otherwise ease the local populations' hardship did not correspond with the picture of violent occupants, thus causing a counter-example with a positive connotation.⁶⁹⁷ Stories of German soldiers who offered their enemy's children bread with yam, as in Fedor's case, had a strong emotional appeal on those involved and, as the aforementioned stories about Russians who helped Jews, transport morale and values which might be one reason why they appear in various forms throughout the interviews. Additionally, as mentioned previously Altshuler, Arad and Movshovich point out that the general attitude of the local prewar population towards Germans was shaped by positive experiences during the Civil War. These factors could also explain why, secondly, a clear distinction was made by many respondents between SS-men who were identified as the real fascists and simple soldiers who, according to a number of respondents had to fulfill their duty and probably did so involuntarily.⁶⁹⁸ The SS-men were perceived as representatives of the Nazi racial ideology which was often underlined by concrete examples stressing their inhuman behaviour. Finally, the National Socialist propaganda was interpreted by some respondents as an important, if not the main explanation for many Germans' orientation towards Nazism.

⁶⁹⁷ In her study *Eroberungen* Mühlhäuser gives examples that illustrate how German soldiers tried to help female locals they had forbidden relationships with. Her study demonstrates that these relationships secured the womens' survival in a number of ways, ensuring food supply and a potential prevention from physical harm caused by other soldiers. Mühlhäuser, *Eroberungen*, pp. 252-256.

⁶⁹⁸ In this context the interviews demonstrate how Soviet terminology outlasted the socio-political upheavals of the past two post-Soviet decades. Particularly respondents who were fully socialised in the Soviet era used the word *fashisty* (fascists) instead of *natsisty* (Nazis).

Regarding the first aspect, the picture of soldiers offering locals food repeatedly appears throughout the interviews.⁶⁹⁹ Some of the contemporary witnesses remembered how German soldiers offered them candy or chocolate, thus making a strong impression on the then children: Timofey recalled how German soldiers gave him sweets and thinks they did so because they probably had children of the same age. One officer made a particularly strong impression on him: 'The officer who related to us very friendly, ... literally said: 'Well, what are we simple people here for?''⁷⁰⁰ When the question is posed by the interviewer how Germans behaved towards the local population, Timofey reasons that people are different and that the people around him tried to protect him by not sharing the horrible stories of the war. He adds that soldiers of the Red Army 'were also no angels.'⁷⁰¹ While latter statement may have been prompted by a discomfort due to the interviewer's German nationality, the assumption that not all German soldiers were convinced of their mission but rather questioned the task they had to fulfill at the Eastern front is brought up by several respondents in all age groups. It is mainly those respondents who report about personal relations between German soldiers and their family who hold a nuanced view.⁷⁰² Raissa (AG1) recalls various German soldiers who were billeted at her family's house during the war and remembers how different these seemed to her. One soldier, Joseph, became more than just an involuntary guest of the family and called her mother 'Mama', Raissa remembers. He shared private information about his girlfriend and parents with Raissa's family, bought them food and encouraged Raissa's mother not to fall into despair. Due to this personal contact Raissa concluded that 'the war was not to everybody's liking.'⁷⁰³ Anna (AG3) thinks that many German soldiers who served at the eastern front may also have been forced to go.⁷⁰⁴

An emphatic view appears in various interviews, especially with participants of the third age group. Yuriy (AG3) heard stories about German prisoners of war who wanted to stay in Russia and married Russian women after they had been released, thus integrating into society. His father Sergey (AG1) confirms Yuriy's comment adding that returning to a country that lay in ruins may have seemed very difficult. To Alena (AG2)

⁶⁹⁹ Apart from Fedor's case, see: FI2/SO, AG2, 22 October, (1:02:38-1:02:57); FI1/MR, SE, AG1, 20 October 2011, (02:51-03:06). RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (1:31:15-1:32:22).

⁷⁰⁰ TL, AG1, 05 October 2011, (17:48-17:59).

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., (18:35-18:48).

⁷⁰² This result needs to be called into question to some degree bearing in mind the interviewer's German background and the respondents' wish to act according to general rules of hospitality.

⁷⁰³ RS, AG1, 23 October 2011, (27:24-27:30).

⁷⁰⁴ AP, AG3, 11 October 2011, (04:08-04:18).

the romantic relationship between her great-aunt and a German soldier was not the main reason why she holds a mainly positive view of the German occupiers at the time. She stresses that she can only comment on her home town Taganrog in terms of the period of occupation but notes that to her knowledge the Germans 'were greeted with flowers'.⁷⁰⁵ From Alena's mainly religiously motivated point of view, the most important reason for the positive connotation attached to the image of Germans at the time results from their re-opening of the churches that had been destroyed by the Soviet power.⁷⁰⁶

Stories about violence against civilians are presented throughout several interviews, though not as often as one would expect given the topic the study focuses on. Valentina (AG1) heard about the brutality of German soldiers but also remembers that her grandmother pitied those low rank soldiers who, towards the end of the occupation during winter were suffering hunger and especially cold due to their improper uniforms that were not suitable for a Russian winter: 'They were also hungry, she said, well, officers most likely, of course they were well provided for...but soldiers, she said...she pitied them although they were occupiers...'.⁷⁰⁷

Fedor not only recalls the aforementioned episode how a soldier offered him bread with yam but also recalls being scared of the Germans in black uniforms he saw on the streets of Rostov and near his neighbourhood:

I remember him, he was tall, in this black uniform, this bearing, ehm, the Germans usually, well, usually they all were like - in green field uniforms. But this one was in this black uniform, tall....⁷⁰⁸

Contrary to the many aforementioned comments on local collaborators, little additional information is available in the interviews on how respondents viewed the so called *Esesovtsy*, members of the SS. Sergey depicts them as brutal but points out that their local collaborators, *politsay*, were as atrocious.⁷⁰⁹ Oksana (AG2) refers to the cold blooded killing of Soviet POWs who were 'neatly shot', as she puts it, in order to illustrate her perception of the occupiers. She adds that the Red Army never deliberately killed German POWs.⁷¹⁰ Generally, McKay's and Welzer's findings that Nazis were

⁷⁰⁵ AF, AG2, 18 October 2011, (04:10-04:25).

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., (26:48-28:20).

⁷⁰⁷ VS, AG1, 05 October 2011, (22:50-23:03).

⁷⁰⁸ FS, AG1, 21 September 2011, (10:28-10:44).

⁷⁰⁹ FI1/SR, AG1, 20 October 2011, (02:32-02:52).

⁷¹⁰ OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (09:32-09:57)

remembered as the others and ideological fanatics⁷¹¹ can partly also be inferred from the interviews of this study. An important distinction needs to be considered in terms of possibly biased results of the remarks on how Germans were perceived, though: As opposed to the above mentioned surveys, the interviews of this study were conducted in a cultural setting with particular traditions and values regarding hospitality towards foreigners. Bearing in mind the subject of the interview and the interviewer's German nationality, openly answering questions regarding the German crimes against civilians may have been perceived as too offensive. The aforementioned example of Anna (AG3) who felt it was too rude to refer to then German fascists as 'the Germans' illustrates how delicate the subject was for her and a number of further examples throughout the interviews indicate the same.⁷¹² This aspect needs to be considered as a possible explanation for the small number of comments on Germans as perpetrators and the comparatively large number of positive comments on *Wehrmacht* soldiers.

As was the case in the other two studies, Nazi ideology and propaganda were identified by several respondents as the motive underlying acts of violence not only with reference to the perpetrators in Rostov but also Germans per se. Although the topic of possible perpetrator motivations is also rarely commented in the interviews some respondents shared their ideas. Galina and Ivan (AG2) for instance argue that Germans were brainwashed by Nazi ideology very quickly.⁷¹³ The aforementioned examples according to which the victims of the mass atrocity were picked for racial criteria can equally be viewed in this context. A different, yet also widespread approach to the question of perpetrator motives is presented by Mikhail (AG2) who argues that the perpetrators in the Zmievka ravine had to obey orders and would have risked to be shot had they not carried out the order. McKay's, Stefanie Rauch's and Welzer's studies revealed similar apologetic interpretations in the British and German surveys.⁷¹⁴

Concluding, the view on the German occupiers was divided into two narratives: A positively connotated view of Germans that derived from stories about soldiers sharing food with locals and a negative view of those who were part of the killing squads and acted on the basis of ideological motives and in cooperation with local collaborators.

⁷¹¹ McKay, *A multi-generational oral history*, p. 188; Welzer, *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi*, p. 22.

⁷¹² See for instance FI2/GZ, IA, AG2, 22 October, (1:02:11-1:02:57); OL, AG2, 7 October 2011, (07:03-08:05).

⁷¹³ FI2/IA, AG2, 22 October, (1:39:24-1:39:33).

⁷¹⁴ McKay, *A multi-generational oral history*, pp. 188-90; Welzer, *Grandpa wasn't a Nazi*, pp. 22-4; S. Rauch, *Making Sense of Holocaust representations*, pp. 97f.

Both groups were clearly separated and at times accompanied by apologetic ideas regarding perpetrator behaviour.

Summary

Summing up, the oral history interviews with 33 Rostovians of three age groups demonstrated that alongside collective experiences and remembrance of hunger, bombardments and the psychological harm resulting thereof, the mass killing in the Zmievka ravine is named as the most significant event of the occupation period by the vast majority of respondents. Regardless of the overall assessment of the event as either but a small part of the Holocaust or an example for the implementation of the Masterplan East, apart from one participant all respondents knew what happened in August 1942 and that many of the city's Jews were victims of the mass execution. Paralleling the results of Welzer's study on German family memory on war and the Holocaust, the interview analysis thus illustrates a similar disparity between official and communicative memory. It has been demonstrated that the aspect of local collaboration proved to be a highly ambivalent subject throughout the sample. While the official narrative stresses the role of Russians as rescuers of Jews, the interviews in many ways illustrated the opposite. The respondents perceived collaboration as a problematic aspect in the city's wartime history as it challenged the general self image by being a central element in facilitating the Holocaust in Rostov. Forced labour and the long-term psychological impact of the war and occupation were other topics that contradict the official narrative and were mentioned in several interviews. A parallel to official remembrance of the GPW however existed in some respondents' assessment of the Zmievskaya Balka tragedy as an event that affected various nationalities.

The findings also contradict central results of Berno-Bellekur's aforementioned quantitative study. The country-wide survey showed that regardless of their educational background nearly 50 per cent of the study participants did not know what the term Holocaust stands for while nearly 37 per cent thought the term refers to the general killing of civilians during World War II. Of those 52 per cent who knew that it terms the annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany, many respondents possessed only little factual knowledge about the Holocaust. It is telling that 35 per cent chose 'the civilian population' to answer the question 'who suffered during the Holocaust?'⁷¹⁵ and Berno-Bellekur's findings have to be interpreted in the context of the state-driven

⁷¹⁵ Berno-Bellekur, pp. 19-20.

falsification of history and silence on the subject in the Soviet era, the consequences of which still have an impact on today's society. In contrast to that, all interviewees of the present study knew what the term Holocaust stands for. Apart from one all were aware of what happened to the city's Jewish population. This not only applied to the generation of contemporary witnesses but also included representatives of the youngest age group. The results thus confirm the findings of a 1997 multi-generational study on collective memory of political events. Its aim was to test Mannheim's claim who postulated that personally experiencing an event in one's adolescence is the key to knowledge about the incident in question. Mannheim consequently argued that the further away in the past an event occurred, the less a person who was born afterwards would tend to know about it. The scholars of the study however partly invalidated this hypothesis: Their study revealed that knowledge about historic events was not necessarily linked to mainly the cohort that experienced their adolescence when the event occurred. To the contrary, an event such as the Holocaust which was among those presented to the participants of the US-study who belonged to various cohorts age 18 and over 'was described adequately by more than 60% of the samples, ... whereas at the other extreme less than 15% of the respondents could provide an explanation scored as correct for the Marshall Plan or John Dean.'⁷¹⁶ In the present case, the result was comparable and in some cases even clearer in terms of the accuracy with which participants throughout all age groups could describe not only the events in Rostov but also the Holocaust as such. This finding is striking insofar, as Holocaust education in the United States and Russia differ significantly in that the latter is only at its very beginning. While it is very likely that the participants of the US-study obtained their knowledge about the Holocaust in educational institutions, the same cannot per se be assumed in terms of the participants of the present study, at least not in an institutionalised frame. As we have seen, awareness of the subject in the majority of cases rather derived from other sources, and in many cases communication within families or other social networks proved to be essential for acquiring knowledge about the Holocaust. Another important aspect many respondents mentioned was the role of literature, the media, including the internet and Holocaust films as a source of information.

⁷¹⁶ H. Schuman, R. Belli and K. Bischooping, The Generational Basis of Historical Knowledge, in J. Pennebaker, D. Paez and B. Rimé (eds), *Collective Memory of Political Events Social Psychological Perspectives* (Mahwah, 1997), p. 53.

The study at hand furthermore demonstrated that the annihilation of the Jews was remembered in the Soviet context rather than as a phenomenon that affected Jews throughout occupied Europe and Germany. Thus, the focus on Auschwitz as the main symbol of the Holocaust was not confirmed in the interviews. The majority of interviewees was nevertheless aware of the camp system and the Nazi Germany's racial policy.

We also saw how biographical factors influenced respondents' perception and interpretation of the events in Rostov and that this also served as an explanation for collaboration in the eyes of other respondents. Belonging to a specific ethnic group or having been affected by the Stalinist repressions had a particular effect on how interviewees remembered the events in occupied Rostov or what they had come to learn about them and how this affected their overall view on history. Those respondents whose family members or who themselves suffered repressions during the Stalinist terror tended to have a critical view on the Soviet apparatus and were better informed on other victims whose stories were likewise silenced by the Soviet authorities, such as on the Jews' fate during World War II. Personally experiencing state-organised violence or its aftermath in other words had had an effect on these interviewees' perception of violence including its potential protagonists and victims, which in the two relevant cases tended to imply a greater knowledge about the fate of Soviet Jews. This need however not necessarily lead to a feeling of solidarity with the Jewish victims, as we could see in Bogdan's example whose family was also affected by the Stalinist terror.

Apart from these family-historical aspects, ethnicity had an impact on how respondents interpreted the Holocaust, as mainly two interviews with an ethnic Armenian and an ethnic German respondent illustrated: While in the first case, the level of awareness of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust was noticeably larger than with the majority of respondents due to the specific parallel in Armenian and Jewish history, in the latter case the respondent's ambivalence which was caused by a family history of suffering under the Soviet regime and the simultaneous awareness of German guilt was apparent. Mikhail's (AG2) identification with the land of his forefathers led to an interpretation of the Holocaust and German motives that clearly stuck out when compared to the rest of the interviews not only because it sought to relieve German guilt but also because it did not allow for acknowledging the suffering of the Russian population. The example of Marianna (AG3) who was born and raised in Rostov but whose mother's family was Polish likewise showed that even though Marianna was

socialised in Russia, her ties to Poland and the Polish history during World War II determine the way she assesses the history of the Holocaust in her home town.

Finally, we saw that the educational background only to a limited extent affected the level of respondents' knowledge about the annihilation of Rostov's Jewish population or the Holocaust as such. Bearing in mind the Soviet silence on the genocide, the long-term deficits in Russian history textbooks in terms of accurate depictions of the Holocaust, and the overall neglect of the Holocaust in historiography, this result is however hardly surprising. The examples of several respondents of AG2 and AG3 however showed that educational institutions nevertheless occasionally provided the frame within which the passing on of information about the mass atrocity eventually took place.

Lastly, a note on gender differences needs to be made. It is important in this context to point to the specific nature of oral histories of those who experienced life under occupation as this a priori excludes men within a certain age range who were at the front. Those personal memories we have come to hear of in the course of the interview analysis were therefore consequently first and foremost womens' and then-childrens' or adolescents' memories. Additionally, we need to keep in mind that the majority of respondents were women. Indeed, the majority of testimonies collected by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission stems from female eyewitnesses, therefore it is not an exaggeration to speak of a distinctly female memory when we look at oral histories on everyday Soviet life under German occupation. Partly this might serve as an explanation for the focus on suffering that has been detected in the interviews. Women were faced with the difficult task of having to provide for the family in the heavily destroyed city whereas the return of the former main provider - and protector - was unsure. This enduring borderline experience, in the case of Rostov's second occupation after all a period of nearly seven months, sharpened the view on essentially important aspects of life, the search for food and water, the striving for physical integrity, saving oneself and others from German attacks. As Sokolov has pointed out, many women sought to diminish the threat of sexual assaults by having relationships with German soldiers, thereby often also trying to establish a new provider for the family. The constant effort to minimize the threat posed to those whose voices we have heard directly or indirectly in the interviews had therefore to be taken into account during the analysis of their perception of the Holocaust and occupation period. The focus on these aforementioned existential aspects also explains why attention is turned on stories that deal with

similarly essential questions of survival. Thus, memories about Jews who went into hiding with the help of locals, about Jewish children being saved by non-Jewish Rostovians, or, to the contrary, about families who were denounced are mainly, though not exclusively, brought up by female respondents. Male interviewees, on the other hand, tended to focus, if they were contemporary witnesses, on the child perspective on war and mentioned their perception of German soldiers and warfare or on the stark impression of hunger. Since the majority of the male contemporary witnesses among the interviewees were seven years old or younger at the time of the second occupation, the information we can draw from them in terms of the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity was likewise filtered by communicative memory, the bearers of which were mostly female. It is, consequently, a predominantly female view on history that is displayed in the interviews. Further research should therefore be focussing on the question how male perception deviates, a gender-specific approach was however not the focus of the study at hand.

Conclusion

The question how the Holocaust is remembered on an individual level, what non-contemporary witnesses know about the annihilation of the European Jews by Nazi Germany and how they interpret the events has been the subject of a number of sociological studies in recent years. However, these have focused mainly on Western European countries, only very little scholarly research persists about specifically Holocaust-related narratives in contemporary Russia. While a number of studies have analysed Russia's collective memory of the Stalinist Gulag and the view on World War II, very few have focused on the location of Holocaust remembrance in the official remembrance of the war and these do not cover important recent developments in Russian memory politics.

The study at hand managed to fill research gaps by pursuing a twofold approach in first of all looking at manifestations of memory politics, and secondly demonstrating in a qualitative study that local forms of individual remembrance and narratives about the Holocaust differ from the official approach at a place like Rostov where the annihilation of the Jews was actually implemented. The combination of an empirical approach with archive research in order to look at the then and now proved to be essential in detecting narratives about the matter of interest. Secondly, for a number of reasons - mainly language barriers and the long-term inaccessibility of Russian archives - western and Russian research on the events in occupied Rostov coexisted without overlapping. The present study delivers a first description of the Holocaust in Rostov that is based on all previous works on the subject, yet it adds an important aspect: The critical consideration of all available sources - in due consideration of their bias - proved to be essential in approaching a more realistic view at the size of the crime but also its procedure whereas a onesided focus on the perpetrator documents has so far created an unbalanced picture of these two aspects in the rare western publications on Rostov. The analysis of both German and Soviet eyewitness accounts many of which had so far not been brought together, compared and examined in-depth showed that the previous historiography of the Holocaust in Rostov lacked such a combined approach that also delivered new details. The most important result thereof in terms of the impact on local memory today was that the annihilation of the Jewish population was witnessed in all its stages by the local non-Jewish population. Future research on the Holocaust on Soviet territory should lay a particular focus on eyewitness accounts as it is unlikely that Rostov is an

exception in terms of its many witnesses - given the openness of how the mass atrocity was carried out here as in other occupied cities. Indeed, this explains how remembrance of it has been passed on and knowledge about it today persists among Rostovians of various age groups. The multi-generational oral history interviews on individual memories of the Holocaust and narratives thereof also added new information regarding the Zmievskaia Balka mass atrocity that deserve further research as it potentially adds to our knowledge about the logistics of the crime. This mainly concerns the question if victims from neighbouring cities and villages were additionally brought to the execution site by train as described by two interviewees and conducted in another reported case near Rostov in the Northern Caucasus region. Another important insight gained from the interviews confirms Berkhoff's or Gershenson's findings regarding discontinuities in the Soviet official silence on the Holocaust either in Soviet media or film. A similar discontinuity seemingly existed in the field of socialist education.

Compared to the aforementioned studies on intergenerational communication and narratives of war and the Holocaust in Western Europe, the present study on individual memory and narratives about the Holocaust in Rostov has revealed both parallels and deviations. Despite being a local study, its findings can partly be compared to the results of the western studies, mainly regarding the nature of communicative memory and how it relates to official remembrance of the GPW and the Holocaust. The main and most apparent of those differences is undoubtedly the specific Russian focus on the war against Nazi Germany whereas western cultures of remembrance refer to the entire period of World War II. Although representatives from all age groups tended towards a critical evaluation as to certain aspects of the GPW narrative, the agreement on its overall accuracy was evident. Regarding the main research interest, the study delivered very important findings that contradicted the basis narrative and were mainly based on communication within the family and other social groups. Regardless of age, respondents addressed subjects that proved the existence of a parallel memory that is based on an equal consensus throughout the three age groups. What was transmitted through intergenerational conversation, for instance that locals acted as collaborators, proved to be at least as steady on the local level as the basis narrative in that the deviating aspects were addressed by representatives throughout all three age groups. A consensus in other words existed throughout all three age groups regarding the topic of local collaboration. The deviation between basis narrative and communicative memory is however characterised by an essentially different aspect when compared for instance

to the findings of the German study that also demonstrated differing official and communicative memories: While young Germans tended to create their private family memory that partly deviated strongly from historical truths, the counter memory detected in the present study reflects perceptions of the past that are free of such a bias. In other words, the underground/private memory and respondents' interpretation of history bears more relation to what we know are historic truths than the Russian basis narrative which leaves out vital elements of the civilian experience of war and occupation and yet continues so far to remain unquestioned by the majority of the Russian public. Similar to Welzer's findings on Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, the success of the Russian basis narrative might however also originate in the fact that respondents could integrate deviating aspects of their personal or family memory into it while the overall narrative of the heroic fight against evil remained intact. This finding is in itself not a uniquely Russian phenomenon. A broader analysis in the form of a representative study comparable to Welzer's in Germany will be needed to see if the conclusions made on Rostov are merely a local phenomenon since the population of areas that were not under German rule may not perceive the difference between the GPW-narrative and local forms of remembrance as significant and may present different results regarding knowledge and remembrance of the Holocaust.

How then will Holocaust remembrance in Russia outlast and evolve, can we predict a direction similar to its western neighbours or will Russia continue to follow its own path? Given the latest changes in memory politics, and the intensive work of Russian Jewish organisations over the past years, Russia may well pursue a stronger commitment regarding Holocaust education and the preservation of memory. It will however most likely continue to head for the specifically Russian direction that ties remembrance of the Holocaust to the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army, as both participants in this process, Jewish organisations and the political elite aim at establishing a narrative that focuses on this event. Indeed, for both sides it proves to be the best connecting factor: While from the perspective of Jewish organisations the liberation of Auschwitz is suited to open up the history of the Holocaust to a greater Russian public and at the same time stress the part of the liberators, the role of the Red Army fits official Russian interests to stress the uniting element in the GPW-narrative, Russian heroism, and the idea of having fought for ideals the majority of Russians identify with.

While the year 2015 and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II receives a specifically broad media attention in Russia and worldwide, the recent change in memory politics towards a stronger emphasis on the Holocaust can nevertheless not undo the decades of silence by the Soviet authorities. The process western societies have undergone that established lessons of the Holocaust as a moral guideline is at its very beginning in Russia. Here, the remembrance of the Jewish victims is accompanied by a phenomenon that also characterised public debates in other countries, Germany for instance: That other victim groups are perceived as being marginalised or even excluded from public remembrance. In a 2009 discussion in the popular Russian internet forum *kontakte* about whether or not Holocaust education leads to tolerance several users addressed the topic of a hierarchy of victims. The online debate illustrated the underlying problem that the so far missing broad public debate about less heroic stories of the GPW such as the suffering of the civilian population in general is still pending. Despite being greater in numbers, some users noted, the focus lies on the Jewish not the Russian victims. One of the commentators argued,

besides, the Jews are remembered in the whole world, and yet the Russians saved the world from fascism. Not only they, but they made the biggest contribution. But they are not remembered in other countries at all. Only in Russia. And even there less and less lately.⁷¹⁷

The increase in public Holocaust remembrance will most likely continue to produce similar reactions on the national level. On the transnational level Auschwitz connects Russian and western cultures of remembrance and serves as a common memory place, albeit with the aforementioned different focuses on the role of the liberators and the victims respectively. The 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and what was commented not only in the Russian media as Putin's disinvitation from the ceremony marked the gap the Ukraine crisis has merely widened though, thus adding to the gradual Russian shift away from the West that has been taking place under Putin's presidency. It is accompanied by a return to traditional values within the Russian society that furthers the process of Russian-Western estrangement. Lutz-Auras points to the alliance politics and the Russian Orthodox Church are forming in this process that has immediate effects on Russia's foreign policy: The relationship between human

⁷¹⁷ 'Uroki Kholokosta - put' k tolerantnosti?', *vk.com*, (24 April 2009), https://vk.com/topic-524993_20252517?offset=0 [accessed 10 March 2015].

rights and 'traditional values of humankind',⁷¹⁸ was addressed in a controversial resolution draft first presented to the UN Human Rights Council by the Russian Federation in 2009. It traces back to a seminar on human rights held in 2008 where one of the discussants, a patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, pointed to what he termed the monopoly of the secular Western *Weltanschauung* regarding the interpretation of human rights.⁷¹⁹ The resolution that called for a stronger emphasis of traditions and was criticised by western states for potentially undermining human rights needed three attempts until it was adopted in 2012.

As a member of the OSCE Russia has however agreed with other member states that 'confronting the Holocaust can provide a context in which learners develop sensitivity towards human-rights abuses generally',⁷²⁰. Russia's nonmembership in the IHRA could be explained against this background, yet it also proves the country's decision to follow her own path - not only in terms of Holocaust remembrance.

⁷¹⁸ While no agreed definition of the term exists, dignity, freedom and responsibility are named as traditional values of humankind in the 'Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind', Human Rights Council United Nations General Assembly, A/HRC/22/71 (6 December 2012), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/AHRC2271_English.PDF [accessed 27 March 2015].

⁷¹⁹ 'Förderung der Menschenrechte durch Annäherung an traditionelle Werte?' *Informationsplattform humanrights.ch*, <http://www.humanrights.ch/de/internationale-menschenrechte/nachrichten/diverse-gremien/resolution-traditionelle-werte-menschenrechte> [accessed 25 March 2015], p. 149.

⁷²⁰ 'Education on the Holocaust and on anti-Semitism: An overview and analysis of educational approaches', Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, (2006), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/18818?download=true> [accessed 27 March 2015].

Appendix 1: Guideline

I. Personal details

1. Age
2. place of birth
3. profession

II. Period of occupation (general)

1. How important is the period of occupation for today's Rostovians?
2. Description of Rostov's occupation towards a stranger: Which events are important?
3. How was the occupation organised by the Germans?
4. Where was the Gestapo headquarter?

III. Personal/family experiences

1. Personal experience / family experiences during occupation

IV. Knowledge of how other Rostovians lived during occupation

V. Zmievska Balka

1. How did the occupiers behave towards the local population?
2. I heard about the Zmievska ravine, what do you know about that?
3. Who were the victims? How many?
4. Why were these people killed?
5. How were they selected?

VI. Knowledge about and awareness of the Holocaust

1. Do you know of other former Soviet cities comparable to the Zmievska ravine?
2. Babi Yar, Taganrog

VII. Oral Tradition

1. Where or by whom were you informed on what happened in the Zmievska ravine?
2. School / other sources of information
3. Accounts of older family members of what happened in the Zmievska ravine?
4. What did they tell you?
5. What was more important for your understanding of war, the stories your relatives told you or knowledge you gained from books and other media?
6. Conversations about the war outside the family (friends, teachers, acquaintants)

VIII. Tolerance

1. How do Rostovians nowadays commemorate the suffering endured by the population during occupation?

2. The majority of victims were Jews, are people aware of this?
3. There's a memorial tablet at the Zmievka ravine which informs about the 27.000 Jews who were killed there: What do you think about this?
4. What about other victims?

IX. Antisemitism

1. Let's assume, somebody said the Holocaust never happened, what would you say?

X. Remembrance

1. Is there enough commemoration of the Great Fatherland War?
2. What should be commemorated so that forthcoming generations of Russians know what happened from June 1941 onwards?
3. What about remembrance of the Holocaust?

XI. Life in a city with such a historic background

1. What does it mean to you that you're living in a city with a place like the Zmievka ravine where these terrible things happened?

Appendix 2: Information on the Project



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Information on the project

I am a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Historical Studies at the University of Leicester. My doctoral thesis focuses on remembrance of the Great Fatherland War and the occupation of Rostov-on-Don. I am interviewing Rostovians belonging to different age groups in order to find out how people belonging to three different generations (20-35, 45-65 and 75 or older) remember the period of occupation or what they know about it.

The interviews are strictly confidential and anonymous. Should you wish to leave a question unanswered, you are free to do so at any time.

The doctoral thesis will be read by my Ph.D. supervisors and an academic committee. It will be made available for students at the University of Leicester and other universities and might also be used for presentations and conferences.

I understand and agree

Date, signature

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