

A History of Violence in Berlin - Prenzlauer Berg: Views and Expressions of Violence 1943-1948

vorgelegt von
Mag. phil.
Efrat Yeger

an der Fakultät I – Geistes- und Bildungswissenschaften
der Technischen Universität Berlin
zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doktorin der Philosophie
- Dr. phil. -
genehmigte Dissertation

Promotionsausschuss:

Vorsitzender: Prof. Dr. Nina Langen

Gutachterin: Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum

Gutachter: Prof. Dr. Atina Grossmann (The Cooper Union in New York)

Tag der wissenschaftlichen Aussprache: 13. Dezember 2022

Berlin 2023

1. Supervisor: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum
2. Supervisor: Prof. Atina Grossmann

*To my late grandfather who was born and raised in Berlin until he was forced to leave in 1933.
He loved and missed the city.*

To my loving husband, Yoav, thank you!

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
List of Illustrations and Maps	x
Introduction	1
1. Violence in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg 1943-1948: Historical Background.....	2
2. The Violence Phenomenon in Germany during the 1940s in the Historiographical Debate.....	3
3. Conceptual Approach and Methodology.....	8
4. Layout of the Study.....	18
Chapter 1. Differences in Violence in Prenzlauer Berg	20
1.1 Differentiated Violence according to Social Diversity in Prenzlauer Berg....	22
Diverse Groups living in Prenzlauer Berg.....	22
Diversity and Change in the Population of Prenzlauer Berg in the Third Reich and after.....	23
Violence against a Wide Range of Groups.....	28
Violence against Jews.....	32
Living Together in Good Neighborliness?.....	37
Acceptance and Submission to Violence against Fellow Neighbors.....	47
Fighting Back against the Violence Directed at Fellow Neighbors.....	48
Fighting Back against the Violence Directed at Oneself.....	50

1.2 Designated Places of Violence in Prenzlauer Berg.....	52
<i>Flakbunker Friedrichshain</i>	53
<i>Falkplatz and Gleimtunnel</i>	53
<i>Schultheiss-Brauerei</i>	54
<i>Wasserturm Prenzlauer Berg</i>	55
1.3 Conclusion.....	57
Chapter 2. Intimate Bodies and Spaces	59
2.1 Intimate Bodies.....	60
Death.....	60
Facing Dead Bodies.....	64
Shock and Tremor towards Death.....	64
Apathy towards the Dead.....	65
Death as Part of Life itself.....	68
Disrespect to the Dead.....	70
Invasion and Violation of the Intimacy of the Dead.....	70
2.2 Intimate Spaces.....	74
Exposed Homes.....	74
The Damage of the Bombings and Artillery Shootings to Homes.....	74
Looting of Private Spaces by German People and Occupation Forces....	80
The Red Army Invasion and Confiscation of German Homes.....	82
The Influence of the Exposed Homes on the Individual Intimate Space.....	84
Creating Private Spaces in Alternative Places.....	86
Recreating an Intimate Space in the Exposed Homes.....	89
Limited Public Spaces.....	91
2.3 Conclusion.....	94
Chapter 3. Gender-Based Violence	96
3.1 The Structure of Violence in Gender Terms.....	97
The Layout of Female-Related Violence Experiences.....	97
Nazi Propaganda towards Rape and its Attitude to Future Rape.....	97

Suicides of Young Girls and Women.....	99
Outbreak of Mass Rape.....	100
The Wide Range of the Raped Women.....	104
Other Violent Phenomena Relating to Rape	105
Complex Relationships between German Women and Soviet Troops..	106
The Layout of Male-Related Violence Experiences.....	108
Deadly Military Service.....	108
German Violence against German Troops.....	112
German Violence against German Civilians.....	114
Suicides of Young Boys and Men.....	117
Meticulous Men Hunt.....	118
3.2 Alteration of Gender Roles.....	120
3.3 Lack of Common Ground between the Sexes.....	128
3.4 Attitudes towards Gender-Based Violence.....	130
Attitudes of Women towards their own Violent Experiences.....	130
Attitudes of Men towards the Violent Experiences of the Women.....	133
Attitudes of Men towards their own Violent Experiences.....	135
Attitudes of Women towards the Violent Experiences of the Men.....	136
3.5 Conclusion.....	137
Chapter 4. Perceptions of Past, Present, and Future in the Historical Present.....	139
4.1 Attitudes towards the Past.....	140
Repression of the Past in the Postwar Era.....	141
Inability or Unwillingness to Repress the Past in the Postwar Era.....	142
4.2 Views and Attitudes of the Historical Present.....	145
Living in “Limbo” during the War and Occupation.....	146

Accepting Life as it is-Apathy and Submission during the War.....	149
Self-Victimization.....	152
The Will to Survive.....	152
Happiness and Satisfaction during Postwar Reconstruction.....	154
4.3 Different Future Views and Attitudes.....	155
Fears of the Future.....	156
Fear of getting Killed.....	156
Fear of What the Future Might Bring.....	159
“There is no Future”-Loss of Hope.....	161
Suicides all around.....	163
Expectations of the Future-What does the Future hold?.....	165
Longing for “Ordinary Life”.....	165
Hoping for Past Life Restoration.....	166
Hoping for a “New” Future.....	168
4.4 Conclusion.....	172
Conclusions.....	173
1. Historical Conclusion.....	174
2. Historiographical Conclusion.....	181
3. Methodological Conclusion.....	183
Bibliography.....	185
Abstract/Kurzfassung.....	201

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my primary adviser, Prof. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, for her support and guidance, and for directing me with patience and dedication during my research years. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Prof. Atina Grossmann, for providing me with feedback, insights, and useful advice throughout this project.

I am also grateful to the late Dr. Boaz Neumann from the Department of History at Tel-Aviv University who was a dear mentor to me from the beginning of my studies. His passion for history and his unconventional approaches to historical studies encouraged me to proceed with this project.

I would especially like to thank Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk (ELES) for their financial support for over four years of my study. Their assistance allowed me to dedicate myself exclusively to researching the project. I would also like to thank the advisory board of the Main Women's Representative at the Technischen Universität Berlin for granting me additional support, Promotionsabschlusstipendien (PAS), at a later stage of this project. I also want to thank the Museum Pankow-Archiv for their expert archival guidance.

In addition, I thank my dear colleagues, Dr. Ivonne Meybohm, and Daniela Aharon for their continual support, and collaboration. A special thanks to my colleague Dr. Helen Gibson for her encouragement, feedback and editorial support.

Lastly, this project would not have been possible without my husband, who provided me with endless support.

List of Illustrations and Maps

Image 1. A Map of Prenzlauer Berg.....	p. 19
Image 2. Ruins all around.....	p. 78
Image 3. Ruins all around.....	p. 78
Image 4. House Ruins.....	p. 79
Image 5. Soviet Soldiers in Prenzlauer Berg.....	p. 83
Image 6. The Battle in Prenzlauer Berg.....	p. 112
Image 7. ‘Order Nr.1’ Poster.....	p. 119
Image 8. A Display of a Destroyed Tank.....	p. 143
Image 9. First Grade Class Foto.....	p. 168
Image 10. Debris Removal.....	p. 169
Image 11. Debris Removal	p. 170
Image 12. Debris Removal.....	p. 170
Image 13. Two Reconstruction Workers.....	p. 171

Introduction

1. Violence in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg 1943-1948: Historical Background

In this study, I portray and examine the history of the phenomenon of violence in Berlin - Prenzlauer Berg in the period from 1943 to 1948. The years of exploration were filled with radical changes that had a profound effect on the lives of the people. In 1943 Germany was in the midst of World War II. The Nazi regime had started to show signs of disintegration and had in fact begun its collapse. Extensive areas of the cities were damaged as a result of the bombings, including the Berlin - Prenzlauer Berg district. The civilian population was severely affected by the air raids of the Allied Forces, amongst others.

On May 2, 1945, Berlin surrendered. In the early morning of this day, the German General Helmuth Weidling who was the commander of the Battle of Berlin signed the order of surrender of the Soviet forces. At 15:00, the cease-fire in Berlin went into effect, although in some places in the city, the fighting continued until the 3rd of May 1945.¹ In Prenzlauer Berg, the fighting at the S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee continued until the afternoon of May 2nd. One of the last battle grounds in all of Berlin was the *Schultheiss-Brauerei* (today: *Kulturbrauerei*) in Prenzlauer Berg. Only hours after the official cease-fire, the SS men that occupied the place agreed to surrender.²

On May 9, 1945, World War II ended in Europe with Germany's surrender, leaving the country almost completely destroyed; the political and economical systems collapsed, and the shortage of food and merchandise was severe. The English historian Ian Kershaw stated that "The end", of the war in Germany, "brought destruction and human loss on an immense scale."³ During the occupation period, the entire country was divided into four occupation zones of the four victorious Allies: Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union. In accordance, the capital city, Berlin, although it was located in the Soviet zone, was divided into four occupation sectors. Berlin was ruled together by an Allied kommandatura established by the four Allied powers.⁴ According to the agreements from September 1944 between the United

¹ Klaus Grosinski, *Prenzlauer Berg: Eine Chronik* (Berlin: Dietz, 2008, 1997), p. 153.

² Annett Gröschner, "Als die Ostfront mitten in Prenzlauer Berg lag," *Die Welt*, April 30, 2015. December 11, 2015 www.welt.de/140328748

³ Ian Kershaw, *The End: Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945* (London: Allan Lane, 2011), p. xiv.

⁴ Ruud Van Dijk, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 82.

States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, Prenzlauer Berg belonged to the Soviet sector of Berlin.⁵

The occupation forces initiated “re-education” programs that included the denazification processes, trials against the Nazis and their assistants, and educational steps, such as screening documentary films about the concentration camps. But very soon these limited steps were abandoned altogether. Most of the attention was now directed toward the rehabilitation of the country. In 1949, two states were initiated; the *Federal Republic of Germany* in the West and the *German Democratic Republic* in the East. Those states were incorporated in broad and conflictual alliances, due to the increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States.

2. The Violence Phenomenon in Germany during the 1940s in the Historiographical Debate

The twentieth-century historian Richard Bessel maintained that over the last decades of the century, violence as the subject of research was at the center of attention of multiple research divisions: sociology, political science, anthropology, and history. Every aspect of violence, such as its measurement, causes, and different ways of reducing and fighting it, were all being explored.⁶ As part of this overwhelming interest in researching the subject of violence, when reviewing the historiographical debate about the 1940s in Germany, there is an extensive reference to the phenomenon of violence.⁷ Researchers that explore the 1940s in Germany tend to divide this period into three distinct parts: The Third Reich period, which includes World War II, the occupation period, and the establishment of the two German states. Historian Pieter Lagrou claimed that no other period in European history aside from World War II in Germany

⁵ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 28.

⁶ Richard Bessel, “Leaving Violence behind: Thoughts on the Development of Germany after 1945,” *Historia* 396 2.2 (2012), p. 182.

⁷ See, amongst many other works, for example: Dagmar Barnouw, *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996); Antony Beevor, *The Fall of Berlin 1945* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yavne, 2003); Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Christian Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Kershaw, 2011; Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

had been explored in chronological amputation from the events that came before and after. The political and moral reason for this chronological amputation was, among other things, the problem inherent in assuming that there is a direct connection between the Third Reich, post-Nazi Germany, and Europe after the war.⁸

It goes without saying that when examining these three periods in the context of violence, Nazism until its collapse in the spring of 1945 attracts the most attention. This dissertation can not possibly include the entire historiography of the study of Nazism and the violence within it. I shall therefore briefly present the historian Boaz Neumann's overview of the research of Nazism in the past and the present. In his book portraying the new histories of Nazism, Neumann maintained that these new historical approaches that have emerged in the last generation, since the early 1990s are characterized primarily by a lack of commitment to a moral-ethical imperative that existed among historians from previous generations who treated the history of Nazism in a more special and sensitive way compared to other histories. In contemporary research, any description or explanation of the Nazi phenomenon can be offered without causing the public and academic sensation caused as a result in the past. The liberation from moral-ethical imperatives allows for the opening of new historical and historiographical horizons, such as new historical research subjects in the research of Nazism. For instance, the connection between the Nazis and the green movement. The liberation from the moral-ethical imperatives also makes it possible to broaden the historiographical horizon of Nazism, both chronologically and spatially. Here, there are historians who point out long-term trends of continuity and interruption in the history of Nazism, beyond 1933-1945, the twelve years of Nazi rule, and even beyond 1920-1945, from the establishment of the Nazi party until the collapse of the Third Reich. Not only that, but the Nazi geographical space is also growing and is not merely explored in German or European space but as part of transnational and global historiographies.⁹

Another characteristic of contemporary research is the lack of dominant history, historiography, and methodology. In the past, research in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s was dominated by fascist theses. During the 1950s, totalitarian theses dominated the research. In the

⁸ Pieter Lagrou, "The Nationalization of Victimhood: Selective Violence and National Grief in Western Europe," in: *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds. (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 244.

⁹ Boaz Neumann, *New Histories of Nazism* (in Hebrew) (Moshav Ben-Shemen: Modan, 2019), pp. 17-23.

1960s and 1970s, it was a social history, followed by the 1980s and part of the 1990s in which cultural history had dominated the research narrative. From the 1990s onwards, however, there has not been a single prominent trend in the study of Nazism. This is as a result of changes in the discipline related to the collapse of the hierarchies of knowledge and the explosion of knowledge and due to technological developments, especially that of the Internet. These processes have led to the fact that there is no more historian or historical school that is the most prominent, influential, and important in the study of Nazism. On the contrary, contemporary historical research on Nazism is characterized by an overall fragmentation without a clear center or major dominant historians, such as Saul Friedländer or Ian Kershaw, as they were in the past.¹⁰

However, since the present study focuses on the last two and a half years of Nazi rule and the years that followed its fall, it is important to emphasize another aspect of the study of violence in Germany during these years. There is a crucial historiographic distinction in approaches towards the violence phenomenon and its different appearances between the periods of the Third Reich and World War II in it, the occupation period, and the establishment of the two German states. We can see two major historiographical thesis statements. The first, known as the “zero hour” (*Stunde Null*) thesis. The first significant and direct reference to Germany’s condition in 1945 as “zero hour” was made by the Italian film director Rossellini in his 1948 movie: *Germany, Year Zero*.¹¹ According to this thesis, the founding of West Germany on the ruins of Nazi Germany is the beginning of a new history.¹² The term “zero hour” refers to a general reset after the total defeat of Germany, and in that way, the end of the war would be a break from the past and a new start. This idea of a “zero hour” grasps German experience and feelings facing total defeat. As there was a political and individual need for people to forget the horrible past and start a completely new era. Also in the moral aspect, this perception of a “zero hour” helped the Germans in distancing themselves from the previous Nazi regime and crimes associated with it.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹¹ Stephen Brockmann, “German Culture at the ‘Zero Hour,’ ” in: *Revisiting Zero Hour 1945: The Emergence of Postwar German Culture*, Stephen Brockmann and Frank Trommler, eds. (Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1996), p. 12.

¹² Robert G. Moeller, “Introduction: Writing the History of West Germany,” in: *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Robert G. Moeller, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 7.

¹³ Petri Karonen and Ville Kivimäki, “Suffering, Surviving and Coping: Experiences of Violence and Defeat in Post-War Europe,” in: *Continued Violence and Troublesome Pasts: Post-war Europe between*

But the “zero hour” concept has been criticized and challenged by many researchers since many people in Central and Eastern Europe experienced Germany’s capitulation as a continuation of totalitarianism and violence and not as a complete break from it. Also in Germany, lines of continuation existed when Nazi authorities and numerous former Nazi officials maintained their positions despite the re-education programs and the denazification process.¹⁴

This line of thought leads to the second thesis, according to it, the new Federal Republic was largely a direct continuity of the previous regime.¹⁵ In accordance with the first thesis, the violence that characterized the Third Reich was essentially different from the one that emerged after 1945, if it even existed. In accordance with the second thesis, lines of continuity in terms of violence existed between the two periods. British historian Richard Overy argued that throughout the 1940s the major violent deaths of the twentieth century in Europe took place. But in 1945, the violence did not end, it just abated, and the existing conflicts before 1945 continued after 1945.¹⁶

Another aspect of the historiography of violence in Germany during the 1940s is the way in which it had been explored according to different disciplinary sections. For instance, traditionally the topics of Nazi Germany and Germany in World War II have been examined by historians extensively and intensively from political, military, and legal perspectives. Within the political, legal, and military historiography, violence in those years has been explored almost without exception in its institutionalized form. Here one can also find a clear division between the period of the Third Reich until its fall in 1945 and the period of occupation in Germany. During the war under Nazi rule, issues such as war strategies, Hitler’s role within the political and military systems, and the causes that led to the downfall of the regime were carefully examined.¹⁷

the Victors after the Second World War, Ville Kivimäki and Petri Karonen, eds. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2017), p. 8.

¹⁴ Karonen, Kivimäki, 2017, p. 8.

¹⁵ Michael R. Hayse, *Recasting West German Elites: Higher Civil Servants, Business Leaders, and Physicians in Hesse between Nazism and Democracy, 1945-1955* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 3-4.

¹⁶ Richard Overy, “Interwar, War, Postwar: Was there a Zero Hour in 1945?,” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, Dan Stone, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 77.

¹⁷ For further reading on the Third Reich and World War Two from the point of view of political, legal, and military historiography, see, for example, Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The*

In the context of the postwar era, subjects such as the process of denazification and its effects, the establishment of the constitution, the founding of the *Bundeswehr*, and the process of rearmament, as well as the activity of radical parties and different terror groups, have all been explored. The main focal question of this kind of research was whether the political, military, and legal systems which were established after 1945 were indeed the complete antithesis to the former Nazi systems.¹⁸

Within the framework of socio-cultural historiography, various issues were examined, such as the ways of coping with the violence and the attitude of the leaders of German culture to violence. For instance, in literature, different issues were explored, such as who were the operating authors in the war and postwar periods? Were they the same authors or was there a transformation in this field after the end of the war? What were their attitudes towards violence and in which ways, if any, they chose to present these attitudes?¹⁹ Another research axis is linked to the culture of memory. Here other questions were examined, such as: In what ways did the Germans confront the dominance of the phenomenon of violence of their past? Was dealing with this past personal, collective or both?²⁰

Within the framework of gender historiography different issues have been investigated. For example, the manifestations of sexual violence towards German women by the Red Army soldiers, as well as the different research attitudes on how to approach this mass rape.²¹ Literary

Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970); Andreas Hillgruber, *Germany and the Two World Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁸ See, for example, Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Heinrich Vormweg, "The Literature," in: *The Germans: 1945-1990*, Volume 1, (in Hebrew) Oded Heilbrunner and Moshe Zimmermann, eds. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), pp. 392-402; Christoph Kleßmann, " 'The House was built of Bricks that were present': On the Question of Continuity in the History of Culture after 1945," in: *From Division to Unification. Germany 1945-1990*, Shulamit Volkov, ed. (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1994), pp. 94-108.

²⁰ Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Saul Friedländer, "On the Twists and Turns of the Germans with their Memory," in: *From Division to Unification. Germany 1945-1990*, Shulamit Volkov, ed. (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1994), pp. 147-157; Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010).

²¹ Atina Grossmann, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers" in: *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Robert G. Moeller, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, 1997), pp. 33-52; Elizabeth Heineman, *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Hsu-Ming Teo, "The Continuum of Sexual Violence in Occupied Germany, 1945-49," *Women's History Review* 5.2 (1996), pp. 191-218; Miriam Gebhardt,

researcher Dagmar Barnouw has chosen to explore the history of violence through the ways in which it was documented in photography, by examining the identity of the photographers, how the violence was represented, and its social acceptance.²²

3. Conceptual Approach and Methodology

Against the above historiographical background, and as opposed to the historic and historiographic complexity that characterizes the research literature and its approach to explore the violence phenomenon of this period, I propose an alternative historiographic process; a straightforward description and analysis of the ongoing historical present from 1943-1948, which involved numerous acts of violent expression.

The periodization of the study starts in 1943, over two years before the end of the war. 1943 was the time point where Berliners were starting to significantly feel themselves being part of the war front, as they experienced distress and violence on a daily basis.

From 1943, it was pretty obvious to many Berliners that the tide had begun to turn to the detriment of Germany, as a result of Italy's collapse, the German defeats at Kursk and Stalingrad, and the large-scale aerial bombing that emerged. Though by 1943, a sense of security and optimism was felt in the city regarding the air raids campaign, as the population got used to the calm since after the first wave of the bombings in late 1940 until the spring of 1941 there were almost two years that the RAF raids (Royal Air Force of the United Kingdom) were fewer and in smaller doses. In 1942 there was only one RAF raid on the city. But then on March 1, 1943 was the heaviest raid on Berlin that took the Berliners by surprise. Throughout 1943, the morale of the Berliners deteriorated because of the ongoing air war that only intensified and due to the rationing's shortages along with the continuous restrictions.²³ These feelings of low morale and the sense of impending loss in the war did not change during the last two years of the war but only intensified until they reached a peak, during the Battle of Berlin in the last weeks of the war.

Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

²² Barnouw, 1996.

²³ Roger Moorhouse, *Berlin at War* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir, 2012), pp. 344, 373, 384.

The periodization of the study ends in 1948, in the late period of German occupation, that is, at the last point in time that preceded the establishment of the two Germanys, when it was still not entirely clear what the future of the occupied state would be.

An important point to consider is that the sources of this dissertation presented later in this chapter concentrate less on the later years of 1947 and 1948, thus in accordance, I have less of a focus on these years. The sources which are mainly personal accounts mention more the war experiences of 1943-1945 and the beginning of the occupation in 1945-1946. Out of the investigated six years, 1945 was a significant record year, in terms of the rise of violent acts. For this reason, there is a strong emphasis in the sources on violent experiences from 1945, and therefore this year is the year which is most mentioned in the study.

Although the periods of Nazi rule and Soviet occupation are completely different contexts, I maintain that they can be investigated together in a chronological sequence and I therefore refer to these two differed periods as one complete unit. In fact, the people of Berlin experienced those years as a continuous period rather than an artificially severed period. In this context, Nazi history has an equivalent place to the history of the postwar occupation period in this study. My aim is not to emphasize the importance of one over the other, but rather to explore them in chronological order, just as past events have developed over the years. When exploring everyday history from “below,” the chronology of the historical-political events and ideological indoctrination is not the focus of the research. Furthermore, the different regimes and institutions are important as they were built and understood in the mind and the mentality of the people. Thus, in this study, I try to structure the investigation as close as possible to their experiences and not to enforce political-institutional structures from above.

Through the periodization that I offer here, I will try to find out, among other things, whether there was a “zero hour” in Germany and if there was, did it necessarily take place in 1945? Could there be a number of “zero hours?” Was there indeed a clear, sharp transition from “war” to “peace” and if so, did it necessarily manifest itself as a change in the ways and measures of violence? It is possible, for instance, that while physical expressions of violence may have diminished over time, other kinds of violence, such as verbal violence, have emerged?

In order to explore these questions, the phenomenological approach to history is the core of my investigation methodology.²⁴ Inspired by my former teacher, the late Israeli historian Boaz Neumann, who exercised this approach to history,²⁵ this research explores things and people as they exposed, presented and articulated themselves. Rather than explaining historical processes and their change over time, a phenomenology of history approaches the *experience* of historical events. Every historical phenomenon has its own language and grammar, and the best explanation for a phenomenon is extant from its description. Therefore, it is necessary to write the history from the inside and not from the outside, as a continuing present by describing the historical reality and understanding the experience of the investigated time and place.

This phenomenological inquiry also naturally touches the areas of the history of experience²⁶ and the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*)²⁷, and uses an anthropological point of view.²⁸ That is, in this study I seek to write the history of Germany in the last stage of the war and the occupation period in a different way than usual; as much as possible, as it was according to the people who experienced it at the time. Instead of closing the contemporaries in a historical narrative which portrays a certain story that has a beginning, a middle and an end, my

²⁴ For more on the phenomenological approach to history, see David Carr's book: *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²⁵ Selected works of Boaz Neumann, in which he uses the phenomenological approach: *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: UPNE, 2011); *Being in the World: German Worlds at the turn of the 20th Century* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2014).

²⁶ For more see, Reinhart Koselleck's research in the field of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) that combined reflections on historical concepts in order to explore historical phenomena. In his book, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, he described the relationship and tension between the pair concepts: "space of experience," that is the past made present by past events that a person remembers, and "horizon of expectation," that is the future made present by the possible actions that one can undertake. According to Koselleck, these concepts are to be used when approaching to analyze historical events of modernity.

²⁷ The history of everyday life emerged during the 1980s in West Germany as a form of micro-history of writing history from "below." For a further overview on this approach, see Alf Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); For an overview of *Alltagsgeschichte* research in the past decades and suggestions for future research, see also Paul Steege, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healy and Pamela E. Swett, "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *The Journal of Modern History* 80.2 (June 2008), pp. 358-378.

²⁸ The anthropological point of view here is mainly based on the anthropological approach of the American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz. For further reading, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. The book is one of the most important anthropological texts written in the twentieth century. It combines essays that deal with the analysis of cultural content while relying mainly on empirical research.

aim is to let the contemporaries just ‘be’ in their world and observe them as they look ahead towards their future.

Although I deal too with the research fields of gender and memory as in the complex historiography mentioned above, my method is not an examination of one research area, such as gender or memory, through a selected case study. Using the phenomenological approach that analyzes things and people as they appeared and expressed themselves in that explored historical segment, I try to understand the experiences of the contemporaries and examine the concrete issues that occupied them and arose from their daily lives.

With this observation, one of my main aims is to decode people’s “common sense,”²⁹ and reassess what was considered to be “strange,” “typical” or “normal” in their world. What did the act of killing or raping mean for the contemporaries? As these acts did not necessarily have the same meaning as they have today.

In order to address these research questions, I decided to examine the widespread phenomena of violence in one distinct geographical area that would serve as a socio-cultural laboratory experiment of one “limited” geographical territory during these six critical years of 1943-1948. The decision to focus on the Prenzlauer Berg district of Berlin was due to a number of reasons. In analyzing the multiple experiences of violence during 1943-1948 in Germany, Berlin and specifically Prenzlauer Berg district are particularly relevant. First of all, Berlin as the capital of Germany played a major role in the political and social events of the wartime and postwar periods. It was the only city divided into four occupation sectors and eventually into two separate states. Berlin also experienced an explosion of violence in the investigated six years. During the last years of the war, Berlin experienced direct daily warfare, which included the massive air war, to which in the last weeks of the war, the Soviet ground offensive was added. It was the Allied Forces’ most important target and correspondingly, the most defended German target. As such, Berlin had an enormous civilian death toll with an estimated 200,000 civilian

²⁹ The “common sense” concept according to Geertz, is based on *Chapter Four - Common Sense as a Cultural System* in his book “Local knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology.” Geertz defines common sense as a “cultural system” and states that common sense is not universal. Thus, in order to expose common sense as a cultural system, one must follow the concepts, assumptions, and metaphors of a particular culture.

casualties.³⁰ During the Battle of Berlin and with the city's downfall, subjected to the Soviet occupiers, Berlin experienced a brutal mass rape and raging violence of the Red Army troops.³¹

Furthermore, as will be furtherly discussed in the next chapter, in Berlin, the district of Prenzlauer Berg is particularly interesting since it had a heterogeneous population consisting of different kinds of political, social, ethnic, and religious groups as well as forced foreign workers and occupation forces. The varied population in the district also changed during this period. Moreover, there was a difference in violent expressions in different parts and in several designated places in Prenzlauer Berg. Certain places in the district were among the last places in the city that were occupied by the Red Army and from that moment, Prenzlauer Berg belonged to the Soviet sector of Berlin. All these characteristics and transformations make this unique district a most important case study. Another consideration in focusing on this district stemmed from the wide variety of personal sources in which countless fascinating testimonies were found on various aspects of life during and after the war in this district.

An in-depth look at the daily experiences of violence in a specific area, that is Prenzlauer Berg, can contribute to different and unique perspectives for research on violence in the period in question. For example, when it comes to gender issues, as will be presented in detail in the third chapter, most studies of the period usually examine separately the men on the distant war fronts and the women at the home front. The case of Prenzlauer Berg differs from these studies in this sense. Through the combined examination of the gender experience of men and women during the war and postwar period in Prenzlauer Berg, it becomes clear that the duality between the men on the battlefield and the women at home completely simplifies the investigation. The investigation reveals a more entangled and unique narrative, as the men and women explored were present in the same space, whether at home or at the war front in the last Battle of Berlin, and avoids creating an artificial division between men and women.

Focusing on small and everyday life violent experiences led me to research using different kinds of sources. For this research I used various personal accounts: diaries, memoirs, collections of interviews and pupils' school essays³². In addition, I used criminal police murder

³⁰ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 13-14.

³¹ Grossmann, 2007, p. 48-51; Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 417-420.

³² The school essays explored in this research were written in 1946 namely by pupils of all ages, but also by teachers or relatives as part of a German class assignment in the lower grades to the upper grades in the schools in Prenzlauer Berg. The pupils wrote about their personal experiences during the war and the postwar period. For instance, they wrote about the air-raids and the Battle of Berlin, which involved their

reports³³ that contributed to having a bigger picture of the violent events and the different perceptions. These varied sources were found mainly at the *Museum Pankow-Archiv*, the *Bibliothek-am-Wasserturm* in Prenzlauer Berg, and the *Landesarchiv Berlin*. They were written by a broad spectrum of people of different ages who belonged to different socio-economic classes and religions that lived in Prenzlauer Berg and they are unique to this district. Additionally, they are supported by sources from Greater Berlin.

This combination of a wide range of testimonies of the different violent experiences allows me to build a “thick description”³⁴ of the lives of the contemporaries that will get us closer to understanding their world. Moreover, through these genres which mainly focus on the self-expression of the contemporaries, I believe, it is possible to reveal the histories of violence: their manner of representation, their significance, the contemporaries’ attitude towards them, and more.

In this respect, it is important to note that the memoirs and the later interviews or discussions with the contemporaries about the past experiences reflect a section of a reconstructed narrative about a part of the person’s life from the point of view of the present. Often, they embody a retrospective interpretation of personal experiences. These later accounts, most of which were published after the fall of the Berlin Wall, were inevitably influenced by the culture and politics of memory that existed in East Germany, West Germany, and United Germany.³⁵

own daily suffering, and about specific traumatic events, such as their house being bombed out. Since the schools were under Soviet control at the time, some writers may have been ideologically inclined or felt committed to biased writing in favor of the Soviets.

³³ The police murder reports are reports of the *Kriminalpolizei*, and the *Polizeirevier - Kriminalinspektion*. The collection is located in the *Landesarchiv Berlin*, under the section *Zentralkartei für Mordsachen und Lehrmittelsammlung*. These reports detail murders and include testimonies from ordinary people, such as neighbors, family members, and acquaintances.

³⁴ The term “thick description” was developed by Geertz. It means a detailed account of experiences through an in-depth and comprehensive description of all the details, rituals, and customs, which does not omit any small detail. See Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

³⁵ For more on the politics of memory in East Germany and West Germany, read: Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). For more on the politics of memory in United Germany, read: Ruth Wittlinger and Steffi Boothroyd, “A ‘Usable’ Past at Last? The Politics of the Past in United Germany,” *German Studies Review* 33.3 (2010), pp. 489-502. For more on the memory of the past in the public realm in United Germany, read: Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the legacy of the Third Reich* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002).

These accounts differ from the pupils' school essays which were written in 1946 and reflect mostly about the collective and personal near past experiences of only a few months or years earlier. They also differ from diaries and archival sources that I explored which are not retrospective and do not have an organized narrative for they were written at the historical present time.

Despite these reservations, all these self-expressed personal sources are important for putting together this research because they are first-hand accounts of historical events and together these overlapping stories that were written, told and discussed from the 1940s onwards provide a comprehensive picture of the period. Therefore, in this research, they are integrated together and produce one narrative.

When approaching the exploration of the violence of the period, it is hard to define in an absolute way the concept of violence. There is no agreement and there can be no agreement on the matter.³⁶ For the purpose of this research, I choose to adopt several simple definitions of the concept and phenomenon of "violence" as it appeared in dictionaries from the era, out of my principled aspiration to write the history of violence from the period, that is, from the way the Germans acted and from the way they understood themselves.

The 1949 edition of *Der Sprach-Brockhaus: Deutsches Bildwörterbuch für Jedermann* defined "violence" as "use of force, unjust behavior." A second definition offered by the dictionary is: "force, to give someone the authority to dominate." The third definition is: "power, great strength."³⁷

Another definition of violence from the era is located in Hermann Paul's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Its 1935 edition defined violence in the following way: "It is first of all 'the ability or authority to refer to something in despotism.' (...) The concept of coercion is often inherent to violence. (...) Ultimately, violence appears to be related to processes and situations, and comes to represent them to a great extent."³⁸

³⁶ Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, "Introduction: Violence, Normality, and the Construction of Postwar Europe," in: *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds. (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 12; Esther Cohen, "Violence, Cruelty and Subjectivity - Porous Boundaries," *Historia: Journal of the Historical Society of Israel* 9 (in Hebrew) (2002), p. 21.

³⁷ *Der Sprach-Brockhaus: Deutsches Bildwörterbuch für Jedermann* (Leipzig: F.A Brockhaus, 1949, 1935), p. 248.

³⁸ Hermann Paul, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Karl Euling, ed. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1935, 1897), p. 211.

In the dictionary, *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache in ihrer Heutigen Ausbildung*, the 1944 edition defined violence first as: “superiority through power; the authority, the ability, to enforce something according to one’s own will.” The second definition is: “the illegitimate use of power.” The third definition is: “the use of all one’s strength.” And lastly: “power, control.”³⁹

My definition of the concept and the phenomenon of “violence” will combine these definitions. I will mainly focus on physical violence, which I interpret as a *use of force* through *the power of enforcement* or by *the illegitimate use of authority*, but not only. As can be seen in the definitions above, violence was not just direct violence that people physically perceived, but also acts using power and control. For instance, hurting the identity or freedom of a person was perceived as an act of violence.

As noted above, in order to explore violence I will use a cultural and anthropological point of view and investigate the history “from below.” I will attempt to look “down” and observe the stories of the daily life of “ordinary people” in order to write the history of violence from within, as much as possible. And I believe that this simple and prosaic definition of violence enables me to rewrite the history of violence in Germany during the period in question as an alternative to the accepted war and postwar “great histories.” That is the macro-history that explores German history on a very large scale and concentrates on the grand “events” in search for patterns and causes that change through time. A history from below allows me to expose known and dramatic violent acts like rape and suicide, alongside different “smaller” acts, like hitting, shoving, spitting on and choking. Those acts have usually disappeared from many historians’ accounts, overshadowed by the more dramatic events of those years.

Furthermore, the examination focuses not only on expressions of physical violence but also on how contemporaries perceived this phenomenon during those years in Berlin. In order to do so I will ask the following questions: Was there a common “normative” perception of violence that continued over the years? Did the perception of violence remain unchanged during those six years, or can we see a reversal drift from one normative perception to another? Furthermore, what kind of violence was considered normative? Were there violent acts that deviated from the normative perception and were they considered to be “radically violent?” Another question I will try to answer is whether there was a single perception of violence among

³⁹ Peter Friedrich Ludwig Hoffmann, *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache in ihrer Heutigen Ausbildung*, Martin Block, ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1944, 1936), p. 227.

the residents of Prenzlauer Berg. Were there different and even contradictory perceptions of violence among the various sectors of the population in the district who experienced different violent acts?

In addition, there are a few considerations about certain groups who stand at the heart of this research that should be noted. First, the Jews examined in this study were mentioned in the sources of Prenzlauer Berg and at times in Greater Berlin, or I refer to stories about other Jews that the residents from Prenzlauer Berg saw or about whose actions and experiences they reported. However, the research does not treat broadly and comprehensively the history of the Jews during and after the Nazi period. The Jews are not presented and investigated as an isolated ethnoreligious group, but rather they are shown and explored as a part of the contemporaries in the investigated geographical space.

Second, my premise when it comes to examining the German contemporaries, including Nazis and their collaborators, is that they were human beings and not “monsters.” There are no events that occur outside the historical limits, and Nazism as well is a historical phenomenon and therefore, a human phenomenon. Nazis, like all other human beings, were born at a certain time and place and took part in a certain human history. The very hasty and superficial conclusion that the German people consisted mostly of fanatical Nazis seems almost like judging them favorably. In the same manner that a murderer who is diagnosed as mentally ill could be determined in court as incompetent to stand trial, so does the exclusion of the German people from the normative boundaries and the simplistic assertion that they are seen as psycho killers leaves no room for a broad analysis of the German society and culture of that period.

Therefore, I seek as much as possible, to make no assumptions about German society of the era. I certainly do not try to explain or determine whether the Germans were “normal” or “abnormal,” “good” or “evil”, and so forth. This kind of discussion is irrelevant to my research. Instead, I am trying to speak about that world and to understand it by revealing the values, the concepts, and the language of the contemporaries, in order to come closer and to reconstruct as much as possible the contemporaries’ world as they themselves understood and perceived it. The approach of understanding is not to be confused with sympathy, empathy, or justification; it suspends moral judgment. I believe that this is the only way to expose and begin to understand the subject of violence on all its various levels and aspects during this period in Germany and also to avoid large and inclusive claims.

Given all the methodical considerations mentioned above, in this research, I posit that violence is a historical-anthropological phenomenon; it is not just a “trivial” phenomenon. The exposed violence in this research was significant to the experiences and existence of the people who lived in that period. For instance, some of the violence in that era existed for the purpose of a survival instinct and thus helped rebuild German society.

In addition, I argue that the phenomenon of violence in wartime Berlin continued in the immediate postwar years. The violence of the last years of the war took place under the atmosphere of the coming defeat, accompanied by massive bombings and eventually, fighting and chaos in the streets. This violence could not have ended in one fell swoop following the announcement of the end of the war. That is to say, people did not overnight turn away from their violent past. This common belief oversimplifies the state of things at this complex period. The violence only changed its form. As German historian Christoph Kleßmann has argued, “long lines of development” can be noticed. Despite the break in the political systems, these lines have lasted.⁴⁰

To illustrate this point, here is one small example of the continuity of violence: Growing up in Prenzlauer Berg in the postwar years, the children’s author Klaus Kordon,⁴¹ who was two years old when the war ended, maintained in an interview that children often heard about the war during the immediate postwar years. The war was always present in everyday discourse since it had an impact on daily life after the war. For example, people talked about children who were left without a father because of the war, and how the city was ruined by the war. Kordon himself had nightmares and he feared another war.⁴²

In this context, I would like to stress that the phenomenon of violence in the period under investigation is not just one of many characteristics of the period, it is actually one of the central subjects of the era. Therefore, I believe that the major significance of the work lies in the intersection between the dramatic and important subject of violence and the method of examination that is no longer focused on the great historical “events,” but rather on the crucial

⁴⁰ Kleßmann, 1994, p. 95.

⁴¹ Altogether, contemporaries whose stories are portrayed in the dissertation are presented by their names as they were written in the sources and the secondary literature. Thus, in some cases by their full name, in others by their first name, or just by initials or by staying anonymous.

⁴² Klaus Kordon, “ ‘Irgendwie hat man so ein bisschen Solidarität gelernt.’ Interview mit Klaus Kordon,” in: *Prenzlauer Berg im Wandel der Geschichte: Leben rund um den Helmholtzplatz*, Bernt Roder and Bettina Tacke, eds. (Berlin: be.bra, 2004), pp. 251-252.

dimension of daily life and culture of ordinary people in Berlin, and more specifically in Prenzlauer Berg. The histories of violence, as I seek to write them, do not conform to the “historical master narratives.” I may not be able to reach one clear and unequivocal claim. It is possible that the small histories of violence will pose an alternative not only to the various narratives proposed in the historical research over the years but also an alternative to the very possibility of the existence of one great “thesis” about violence in the period. This investigation, I presume, can reveal another historical narrative, by focusing on the history of daily life that would expose small pieces of history.

4. Layout of the Study

This work consists of four thematic chapters, each of which focuses on a different concept in reference to violence in Prenzlauer Berg and covers the entire chronological period from 1943 to 1948. Chapter one focuses on the differences in violence in Prenzlauer Berg. The focal points in this chapter are how did social diversity, based on ethnicity, religion, support, or opposition to the regime, influence the violence aimed towards an individual? Furthermore, what different types of violence took place in the geographical layout of the Prenzlauer Berg district in different designated central locations?

The second chapter examines the concept of intimacy and how the intimacy of the body and space of the individual has been damaged, violated, and even destroyed during the period under study. Moreover, it shows how the intimacy changed forms and at times was replaced by other and new kinds of intimacy.

Chapter three addresses the concept of gender-based violence, since the violence of this era in Berlin was characterized immensely according to masculinity or femininity. Here the separate violent experiences of the men and women are examined, where the most decisive example for the different kinds of violence according to gender is the mass rape of German women by Red Army soldiers that accompanied the occupation of the city.⁴³ The chapter also examines the changes in gender roles that violence created, and the negative effects of gender-based violent experiences on the relationships between the two sexes, and the attitude of both sexes towards gender-based violence.

⁴³ While rape is an important subject, and is related to most of the areas I have researched, I have chosen to focus on the subject of rape in the third chapter about gender-based violence. Obviously the rape of German women was also mentioned in other chapters, but not as the main research theme.

The final chapter, chapter four, focuses on the aspect of time. One most noticeable thing is that the contemporaries reflected immensely about the past, the future to come, and their lives in the present during these brutal years. And thus, this chapter explores the contemporaries' different perceptions and reflections regarding the three time zones; past, present, and future, from their point of view of the historical present throughout the years investigated.



Image 1. Prenzlauer Berg map during the Nazi period (Museum Pankow-Archiv, KA000231)

Chapter One

Differences in Violence in Prenzlauer Berg

Prenzlauer Berg in the years 1943-1948 was everything but a homogenous district. It consisted of various neighborhoods and diverse ethnic, socio-political, and religious groups. Into this complex environment joined various different groups of foreigners, such as forced laborers during the war, refugees towards the end of the war and afterward, and also Allied troops from the beginning of the battle in the district and throughout the following years of occupation. Therefore, diversity was an essential aspect of life in the district that should be addressed when beginning to investigate the subject of violence in Prenzlauer Berg.

Violence against specific targeted groups during the Nazi era and the postwar period was widely researched by historians from multiple perspectives.⁴⁴ However, in most studies, the focus is on violence and crimes against a certain group without binding the experience of this group to the wider context of the experiences of other groups that lived together in the same space. Studies that do include more than one group who were treated with violence are usually comparative studies that focus on investigating common and contradicting points between the persecuted groups.⁴⁵

Opposing these studies, in this chapter, the emphasis is on the geographical space in which the violence occurred, in the Prenzlauer Berg district. This course of investigation illustrates how violence was experienced by different groups in their daily-life space without artificially isolating a particular group for research purposes. Since inside this space, a variety of groups lived side by side and experienced violence, at times in different ways and with different intensities and at other times in similar ways. The investigation also portrays the relationships between the groups who lived together as well as their interactions, which included acceptance of violence against their fellow neighbors but also fighting back against it. It will also show how within this geographical space certain places turned into “violent locations” and housed various kinds of violence. In brief, a close examination of the contemporaries’ daily present reveals

⁴⁴ In order to shorten the annotation, I have chosen only one example of the main groups that have fallen victim to Nazi violence. For more studies see the bibliographies in these books. On violence against Jews, see, for example, Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); on violence against Gypsies, see, for example, Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); on violence against Homosexuals, see, for example, Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt, 1986).

⁴⁵ See, for example, Michael Zimmermann, “Jews, Gypsies and Soviet Prisoners of War: Comparing Nazi Persecutions,” in: *The Roma: A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago, eds. (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2007), pp. 31-54.

different perspectives on the particular violent experiences of different groups and spaces in Prenzlauer Berg.

1.1 Differentiated Violence according to Social Diversity in Prenzlauer Berg

Diverse Groups living in Prenzlauer Berg

A wide variety of groups had lived in Prenzlauer Berg over the years. The diversity of people living together characterized the district from its establishment. In the period of Imperial Germany, Prenzlauer Berg was a place of a unique and stable mixture of newcomers belonging to the middle class and the working class. Prenzlauer Berg was built during the 1870s in order to accommodate the growth of the new industrial Berlin. A flood of workers from East Prussia and Posen joined by Italian and Slavic immigrants came to Berlin during this period looking for a job. For the purpose of housing the new workers, five-story apartment buildings were built in the district, which was previously a hilltop with several beer gardens and full of windmills. The working-classes stayed crowded together in back-courtyard apartments, while in the front apartments facing the streets with the elegant facades lived doctors, bakers, and teachers.⁴⁶

Since its beginning in the 1870s, Prenzlauer Berg drew all kinds of immigrants; immigrants from other parts of Germany, polish immigrants, Jews from former Polish territories like Posen, Italian immigrants, Slovaks, and Gypsies. Those groups created together the social atmosphere of the district which was much more diverse culturally than the rest of Germany, and in some ways, it continues until today. Those immigrants that came to Prenzlauer Berg in the last quarter of the 19th century spoke German, were involved in building the German nation and identified themselves as Berliners. The exceptions to the integration process were the Slovaks and the Gypsies when the Italian immigrants partially integrated: while they were not identified at all as Germans, they did participate in the construction of the city. The Slovaks and the Gypsies moved away quickly as they were not integrating well because of their different language and appearance, and the Italian immigrants largely left Germany during World War I when Germany and Italy fought against one another.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Jennifer R. Wilz, *Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, 1870-Present: A Neighborhood on the Fringe of Germany*, (PhD Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment, Brown University: 2008), pp. 11, 16-17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 68-69, 84.

In terms of religious diversity, in these first years, about 65% of Prenzlauer Berg residents were Lutheran, nearly 10% were Catholic, and around 8% were Jews. In addition, about 15% of the residents did not have any religious affiliation, many of them were politically active, mostly in the late 19th century in the workers' movement, or later with the social democrats or the communists.⁴⁸

Diversity and Change in the Population of Prenzlauer Berg in the Third Reich and after

In 1933, Prenzlauer Berg was populated with almost 313,000 people. The population composition by religion was almost identical to the one in the first years of the district: 67.2% of them were Protestants and 9.4% Catholics. The Jewish community consisted of 5.8% of the people. It is also important to note that during this period, the unemployment rate in the district was 34.4%.⁴⁹

In northeast Berlin, the workers' parties were strong, and specifically, Prenzlauer Berg was one of the strongholds of the Berlin workers' movement. In the Reichstag elections of March 1933, elections which were no longer fully free, the communist party called the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD) and the social democratic party called the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) gained together in Prenzlauer Berg over 55% of the votes. In these elections, the Nazi party had gained more votes in all of Germany (43.9%) than in Berlin alone (34.6%), and even less in Prenzlauer Berg (30.2%).⁵⁰

Nazi leadership labeled Prenzlauer Berg together with "Red Wedding," its neighboring district, as a problematic area of "troublemakers." Due to the social heterogeneity within the district of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, workers and professionals, radicals as well as liberals, the expulsion of different groups was visible and profoundly felt. Within this mixture of the different groups in the district, there was also no consensus in supporting or resisting the Nazi regime.⁵¹

As mentioned before, in 1933 the Jewish community was 5.8% of Prenzlauer Berg's population. After the Mitte district, which was the city center, and the districts of Charlottenburg

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁹ Hans-Rainer Sandvoß, *Widerstand in Prenzlauer Berg und Weißensee* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 2015, 2000), p. 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 16, 18.

⁵¹ Wilz, 2008, pp. 16-17.

and Wilmersdorf in West Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg was the third largest Jewish community in Berlin. Many Jews lived in the south of Prenzlauer Berg, mainly in areas that were close to the inner-city. For example, the *Bötzowviertel*, which had upscale residential houses. Only a minority lived in the northern workers' neighborhoods of the district. Particularly preferred by the Jews were Metzger Strasse at *Senefelderplatz* and Jablonski Strasse, located between *Bötzowviertel* and *Senefelderplatz*. The Jews in Prenzlauer Berg were mainly occupied in freelance professions such as lawyers, doctors, and merchants. The Jewish religion played a very small part in their lives; they were assimilated and had a strong national identity.⁵²

From the moment the Nazis came to power in 1933, the gradual anti-Jewish policy that was reflected in propaganda, legislation, and severe acts of violence against the Jews affected Jewish life in the district and led to their exclusion from the German public. Two key events that each marked a new record for the deterioration of the Jewish status in the district and the violent attitude against them were the pogrom against the Jewish population, also known as the "Night of Broken Glass" (*Kristallnacht*), that occurred on November 9th and 10th, 1938, and the process called the "Factory Action" (*Fabrik-Aktion*) in 1943, which was the roundup of the last Jews to be deported from Berlin.

Jennifer Wilz maintains in her dissertation, *Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, 1870-Present: A neighborhood on the Fringe of Germany*, that due to the relatively large number of Jews and the influence of the Jewish community in Prenzlauer Berg, the forced expulsion of the Jews from Prenzlauer Berg's community meant a significant change to the district.⁵³ With this in mind, at the end of the war, only forty-eight out of the 18,051 Jews that had lived in Prenzlauer Berg in 1933 survived in Berlin by going to ground.⁵⁴

In interviews from the 1990s, Walentina from Prenzlauer Berg detailed her family's relationship with the Jews. After the end of World War I, at the age of three, Walentina and her family were expelled from Russia as *Reichsdeutsche* with Prussian citizenship. Her father was a

⁵² Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 327.

⁵³ Wilz, 2008, p. 252.

⁵⁴ Regina Scheer, "Die Untergetauchte," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 88.

watchmaker and worked in Berlin with many Jews. It did not matter to him how they were perceived.⁵⁵

Walentina also elaborated on the social changes in her surroundings in Prenzlauer Berg. She went to a private girls' school on Schwedter Strasse. In her class, there were also Jewish girls, some of them still lived in *Scheunenviertel*, which was a poor neighborhood in Mitte district inhabited largely by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, who were poor and lived traditional lives. Some of the families of the Jewish girls in her class became rich and moved to Grunewald in the western part of Berlin to live in a villa or received a German citizenship, but still, these girls stayed in her school.⁵⁶

After Walentina was married in 1939, she moved to Hochmeister Strasse (today: Husemann Strasse), where she continued to live until the time she was interviewed in the 1990s.⁵⁷ Walentina remembered the Jewish places that no longer exist, which were once an inseparable part of her neighborhood: In the corner of Hochmeister Strasse there was a kosher Jewish butchery, and in the square nearby there was a Jewish bakery at which she used to shop. In Fransecky Strasse (today: Sredzki Strasse) was also a shop of a Jewish tailor. After the tailor and his family were gone, a barbershop of a Nazi woman and her husband replaced the tailor's shop. Also, in the neighborhood was a cigarette booth of a Jew that afterward turned into a *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM) booth, which was the girls' wing of the Nazi youth movement.⁵⁸

As Walentina briefly mentioned, there were also Nazis who lived in the district. However, their presence was not felt in a way in which allowed them to enforce their power.⁵⁹

Another group present in the district during the war was the forced laborers. This group was part of the change in the population structure in the district that occurred during the war. This was actually a mixed group composed of different sub-groups. With the beginning of the war, there was a shortage of workers in Berlin caused by drafted men who were sent to the front. This problem was partially solved by the forced labor of different groups: local Jews that were

⁵⁵ Walentina, "Das hat och Nerven gekostet. Walentina zwischen Hochmeister und Husemann," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 113-115.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 120-121.

⁵⁹ Annett Gröschner, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann, "Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber," in: *Backfisch im Bombenkrieg: Das Tagebuch der Gitti E. Notizen in Steno 1943-45*, Annett Gröschner, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann, eds. (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2013), p. 10.

released from their employment, or whose businesses had been either “Aryanized” or were forced to close, French and Britain POWs, and non-combatant captives from many European countries. These workers had similar regulations to the locals. However, the local Jews had additional hardships. Later on, when the Jewish Berliners had been deported, they were replaced by Italian and Soviet⁶⁰ captured soldiers.⁶¹

In order to understand the magnitude of this phenomenon, at the beginning of 1944, according to police reports, there were 10,388 foreign forced laborers in Prenzlauer Berg, including 988 POWs.⁶² Towards the end of the war, during the fighting against the Red Army troops, there were 9,000 forced workers in Prenzlauer Berg. Some of them were killed during the battle on Prenzlauer Berg.⁶³

Another remarkable change in the diversity of the population in the district occurred during the last two years of the war. In the summer of 1943, a mass evacuation mainly of women, children, and older people from Berlin began after the Nazi regime forced the Berliners to find accommodation in other less dangerous places. The transfer of school children to rural regions as part of the wide *Kinderlandverschickung* (KLV) process of the evacuation of children in Germany was a priority. The only exceptions to this mass evacuation were people who had to stay in the city for work-related or other special reasons.⁶⁴

The numbers can help illustrate the extent of this phenomenon: In July 1943, 54,942 children were registered in Prenzlauer Berg between the ages of three and eighteen. In October 1944, according to the official records, a total of 27,643 of them remained in the district,⁶⁵ about half of the children’s population of the previous year.

Only on September 12, 1946, more than one year after the end of the war, did the last six school-age children return from Bavaria in south Germany to their home in Prenzlauer Berg.

⁶⁰ In most sources, when German contemporaries mentioned Soviet soldiers or Soviet occupation officials they called them by their country of origin or by what they thought their origin and racially classified them as mostly “Russians,” and also as “Mongolians” or “Ukrainians.” For the purpose of this study, although they were referred to differently in the sources, I refer to them when they are mentioned in the sources as the “Soviets,” as they all belonged to the Soviet occupation forces.

⁶¹ Wilz, 2008, pp. 97-98.

⁶² Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 147.

⁶³ Annett Gröschner, “Menschen an unserer Rückseite. Einleitung,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), p. 22.

⁶⁴ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 130.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 149.

With this last transport from Bavaria, the returning process of the evacuated children in the *Kinderlandverschickung* in Prenzlauer Berg was brought to an end.⁶⁶ In the immediate postwar period, capitulated Berlin housed many different groups of people, among them were the former East European forced laborers, the many refugees arriving in the city in a continuous flow, and the liberated Jews.⁶⁷ Prenzlauer Berg was not different from the rest of the city in that sense. In addition, Soviet occupation officers arrived in the district, since the destruction in the area was relatively small.⁶⁸

With the return of around 650 Jewish people from Theresienstadt concentration camp after the end of the war, the area of the synagogue on Ryke Strasse 53 in Prenzlauerberg was set up to temporarily accommodate the Jewish refugees. Presumably, the camp was set up in the summer months at the former school building in the front house. In August 1945, the first trains with survivors from Theresienstadt arrived. To this concentration camp, more than 14,000 people were deported just from Berlin alone between June 2, 1942 and March 27, 1945. 1,628 survivors from Theresienstadt were registered in Berlin by April 1946. Only a portion of them had lived in the city before being deported.⁶⁹

Josef K. was a Berliner Jew who returned to his district Prenzlauer Berg after the end of the war. In 1930, at the age of twenty-seven, Josef K. had joined the communist party, the KPD. After the rise to power of the Nazi party in 1933, he worked as a courier for the communist party in West Berlin, distributing leaflets and affixing wall inscriptions. Three years later, in 1936, he was arrested and sentenced to three years imprisonment. From then he was in and out of penitentiaries and concentration camps until 1945. When Josef K. returned to Berlin in 1945, not a single member of his family was left in the city. Some had immigrated to other countries, while others had been deported and murdered. He found himself lodging with a friend from earlier times. This was a severely war-damaged house on Pappelallee, Prenzlauer Berg. This house was

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

⁶⁷ Jennifer V. Evans, *Life among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 18.

⁶⁸ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Birgit Jerke, "Ein Tempel des Friedens," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 340.

demolished, and he received his own apartment in the same street.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Josef K. did not elaborate on the reasons and the way in which he received this apartment.

The husband of Hella Frankenberg from Prenzlauer Berg was a Polish Jew who came to Berlin after the war. In March 1995, the couple met with the publicist Regina Scheer and shared their past experiences. Hella Frankenberg, who was the daughter of a mixed German-Jewish couple, met her husband-to-be a few years after the end of the war, at a Hanukkah party. This Polish Jewish man was a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He explained to Regina Scheer in their meeting that once he came back to his village in Poland, a Polish woman that he knew was living in his family's hut. This woman did not even let him inside nor did she offer him a piece of bread. He claimed that he had nothing to do back in Poland; it was one big Jewish cemetery. And so, he decided to stay in Berlin after the war.⁷¹

After the collapse of the Third Reich, the process of returning Jews and the arrival of other Jews to the city was in some cases closely linked to the exclusion of Nazis. On September 4, 1945, a young woman from Prenzlauer Berg, Brigitte Eicke, and her friend went to pick up books from an apartment on Greifswalder Strasse that had once belonged to Nazi people and now housed two Jewish women. Eicke noted in her diary that the place looked awful: The old woman stayed in bed, the younger one looked dirty, and garbage was dispersed all over the place. The two Jewish women insisted that they would take out all the books, including the Nazi ones. They were living in a Nazi apartment and did not want to see those books around.⁷²

Under the circumstances of changing population in the postwar period, Prenzlauer Berg district maintained its status as a home for mixed groups and people.

Violence against a Wide Range of Groups

It can be generalized that all locals as one big group in Prenzlauer Berg experienced violence in diverse different ways by the Allied forces and postwar violence by the occupying forces. The

⁷⁰ Sibylle Hinze, "Mensch unter Menschen," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 68-70.

⁷¹ Regina Scheer, "Der zerbrochene Stein," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 61.

⁷² Annett Gröschner, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann, eds., *Backfisch im Bombenkrieg: Das Tagebuch der Gitti E. Notizen in Steno 1943–45* (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2013), p. 323.

violence of this kind was unbridled and often arbitrary and without the intention of distinguishing who was the object of injury. For example, Jews or Germans communists who were in favor of the Allied victory were harmed.

Most of the population of Prenzlauer Berg also experienced violence or was threatened by violence between 1943-1948 based on their affiliation with a specific group, whether religious, ethnic, or socio-political, or due to their attempt to help people from a particular group. During the war, the Nazi regime persecuted political and ideological movements which included anti-fascists, socialists, communists, and so on. They persecuted members of the Catholic Church as well as Jehovah's Witnesses (*Zeugen Jehovas*). Of course, the Jews were the most heavily targeted group for persecution on racial grounds. After the end of the war, under Soviet occupation, the tables had turned and now it was groups such as the Nazis, their collaborators, and former *Wehrmacht* soldiers that were the target of violent treatment by the new Soviet authorities. The formerly persecuted groups by the Nazis now frequently received the most sympathetic treatment and acceptance from the new authorities. Hence, as we can see, even within this relatively short period of six years, there were profound changes in groups and circles of people who were exposed to violence.

At the same time, it is important to clarify in this context that a wide variety of political, social, and religious groups in the Third Reich were already denounced and treated with violence during the 1930s. As Wilz elaborated, in the early 1930s with the political division in Berlin, the social atmosphere in Prenzlauer Berg turned violent. The people of Prenzlauer Berg witnessed mass arrests, and furthermore, the *Wasserturm* in Prenzlauer Berg was used by the Nazis as one of their first arrest centers for the many communists from the area.⁷³ Consequently, by the 1940s, most of the visible heterogeneity within the German population was completely blurred or at least hidden.

Catholics were one religious group that was persecuted throughout the years of the Nazi regime. Coming from a Catholic family that was originally from Silesia, Erhard was an altar boy who attended a Catholic school on Oderberger Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, in the 1930s. In later interviews from the 1990s, Erhard mentioned that he was only enrolled there for a few years because the Nazis abolished these schools. Erhard explained that the Nazis wanted to make it look like the parents were the ones who wanted their children to drop out of the Catholic schools.

⁷³ Wilz, 2008, pp. 251-252.

As a result, notes were distributed saying parents wanted their children to move to community schools, with a “request” to sign the note. This maneuver was done largely under pressure.⁷⁴

Another persecuted religious group was the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The areas of Wedding, East Berlin, and Spandau were the centers of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Berlin. In Prenzlauer Berg, numerous people were killed by the Nazis between 1933-1945 because of their affiliation with this small religious community. Although their activity was banned from 1933 onwards, members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses held secret meetings and continued to spread their ideas. In 1944, there was a mass process against seventy-five defendants in Berlin. Their brutal suppression was primarily due to the fact that this community required a total belief and made no compromises.⁷⁵

However, the violence of the Nazi regime was most definitely not solely limited to religious groups. It was also aimed at various political groups, such as the social democrats. In his book, *Widerstand in Prenzlauer Berg und Weißensee*, the German political scientist and historian Hans-Reiner Sandvoß presented the story of the social democrat Otto Schieritz of Senefelder Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg, who was persecuted by the Nazi regime. In 1936, Schieritz was sentenced to four and a half years in prison. In 1940, he returned from the dreaded camp in Papenburg and started working at AEG. Towards the invasion of the Red Army troops, Schieritz hung a white flag on his balcony. Just a few minutes passed, and he was taken by an SS squad that stormed the house and carried him off to their local last base at the *Schultheiss-Brauerei*. His fate remains unclear. Sandvoß presumed that he was probably buried in the cemetery of the non-denominational community in Pappelallee, Prenzlauer Berg.⁷⁶ On July 22, 1943, the social democrat and trade unionist Eduard Zachert, who was a former Prenzlauer Berg district council member and an assemblyman of the Prussian parliament was executed in *Plötzensee* prison on the grounds of “undermining of military morale.”⁷⁷

The communists were another political group that was largely persecuted by the Nazis and who received particularly violent treatment. Erhard remembered the disappearance of certain communists from his surroundings, for instance, one family that lived just above his family. He

⁷⁴ Erhard, “Wir haben viele Waschungen erlebt. Erhard aus der Lothringer,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 212-213, 217-219.

⁷⁵ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 320.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

⁷⁷ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 146.

noted that no one talked about the disappearance, aside from casually mentioning that they were gone.⁷⁸

Sandvoß presented the story of the Nazi oppression of the communist Kurt Adolf Nast of Ahlbecker Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg. Nast was the head of the young communist league of Germany cell, the KJVD, in Pappelallee. Already in 1933, he was convicted in “breach of the peace.” From 1940, he worked at the *Schwarzkopf*. In 1942, he had developed an affection for a seventeen-year-old French girl who lived at his mother’s house and tried to politically influence her. The young girl brought Nast’s letters to her uncle, who handed them to the police. Nast was charged in 1943 for attempting to influence foreigners with communist ideas. He was sentenced in April that year to six years in prison.⁷⁹ A year later, in June 1944, the court sentenced to death three communist resistance fighters from Prenzlauer Berg for their involvement in a resistance organization that operated in 1938-1939. The three of them were executed on August 14, 1944.⁸⁰

The fight against communists continued to a certain extent even after the collapse of the Nazi regime. The violence against them was carried out apparently by fanatical *Hitlerjugend*, which was the boys’ youth organization of the Nazi Party, who acted as *Werwölfe* in acts of sabotage in occupied Berlin. Brigitte Eicke wrote in her diary on June 16, 1945 about the burning at the corner of the streets Wins Strasse and Marienburger Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg. She suspected that the *Werwölfe* who fought against Soviets and communists would be blamed for it. Eicke claimed that if the occupation authorities suspected that a *Werwolf* was responsible for an offense, they would take in response fifty Nazi party members and execute them.⁸¹

Apart from the locals, the foreigners in the district were certainly victims of violence in the years in question. A representative example of this violent treatment occurred at the end of 1944 when SS men were informed about POWs that were hiding in a former open cistern in the Jewish cemetery at Schönhauser Allee 23-25, Prenzlauer Berg. The POWs were hanged after their capture on the surrounding trees.⁸²

⁷⁸ Erhard, 1998, p. 217.

⁷⁹ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, pp. 251-252.

⁸⁰ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 147.

⁸¹ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 289.

⁸² Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 149.

Violence against Jews

160,500 Jews lived in Berlin in 1933. At the beginning of the war, there were 77,850 Jews left in the city. In February 1943, the month of the “Factory Action,” only 27,000 Jews still lived in Berlin.⁸³ In accordance with greater Berlin, the Jews as an ethnic-religious group in Prenzlauer Berg were the group that experienced the most severe, consistent, and extensive violence during the period of the Nazi dictatorship. As mentioned earlier, in 1933 more than 18,000 Jews lived in Prenzlauer Berg. In 1945, after the war’s end, there were no more than one hundred of them left.⁸⁴ Respectively, as the group who was treated with the most violence, the sources mention a relatively broad amount of violent acts against them.

But even before the rise of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933, there had been cases of hostility against Jews on the part of their neighbors. For instance, in Prenzlauer Berg, already in 1932 the synagogue association *Synagogenverein Lew Jehudo e.V.* had to relocate from Fransecky Strasse 3 to Schönhauser Allee 31, because of the anti-Semitic attitude of the building’s residents.⁸⁵ From February 1933, as the historian Sibylle Hinze maintains, the livelihood of the Jewish residents in Prenzlauer Berg as in the whole of Germany was systematically destroyed by the Nazi state with the help of non-Jewish Germans as well as associations, who welcomed the opportunity to get rid of their competitors. Only in cases of individuals can we see instances of passive resistance to anti-Semitic activities, assistance, or even active support for Jews.⁸⁶

This destruction of Jewish livelihoods in Prenzlauer Berg also appears repeatedly in the sources as can be seen, for example, in Willi Holzer’s case: Holzer grew up in Greifenhagener Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, until he fled in 1939 with his family to Palestine, at the age of nineteen. In the mid-1990s, he explained to the Prenzlauer Berg museum staff that after the Nazis came to

⁸³ Scheer, 1997, p. 85.

⁸⁴ Reinhard Kraetzer, “Vorwort,” in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 8.

⁸⁵ Sibylle Hinze, “Der Anfang vom Ende,” in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 286-287.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 296.

power in 1933, the anti-Semitic climate increased in his surroundings, and as a result, his father was forced to take his children out of school.⁸⁷

In her meeting with the publicist Regina Scheer in March 1995, Hella Frankenberg shared her childhood experiences from school during the Nazi period. Frankenberg was the daughter of a mixed couple; her mother was Jewish and her father was an “Aryan” in Nazi terms. She went to school on Schönhauser Allee, Prenzlauer Berg. Once, and she remarked that it was just one incident out of many similar ones, the director of the school instructed her class to sing a familiar Nazi song that had many verses. Out of fear, she always tried eagerly to do what was asked of her. Nevertheless, the director pulled her forward, slapped her face, and warned her that if she did not sing along, she would go to where her whole clan was. She explained that she and the other children suspected where all the Jews were going, but no one talked about it. After so many farewells in those years, all the “other” Jews were gone, and it seemed to her that the only ones who remained were her sister, mother, and herself.⁸⁸

On November 9th and 10th, 1938, the so-called “Night of Broken Glass” broke out. On these dates, following orders of the Nazi leadership, SS and SA men as well as citizens in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland, “launched the deadliest violence in the region’s history.” They demolished Jewish properties, schools, synagogues, and businesses while using violence against the Jewish population in the form of looting, raping, beating, and murdering.⁸⁹

In Prenzlauer Berg, the synagogue at Ryke Strasse was only seemingly spared from this pogrom. It was not set on fire out of concern for the nearby houses. Nonetheless, the Nazi authorities which organized the “Night of Broken Glass” ensured of the demolition of the synagogue’s interiors, the desecration of the Torah scrolls, as well as damage to other holy artifacts, including the deportation of rabbis and parishioners to *Sachsenhausen*, which was a concentration camp near Berlin.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Bernt Roder, “Einführung,” in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 10-11.

⁸⁸ Scheer, 1997, pp. 57-58.

⁸⁹ Wolf Gruner, and Steven J. Ross, eds., *New Perspectives on Kristallnacht: After 80 Years, the Nazi Pogrom in Global Comparison* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), p. ix.

⁹⁰ Birgit Jerke, “Des Gotteshauses Bedeutung und Berechtigung,” in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 271.

Erhard grew up with Jewish children in his surroundings. They played together, and he even joined their feasts celebrated in the backyard of their house on Lothringer Strasse. Walking to school after the “Night of Broken Glass” was a shock for him. On his way, he saw the many ruined stores that were looted and the smashed shop windows.⁹¹ Yet, the violence explicitly directed against the Jews was not the only violence Jews experienced in the early 1940s. Throughout the war, although the Jews were persecuted by the Germans and supposedly found on the other side of the barricade, they still had to endure, just as the Germans did, the war campaign against Germany. For the foreign countries, they counted as Germans and were fought against for these reasons. For instance, Hella Frankenberg’s school in Schönhauser Allee was closed after the building was destroyed in a bombing. Their house was bombed several times as well. But in Hella’s memory, all these separate horror events have merged together into one overall feeling of fear and danger.⁹²

Hella Frankenberg had a sister named Vera. On April 22, 1945, her sister Vera was hit by shrapnel when she stood in the courtyard, just in front of the entrance to the air raid shelter. She was sixteen years old. The family brought her body to the Jewish cemetery just behind their house, where their father wrapped her body in blankets, for in April 1945 there were no coffins in Berlin, certainly not for Jewish people. The father chose the burial place and dug the pit. Hella held her mother back, as she screamed and wanted to join her dead daughter in the pit.⁹³

Moreover, the bombing campaign against Germany during the war posed another ongoing threat to the Jewish population in particular. During the bombings, the Jews that remained in the city were prohibited from entering the air raid shelters.⁹⁴ As the war progressed, and the air raids gradually intensified, this prohibition was especially life-threatening. Ilse Kraft from Prenzlauer Berg who was in her twenties during the war, maintained in 1999 that when the Jews were no longer allowed to enter the air raid shelters, they needed to find for themselves a hiding place from the bombings in other places.⁹⁵

Also, an exceptional evidence use of a gas van against Jews in Berlin was witnessed by Anna from the *Zeitungsviertel* in Berlin’s center: She remembered years later that during a

⁹¹ Erhard, 1998, p. 216.

⁹² Scheer, 1997, p. 59.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Wilz, 2008, p. 99.

⁹⁵ Ilse Kraft, “Ilse Kraft, Jahrgang 1921,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 102.

semester vacation, she met a photojournalist who had taken pictures of Nazi propaganda. He told her about the gas vans and explained that people were taken away and loaded into vans. Afterward, gas was directed into the interior of the car until the people inside died. About fourteen days after she heard about it, Anna claimed that she had seen such a van driving at the *Jerusalem Kirche*, in Berlin city center. She got sick knowing what was going on there.⁹⁶

This eye-witness testimony regarding the existence of gas vans in Berlin was very unusual and hence interesting because gas vans were used to murder Jews and other prisoners in the German-occupied Soviet Union. The question is whether the car that Anna saw was indeed a gas van or perhaps she was influenced by the journalist's story, so she thought that she saw the same gas van in Berlin.

During the war, one major violent act against Jews in Berlin was mass deportation. From 1941, most of the Berliner Jews were deported to eastern ghettos and from there to concentration camps. After the “Wannsee Conference,” which was held in January 1942, in which the total extermination of the Jews was decided, certain Jewish groups such as the elderly or veterans of World War I, who had been protected until that point, were also deported. And in Prenzlauer Berg, the staff and children from the Auerbach’schen Orphanage were also deported to Riga.⁹⁷

On February 27, 1943, the “Factory Action,” the final roundup of the Berliner Jews, began.⁹⁸ After years of gradual denunciation and systematic violence against them, with this action the violence of the Nazi regime against the Jews in Berlin and specifically in Prenzlauer Berg culminated, directed at the rest of the Jews in the city.

In a surprising wave of arrests, the last “unprotected” Jews were arrested, brought to collection camps (*Sammellager*), and then deported. Around 7,000 Jews were deported during this time. From February 28th until March 6th also Jews who were married to non-Jewish partners and *Geltungsjuden*, Jews with partial Jewish ancestry were also considered Jews by the “Nuremberg Laws,” and were brought to collection camps. After a big protest of “Aryan” women in front of the collection camp *Rosen Strasse* in the Mitte district, their men and children were released. On April 28, 1943, Jews who worked in firms that were highly important to the

⁹⁶ Anna, “Eine richtige große Liebe. Anna aus dem Zeitungsviertel,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 252-253.

⁹⁷ Wilz, 2008, pp. 101-102.

⁹⁸ Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds., “*Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.*” *Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), p. 155.

war effort were also to be deported from Berlin or transferred to confined forced labor. Not too long after, on June 10, 1943, the offices of the Jewish organization in Germany and the Jewish community in Berlin were shut down.⁹⁹

On May 2, 1945, Berlin capitulated, and around 1,500 Jews that were hiding as non-Jews across Berlin succeeded in surviving the war.¹⁰⁰ But even after the Red Army troops entered the city and the threat of violence against the Jews as a group ceased, cases of violence against Jewish people continued to emerge as part of the general rampage of violence that took place in the city.

When the Soviet troops arrived in their neighborhood, Hella Frankenberg and her father stood in front of the house, as if nothing could happen to them. One Soviet officer approached them and wondered if they were not afraid, as they were the only ones in the street who stood outside. After hearing their story, the officer went up with them to their apartment and told her mother that he was also a Jew. He promised to hang a sign on their door for their protection. Also, he urged them to hide Hella because he could not be responsible for the acts of his soldiers at this time. And so, she was hiding for a few days and nights in a loft of an elderly woman. Hella maintained that young Soviet soldiers also provided her family with food supplies from the bunker at the nearby *Wasserturm*.¹⁰¹

A distinct example of violence against a mixed Jewish-German couple after the collapse of the Nazi regime was relayed by an anonymous woman from Berlin¹⁰² in her diary: A friend of the anonymous woman shared the story of her former employer, a lawyer who was married to a Jewish woman. Because of the mixed marriage and his refusal to divorce his wife, he suffered enormously during the Third Reich, especially in the last years of the war. The couple waited for months for the liberation of Berlin. Once the first Soviet soldiers entered their cellar looking for

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Scheer, 1997, p. 60.

¹⁰² There is uncertainty about the authenticity of the diary and authorship. However, the experiences described in the diary and the language used there are consistent with other reports. The anonymous writer who asked to remain anonymous was apparently the journalist Marta Hillers. Kurt Marek, the author, and publisher of the first edition in 1954 wrote in the epilogue a few details about the notebook and his acquaintance with the writer. In 2003, the journalist Jens Bisky published the author's presumed identity after receiving a letter from a woman who claimed to have known her. The description corresponded to the details about her that Marek had published. However, Marek, who knew the identity of the author, died in 1972, and Marta Hillers also died in 2001. Therefore, it is impossible to verify with certainty that she is indeed the writer of the diary.

women, a fight started, and a stray bullet injured the lawyer. The wife begged the soldiers in German for help, but in response, they took her out to the hallway. There, when the three guys were on top of her, she screamed repeatedly: “ ‘But I’m Jewish, I’m Jewish.’ ” In the meantime, her husband bled to death. He was buried in the front yard, and the woman disappeared and had not been seen since.¹⁰³

This story reveals how even if violent acts were not specifically aimed towards a certain group, they could end up suffering from general violence. Henceforth, as can be seen in this story, there were times when there was no difference in violence between the different groups. The ostensible distinction between Jews and Germans which had been previously encouraged has lost its affect and did not benefit the Jews this time, and they were treated equally as all Germans.

Living Together in Good Neighborliness?

The uniqueness of Prenzlauer Berg was that it was home to a wide variety of inhabitants from different classes, religions, ethnicities, and political positions. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, working-class and lower-middle-class people lived in the back-courtyard houses of Prenzlauer Berg, while store owners and the higher middle-class people lived in the front buildings. They all lived together.¹⁰⁴

Erhard grew up on Lothringer Strasse 17 in the south of Prenzlauer Berg, close to the *Scheunenviertel*, until his family moved in 1939 to Greifswalder Strasse, in the eastern part of Prenzlauer Berg. On Lothringer Strasse, his family lived in the back-courtyard building. On their street, there were nice front houses that had big apartments with a bath and a servant’s entrance at the back. He explained that the concept was that rich and poor would live next to each other, side by side. The well-heeled people who lived in those apartments had chosen to live there rather than in a better neighborhood.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in Erhard’s building social democrats, communists, and people without a party affiliation, like his parents, lived side by side. Yet, he

¹⁰³ Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Diary 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945* (London: Virago, 2005), p. 230.

¹⁰⁴ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 10.

¹⁰⁵ Erhard, 1998, pp. 212-213.

stressed, people had a good relationship with one another and spoke relatively openly with others.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Prenzlauer Berg was also the place of varied ethnic groups. Since the district was largely residential, many of its residents commuted to work in other parts of Berlin. But there were also many small family businesses in Prenzlauer Berg. In every apartment block, there was a variety of small stores where neighbors shopped and ate together. These small businesses shaped the lively social atmosphere of the place beyond the varied ethnic identities.¹⁰⁷

As seen in the personal sources and in the retrospective reflections of contemporaries, there were many stories of good relationships between Jews and Germans in the district over the years. Although this may be true, it is important to qualify and remember that in memoirs, people are more comfortable emphasizing the positive past stories and not stories about their misconduct. Furthermore, in their stories, there are many indirect references to the negative behavior of those around them towards the Jews.

Erika Meusel from Prenzlauer Berg, who was born in 1924, detailed years later her close relationship with the Jewish neighbors who lived in her house. They were very nice to her, and whenever on Fridays they baked a *matzo*, which is a kind of bread from the Jewish cuisine, they shared it with her. She got to know the *matzo* from the Jews who lived in her house and for her, it was always something special to get a slice of it. Even when she did not come by to get the *matzo*, they brought it to her.¹⁰⁸

The local Jews of Prenzlauer Berg were mostly middle or lower-middle class and were well spoken in the German language, unlike the Jews at the nearby *Scheuneviertel* who were poorer, more religious, spoke often Polish and Yiddish, and were thus perceived by Jewish and non-Jewish Germans as outsiders.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as previously mentioned, the Jews in Prenzlauer Berg were assimilated German-Jews with a strong sense of nationalism.

During the Nazi period, since Jews were gradually prohibited from attending public activities, the integration of Jews with the other members of the Prenzlauer Berg community was

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 217.

¹⁰⁷ Wilz, 2008, p. 160.

¹⁰⁸ Erika Meusel, "Erika Meusel, Jahrgang 1924," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 83.

¹⁰⁹ Wilz, 2008, pp. 68-69, 96.

gradually destroyed. Therefore, as Wilz claimed, Prenzlauer Berg was a successful place of Jewish-German integration until the persecution of the Jews. Their persecution turned the Germans and Jews in Prenzlauer Berg away from one another.¹¹⁰

After January 1933 the separation of the Jews from the German population was a matter of public policy. One way in which the policy came into practice was by concentrating Jews in designated areas intended for only the Jewish population. In Prenzlauer Berg, the policy of residential concentration had also led to a dramatic limitation of housing for the Jewish population. However, the systematic resettlement actions in Berlin did not affect the Prenzlauer Berg district, with the exception of parts of its southeastern *Bötzowviertel*. Although more and more Jews were being concentrated in smaller and smaller living spaces in the district, the settlement structure of the Jewish population in Prenzlauer Berg was still preserved. This was not evident only in the numbers of the 1939 census, but also more than obvious in the last addresses of the Jews in the district before their deportation.¹¹¹

The gradual separation and distancing of the Jews from the German population also occurred in other levels of daily life in the district. This can be seen in a wide variety of contemporaries' stories. For example, Walentina elaborated on her family's previously good relationships with the Jews that inevitably came to an end. Since her father was a watchmaker, most of their Jewish friends were jewelers. Before they left the city, they came to say goodbye. She explained that only the ones that had money had the privilege to do that.¹¹²

Margarethe from Prenzlauer Berg was born in Wins Strasse in 1919 and still lived there in the 1990s. In her lifetime, she had only moved twice, both times to a bigger apartment but in the same building. In later interviews from the 1990s, Margarethe spoke about the former Jews in her neighborhood in Prenzlauer Berg, called *Winskies*. During the years 1926-1934, she attended a girls' school in her neighborhood, on Heinrich-Roller-Strasse. One-third of her class were Jewish girls, and she and the other girls were associated with the Jewish girls. But the Jewish girls were already then pretty much isolated, she explained. The street next to her house, the Raabe Strasse, was pretty much a "Jewish street." In this street were many big apartments,

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Michael Kreutzer, "Über konzentrierte jüdische Nachbarschaften in Prenzlauer Berg 1886-1931," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 378-379.

¹¹² Walentina, 1998, pp. 121-122.

and thus many academics and people with money lived there, but when “they moved out,” “probably went abroad,” using Margarethe’s words, the street was left pretty much empty.¹¹³

Bernt Roder, the Head of the Prenzlauer Berg Museum from 1992 onwards, interviewed Leonore Samuel in the mid-1990s, as part of the Book *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*. Samuel was born in 1923 and grew up in a Jewish family in Wörther Strasse 46 Prenzlauer Berg until her departure in 1939. Her family lived there as sub-tenants under one woman named Fräulein Koch, in an apartment that consisted of only a living room and a kitchen.¹¹⁴

As a young child, Samuel attended the Jewish kindergarten at Fehrbelliner Strasse 92 in southwest Prenzlauer Berg. In 1930, at the age of seven, she enrolled in the elementary school not so far away, in Schönhauser Allee. As her class enrollment photo of the first day at school shows, she sat on a bench between the other two Jewish classmates. From 1933, the motifs on the walls of the classroom; a map of Grunewald forest in West Berlin and a photo of a Monastery, were replaced by other pictures that included a portrait of Hitler. In school, she had to do the demonstrative Hitler salute, and the teachers suddenly ignored her in class and labeled her as a child of Polish Jews. Also, her freedom of movement which was an integral part of herself was increasingly restricted.¹¹⁵

In addition, Samuel recalled the change of atmosphere in her own house on Wörther Strasse. She and her playmates were sometimes invited to the homes of her neighbors, who gave them sweets, but these kindnesses towards her had stopped at some point, and many of the house doors were pointedly shut down just in front of her. Her parents transferred her to the private elementary school of the Jewish community on Ryke Strasse in summer 1934 and paid the additional school fees. Shortly before, she became a member of the Jewish sports federation *Makkabi*, and so her urge to be active and outside now shifted to these sports activities. Increasingly, many activities of everyday life were further restricted. Samuel experienced firsthand measures taken like forbidding Jews to enter cinemas, and public parks, as she was not

¹¹³ Margarethe, “Der Fuß, der das Bein war. Margarethe aus der Wins,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 131, 135-136.

¹¹⁴ Bernt Roder, “Vier Staatsbürgerschaften,” in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), p. 62.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

allowed to go to the movies in the nearby small cinema anymore. Playing at the *Wörtherplatz* was also forbidden for Jewish children, and the park benches had prohibition inscriptions.¹¹⁶

Mixed couples of non-Jews and Jews formed another kind of relationship between the two groups at a more intimate level. Mixed marriages and any form of relationship between “Aryans” and Jews were outlawed as a part of the so-called “Nuremberg Laws” in 1935. However, this new legislation did not apply retroactively to already married couples, it only enabled the state prosecutor to initiate an annulment of existing marriages.¹¹⁷

An example of a mixed couple was the parents of Hella Frankenberg, who got married in 1929. The Christian family of her father was angry that this tall, blond man wanted to marry a Jewish woman. Also, her mother’s Jewish family was disappointed and outraged about this marriage. Hence, the young couple was largely self-reliant. The father, Christoph Frankenberg, did not leave his Jewish wife Doris despite all the hardships they experienced during the Nazi period.¹¹⁸

Mixed couples and their children called *Mischlinge*, which was the Nazi term for mixed blood people that have both “Aryan” and Jewish ancestry, also suffered from a distant attitude, separation, and detachment as well as violent treatment from the other population in the district and the authorities. Hella Frankenberg remembered her daily experiences as the daughter of a mixed couple. In 1929 and 1930, she and her sister Vera were born, and the family lived in a two-room apartment in Wörther Strasse 9 in Prenzlauer Berg, the same street as Leonore Samuel. Hella Frankenberg explained that although it was not a fine neighborhood, the family had their livelihood. Because their “Aryan” father claimed that the girls were not educated according to Jewish belief, she and her sister did not have to wear the yellow star. In practice, they did share their mother’s Jewish faith, but they knew that they had to hide it.¹¹⁹ Hella and Vera Frankenberg had some “Aryan” girlfriends, but there were also children that were not allowed to play with them. Also, most of their neighbors kept their distance.¹²⁰

Once, Hella Frankenberg’s father was called to the police station on the corner of Wörther Strasse and Schoenhauser Allee and was “encouraged” to get a divorce. In various

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

¹¹⁷ “Holocaust Encyclopedia,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, December 16, 2019 <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws>

¹¹⁸ Scheer, 1997, p. 57.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 58.

cases, the mother was repeatedly dragged out of the apartment, and more than once her father rode his bike to bring her back home. One time, her father was beaten up by a SA man at *Wörtherplatz*. This was in front of a truck when her mother was already sitting inside, but the mother came back home again and again and gradually became more and more anxious and quiet.¹²¹

At some point, the German passport of Hella Frankenberg's father was taken from him, and later on, he was sent to a labor camp in Thuringia. In April 1945, shortly before the end of the war, he came back emaciated and had huge infections on his body. They felt lucky to have him back since he was the only one who was protecting their family.¹²²

The neighbors of the Frankenbergs were not united in their attitude towards the mixed-race family. With the beginning of the bombing, the air raid protection warden of the house met with the Frankenberg family and informed them about the ban of Jews from entering the air raid shelters. Thus, throughout the air raids, they could do nothing but sit close together and wait until it was over. One of their neighbors, Frau Koslowski, lived in the basement floor and did not go to the cellar during the bombings. Whenever the alarms were activated, she brought the Frankenbergs to her place. Unlike her, another neighbor called Frau Schikora, always looked out that no Jewish ban would be violated. Sometimes she held out her sofa cushions which were embroidered with a Swastika (*Hakenkreuz*) and brushed them off demonstratively towards the windows of the Frankenbergs. The intention behind this act was that they would see which was the actual ruling symbol in Germany.¹²³

All residents of Prenzlauer Berg witnessed the deportation and destruction of the local Jewish community. And still, the response of the local Germans to the Nazi persecution of the Jews was keeping a certain distance from the local Jews. Several locals who witnessed the deportations of their Jewish neighbors described their neighbors as having vanished. They perceived the deportations as a sudden, unexpected event. Yet there were others who had close relationships with their Jewish neighbors and thus, empathized with the unpredictable violence aimed towards them. Altogether, the deportations had become the center of German-Jewish community life in Prenzlauer Berg, overshadowing all previous corporations.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., p. 59.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹²⁴ Wilz, 2008, pp. 104-108.

Anna from the *Zeitungsviertel* concluded that people knew that something was wrong. Especially people like her family who worked together with Jewish companies, and then all of a sudden, these companies stopped existing. Also, her Jewish school friends suddenly disappeared. She knew what was going on and that persons who were not recognized as “Aryans” were at risk.¹²⁵

Margarethe recalled that a Jewish family lived in her building on Wins Strasse. When they left Berlin, they came over to say goodbye. She also remembered that the other Jews who did not leave on their own were picked up later. She witnessed this “pick up” at close range.¹²⁶ In the front house of her building, Margarethe added, lived a Jewish girl who stayed with her mother. She was mostly raised with Margarethe’s family because her mother had to work. Later, her mother married, and the girl had a stepfather. The girl came to visit them often, until her last day in the building. Her stepfather was picked up first, and before leaving he asked Margarethe’s family to take care of her. But they had to be very careful with their relations with the Jews, Margarethe explained, since the neighbor who lived under them was from the *Gestapo*, and they knew that they could not deceive him. The girl had to register at a collection camp in Ryke Strasse, where there was also the synagogue. Then one night the girl came over and told them that the day after they would be leaving with the transport. Margarethe was certain that the girl did not survive the war. Margarethe’s family stayed in the same building, and if the girl had survived, she would have returned to their house.¹²⁷

A remarkable example of a close friendship in the district that continued during these difficult times of the Jews’ exclusion and despite the Nazi threat of severing contact with the Jews is the following story of Else Rosenfeld of Göhrener Strasse 14, and her Jewish friend, Martha Ullendorff of Chodowiecki Strasse 37. When Else Rosenfeld died in 1956 at the age of fifty-four, her relatives found in her documents the story of another woman, Martha Ullendorff. In a letter from May 23, 1946, which Rosenfeld wrote to the police headquarters, asking them to search for information about her friend Martha Ullendorff. She elaborated that from February 1943 until August 1943, Ullendorff was living underground in Berlin. The decision to live underground was probably connected to the so-called *Factory Action* that took place from February 27, 1943. Rosenfeld explained that she supported her friend frequently in every way

¹²⁵ Anna, 1998, pp. 252-253.

¹²⁶ Margarethe, 1998, pp. 131, 135-136.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

she could. Lastly, Ullendorff was a housemaid at an ophthalmologist's. On August 23, 1943, Rosenfeld talked with Ullendorff on the phone for the last time. On that evening, the ophthalmologist invited her to the clinic and informed her that Ullendorff was taken by the *Gestapo* to the collection camp at Grosse Hamburger Strasse. He explained that he had already visited her there and brought her her bag with the ration cards which were used to obtain food and other commodities. Since his fiancé was from an "Aryan" and Jewish ancestry and considered a *Mischling*, he told Rosenfeld that she would have to take responsibility if there would be an attempt to find out who helped Ullendorff.¹²⁸

A few days later, Rosenfeld received a letter from a Jewish security guard on Grosse Hamburger Strasse. She met him in his apartment and he told her that Ullendorff was asking for food and money. It was strange for Rosenfeld because the ophthalmologist said that he had given her the ration cards. Rosenfeld gave her money and food and severed contact with the ophthalmologist because she did not trust him. Ullendorff was deported on September 10, 1943. On September 21st and twice, later on, two *Gestapo* commissioners came to Rosenfeld's house and searched her apartment. In 1946, Rosenfeld wanted to find out whether the police had in her files the name of the informer of Martha Ullendorff. The police replied that they could not help her because when the Red Army entered Berlin, they occupied the *Gestapo* buildings and seized all their files. From then on, German authorities were not allowed to inspect those files.¹²⁹

During the last days of the war, as part of the atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty as to what the balance of power was, changes also occurred in the relationships and contacts between the various residents of the district. Hella Frankenberg remembered that when her sister Vera was buried at the end of April 1945, her parents and herself were the only ones present. No one else stood by their side, also not their neighbors. Only a few days later, when the Soviets were already at Prenzlauer Allee, the main street next to them. SS troops entrenched at the *Segenskirche* and there were shootings from all sides. Their neighbors stayed in the cellar and barely left its side. The Nazi party signs were taken off. At once the neighbors were friendly to her family. But her mother stayed in their apartment, she refused to join the others in the cellar.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Scheer, 1997, pp. 84-85.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

After the Soviets occupied the area, neighbors that until that time did not care for the Frankenbergs came over asking them for some food-items, but they agreed to only supply them to Frau Koslowski and Frau Buntrock, who were good to them. The previously mentioned Jewish Soviet officer who got acquainted with the Frankenbergs came back and wanted to know who in their street was mean to them in particular. The father wanted to name Frau Schikora, the Nazi woman who tormented his wife whenever she met her, but he kept silent after looking at his wife who did not want to seek revenge. Later, when her father was assigned to be in charge of the rubble women (*Trümmerfrauen*) of their street, which were the women who helped clear and reconstruct the bombed areas in the cities, he made sure that she would join them to work and assigned the hardest work to her.¹³¹

Even after the occupation, the negative and violent attitude towards Jews in ordinary daily life in the district did not stop completely. This can be clearly seen in the turn of events regarding the burial of Vera Frankenberg. The father managed to bring a beautiful tombstone for Vera's grave, and even though Jewish graves are not usually planted with flowers, he followed his heart and planted flowers for her. The Jewish cemetery was closed during the first years after the war, but the father had received a key. The surrounding houses had a clear view of the inside of the cemetery, and its wall was not hard to climb. And so, time after time the flowers were stolen, and the tombstone was stained repeatedly. Hella Frankenberg mentioned that she did not know whether it was just out of stupidity or perhaps malice, nonetheless, it was as rubbing salt on a still open wound.¹³²

After the war, a new kind of neighborly relationship emerged in the district. A relationship between locals and refugee newcomers, as well as occupation forces that were either posted or put in houses in Prenzlauer Berg. In the summer of 1945, more and more refugees from the East came to Berlin looking for shelter. Tino Kotte pointed out in his book, *Die Bremer Höhe in Berlin: ein Kiez im Prenzlauer Berg*, that several refugees were lodged in the Bremer Höhe in Prenzlauer Berg, according to the orders of the district's Soviet commandment.¹³³

The Red Army troops that were posted in Prenzlauer Berg had an ambivalent relationship with the locals: They provided food and essentials for the local community and gave chocolates

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹³³ Tino Kotte, "Erinnerungen an die Kindheit 1939 bis 1949," in: *Die Bremer Höhe in Berlin: ein Kiez im Prenzlauer Berg*, Tino Kotte, ed. (Berlin: Geschichtswerkstatt Bremer Höhe, 2007), pp. 56-57.

to the children, but at the same time, they looted local property and sexually assaulted German women.¹³⁴ Waltraud Garstecki from Prenzlauer Berg, for instance, was twelve years old in 1945. She remembered positively the Soviet soldiers that were in her neighborhood. In 1945, the Soviets provided supplies for all the houses in her neighborhood. The Germans brought cans and other cookware to transport the food. They did not have bad experiences with the Soviets; quite to the contrary, the Soviets helped the locals with the issue of hunger.¹³⁵

Joachim Doempke was only four years old when the war ended. In 1999, he remembered the working relationships between his family and the Soviets that saved his family from the general hunger that prevailed around them. He mentioned that in 1945, there were people who simply starved. His family was lucky because in the house next door to their house in Metzger Strasse in south Prenzlauer Berg was a big drugstore, which was replaced by a Soviet bar after the end of the war. High-ranking officers came there, and his mother and grandmother both cooked for the bar. They got leftovers, and in that way, they avoided hunger.¹³⁶

The newcomers lived close to the locals, in the same streets and buildings, and sometimes they even shared an apartment together. In a book about the Bremer Höhe in Prenzlauer Berg that was published in 2007, Jürgen Bergk told of how the sailor Ullrich Kleist moved into his family apartment in Bremer Höhe. Kleist was the son of a fisherman from the Rügen Island in the northeast of Germany. He exchanged smoked eels on the black market for bread and butter and from time to time gave some of it to the Bergk family. Jürgen Bergk, who was a little child then, explained that Kleist brought to Berlin live eels and smoked them in their apartment. The eels swam in the bath, so they could not use the bath to shower. The eels had a priority over them, because they could be exchanged for food.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ See, for example, Ingrid H., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 229; Bredereck, Siebelitz, "Die Blutordenträger und die Opernsängerin. Ein Interview (Juni 1995)," in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), p. 263.

¹³⁵ Waltraud Garstecki, "Waltraud Garstecki, Jahrgang 1933," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 109.

¹³⁶ Joachim Doempke, "Joachim Doempke, Jahrgang 1941," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 109.

¹³⁷ Kotte, 2007, pp. 56-57.

Acceptance and Submission to Violence against Fellow Neighbors

In many cases, the locals in Prenzlauer Berg just accepted and submitted willingly or unwillingly to the violence that took place around them. Especially with regard to the Jews, historical sources mention many events in which contemporaries silently accepted what was happening to the Jews and did not act in any way to assist them. Walentina noted that in Fransecky Strasse (today: Sredzki Strasse) in her neighborhood, the Jews lived a relatively quiet life until the “Night of Broken Glass” in 1938. Yet this pogrom was terrible in her neighborhood. One small shop, where her family used to buy books and pens, was completely trashed. Her father wanted to go over there and help out, but her mom convinced him not to, telling him that it would not make sense.¹³⁸ Walentina concluded that those who say that they did not know that the Jews had been picked up were definitely lying. Because in her neighborhood in 1941, they all saw in rotation how the Jews were being loaded into trucks with their luggage in the middle of the street.¹³⁹

Georg Kulecki, who lived at Schönhauser Allee 58, remembered about sixty years later a specific deportation that he and a few other children witnessed on Raumer Strasse. In 1942 or 1943, he was not sure about the exact year, he saw on the street near his home a military truck and behind it stood a soldier holding a gun. An older boy explained that Jews were being picked up there. Kulecki thought that he would see stereotyped Jews as he had known from posters. But then soldiers came out of the house with a few young women. One woman was allowed to stay, but two or three other women had to go into the truck. They all cried and sobbed. He and the other children just walked away in silence.¹⁴⁰

Also living at Schönhauser Allee 58, Helmut Sowa remembered this deportation on Raumer Strasse about sixty years later. His mother cried as she watched the deportation on the street. In response, one soldier yelled at her to get lost, otherwise, she would also go into the truck and be deported with the others.¹⁴¹

In later interviews from the 1990s, the couple Trude and Willi described the fate of the Jews living in their house. The couple lived on Christburger Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg during the war until 1995. Many Jews lived in their house, and Trude said that they were all very nice. Their neighbor Fräulein Gottlieb visited Trude frequently. One day, Fräulein Gottlieb said to

¹³⁸ Walentina, 1998, pp. 121-122.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁴⁰ Kotte, 2007, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 49.

Trude that she would soon be picked up, and asked Trude to carry down a sack with her things. Trude agreed. Afterward, a police truck arrived with Jews already sitting inside. As Trude went outside, the guard of the truck became very angry. He said to Trude that the Jews inside want to get out of the truck, and if she would not disappear right away, she would be joining them. Given his threats, Trude could not say goodbye to her neighbor and walked away without even turning back to look. Trude added that many other neighbors were picked up.¹⁴²

Trude did not act against the guard who ordered her to leave the place. She also stated that the pickups had happened in broad daylight. Thus, all the locals were aware of what was happening, but she did not mention any resistance from their side. Trude only reflected sadly that the Jews who were taken away did not harm anyone. She did not understand how anyone could murder such people. “No one came back, no one” she noted. Willi agreed with her and said that they did not see any of them again.¹⁴³

Fighting Back against the Violence Directed at Fellow Neighbors

Within the Prenzlauer Berg community, there were a few individuals and groups who responded and even fought against the violence that was directed at their fellow neighbors. Most of these efforts that were mentioned in the sources referred to helping the Jewish neighbors. This may be for several reasons: First, the Jews were the most affected group by the violence of the Nazi regime and needed the most help. Second, the shock from the violence directed at the Jews affected the contemporaries and was engraved in their memory. Third, looking back at past events, knowing what had happened to many Jews, the witnesses were emphasizing stories around supporting Jews.

Jennifer Wilz argues that the residents of Prenzlauer Berg lived very close to each other and could not simply ignore or keep silent to the deportation of the many Jews in the district. The public and the church leaders as well were divided on the subject of aiding the local Jews. The churches in Prenzlauer Berg took little action in helping them. Yet, some of the district inhabitants and members of the local church leadership did support or hide their Jewish

¹⁴² Willi und Trude, “Tango und Schrippen. Willi und Trude aus der Christburger,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 105-106.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1998, pp. 106-107.

neighbors.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Sandvoß contends that in Prenzlauer Berg, as in all of Berlin, there were some individual rescuers and groups who helped the Jews for political or humanitarian reasons. However, not all these attempts at rescue were successful, as in the above-mentioned case of Else Rosenfeld who helped and supported her Jewish friend, Martha Ullendorff.¹⁴⁵ Else helped Martha also at the time when she was living underground, and even when she was taken to the collection camp, until her deportation. Since then Rosenfeld did not know what had happened to her Jewish friend.¹⁴⁶

In a book collection of personal stories that was published in 2001, Ursula Klaffert recounted that during the war, she lived with her family on Chodowiecki Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg. Six families of Jewish descent lived in their house. Five of them were taken to camps before the war began. The sixth was a mixed couple that remained in the house since the husband was a World War I veteran of “Aryan” descent. After the death of the husband in 1942, the wife was allowed to stay in their apartment. She received the so-called “*Hungerkarte*,” the ration card with the lowest rations.¹⁴⁷

Klaffert maintained that her father, who was assigned as a block warden in their house, although he was not a supporter or a member of the Nazi Party, had a good relationship with this mixed couple. Once the air raids began, her father set up a small radio with headphones and listened to it regularly. Each time, when he heard on the radio that there were airplanes flying above Hannover and Braunschweig, he disappeared for a short while. After the alarm was activated, he came back and took his family to the cellar. After the all-clear signal, he made sure that all the tenants left the cellar and brought his family to their apartment. Then he went back outside.¹⁴⁸

In 1943 her father was hospitalized and died shortly after. Before he died, his block warden position was transferred to Klaffert, and she found out the reason for his actions; he had taken care of the mixed couple. He warned them first to go to the cellar before the others, where they had to hide in the dark, because of the ban prohibiting the Jews from entering the air raid

¹⁴⁴ Wilz, 2008, pp. 110, 251-252.

¹⁴⁵ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 339.

¹⁴⁶ Scheer, 1997, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴⁷ Ursula Klaffert, “Stiller Widerstand und ein kleiner Hauptgewinn,” in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 40-41.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

shelters. After the air raids, he escorted them back to their apartment. Her father also made sure that they got an extra bread ration. Klaffert was proud of him and felt honored that he trusted her with this task as she was only twenty-one years old. She continued to help the wife until the end of the war. Klaffert was uncertain whether the other inhabitants of the house noticed her help.¹⁴⁹

There were also cases of “small” fighting on various daily matters against the violence towards the Jews. Since the food cards with the small rations for Jews were not enough, the Frankenberg family suffered during the war years from hunger. Once the pastor of the church nearby, the *Segenskirche* on Schönhauser Allee, tried to help them by slipping an envelope with bread stamps, but the mother was too afraid to cash them.¹⁵⁰

The mother of Hella Frankenberg went in the mornings to forced labor in the Lichtenberg district of Berlin, where she cleaned blood-stained uniforms with other Jewish women and Ukrainians. The sister, Vera, had to do forced labor as well. She worked for several days at a construction site, until her father managed to get her to do the bookkeeping for an acquaintance of his who owned a small company in Mitte, and she could even attend a business school.¹⁵¹

Altogether, although some residents of Prenzlauer Berg indeed tried to help their Jewish neighbors by hiding them, only a small handful of forty-eight Jews out of the 18,000 that lived in Prenzlauer Berg in 1933 survived the war by hiding.¹⁵²

Fighting Back against the Violence Directed at Oneself

There were various people and groups in Prenzlauer Berg who dared and responded to the violence that was directed at them. First, there was the communist resistance: During the war, several officials in Berlin KPD were able to go underground. Some of them succeeded in escaping arrest because they distanced themselves from the illegal headquarters of the party. This applied especially to experienced people such as Gerhard Sredzki, Bernhard Karl, and the circle of friends of Herbert Bogdan, all of them from Prenzlauer Berg. The final communist resistance initiative in Berlin arose from these circles. For instance, the small but very active Sredzki group, which was active from 1934, provided several scattered KPD cells in Berlin.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Scheer, 1997, p. 59.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Wilz, 2008, pp. 104-108.

¹⁵³ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, pp. 216-217.

Waltraud Garstecki explained in 1999 that Weissenburger Strasse (today: Kollwitz Strasse) was a stronghold of the communists. Among them, she mentioned, were also many Jews. These communists fought against local Nazis. In 1945, just before the end of the war, a mass brawl between these two groups erupted with many of them found dead as a result.¹⁵⁴

Second, there were cliques of teenagers called the “Swing Youth” who challenged and provoked the regime in their own rebellious and unique way.¹⁵⁵ Sandvoß presents the story of these cliques who sang along with guitar accompaniment or with a gramophone in the neighborhood around Schönhauser Allee, Prenzlauer Berg, to the melody of the banned American swing and jazz music. Two favorite meeting places of these teenagers were the coffee houses, *Nord*, at Schönhauser Allee 118, and *Truxa* at Schönhauser Allee 98. At the entrance to the coffee houses stood teenagers who watched whether a *Hitlerjugend* patrol was approaching. Café *Nord* was the center of the *Clique Broadway* gang and *Truxa* was the center of the Pankower gang, *Kolonne X*. The two gangs were united in 1943 at the *Kissingenplatz* in Pankow, the neighboring district. If someone dared to say goodbye using the phrase *Heil Broadway*, he got into a fight with a *Hitlerjugend* group member. Hanging around of clique *Broadway* gang under the elevated railway and their long hair outraged Nazi party circles. Thus, teenagers were often picked up and sent to the *NSDAP* office at Bornholmer Strasse 9, Prenzlauer Berg. They were abused there, forced to do the Nazi salute, and their hair was cut.¹⁵⁶

Sandvoß stated that, according to state police reports, twenty-four members of another clique called *Knietief* were arrested in 1944 because they listened to jazz music at Café *Nord*. Supposedly, they consumed alcohol and behaved immorally towards girls. In addition, two *Mischlinge* of first degree¹⁵⁷ were put in work-training camps, and twelve boys were brought to trial at the youth court. All these acts against the rebellious teenagers just strengthened for many of them the will to reject the Nazi regime.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, once the defeat in the war in the years 1944-1945 became more obvious, young people were less ready to join the army or the Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*).

¹⁵⁴ Garstecki, 2000, p. 105.

¹⁵⁵ For more information on the Swing youth, see Jean-Denis G.G. Lepage, *Hitler Youth, 1922-1945: An illustrated History* (North Carolina, London: McFarland, 2009), pp. 117-120.

¹⁵⁶ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 236.

¹⁵⁷ A *Mischling* of the first degree (a “half-Jew”) was a person with two Jewish grandparents who did not practice Judaism or was married to a Jew.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Additionally, since many households were simply empty because the fathers were at the front, and the mothers were evacuated with their small children, teenagers could hide there, celebrate privately, and even hide Jews inside the houses.¹⁵⁹

Third, there were also infrequent cases of Jewish resistance. The following police report documented an attempt of Jews who fought back against the police forces: During an air raid on March 14, 1945, between 21:00 and 22:00, passers-by noticed people in a vacant apartment in the eastern part of Prenzlauer Berg. The Nazi local group (*Ortsgruppe der NSDAP*) arrested two men there and handed them to two policemen that took them to a nearby police station at Immanuelkirch Strasse 13. Just before entering the police station, the two arrested men fired at the policemen between four to six shots and injured one of them. Then they split up and fled in different directions. The uninjured policeman shot back at one of the escapees. Later, one of the escapees was arrested. He was a Jew who had escaped from a collection camp. During his arrest, he informed the police of other illegal Jews.¹⁶⁰

1.2 Designated Places of Violence in Prenzlauer Berg

There was a difference in violence during the investigated period in Prenzlauer Berg not only in terms of the population, as seen above, but also in terms of different geographical spaces. We can see that during the battle on Prenzlauer Berg, the experiences of these battle days differed extremely for the inhabitants of the district; there were parts of the district which were quiet, and there were others which were literally battlefields.¹⁶¹ In terms of the layout of the geographical space, there were central locations throughout the district that played different roles in this era and therefore had experienced different violent occurrences.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1811.

¹⁶¹ Elke Brederick, and Konstanze Siebelitz, “ ‘Und dann wurde unsere Gleimstraße das Kampffeld.’ Die Straße als Schlachtfeld,” in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), p. 159.

Flakbunker Friedrichshain

From April to October 1941, a pair of towers of Friedrichshain were built. The two towers served as an anti-aircraft battery and contained primarily ammunition chambers, an upper combat platform, and bunkers to protect the civilian population during air raids.¹⁶²

The *Flakbunker Friedrichshain* was a designated site of great violence at the eastern border of Prenzlauer Berg. The Allied Forces marked the flak towers as a bombing target since they were used by the *Luftwaffe* to defend against Allied air raids, and also because the bunker inside them accommodated a great number of local civilians. Moreover, since it was a target for the Allied Forces, living in the vicinity of the flak towers affected and threatened many residents of the area.

Not too long after the war, in 1946, the teacher Anna J. elaborated about the experience of living near the flak towers in Friedrichshain.¹⁶³ When the flak towers were built, she and the other people who lived in the area predicted that it would bring them more problems than protection. Each air raid reinforced their suspicion when the bombs fell in the surrounding of the towers and caused great damage. But the worst period was the final battle over the towers. The first heavy grenades hit her house on April 20, 1945, when the Red Army troops fired artillery at the towers. The battle raged for twelve days. During the street fights and tank battles, the ground floor apartments of their houses served as machine-gun nests, so they were at great risk. A courier was sent to the commander to inform them that around 600 locals on the front line were left in the cellars without food, water, or light. But the commander expected them to just wait patiently and did not respond. On April 27th, the first Soviets entered their cellar and occupied the building. Once the city had capitulated, said Anna J., the battle over the flak towers in Friedrichshain ended as well.¹⁶⁴

Falkplatz and Gleimtunnel

Falkplatz is a square located on the western side of Prenzlauer Berg, adjacent to the neighboring district of Wedding. Next to it is the *Gleimtunnel*, a tunnel that links the districts of Prenzlauer

¹⁶² “Die Berliner Flaktürme,” *Berliner Unterwelten E.V.*, November 28, 2018 www.berliner-unterwelten.de/verein/forschungsthema-untergrund/bunker-und-ls-anlagen/flaktuerme.html

¹⁶³ At the time that Anna J. wrote the essay in 1946, her address was at Werneuchener Strasse. However, the Werneuchener Strasse was not near the flak towers in Friedrichshain, so perhaps she lived at a different place closer to the towers during the war.

¹⁶⁴ Anna J., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 115-116.

Berg and Wedding. This place experienced various kinds of violence during the Battle of Berlin and the immediate postwar period.

Since the *Wehrmacht* positioned their anti-aircraft at *Falkplatz*, *Falkplatz* and Gleim Strasse, which was the street next to it, were on the front line of the battle.¹⁶⁵ During the last days of the battle, *Falkplatz* became a graveyard for many dead soldiers on both fighting sides and civilians as well. After the fighting ended, long rows of bodies lay in the square.¹⁶⁶

One year after the war's end, the pupil Gisela V. elaborated in her school essay about the heavy fighting towards the end of the war in the *Gleimtunnel*, near her house. In April 1945, during the hard battles, the *Gleimtunnel* was an extremely controversial place. Fierce fighting raged under the tunnel; the place was alternately occupied by the SS troops and the Red Army soldiers, and throughout the battle, bodies of dead soldiers, civilians, and even horses lay there. Behind the tunnel was an SS warehouse that was later plundered by German locals. During the final battle days, she explained that high barricades were built under the tunnel and were supposed to stop the giant Soviet tanks from passing the tunnel towards Wedding. But of course, she mentioned, these barricades were not able to stop them.¹⁶⁷

After the end of the battle, *Falkplatz* served as an execution place for Soviet soldiers who did not follow the pillage and rape ban that was imposed. The harassed women had to be at *Falkplatz* at the time of the executions.¹⁶⁸

Schultheiss-Brauerei

Throughout the war and during the conquest of the city, great violence prevailed in the *Schultheiss-Brauerei* in Prenzlauer Berg. The *Schultheiss-Brauerei* was closely linked to the Nazi regime. The brewery provided beer to the *Wehrmacht*, the *Hitlerjugend* training program was initiated there, and, during the war, the brewery used labor from POWs that were housed in an on-site camp as well as forced foreign labor. In 1941, thirty-one POWs and eleven foreign workers were employed at the brewery. They had no experience as brewers and worked mostly in filling kegs and bottles and cleaning the machines. The POWs and foreign workers were

¹⁶⁵ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 159.

¹⁶⁶ Annett Gröschner, "Der Falkplatz. Metamorphosen eines Stadtplatzes," in: *Grenzgänger . Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), pp. 48-50.

¹⁶⁷ Gisela V., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183.

¹⁶⁸ Gröschner, 1998, p. 50.

observed constantly and there were numerous rules whose purpose was to isolate them from the German population.¹⁶⁹ In addition, the *Schultheiss-Brauerei* rented one of its deep cellars during the war years to *AEF*, which employed Ukrainian forced laborers there.¹⁷⁰

During the final battle on Berlin, the city was divided into eight sectors. The headquarters of sector H, which included the districts of Prenzlauer Berg, Bernau, Pankow, Heinersdorf, and Weißensee, was based at the *Schultheiss-Brauerei*. Towards the end of the war, the division command post was set up in the cellar where the Ukrainian forced laborers had previously worked.¹⁷¹ At the end of the war, the brewery suffered massive destruction. SS sharpshooters used the brewery towers, the storerooms were looted by local Germans, and the small group of Germans that still fought at the war's end surrendered to the Red Army troops there. Some of the fighting German troops were then buried in the courtyard of the brewery.¹⁷²

The child Wolfgang S. recalled in 1946 the looting that raged at the *Schultheiss-Brauerei* at the end of the war. During the battle days, trucks loaded with supplies drove up to the division command post located in the cellar of the *Schultheiss-Brauerei*. They were stored on the fourth floor of the deep bunker. Once the soldiers left the bunker, on May 1, 1945, the looting of the supply began. Local people went out from the bunker carrying soaps, wine, cookies, and other goods. In the courtyard of the brewery stood trucks with additional supplies. One truck that stood there was loaded with bread, and people climbed onto the roof of the truck and tried to get inside and grab the bread.¹⁷³

Wasserturm Prenzlauer Berg

Another location of great violence since the beginning of the Nazi regime was the *Wasserturm*, the water tower of Prenzlauer Berg. Werner Meidow from Prenzlauer Berg, who was born in 1917, remembered in 1999 playing around during his childhood in the area of the water tower.

¹⁶⁹ Wilz, 2008, pp. 177-178, 180.

¹⁷⁰ Annett Gröschner, "Menschen an unserer Rückseite," *Annett Gröschner*. November 28, 2018 www.annettgroeschner.de/buecher/vorwort-jeder-hat-sein-stueck-berlin-gekriegt

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Wilz, 2008, p. 193.

¹⁷³ Wolfgang S., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 293-294.

He maintained that the place was “the lung” of the district with two playgrounds where they built sandcastles and a green area at the top of the hill.¹⁷⁴

But then, in early 1933, the *SA-Sturm Prenzlauer Berg* turned the former machine hall of the water tower into a “wild” concentration camp¹⁷⁵. It served for several months, from March until June 1933, to imprison and extort people who opposed the Nazi regime. Anti-fascists were often beaten to death and tortured there.¹⁷⁶ Hence, the water tower was labeled as the “tower of terror.”¹⁷⁷ Two years later, in 1935, the machine hall was destroyed.¹⁷⁸

Later on, the Nazis set up a reserve station for food at the water tower. This reserve station was plundered by the locals at the end of the war. Meidow, who was nearly thirty years old at the end of the war, recalled the massive plunder that occurred there. With the collapse of the regime, the big doors of the reserve station at the water tower were opened by force. Meidow was there and elaborated on the experience: There was no proper light in there, so they just fell inside, and encountered a big mess, with all sorts of food thrown around.¹⁷⁹

In 1946, the child Wolfgang S. also recalled this raging looting at the water tower. The picture that was stamped to his memory was of people leaving the tower with big pieces of round cheese.¹⁸⁰ Another witness of this looting was the child Horst B. On the afternoon of May 2, 1945, he and his father walked down the street and saw numerous people coming from the direction of the water tower. They had with them cigarettes, chocolate, cakes, sugar, flour, wine, and other goods.¹⁸¹ Thirteen-year-old Lieselotte J. commented in her school essay on this aggressive looting one year later. According to her, people were so crowded together that some of them fell and broke their limbs. She argued that people who were afraid to enter the tower themselves assaulted people that came outside and took their food.¹⁸²

According to the sources, it seems that the locals, who were intent on obtaining any product they could lay their hands on, attacked mainly the weakest among them. Meidow

¹⁷⁴ Werner Meidow, “Werner Meidow, Jahrgang 1917,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 92.

¹⁷⁵ Several of the Nazi camps in the early Nazi period were spontaneous camps that were labeled as “wild” concentration camps.

¹⁷⁶ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, pp. 124-125; Grosinski, 2008, 1997, pp. 25, 128.

¹⁷⁷ Wilz, 2008, pp. 251-252.

¹⁷⁸ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, pp. 124-125.

¹⁷⁹ Meidow, 2000, pp. 106-107.

¹⁸⁰ Wolfgang S., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 293-294.

¹⁸¹ Horst B., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 284.

¹⁸² Lieselotte J., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 298-299.

remembered that one elderly woman came out of the tower with a box of canned meat. The people who stood outside immediately rushed at her and took the box. She was left there with empty hands and messy hair. After a while, Soviet troops closed the station and took out truckloads of food.¹⁸³ In the same fashion, Horst B. reported that he heard people shouting from inside the tower. Exhausted and scratched, children left the tower with food and wine, and outside on the street, their loot was snatched away by adults.¹⁸⁴

Then, after a few hours, as Horst B. concluded, since unpleasant incidents and disputes had gradually become violent, Soviet troops shut down the place.¹⁸⁵ The intervention of the Soviet forces included, as Wolfgang S. recalled, shooting in the air in order to stop the extensive plunder.¹⁸⁶ Lieselotte J. added that during this shooting, many people were injured because each one tried to get out first.¹⁸⁷

1.3 Conclusion

Prenzlauer Berg's story in the 1940s was also a story of diverse relations between varied groups which were at times harmonic and flowing and at times complicated and broken. Within Prenzlauer Berg's population, there was a difference in the violent attitude towards the varied ethnic, religious, and socio-political groups. This violent attitude was manifested in various expressions of violence and a different acceptance of the violent acts by the victims of violence and those around them. Certainly, the most dominant group which was violently treated was the Jews.

Primarily, the main thing that is evident is that almost nobody in the district felt safe because of who they were. Not a single person could perceive himself or his surroundings as merely ordinary people safe from any harm doing. Every person could be a target, if not by the Nazi regime or groups related to the regime, then later on by the occupation forces based on his or her affiliation with a certain group, or because of their attempt to assist other people from a particular group. Also, being a target of violence because of who you were or the group you belonged to or sympathized with changed significantly over those six years.

¹⁸³ Meidow, 2000, pp. 106-107.

¹⁸⁴ Horst B., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 284.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Wolfgang S., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 293-294.

¹⁸⁷ Lieselotte J., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 298-299.

According to the sources, it can be seen in many cases that the mixed population of socio-economic classes, religious, ethnic, and political groups in Prenzlauer Berg lived side by side peacefully and formed good relationships. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that these relationships between the different groups were mainly based on personal relationships between single people. And thus, the perception of the others was not in accordance with the image and characteristics of the group they belonged to, but based on the individual themselves. Hence, in these cases, the great perceptions and images of different groups in this period did not match the reality of the daily life of ordinary people. Contemporaries' perceptions and actions were not in line with the accepted conventions and great general perceptions of the period. However, in cases in which they did not know in person a specific group, it can be seen that these general ideas influenced them.

All in all, Prenzlauer Berg was a diverse, mixed district in which there were good relationships between the German locals and Jewish-German locals living together largely in harmony until the years of persecution. These relationships changed significantly with the gradual and intensifying process of the persecution of the Jews and especially with the deportations. This process emphasized the differences between the two groups and gradually drew the local Germans and local Jewish-Germans more and more apart to the point where they stood on either side of the aisle, except for exceptional individual cases. Additionally, it led to defamiliarization, exclusion, denunciation, and at times active resistance against the Jews by the German locals.

The locals in Prenzlauer Berg had different attitudes towards the raging violence around them. Quite often they accepted and submitted to the violent events that occurred, notably with regard to violence against the Jews. In other cases, the locals took an active role in the exclusion of the Jews in the acts of violence against them. Nevertheless, there were cases of people and groups who took action and tried to fight back against the violence that was directed either at themselves or at their neighbors.

Furthermore, in several central places throughout Prenzlauer Berg; *Flakbunker Friedrichshain*, *Falkplatz* and *Gleimtunnel*, *Schultheiss-Brauerei*, and the *Wasserturm Prenzlauer Berg*, severely violent acts occurred by various parties during the period investigated. Each of these places had its own different and unique violent experiences that had defined it as a designated place of violence in Prenzlauer Berg during those years.

Chapter Two

Intimate Bodies and Spaces

During the years 1943-1948, the body and the individual space of the contemporaries were frequently exposed, and therefore their privacy was often invaded in various ways, and in many cases, extremely violated. The breach of privacy and intimacy of the people's body and individual space and the implications of this exposure was a subject that arose repeatedly in the micro-historical examination of the daily events in Prenzlauer Berg, as will be presented and further discussed in detail later in this chapter. Therefore, in contrast to many historical studies that usually analyze separately the grand violent events of this period, such as the bombings¹⁸⁸, the rape of German women¹⁸⁹, and the Battle of Berlin¹⁹⁰, without addressing horizontal themes that bind them together, this chapter suggests a different perspective on the historical events. Here violent occurrences are integrated and examined as a part of a cross-border investigation that places bodies and spaces together with the issues of privacy and intimacy at the center of exploration.

2.1 Intimate Bodies

Death

In wartime Berlin, death was present everywhere. Almost every family in Berlin had lost one family member during the war years.¹⁹¹ From 1943 onward, when the air raids over Berlin intensified, bodies of people could be seen lying in the public space in front of passersby as a matter of routine. During the last two and a half years of the war, cases of killing of German soldiers and civilians reached enormous proportions. It is impossible to generalize and argue that the killings took place in a certain way. The causes of death were varied, and there were different ways of killing, for instance, during the air raid campaign that lasted until the end of the war, being hit by a bombing, or other types of deaths caused by the bombings, such as being buried under the rubble of the bombing, or being burned alive or suffocated to death inside the air protection shelters, and cellars. During the Battle of Berlin in the last weeks of the war, there was death by all kinds of artillery fire. Also, during the war years, and especially towards its end,

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, Friedrich, 2006.

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Gebhardt, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, Peter Antill, *Berlin 1945: End of the Thousand-Year Reich* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2005).

¹⁹¹ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 285.

there was even death by hanging or beheading as part of the Nazi regime's pursuit of defectors and whoever the regime considered "traitors". The situation in Prenzlauer Berg was no different than that in Greater Berlin.

Many Germans were killed during the airstrikes. The immediate causes of death were multiple and varied: Some of the dead were killed by a direct shell hit or by shrapnel hit. Others were killed by sniper attacks from low-flying aircraft. Many victims were buried under the rubble, some burned alive or suffocated to death in the bunkers and cellars after they were hit.

At the beginning of the bombings, unidentified bodies lay in the streets for neighbors and passersby to identify. But then, after heavy bombings, the authorities decided to put them in halls and school gymnasiums, out of fear of the general horror that the sight of so many corpses in the street could have caused. In numerous cases, the injuries were so severe that the bodies could not be identified.¹⁹²

Apart from the bombings, there were many other causes of death in the years 1943-1948 which were direct results of war and occupation. For instance, the writer and journalist Ruth Andreas-Friedrich¹⁹³ remarked in her diary on January 22, 1945 that for the first time trains with refugees from Silesia arrived in Berlin, as a result of the Soviet offensive in the East. A cargo train arrived in Berlin carrying children who froze to death after they stood crowded for ninety-six hours in the tipper wagon.¹⁹⁴ Andreas-Friedrich did not explain if she saw it with her own eyes or from where she got the information about this incident.

The young Marta Mierendorff also referred in her diary to the sight of dead children, although the circumstances were different. During the last battle days in Berlin, on April 26, 1945, she and her mother dared to walk through the streets of the Lichtenberg district in eastern Berlin on their way to visit Elsa, Mierendorff's sister-in-law. On their short way, they saw at the entrance of the district's finance office the bodies of children wearing brown shirts laid still.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁹³ Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, born in 1901, was a resistance fighter against National Socialism, a writer, and a journalist. She and her life partner, the conductor Leo Borchard, founded a small Berliner resistance group called *Uncle Emil* in 1938. It was a humanitarian group with no political ambitions that consisted mainly of journalists, doctors, and intellectuals. The group helped to hide and support Jews and other "illegals."

¹⁹⁴ Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Der Schattenmann: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1938-1945* (Berlin: Union, 1977, 1947), pp. 175-176.

¹⁹⁵ A description of children wearing brown shirts usually indicated their membership in the *Hitlerjugend*, which also served as an auxiliary force that participated in the Battle of Berlin.

No one dared to move them. Mierendorff blamed the “bloody Nazi madness” that led the German people to the difficult situation in which they have found themselves in.¹⁹⁶

Clearly, the fighting itself was another reason for many casualties. The next day, Mierendorff walked even further, out of Lichtenberg’s borders. Other parts of the city were hit more severely than Lichtenberg and the distress was acute. She saw many bodies scattered in the streets, including the bodies of Soviet soldiers, and was surprised to discover that the dead Soviet soldiers were no longer as scary as they appeared in life. Mierendorff was glad to be on her way back.¹⁹⁷ Since dead bodies were a common sight all over Berlin, contemporaries became familiar with death on a daily basis. Descriptions and reflections on the subject of death had a considerable place in their conversations and their writings.

The historian Helga Grebing was nine years old at the beginning of the war. She lived in Miersdorf, a district in Brandenburg, southeast of Berlin. In her memoir, Grebing explained that during the first years of the war in Miersdorf, they did not really experience the war, and almost everything in her life as a child was the same as always. There were, of course, extraordinary events, such as meeting a mother, dressed in black, of the first fallen soldier from the village, and also there were French prisoners of war, whose whereabouts in a basement in the village drew a mysterious attraction. In addition, her father’s youngest brother, Erhard, who was a soldier, was shot in 1943 in Russia by a Red Army sniper. But from 1942 onwards, she claimed, the war situation was aggravated by air war which led to the reduction of the separation of home and front. Gradually, Grebing stopped regarding the war as an accumulation of individual accidents, especially since she then realized for the first time specifically what it meant to be dead, as a confidant of hers died in 1942 during her son’s birth, and a year later the husband of this confidant died in the war.¹⁹⁸

On June 21, 1944, Andreas-Friedrich stated in her diary that according to various reports, forty-eight bombs hit the blocks of houses where she lived, and the number of casualties was

¹⁹⁶ Marta Mierendorff, “ ‘Jeder Tag des Wartens auf Gottfried ist eine Ewigkeit,’ ” in: *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.* *Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 111-112.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Helga Grebing, *Freiheit, die ich meinte. Erinnerungen an Berlin* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2012), P. 70.

unclear at that time. Andreas-Friedrich wrote that the dead “lay under rubble and stones, crushed, annihilated, unattainable for our help.”¹⁹⁹

In Prenzlauer Berg, Waltraud Garstecki, who was a child during the bombings, remembered years later the awful sight on Weissenburger Strasse (today: Kollwitz Strasse) etched in her memory: A falling bomb caused an explosion of a gas pipe and the bursting of a water pipe. “It was really bad” claimed Garstecki, as the corpses were swimming there like in a crater.²⁰⁰

Frau Z. who lived on Gleim Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, detailed in an interview in 1995 the female casualties during the battles on the streets of Prenzlauer Berg: The district was a war zone, with shooting in the streets and from the air, and during the fire breaks some women ran to the cowshed on the corner of Schwedter Strasse and Gleim Strasse to get milk for their children. They tried to reach the cowshed through a shortcut across Korsörer Strasse, but on their way they were shot down “like the rabbits.” Some women succeeded from time to time to run into a courtyard to call for help, but no one was able to help them since there was a lack of medication. And so, they just collapsed and died there. In one case, a woman from Korsörer Strasse 8 who tried to get milk for her children got shot in the stomach. There was no hope for her.²⁰¹

As mentioned in chapter one, *Falkplatz* in western Prenzlauer Berg turned into a graveyard during the last days of the fighting. The first Red Army soldiers arrived in the streets around *Falkplatz* on April 22, 1945, and encountered the *Wehrmacht* and SS troops that were stationed there. The day after, the area around *Falkplatz* became a “no man’s land.” The corner house opposite the square burned down, the occupation of the square changed frequently and there were numerous deaths among troops as well as civilians. Some of the dead were buried at *Falkplatz* during the fire breaks, in the exact place where years before they walked with strollers or played in the sandpit.²⁰²

After the battles ended, long rows of unburied bodies lay in *Falkplatz*. The survivors went along the long rows of German and Soviet dead bodies in search of their missing relatives.

¹⁹⁹ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, pp. 137-139.

²⁰⁰ Garstecki, 2000, p. 102.

²⁰¹ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 260.

²⁰² Gröschner, 1998, pp. 48-49.

Some bodies were identifiable, but others could not be identified without their papers after tanks flattened them, grenades tattered them or they were simply burned.²⁰³

Not far away from *Falkplatz* was the horrible site of dead bodies at Schönhauser Allee under the elevated railway, as Frau Z. remembered.²⁰⁴ All the bodies laid with their faces down, and the women that came down to search for their relatives had to touch each and every corpse.²⁰⁵

Daily encounters with the dead in Berlin were also mentioned by the anonymous woman from Berlin in her diary. Nearly two weeks after the occupation of Berlin, she passed by several graves on her way to draw water from a hydrant in her neighborhood. In most of the front gardens, there were graves. Sometimes they were marked with German steel helmets and sometimes with the red stakes and white Soviet stars.²⁰⁶

Facing Dead Bodies

Death was so tangible and present in the lives of Berliners that it inevitably drew constant attention. There were various ways in which the many deaths were treated and dealt with. Reactions of anguish and at times complete shock can be seen, and on the opposite side, reactions of indifference. There were also cases of identifying death as a natural and integral part of life, while blurring the thin line separating the between life and death, and other cases of disrespect to the dead. In many cases, as the war progressed, as did the violence and general chaos intensify, feelings also changed from tremor to indifference, and from shock to disillusionment.

Shock and Tremor towards Death

The first immediate reaction towards the countless death events that took over the city and within Prenzlauer Berg district during the war was total shock. This happened in the case of the bodies lying in the streets. Hilde of Stargarder Strasse lived in Prenzlauer Berg during the war and beyond until the time she was interviewed in the 1990s. She remembered one severe bombing

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 50.

²⁰⁴ Frau Z. probably referred to the thousands of dead bodies who laid under the elevated railway, after the defeat of the German forces in the battle at the S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee in Prenzlauer Berg on May 2, 1945.

²⁰⁵ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 260.

²⁰⁶ Anonymous, 2005, p. 207.

attack in her surroundings. On her way back from the nearby bread factory, the bombs hit the buildings in her surroundings. She was in a state of shock after seeing all the bodies. All she could say was “all dead, all dead.” People helped her and laid her down. She felt better after she rested.²⁰⁷

The shock of death struck in workplaces as well. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich and her partner Andrik²⁰⁸ met a young musician named Konrad Bauer, who wanted to study music and conduct with Andrik. Bauer explained to them that he had escaped with his parents from Breslau on February 28, 1943. Once he arrived in Berlin, an acquaintance had arranged for him a job as an organist at funerals that took place in the crematorium. Every day, twenty-two bodies were buried there. For each corpse, he was paid one *Reichsmark* and five *pfennigs*. Andrik could not bear this terrible way of life and wanted with all his might to go study.²⁰⁹

Certainly, the shock of death also appeared in cases of the death of relatives. The anonymous woman wrote in her diary about her visit to Hilde, a young secretary from her old firm, who revealed her own grief to her. On April 26, 1945, Hilde lost her only brother, who was seventeen years old. While she stayed with her mother in the cellar, the brother had gone up to check on the situation outside, and shrapnel pierced his temples. Germans looted his body, and he was brought naked into a nearby cinema. After two days of searching, Hilde found him. She and her mother took the body in a handcart to the park, where they dug a grave and buried him wrapped in his rain jacket. Hilde seemed shocked; she told the story without batting an eyelid. She wore a dark blue dress because she did not have a black dress. The anonymous woman noted that Hilde looked different, “Her face has changed; she looks as if she’s been signed. She has been marked for life.”²¹⁰

Apathy towards the Dead

Over time, as the war went on and death became such a strong component of everyday life, the shock and anguish were reduced and converted to general apathy and detachment. In many cases,

²⁰⁷ Hilde, “Glas ins Essen tun. Hilde aus dem Stargarder,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 33-34.

²⁰⁸ The alias that Andreas-Friedrich gave in her diary to her partner, the conductor Leo Borchard, was “Andrik”.

²⁰⁹ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, pp. 108-109.

²¹⁰ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 273-274.

the distinction between a dead and a living person became less distinct, and more importantly, for some people, it became less significant to the point of being meaningless. Several days before the capitulation of Berlin, the anonymous woman saw a man pushing a wheelbarrow in which laid a dead woman. The woman's body was stiff, her grey hair flapped loose in the wind, and her withered legs in grey stockings stuck out from the edge of the wheelbarrow. Almost none of the bystanders looked at her. The anonymous woman posited that these sights of moving exposed bodies were regarded as routine; people accepted the reality that death was present everywhere and referred to the evacuation of the bodies "just like when they used to ignore the rubbish being hauled away."²¹¹

On their way back from pumping sewage, the anonymous woman and her friend, the widow, saw a man lying on his back on the grass. His mouth was open, and his lips were blue. The man that was about fifty years old, looked very neat; he was shaved, dressed in a light grey suit, hand-knit grey socks, and polished, shiny shoes. Perhaps the sun warmed the body because his hands were lukewarm and not as cold as a dead man's hands. But after checking the pulse, the anonymous woman determined that he was certainly dead. She noted that the body had not been looted, because a silver pin was still in his tie. Grasped with horror, the anonymous woman and the widow wondered whether to look for identifying papers in his jacket to inform his relatives.²¹²

They asked a couple that stood not far away for help, but after lingering for a while by the body, the couple walked away silently. The anonymous woman and the widow also left the place with a heavy heart, but not too long after, their tremor feeling changed to indifference. In front of their building, they met their neighbor Mr. Schmidt and a deserter German soldier who lived in their building and notified them about the dead man. The soldier assumed that the man had a stroke. Mr. Schmidt argued that it would be better to not go there in case something would be missing from his pockets, and they would be blamed for it. In the same breath, he informed them that the Soviets left in trucks and evacuated the area. This shocking news made the anonymous woman and her friend completely forget about the dead man.²¹³

An example of indifference expressed in emotional detachment and lack of interest in the dead, was given in the diary of Andreas-Friedrich, through the way that dead bodies were

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 63.

²¹² Ibid., pp. 172-173.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 173.

incorporated into a daily conversation about drinking water. While waiting in line to pump water from the well, one woman told Andreas-Friedrich that she usually pumps water from a reservoir for extinguishing fires. But since a body floated there, the pumping had stopped. Andreas-Friedrich did not see it with her own eyes. She admitted that it was impossible to drink from water containing bodies, and the woman said with a reservation that it was indeed impossible to drink the water even though it was a body of a citizen, and not of a soldier.²¹⁴

Andreas-Friedrich noted on June 15, 1945 that the German refugees were desperate and did not attribute too much importance to death. They walked along the highway “in an endless misery train” westwards. Among the refugees, she noticed a pram with an old woman inside. The pram rocked, and the woman’s head swung from side to side. She thought to herself that a few more breaths and the man who carried the pram would carry a corpse. The man did not bother to look back and probably did not notice that the old woman was dying slowly. One girl from the group of children following the pram sighed and said with disbelief that they were all going to die. “And why not? Death is not the worst.”²¹⁵

Total indifference to the dead, intertwined with pragmatism and opportunism, was presented in the following burial story: In the cemetery near the house of Andreas-Friedrich, trenches, two meters wide and 1.5 meters deep were dug along the field. As she crossed the cemetery, she heard a distant women’s choir singing a prayer, and froze immediately out of respect. She then noticed a man standing next to her, he mentioned to her that he had previously sacrificed his birch closet to serve as a coffin for his wife. They stood and observed the funeral. The deceased was wrapped in a horse blanket, one rope was bent around his neck, and a second rope was around the bones of his legs. The naked, yellow legs stood out. The man next to her was angry that the deceased was being buried without a coffin. Five mourners followed the stretcher. Immediately after the burial, the choir of women and the relatives dispersed. Andreas-Friedrich explained that the people who sang at the funerals were registered as singers and belonged to the group of Cultural Workers (*Kulturschaffende*). This group was entitled to the highest ration of food. Therefore, there was now a record number of candidates wishing to join the choirs at the cemeteries.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Schauplatz Berlin: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1945 bis 1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 20.

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

²¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 47-49.

Death as Part of Life itself

Throughout this chaotic period of war, death was not clearly distinguished from life itself. On the contrary, it was assimilated and became part of Berliners' everyday life. One area in which the dead were assimilated into the world of the living was the physical place of burial.

During the Battle of Berlin, municipal burial services in the city stopped functioning because of the overall chaos. Due to this, the inhabitants of the city took charge of the burial procedure. They hid bodies in their apartments and hallways until they could go out during the fighting to bury them, and then had to find a place for burial. Quite often they had no coffins and ways to transport the bodies to a proper graveyard.²¹⁷ In that way, the dead who until then were physically separated from the living by burial in cemeteries suddenly were buried within the physical space of the living people. Moreover, as the distinct boundaries between the dead and the living were erased, the contemporaries treated the dead as an actual part of their lives and it can even be said living elements in their day to day lives.

During the battle on Prenzlauer Berg, there were victims from both armies, the civil population, and forced workers. The exact number of them is unknown. The small number of victims that were actually buried in cemeteries were buried in mass graves. However, more were buried by relatives and neighbors in courtyards and squares throughout the district. Only in the summer of 1945 were they transferred to cemeteries.²¹⁸ Frau Z. recalled that the dead in her surroundings were first buried in a small garden in the neighborhood. Then, in June 1945, the corpses were lifted out.²¹⁹

Not only small courtyards and squares were used for burial. As previously mentioned, *Falkplatz* in Prenzlauer Berg also became a temporary large graveyard at the end of the battles. Only after a burial office was established in Prenzlauer Berg were the corpses pulled out of there in June and brought to burial in regular cemeteries.²²⁰

In the absence of adequate burial equipment for the large numbers of dead, ordinary items without any sacred meaning were converted into burial items. During the battle on Prenzlauer Berg, floorboards and closets were used to make the coffins.²²¹

²¹⁷ Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to divided Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 134.

²¹⁸ Gröschner, 1998, p. 22.

²¹⁹ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 260.

²²⁰ Gröschner, 1998, p. 50.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 22.

Conversely, the rarely available means of burial in Berlin which until then had been considered sacred items lost their sanctity and became an inseparable part of daily life. On June 1, 1945, as she wandered through the streets, the anonymous woman mentioned before ran into a black tar-lined coffin attached with a string to a handcart. A man and a woman pushed the coffin, on which a child sat. At another place, she noticed a Berlin municipal garbage truck carrying six coffins. One of the coffins served as a bench for the driver. The men ate breakfast and shared a bottle of beer as they drove.²²²

Leaving a dead body in the place of death in order to use it for personal needs was another act that showed the assimilation and usage of death and the dead themselves in everyday life. In mid-May 1945, the anonymous woman detailed a story she overheard while waiting in line to buy meat; she did not see it with her own eyes. One woman was telling with satisfaction that the Soviets decided not to go back to her building after a tour that they had made there. They found on the second floor the bodies of poisoned family members who lay in their beds, and on the third floor, they saw an entire family hanging from the bars of the kitchen windows. The Soviets fled in panic, while the bodies were left in place for a while, just in case.²²³

The process of dying also became very often incredibly close to the living people, an inseparable part of their lives. Jürgen Bergk, who lived in Bremer Höhe as a child, revealed years later his experience of losing his brother. On the afternoon of May 2, 1945, the fighting in Prenzlauer Berg ceased, and the Soviets entered Bergk's house in the Bremer Höhe. The house residents went out from the cellar to get fresh air, and Bergk's brother, Dieter, went out to play in the sandbox in their courtyard. While playing, fragments of a grenade that exploded in a nearby house seriously injured Dieter and his playmate, Hans-Dieter Roeger. Roeger died the day after and was temporarily buried in their inner courtyard out of fear of epidemics. Bergk's mother took Dieter to the hospital, but came back shortly after because the place was partially destroyed with no supplies and with priority to the injured Soviet soldiers. She laid him in a bed in the kitchen. Dieter was aware of his coming death, which occurred a month later. He asked his mother if he had to die soon and continued to fight bravely for a month until he died.²²⁴

²²² Anonymous, 2005, p. 275.

²²³ Ibid., pp. 208-209.

²²⁴ Jürgen Bergk, "Bitteres Ende," in: *Die Bremer Höhe in Berlin: ein Kiez im Prenzlauer Berg*, Tino Kotte, ed., (Berlin: Geschichtswerkstatt Bremer Höhe, 2007), pp. 61-63.

After he died, on June 8, 1945, the family took his body in a handcart to the cemetery. On their way, Soviet soldiers stopped and searched them. His grandparents and mother had to go with the soldiers, while he and his siblings stayed with Dieter's body in the handcart. Bergk's feet hurt, so he sat on his brother's coffin. After a while, the mother and grandparents came back battered, and his grandfather's watch was stolen. They went on to the cemetery and buried Dieter.²²⁵

Disrespect to the Dead

An example of complete disrespect to the dead during the war in Berlin was shown by the anonymous woman in her diary. A woman from the Adlershof neighborhood in Berlin moved in with her mother, who lived in the anonymous house after her house was completely destroyed by a bomb that landed in her neighbors' garden. The neighbors were killed, and their body parts were collected from the house ruins and the garden. The funeral ceremony was brief and urgent because the sirens cut in, forcing the gravediggers to lower the coffins quickly into the ground. The woman giggled as she told the story. The anonymous woman thought that it was not at all amusing. As she giggled, she went on and explained that three days later, when the neighbor's daughter was searching the garden for anything of use that might have been saved, she found her father's hand behind a rain barrel. Most listeners in the cellar in the house of the anonymous did not laugh, yet some of them laughed briefly.²²⁶

Invasion and Violation of the Intimacy of the Dead

As shown above, during the period of 1943-1948 people gradually and intimately became acquainted with death. They got to know in detail what death feels, looks and smells like. They saw people dying, people at the very moment of death, corpses lying everywhere in different stages of rotting, and more.

Death was perceived and affected the contemporaries in different ways, but the common ground to all the different perceptions was the closeness and intimacy with the dead. Even if they treated death indifferently or lightly, contemporaries could not just ignore the dead that were everywhere. It almost seemed like the distinct and unchangeable state of being dead was starting

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 24-25.

to blur. In this atmosphere, living people had different interactions with the dead up until the point that they invaded the space of the dead, and in some cases, the invasion escalated into a real violation of the dead.

A representative example of continuous interaction with the dead was illustrated by Gerda from Prenzlauer Berg. In later interviews from the 1990s, Gerda elaborated on her grandfather's death on March 19, 1945. Gerda was only twelve years old then. After his death, he remained in the house and was only removed ten days later. He could not be picked up before then because there were no more vehicles available, and the family hardly managed to obtain a coffin for him. During that time, his body was kept in a small room, and the family took care of him. Gerda remarked that he looked as fresh as always. Fortunately, his body could be well kept, because the room had no heating and therefore remained cold.²²⁷ Although the dead were well taken care of, this case also demonstrates a kind of invasion of the privacy of the dead, for the body of the dead was simply left in the family home without being buried, exposed to the people around it.

A different occurrence of invasion into the space of the dead was the case of Margarethe of Wins Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg. About fifty years later, Margarethe detailed the story of her father's death in an interview. Near the end of the war, her father was badly wounded after a Soviet rocket called by the Germans *Stalinorgel* hit their house. Her father was brought to a military hospital nearby and died the day after. His body was placed in the cellar of the hospital together with the rest of the corpses.²²⁸

Margarethe was left with no money. Her father kept all the money that she earned in his briefcase. After searching the house, she came back to the hospital and explained to the doctor what had happened. Since the bodies in the hospital were scheduled to be transferred to the cemetery the day after, he allowed her to search for her father's body in the cellar of the hospital. The site there was unpleasant. Among the bodies were also dead children, and several heads and arms were lying around. After trampling over corpses and faces, she felt that she could not go through with it and wanted to give up. The doctor came to her aid, asking her to describe how

²²⁷ Gerda, " 'n Drama wie bei Ibsen. Gerda am Friedrichshain," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), p. 50.

²²⁸ Margarethe, 1998, pp. 138-139.

her father looked and what he wore. Then he found her father under hundreds of corpses along with 760 *Reichsmark*.²²⁹

A wide invasion to the sacred space of the dead which was taking place all over Berlin, was the previously-mentioned process of removing the bodies from their temporary graves in parks, squares, and gardens, and bringing them to a proper burial at the cemeteries around the city during the months following the end of the war. After the *Wehrmacht* defeat, the Red Army ordered the burial of the dead in Berlin aiming to bring order back to the burials in the city for hygienic and practical reasons combined with the demonstration of Soviet power over the city.²³⁰

As the summer of 1945 began, the heat stirred the thousands of fresh bodies scattered around Berlin and the smell of stench was in the air. A terrible haze rose from the long city canal, the *Landwehrkanal*, which forced the bypassers to put a handkerchief to their noses. There was a great fear of epidemic outbreaks, and the authorities therefore ordered bodies that were buried temporarily to be brought for regular and proper burial in cemeteries. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich argued that the number of bodies that were buried in the courtyards of the houses, on the sides of the streets, in the squares, and under the ruins reached thousands. There was a severe shortage of coffins, stretchers, burial cars, gravediggers, and especially burial spaces in cemeteries. The dead were therefore led to reburials on wheelbarrows and carts. The bodies were only partially covered and placed on the carts in the exact same condition that they were taken out of the ground for reburial. Passersby looked away in embarrassment. In the best case, they were placed in a cardboard box covered with dark black paper with two crossed strips of silver paper on it.²³¹

On her way to the Charlottenburg district in western Berlin, the anonymous woman came across a reburial incident. She saw how bodies were taken from one grassy lawn to reburial in a cemetery. One of the corpses was lying on debris wrapped in sailcloth. For the first time in her life, she smelled the smell of a human corpse. She thought that the common phrase “sweetish odour” did not match at all the description of the smell. On the contrary, the soupy vapor made her hold her breath. To her, it was more steam than a smell, too stifling, solid, and thick to be inhaled.²³²

²²⁹ Ibid., pp. 139-140.

²³⁰ Black, 2010, p. 148.

²³¹ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, pp. 46-47.

²³² Anonymous, 2005, p. 297.

Frank, a friend of Andreas-Friedrich, was forced as a government physician to be involved in the exhumation of rotten corpses from their graves. It took six hours in thirty-degree heat. According to Frank, those were corpses of thirteen people who were shot by the Nazis in their necks behind partitions of toilets in a schoolyard. He claimed that their only crime was that they expressed with great courage doubts about the final victory two days before the collapse of the Third Reich. The bodies were exhumed from the graves, the excavation site was closed, and a committee of doctors and jurists was set up to document the details of the event. Former Nazi party members that were forced to expose the graves vomited from the sight of the corpses. In response, Frank shouted at them that it was definitely easier to put them in the ground, and then they totally collapsed.²³³

Aside from invading the intimacy of the dead, in multiple cases bodies were brutally violated. Hilde of Stargarder Strasse was shocked when she saw how ordinary Germans tried to steal from dead German soldiers, as they tried to take their rings and take off their shoes. She was glad that the Soviets drove them away.²³⁴ The pupil Elli L. of Kopenhagener Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg also commented in her school essay from 1946 about the plunder of corpses. She claimed that even the dead were not allowed to rest during the mass looting of stores and storage places that took place in the last days of the war. Local Germans took off their boots and stole from them other belongings, such as cigarettes and rings.²³⁵

On April 23, 1945, the anonymous woman witnessed a different sort of body violation on her way back from getting coal. Just outside the *S-Bahn* tunnel, she encountered a crowd of people. The tunnel was closed, and the people that stood outside said that at the other end of the tunnel a soldier was hanged in his underwear with a sign “traitor” around his neck. One man said that his body was hanging so close to the ground that he could be spun around by his legs. The same man chased off several street kids that turned the victim around just for fun.²³⁶

²³³ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, pp. 49-50.

²³⁴ Hilde, 1998, p. 39.

²³⁵ Elli L., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 107.

²³⁶ Anonymous, 2005, p. 40.

2.2 Intimate Spaces

Exposed Homes

Throughout the war and the following immediate postwar years, the Berliners' most intimate spaces were invaded over and over again, which left them exposed to all kinds of violations.

As manifested historically in the rise of the modern family and socially in the household institution, the home is a protected, intimate private space that is separated from the public space that exists outside. The home itself is a social unit that is, in modern times, a family that is tied together in intimate relationships. The home provides for its members a territory for reproduction, it houses biological life processes, and it is also a place for psychological, individual needs. Even though it is not the only private space available, it is the perfect and institutionalized example of it.²³⁷ For these reasons, the home serves as the most appropriate case study through which to examine contemporaries' intimate space: the ways in which it was exposed, disintegrated and violated, and the way in which these events affected Berliners themselves.

The Damage of the Bombings and Artillery Shootings to Homes

One most serious invasion and violation of the homes occurred through warfare, by the ongoing Allied air raid attacks which lasted until the defeat of Germany and included bombing, low-level strafing, and attacks by fighter-bombers as well as artillery shootings during the last Battle of Berlin. All of these attacks caused severe and in many cases irreparable damage to the homes.

The carpet bombings of the British and American air forces damaged many German cities. In the case of Berlin, about forty thousand tons of bombs were thrown on the city during the last two weeks of the war alone. Large parts of the city were totally ruined and about 75% of the buildings were no longer habitable.²³⁸ During the last months of the war, when the bombing war drew to its close, there was intense constant bombing, continuing low-level strafing, and

²³⁷ Ali Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 71.

²³⁸ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p. 16.

attacks by fighter-bombers across Germany.²³⁹ The bombings and the air raid alerts shaped the life of the population in large German cities including Berlin, and affected them severely.²⁴⁰

A close look into a house under fire is given in Ruth Andreas-Friedrich's description: At 8:00 in the morning, on April 24, 1945, Andreas-Friedrich woke up to the cries of her friend Jo urging her to get up. She leaped out of bed. The walls trembled, the windows were shattered, and clots of loam splashed in her face. The second blast of a grenade strike at a neighbor's house deafened her ears. She thought that it was the end for her. She did not know if she was still alive, nor if the house had collapsed. Andrik pressed her to hurry up and get dressed, saying that they could not stay in the apartment under this heavy artillery fire. The room looked to her as if "a hundredweight of mortar had been scavenged over it." She got dressed quickly, and put in the laundry basket all she could gather: pillows, knives, cups, a sugar bowl, and several other things. She was obsessed with not forgetting anything important. The way to the cellar was blocked with various items, and the dirt in the air prevented her from seeing the way. That day the first gunshots were fired in her area. She heard from the cellar how the bullets hit the walls of their house.²⁴¹

On February 15, 1945, the German author Erich Kästner²⁴² recalled in his diary that exactly one year earlier, his apartment on Roscher Strasse in West Berlin had gone up in flames. The day after the hit, his mother came from Dresden to hand him his laundry that the post refused to send. Kästner planned to spend the time with his mother at a good restaurant in town so that she would not see how bad the situation was in Berlin. In particular, he hoped to spare her the sight of the destruction on his street. But even after he explained to her that the entire building where he lived had been erased, she insisted on seeing it with her own eyes. The journey from the train station to his home took about two hours. They took a tram whose path had been cut off in some places. In these sections, they completed the journey by bus. In other sections, they ran to the next train station through partially destroyed streets. Finally, they

²³⁹ Ralf Blank, ed., "Germany and the Second World War," Vol. 9/1, *German Wartime Society 1939-1945: Politicization, Disintegration, and the Struggle for Survival* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 467.

²⁴⁰ Katrin Schreiter, "Revisiting Morale under the Bombs: The Gender of Affect in Darmstadt, 1942-1945," *Central European History* 50.3 (2017), p. 348.

²⁴¹ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, pp. 258-259.

²⁴² Erich Kästner was a very well-known left-liberal author. During the Third Reich, it was forbidden to publish Kästner's books in Germany and his books were burned as a part of the *Nazi book burnings* in 1933 in Berlin.

reached the courtyard of the ruined building. His mother stood frozen for a while in front of the piles of bricks. Then she pulled herself together, climbed over the rubble at the front yard, and got back to the street. Kästner tried to cheer her up by saying that they were lucky that the post refused to send the laundry package. Otherwise, the laundry, like all the contents of the apartment, would have been burned. She returned to her home, and after a while, she wrote to him that she had cried for many days after her visit.²⁴³

As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, on August 1, 1943 Joseph Goebbels, who served as the *Gauleiter* of Berlin, the governing political official of the city under Nazi rule, made an urgent appeal to the people of Berlin. He asked all Berliners who were not obligated to stay in the city for work-related or other special reasons to temporarily find accommodation for themselves in less vulnerable zones. The appeal was directed especially to women, children, and older people. Therewith began a mass evacuation from Berlin, with the primary issue of transferring school children to rural regions as part of the *Kinderlandverschickung* process.²⁴⁴ Despite the order, there were many reasons that kept people in the city; some did not want to leave their parents alone, others did not want to be elsewhere, or they were on duty (*dienstverpflichtet*) in Berlin.²⁴⁵

The houses in Prenzlauer Berg as well suffered from the bombings and artillery shootings. On November 22nd and 23rd, 1943, the first massive bombing of Prenzlauer Berg occurred. 18,251 people lost their homes in that great attack on the district. Later attacks in 1944 and 1945 again caused considerable losses.²⁴⁶ During the year 1944 alone, 3,557 apartments in Prenzlauer Berg became unusable due to damage of the bombings.²⁴⁷

In 1946, the anonymous pupil H.G. of Kastanienallee, Prenzlauer Berg, wrote about the damage to his building during the air raid on November 23, 1943. It started with a fire on the top floor of the building, and as a result, the whole roof was set on fire. The flames were so big that it was almost impossible to extinguish the fire. His home was on the third floor, and the water that was used to extinguish the fire dripped from the ceiling. The apartment was filled with water, and although they drew the water in buckets and threw it from the window, the place was

²⁴³ Erich Kästner, *Notabene 45: Ein Tagebuch* (Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg: Fischer, 1966, 1961), pp. 32-33.

²⁴⁴ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 130.

²⁴⁵ Gröschner, 1998, p. 19.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 149.

no longer habitable. H.G. and his family left for Silesia until their apartment was usable again. In order to dry the place, H.G.'s grandfather came regularly and heated the place.²⁴⁸

Erika Meusel, who was a young woman by the end of the war, recalled more than fifty years later the massive destruction in Prenzlauer Berg. In almost every street, at least one house was damaged, and all of the buildings were affected in some way. People had to put cardboard on the windows because they had no window panes.²⁴⁹ Different from Meusel, Horst Dembny, who grew up as a child in Prenzlauer Berg during the war, claimed later that Prenzlauer Berg was in a relatively good condition compared to the damage of the bombings in the rest of Berlin.²⁵⁰

At the end of May 1945, 17.9% of the buildings in Prenzlauer Berg were destroyed. More than 20% of the housing stocks were ruined, and every second apartment of the 89,500 apartments that were still habitable was damaged.²⁵¹ All in all, the Prenzlauer Berg district suffered lesser damage compared to the surrounding areas.²⁵² Nonetheless, the destruction still deeply affected the residents of the district.

²⁴⁸ H.G., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 180/2, Bl. 473.

²⁴⁹ Meusel, 2000, p. 102.

²⁵⁰ Horst Dembny, "Horst Dembny, Jahrgang 1933," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 102.

²⁵¹ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 137.

²⁵² Wilz, 2008, p. 50.



Image 2. Debris at the corner of Kollwitz Strasse²⁵³/Belforter Starsse (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA032093)



Image 3. Ruins at the corner of Greifswalder Strasse/Grell Strasse/ Storkower Strasse (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA032011)

²⁵³ In 1947 the name of the street Weissenburger Strasse was changed to Kollwitz Strasse.



Image 4. Ruins of the house in Chodowiecki Strasse 35 (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA044662)

Looting of Private Spaces by German People and Occupation Forces

The British historian Antony Beevor stated in his book, *The Fall of Berlin 1945*, that during the air raids towards the end of the war, an obsessive drive of hoarding characterized the German population. This impulse caused many Germans to loot everything that they could lay their hands on, even when they faced an actual threat on their lives by the enemy airplanes that circled over them, sniped, and dropped bombs on them.²⁵⁴

After the occupation of Germany, the occupying forces also joined the mass pillage. Soviet soldiers looted many things from the Germans, among them were boots, bedding, jewelry, and watches.²⁵⁵ Frau Z. remarked that during the street fighting in Prenzlauer Berg, the Soviet tanks were always covered with quilts, full of watches, and other useful items. They just took them from the Germans and put them all on their tanks.²⁵⁶

Among the sites that were plundered during this ongoing mass looting carried out by Germans and occupation soldiers alike were private German homes. First of all, exposure of the houses to the danger of looting during the war was created by governmental guidelines. The official instructions during the bombings were to leave the doors and windows of the houses open in order to minimize the potential damage of a blast wave from a nearby explosion. Therefore, many Berliners were afraid of thefts in their open homes and preferred not to leave their homes.²⁵⁷

Back in Prenzlauer Berg, during an air raid on March 18, 1945, bombs hit the house of the child Karl K. and destroyed parts of it. Karl K. wrote about the incident in his school essay in 1946: Several women including his mother wanted to go and help put out the fire, but then new bombs fell down. One of the bombs hit the main water pipe and soon the water in the cellar rose up high. The people in the cellar tried to get out straight away. His mother took him and his brother to *Arnimplatz*, the nearby square, where they watched the bombs falling next to them. Their entire house was in flames. In an effort to save some of their belongings, his mother threw the quilts out of the window. But unfortunately, Karl K. marked that “bad people” had stolen from them, and so they lost everything that they had.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Beevor, 2003, p. 279.

²⁵⁵ Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 801.

²⁵⁶ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 263.

²⁵⁷ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 365.

²⁵⁸ Karl K., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 180/2, Bl. 429.

In the following month, on April 29, 1945, looting took place in the house cellar of the anonymous woman, carried out by the occupying soldiers. Once the Red Army troops occupied the area, the tenants got out of the cellar and returned to their apartments, but many of their belongings remained there. After the anonymous woman and her friend, the widow, heard about the looting, they hurried down there. The place was in chaos; the tenants' suitcases were trampled, and the locks were broken. The neighbors searched for their belongings, which were scattered everywhere. The widow's big suitcase with her best clothes was gone. The widow packed the few things that she did find in a torn suitcase that stood in the corridor. The anonymous woman watched her as she then began to collect flour from the floor and pour it into the suitcase "as if she's lost her mind."²⁵⁹

At the end of May 1945, Marta Mierendorff agreed to accommodate for one night three French prisoners of war who claimed to be ill. She did it out of compassion and love for the French language. The three rewarded her hospitality by stealing from her apartment her last remaining foodstuffs. She was very agitated by the incident, at how her hospitality was rewarded with theft. This little theft shocked her "more than a great catastrophe" because they were rather young people who had already proven to be "bad."²⁶⁰ Mierendorff's perception reflects a common perception of contemporaries that the looting manifested a terrible moral bankruptcy. Yet it is astonishing to see that specifically this petty act of theft during a period of mass looting and overall violence made her so furious and led her to believe in the existence of a terrible lack of morality.

In some cases, acts of home looting became entangled and led to more severe acts of violence against the house residents. Such a case was documented in a police report: On the night of August 8, 1945, a woman from Buch in north Berlin was shot to death by Soviet soldiers who broke into her home. In his testimony, the husband explained that he lived together with his wife and his sister-in-law. They all woke up in the middle of the night after hearing suspicious noises. He looked outside at the courtyard and saw an armed Soviet soldier wearing a blue mask entering the front door of the building. Then they heard soldiers outside their door calling them to open the door, claiming that they were doing a patrol. The husband replied that they have nothing at home and told his wife to get dressed. The wife went to the bedroom and called for

²⁵⁹ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 99-100.

²⁶⁰ Mierendorff, 1996, p. 122.

help through the open window. At this moment, the husband heard a gunshot and saw that his wife collapsed. The soldier with the mask entered through the bedroom window, and after shooting her he continued to hit her in the head with his gun. He then threatened the husband by pushing the gun into his chest.²⁶¹

After that, the soldier turned to open the front door, and another two or three soldiers came inside. They ordered the husband and sister-in-law to stay in the bedroom, and one soldier stood outside the room to watch them. The other soldiers went upstairs to the neighbor's apartment. A few hours later they left the building after they stole from the husband 920 *Reichsmark*, two pairs of shoes, a jacket, a summer coat, and other items. The neighbor said that the soldier with the mask came to his home and took 5,000 *Reichsmark*, a suitcase, and several clothing items.²⁶²

The Red Army Invasion and Confiscation of German Homes

Apart from the spontaneous looting, from the beginning of the occupation of the city Soviet authorities confiscated property from Nazis and suspected Nazis, which undoubtedly included non-Nazis. The property that was taken was varied and diverse, from houses and furniture to cows and motorcycles. Sometimes the seizing was recorded in the confiscation's actual orders, but at other times, especially in the first months after the end of the war, it seemed more like plundering.²⁶³

Germans faced the sequestering of their houses and apartments in accordance with local Soviet commanders' orders. This sequestering included beach houses, villas, manors, and castles. In the summer of 1947, Soviet officers were ordered to live only in designated areas in the cities and towns within the Soviet occupation zone. Then began a wave of sequestering of German apartments, in which the residents were thrown out from their homes with just a few hours' notice. In addition, the local German authorities took part in this overall sequestering and confiscated German property without the Soviet authorities' approval.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1560.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 170.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 170-171.

On May 13, 1945, the anonymous woman confessed in her diary that there was a common fear among Germans that the Red Army would take their apartments. At the gathering around the pump, there was a rumor that soldiers would be lodged on her block.²⁶⁵

Shortly before, on May 4, 1945, only two days after the occupation of Berlin, Mierendorff described in her diary a large-scale evacuation of Germans from their apartments. Friends of hers were ordered to leave their homes in the Karlshorst district of Berlin in order to accommodate Soviet personnel. Consequently, thousands remained homeless. Mierendorff maintained that after it seemed that there had been some quiet, a “new catastrophe” emerged. She helped her friend to move out of Karlshorst. Each of the evacuees was permitted to take with him only one handcart with his belongings.²⁶⁶

Back in Prenzlauer Berg, Christa lived during her childhood and early youth on Göhrener Strasse. Then, in 1947, she and her family were evacuated by the Soviets to Hufeland Strasse in eastern Prenzlauer Berg, because all the houses in Göhrener Strasse were confiscated and occupied by the Soviet newspaper, the *Tägliche Rundschau*.²⁶⁷



Image 5. A squad of Soviet male and female soldiers in Prenzlauer Allee in early summer 1945 (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA036320)

²⁶⁵ Anonymous, 2005, p. 203.

²⁶⁶ Mierendorff, 1996, p. 116.

²⁶⁷ Christa, “Ich bin eine richtige bürgerliche Tochter. Christa aus dem Göhrener Ei,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 156, 165.

The Influence of the Exposed Homes on the Individual Intimate Space

Through these violent attacks from all directions, the air war, the looting epidemic, and the Red Army invasion and confiscation of homes, the boundaries separating the private sphere and the public sphere had completely collapsed. This immense collapse had a great impact on contemporaries, for it caused a total disintegration of their intimate space, which affected them both physically and mentally. Their intimate “walls” fell apart and they had to accept the fact that they had no longer complete privacy or an intimate space for themselves.

Firstly, people lived at their homes in a constant state of alertness due to outer threats. Jürgen Bergk remembered how at the time of the bombings in the late stage of the war, they went to bed completely dressed because in this way they could quickly come down to the cellar when the alarm was activated.²⁶⁸ Moreover, people felt continuously exposed and could not behave freely in their own private space, even in situations where the homes were not physically exposed. For example, Dorothea Rehmet who lived with her family on Kastanienallee, Prenzlauer Berg, remembered in 1999 her own family efforts to hide a Jewish acquaintance at their home. But during the air raids, as the houses were left wide open, they feared he would be discovered. Rehmet came from a tolerant, religious Catholic family. Her father was a hairdresser and pedicurist and had many Jewish clients with whom he had trusting relationships. Her aunt Hete worked as a housekeeper in the house of a very wealthy Jewish couple named Lucie and Otto Zentler.²⁶⁹

In late summer 1943, Otto Zentler stood in front of Rehmet’s house; apparently, her aunt had sent him. They let him stay, but his concealment was very complex. From 1943, there were constant air raids, and in addition, her family possessed the only phone in the building, and quite often one of the neighbors came over to use it. During the air raids, her family went down to the cellar, and Zentler hid below her father’s desk. But this was too risky, because the doors of the house had to be left open, and therefore the air raid protection warden (*Luftschutzwart*)²⁷⁰ could find him. Thus, for a while, he hid in the closet, and then in the family’s coal cellar. But since the

²⁶⁸ Bergk, 2007, p. 58.

²⁶⁹ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 341.

²⁷⁰ The air raid protection warden was appointed to each residential building by the National Air Safety Organization (*Reichsluftschutzbund*). He had to inform all the house members on the preparation for the air raid protection. He ensured order and helped the house members when the alarm was activated, during an air raid and after the all-clear alert. The air raid protection warden shared some of the officials’ authority and was responsible to report back on behavioral issues to the military and judiciary.

cellar was accessible from the courtyard, he could leave the place only after there was an all-clear alert and all of the building's tenants had returned to their apartments. Because of the risks to the safety of the entire family, Rehmet's father himself became the air raid protection warden. After several months, Zentler moved to another acquaintance of his.²⁷¹

In the homes that were hit by bombings and were partially uncovered, people felt even more exposed. Erna Becker, a converted Jewish woman who fled with her son in June 1943 from Berlin to the Tyrol region, traveled back to Berlin for a quick visit in October 1944. The purpose of the visit was to see her husband Gustav before he was sent to a forced labor camp. She portrayed her visit in her diary: Being in the city was incredibly stressful, she closed her eyes when the tram stopped at the various stations since it was hard for her to see the enormous destruction. Like many other homes, her apartment was also damaged from the bombings.²⁷²

As a converted Jewish woman, Becker could not simply stay in her own private apartment without fearing the response of the *Gestapo* and its collaborators. Despite the known danger and Gustav's warnings that feared that the neighbors would notice her, she courageously went to visit the apartment at nightfall. The furniture and the carpets were covered with dust and lime. There were cracks in the walls, and the bathroom, as well as the kitchen windows, were shattered. Gustav had hung wooden boards on the broken windows as a temporary solution to prevent the cold from entering, because glass could not be obtained. Gustav had to live in this neglected space for a long time, and Becker knew how difficult it was for him.²⁷³

In a considerable number of cases, contemporaries had to live in their homes without any privacy. On August 18, 1945, the young woman from Prenzlauer Berg, Brigitte Eicke, raised in her diary her worries about the upcoming winter. Three months after the war had ended, Eicke and her mother still did not have a wall between their apartment and the neighbors' apartment after it was destroyed in the bombing of March 11, 1945. Consequently, she thought, they would probably freeze the whole winter. Eicke also complained about their inconsiderate neighbors. When she went to bed, there was always a terrible noise from the neighbors' apartment. The neighbors could also see them sleeping from their corridor, and she admitted that it was a very

²⁷¹ Sandvoß, 2015, 2000, p. 341-342.

²⁷² Erna Becker, " 'Nun sollen wir plötzlich "artfremd" sein,' " in: *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.* " *Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 47-50.

²⁷³ Ibid.

unpleasant feeling.²⁷⁴ With the arrival of winter, Eicke wrote on December 8, 1945 that it was already minus 16 degrees and it was very cold inside their home. They still did not have a proper indoors wall, and when they went to sleep, they dressed properly so that they would not freeze.²⁷⁵

Moreover, the bare homes invited additional dangers for their inhabitants. The anonymous woman described how two young Soviet soldiers invaded the abandoned apartment next to the apartment of her friend, the widow. The wall separating the two apartments was damaged in one of the final air raids, and there was a big hole in it. The Soviet soldiers called the widow and the anonymous woman through the hole to open the door and threatened to shoot them if they would not open. One of them lit a flashlight and the other cocked his automatic rifle and aimed it into her apartment. The anonymous woman stayed calm, she already knew that the Soviets did not shoot so fast, especially not when they were sober. She tried to make them laugh in Russian and to persuade them to give up. After some time, the two gave up and turned away from their firing position.²⁷⁶

Creating Private Spaces in Alternative Places

The complete disintegration of intimate spaces led to the creation of a new, sometimes different, or only partially intimate space for themselves in alternative places. This process demanded that they make adjustments and change their behavioral patterns. During the long period of the bombings through the end of the war, people gradually began to treat the cellar of their building as an intimate, protected private space. Most Berliners stayed in their cellars throughout the air raids. They gathered there along with their families, neighbors, and friends, and followed the regulations and safety precautions that were handed out at the beginning of the war.²⁷⁷

Karl-Heinz Buhl, who lived as a child in Prenzlauer Berg at the time of the bombings, elaborated in his recollections on the preparations for converting the house cellars into air raid shelters (*Luftschutzkeller*). The transformation of the cellars into air raid shelters was obligatory in every house. In the cellar, a large open space had to be made to accommodate all the house tenants. Fire-extinguishing materials had to be available in every air raid shelter, and the air raid

²⁷⁴ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 317.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 357.

²⁷⁶ Anonymous, 2005, p. 119.

²⁷⁷ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 365.

protection wardens were in charge of them. Finally, in the hallway of each house, it was obligatory to put a sign directing people, including strangers, to the air raid shelter.²⁷⁸

In addition to home cellars, there were the urban bunkers that were more secure since they were designated concrete shelters, though they were not very popular.²⁷⁹ In Prenzlauer Berg, there were insufficient shelters for civilians. People who lived relatively close to the two big bunkers, the bunker at Humboldthain and the *Flakbunker* at Friedrichshain, often went there. However, the doors of the bunkers closed once they were full, and the people left outside stood there, vulnerable under the open sky.²⁸⁰

On November 25, 1943, Eicke described the comfortable atmosphere in her cellar during an air raid. One neighbor distributed schnapps and his wife gave sugar cubes to all the tenants. Eicke stated that there was a cozy feeling among their “housing community”²⁸¹ (*Hausgemeinschaft*).²⁸² However, the situation in the cellars deteriorated towards the end of the war, as did the attitude towards it as an intimate and protected space. During the Battle of Berlin, the conditions in the house cellars got worse. People spent most of those battle days in the cellars under difficult conditions, with no light or water, and insufficient air.²⁸³ Moreover, the street fighting and, afterward, the rapes converted the cellars and bunkers into chaotic, disordered places. Thus, the feeling of refuge and orderliness that they provided changed towards the end of the war.²⁸⁴

The child Ursula T. of Gaudy Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, revealed in her essay from 1946 her chaotic experiences from the cellar throughout the last days of the war. On the morning of April 21, 1945, Ursula T. returned with her mother to their apartment, after they heard from people around them that the Red Army had started its offensive on Berlin. Shortly after, the air raid protection warden instructed them to go down to the cellar because the first grenades had

²⁷⁸ Karl-Heinz Buhl, “Karl-Heinz Buhl, Jahrgang 1931,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 99.

²⁷⁹ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 365.

²⁸⁰ Gröschner, 1998, pp. 19-20.

²⁸¹ The housing community (*Hausgemeinschaft*) consisted of apartment building tenants or persons from the same neighborhood. The establishment of these small communities was required by the German government in order to provide mutual assistance of civilian self-defense during the bombings. The exclusion of the Jewish inhabitants and foreign workers was part of the creation of a housing community that was racially homogeneous.

²⁸² Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 115.

²⁸³ Gröschner, 1998, p. 22.

²⁸⁴ Evans, 2011, pp. 19-20.

already smashed nearby. There was a great fuss among the tenants. Little children cried, and from time to time one of them fell on their way to the cellar, which created stoppages at the stairwell.²⁸⁵

There was a great mess in the cellar, Ursula T. maintained, bigger than the time of the air raids. The tenants looked for new places to sit in. Each one wanted to have the best place, and no one wanted to sit near the outer wall. She and the other children did not know where to go. They settled down in one corner and kept themselves occupied with guessing and finger games and by singing. But they were constantly told to stay quiet. Meanwhile, people brought down to the cellar beds and other furniture which minimized the free space. A few hours later, the light went off. In the following days, Ursula T. slept in the cellar on a children's bed along with two other children. After a few days, they were left without any bread or water. One of the neighbors that dared to go out to get them water and bread, was shot in the stomach and died eleven hours later. At midday, on May 2nd the fighting had stopped, and Ursula T. was very glad to hear that the war had finally ended.²⁸⁶

Nevertheless, in many cases, precisely the tough conditions in the cellar during the days of the Battle of Berlin strengthened the intimate relations between the cellar inhabitants. They treated the house cellars as their homes, and the members of the housing community became their closest people. The anonymous woman detailed the close, trusting relations between the tenants in her building. On April 26, 1945, while she and her neighbor the baker were standing at the entrance of their house, someone holding a chunk of bleeding meat told them that he managed to get the meat at the former police barracks. They hurried there and saw the place in absolute chaos; people were trampling each other in the dark to get some of the spoils. The anonymous woman managed to grab a box of bread, and then exchanged bread for a bottle of brandy with a stranger who carried a bouquet of alcohol bottles. She and other neighbors who also joined the raid divided the loot in front of their house door. In that way, she got a few bottles of wine, tin cans, and loaves of bread.²⁸⁷

Yet, the house cellars were only a temporary solution in the time of the area bombings and the battle days. People could not live there permanently for long periods of time and needed to find alternative accommodation solutions. Many people whose home was completely bombed

²⁸⁵ Ursula T., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 141-142.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 57-59.

and was no longer usable or was confiscated by the Soviets moved to other apartments. These could have been friends or relatives' apartments, or vacant apartments that were in a better condition than theirs, and were sometimes inhabited by other people who had lost their homes too. People tried to create private spaces for themselves in the new apartments and to maintain new intimate relations with the people who lived there.

Renate Christian was only four years old at the end of the war. In her recollections, she remembered how her mother returned alone to Berlin at that time, to their old apartment at *Senefelderplatz*, in southwest Prenzlauer Berg. In their absence, other people whose own houses were bombed out, settled in the apartment. Altogether twelve people stayed there until they found their own places to live.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it was difficult to find proper homes, since there was a serious shortage of houses after the end of the war. Werner Lohaus from Prenzlauer Berg was born in 1936 and lived with his parents on Stubbenkammer Strasse. The apartment was small, containing one room, a kitchen, toilets, and no bath. Their life took place in this one space and everything that they needed was there. Lohaus maintained that it was not possible to get a bigger apartment even if his parents wanted to since there were no apartments available after the war. People who had an apartment were just glad that they could live by themselves because so many buildings were ruined during the war. Lohaus recalled that for example, the family of one of his classmates shared an apartment with two other families.²⁸⁹

Recreating an Intimate Space in the Exposed Homes

Aside from creating an intimate space in alternative places, in numerous cases, the disintegration of the private space led to the recreation of an intimate space in the exposed homes, and by doing so to rebuild their private lives.

There were many cases of people who had lost their homes in the bombings that had no alternative place to which to be evacuated. According to the official instructions, people whose building was bombed needed to ask friends and relatives for shelter first. If they did not manage to find any other place by themselves, the authorities would find them alternative housing. However, many Berliners refused to leave their destroyed homes, and stayed there along with

²⁸⁸ Renate Christian, "Renate Christian, Jahrgang 1941," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 107.

²⁸⁹ Werner Lohaus, "Werner Lohaus, Jahrgang 1936," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 75.

their last belongings, without heating and with no means of providing for their basic needs. For some of them, the repair and rehabilitation work provided a sort of continuity in their lives at their home and helped maintain their sanity.²⁹⁰

During the Battle of Berlin, the house of the child Hannelore W. on Saarbrücker Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, was damaged from artillery fire. In 1946, Hannelore wrote about the occurrences that followed in her school essay: The fourth floor was partially uninhabitable. Thus, house inhabitants whose apartments remained intact accommodated the inhabitants who could not stay in their apartments. Hannelore W. and her family stayed in the cellar until May 1st. Unfortunately, when they went out of the cellar, they found out that their home also suffered from damages; some doors had fallen out and the window panes were not in place. And so, they began working on returning their home to a state that it would be possible to live in. First, they nailed the windows with cardboard. Then they hung back the doors as well as they could. After that, the apartment was once again a suitable residential place.²⁹¹

The boy Joachim H. from eastern Prenzlauer Berg, in Friedrichshain, described in 1946 the changes that his home had undergone. Joachim H. lived with his family in a nice, comfortable, five-room apartment. The apartment suffered its first hit during an air raid in November 1943. All the window panes were smashed in that attack. Therefore, they plastered the windows. But then, in an air raid in January 1944, the patches were torn, and there was a crack in one of the corridor walls. Then the bombings became frequent and the damaged corridor wall was about to collapse. Each attack brought new damages. After the Battle of Berlin began, a grenade tore off part of the balcony, and since the apartment was just about 400m from the *Flakbunker Friedrichshain*, it also suffered from a low-flying attack.²⁹²

After the capitulation of the city, Joachim H.'s family returned to the apartment without really thinking about the need to prepare it for residency. Once they saw its condition, they started to arrange it; they cleared out the rubble from each room and put cardboard on the windows. After two weeks the place looked decent again. However, Joachim H. explained that this joy was soon disturbed when in June, they received an order to accommodate a Soviet Major with his two boys. Joachim H.'s family could keep two rooms of the apartment, and the whole place got a different look once again. They got along well with the Major and his boys, to the

²⁹⁰ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 370-371.

²⁹¹ Hannelore W., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 424.

²⁹² Joachim H., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 348-349.

point that it was even tough for them to say goodbye when they moved out. In time, they replaced partially damaged furniture items. But then again, new subtenants moved in that also rearranged the space. After the subtenants had moved away came the frozen winter of 1945-1946. The wall had not yet been repaired, and they had no coal or wood for heating. Fortunately, they could use his grandmother's coals that she had not used since she stayed mostly with them during the war. Joachim H. remembered how when the spring came, it aroused the will to live, and with it he hoped that his house would return to what it once was.²⁹³

Limited Public Spaces

Throughout the war and occupation, not only the private sphere was affected and transformed, but also the public sphere changed dramatically. Similar to the private sphere, the change in the public sphere resulted from the overall violence. However, in addition, it was also significantly affected directly by the people's change of perception of their private space. The alteration that occurred in the public sphere and the changing relations between the private sphere and the public sphere also had a significant influence on the private space and its meaning. This development made the geographical nearest public spaces of the contemporaries more private, in which intimate relationships developed.

During the war years, and especially towards the end of the war, the geographical public space was reduced gradually and became very limited. Berliners experienced difficulties moving around in the city because of the intermittent trains, the alarms that kept them close to shelters, and the bombings that caused massive destruction. Consequently, people gradually stayed close to their homes, and travel to other parts of the city or even to a neighboring district, which had been previously a matter of routine, became toward the end of the war very difficult and infrequent. Eventually, once the fighting reached the streets of Berlin, people rarely left their shelters, and if they did so, it was only to provide their basic survival needs, especially food and water supply.²⁹⁴

In addition to the reduced and limited public space was the parallel development mentioned in detail above: the lack of privacy in the original private spaces, homes. These transformations influenced relations between the private sphere and the public sphere and created

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ See, for example, Anonymous, 2005, pp. 21-136.

a situation in which the small residential neighborhood, which previously formed part of the boundless public space, became a very intimate space for the people of the neighborhood. People developed closer, intimate relationships with other people in their surroundings who shared the same experiences of war and occupation. They in essence changed their perceptions about what is public and what is private and treated their close public surroundings in a more intimate way.

This development was supported by the vision of the Nazis of a “People’s Community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*), which meant that all “Aryans” at the homefront were expected to actively help in overcoming the air war in mental and physical ways.²⁹⁵ This National Socialist concept implied loyalty to the Nazi regime and public solidarity with the regime.²⁹⁶ Historian Katrin Schreiter discovered, according to her micro-study on the city of Darmstadt, that over the course of the air raids, there was temporary solidarity within the neighborhood, where people in the neighborhood supported each other in their daily struggle to survive and resettle.²⁹⁷ In like manner, back in Prenzlauer Berg, Hilde of Stargarder Strasse claimed that although the war was a bad period, the solidarity of the people in her surroundings was unique. There were no conflicts between them. Quite the contrary, they understood each other well and did everything together in cooperation.²⁹⁸

As part of this development, residential buildings played a more important role in the lives of their inhabitants. They appeared as autonomous entities that were forced to supply and provide for themselves. At times it seemed as if there was no life existing for the inhabitants outside of residential buildings, which shows, first of all, the great intimacy that existed inside the houses, and equally important, how thick the boundary with the outside world had become. The residential building that previously functioned as a kind of interspace between the private and the public spheres, converted to being solely an enlarged private sphere, whereas the wider public sphere, the outside world beyond the borders of the house, seemed very far off and unattainable.

Residential buildings were invaded from time to time by various troops, *Wehrmacht* soldiers, SS soldiers, and later, by Soviets soldiers. There were multiple reasons for their

²⁹⁵ Torben Möbius, “World War II aerial Bombings of Germany: Fear as Subject of National Socialist governmental Practices,” *Storicamente* 11 (2015), p. 3.

²⁹⁶ Schreiter, 2017, p. 353.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 374.

²⁹⁸ Hilde, 1998, pp. 32-33.

invasions, such as threatening the building's inhabitants, seeking shelter, looting, raping, and more. An example of such an invasion of the private sphere was later raised in an interview by Inge of Bötzw Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, who was a young student at the end of the war. Inge's mother died of cancer in 1941, and her father was a fireman. Thus, at the end of the war, her father was always at work, and she stayed alone at home.²⁹⁹ Inge described how, in the middle of the courtyard of the house next to her, stood a large bathtub that the Soviets had brought. The Soviets distributed water to all the apartments in the house, and then ordered the women to heat them, and pour the hot water in the bathtub. Once the bath was ready, the Soviets jumped in naked. Inge said that they bathed and shrieked just like little children.³⁰⁰

This example not only demonstrates the invasion by the Soviets of the private space of the building's inhabitants, but also illustrates how a very intimate activity, such as bathing naked in a bathtub, became a public activity in the courtyard with many Soviets bathing together, where the women of the house were forced to cooperate by preparing baths for them. Only when the reconstruction of the city began did the physical public space start to expand again and to reestablish its previous role in the daily life of the population as an open public sphere that was separated from the private sphere.

In her school essay dated 1946, the fifteen-year-old pupil Elfriede R. of Esmarch Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg maintained that the look of the city at the end of the war was chaotic. There was debris everywhere, torn electricity cables blocked the streets, burned-out cars and trams, dead men and animals, and completely destroyed streets. It was a very sad sight for her. But not so long after, from her contemporary point of view in 1946, Elfriede R. remarked that people already walked easily through the streets, and the ruins of the buildings had been moved to the sides of the ways. In addition, the new, clean shop signs were shining, which was a sign that business life in the city was also part of the city's general upturn.³⁰¹

Parallel to the process of extending public space, the homes of the people also gradually returned to their previous role and functioned again as intimate private spaces. The anonymous woman wrote on May 19, 1945 that their housing community that was formed by national

²⁹⁹ Inge, "Singen für die Siege. Inge aus der Bötzwstraße," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 185-186.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 189.

³⁰¹ Elfriede R., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 256.

identity, living together in the same building and sharing the air raid shelter, slowly disintegrated. After all, Berlin was a big city, and in this urban way of life, people shut themselves up once again in their homes and chose their acquaintances carefully.³⁰²

2.3 Conclusion

During the years 1943-1948, the individual's body was often exposed. As death became familiar and present in the lives of Berliners with the progress of the war, the attitudes and reactions towards death and dead bodies ranged from tremor, shock, and apathy, to identifying death as a part of life, and disrespect to the dead. The individual's body became exposed and uncovered during the dying process, death itself, and the remaining bodies. Through this intimate acquaintance with the dead in all stages of death, the distinct separating line between the dead and the living was starting to blur. This state where living people interacted with the dead led at times to invasion of the sacred space of the dead, and even, in some cases, to extreme violation of the dead.

However, not only the body of the individual became exposed throughout these years, but also the most intimate space of the individual, its private home, became on numerous occasions exposed and invaded, totally destroyed, or seized. This was due to a number of different reasons; the bombings and shootings that caused damage or destroyed buildings, the looting of houses by the German population as well as the occupying troops, and also the Red Army invasion and confiscation of homes. All of these events led to the exposure of the intimate space of the individual or even its termination because the separation between the private and the public spheres had totally collapsed. One way to deal with the situation was to find alternative places in which one could create a private space for oneself. Another way was to recreate an intimate space for oneself in the exposed homes, and in that way to rebuild private lives once again.

In addition to the private sphere, the public sphere also went through a dramatic transformation during those years. As the physical public space was reduced gradually during the war until its end, and private homes were exposed and invaded, residential buildings became autonomous entities, enlarged private spheres for their inhabitants, and public neighborhoods became intimate spaces for their residents. With the reconstruction of the city, physical public space started to expand once again and to reestablish its previous role in contemporaries' daily

³⁰² Anonymous, 2005, p. 231.

lives as an open public sphere that was separated from the private sphere. Alongside this development, homes started to function once again as intimate private spaces.

Chapter Three

Gender-Based Violence

Throughout the years 1943 to 1948, gender-based violence in German spaces was a major phenomenon and thus should be addressed comprehensively. Examining the violence from a gender perspective derived chiefly from the fact that this era was abundant with completely different experiences, and even opposing perspectives, for males and females in this period. Two key perspectives, the women's perspective and the men's perspective, will structure the chapter and constitute the major research categories through which gender-based violence will be examined.

Historical research on Germany in World War II and the postwar period has analyzed questions of gender in depth. Most research on the subject has explored the German men at the war front, in captivity, or their return home, however, whereas the investigation of German women has mainly concentrated on their experiences on the home front.³⁰³ This chapter proposes a different outlook on gender from 1943-1948, because the daily experiences of men and women are explored in the very same area of Berlin; the men that are being analyzed are the ones who, for different reasons, stayed at home or the ones who fought in Berlin itself next to the women who stayed in the city. This particular situation makes this investigation of men and women more complex, and therefore it serves as a unique case study of daily conduct and intersecting points between the genders.

3.1 The Structure of Violence in Gender Terms

From the years 1943 to 1948, many of the violent phenomena in Germany differed according to the biological sex of the person. The state of being male or female substantially influenced the violence that one experienced or that was directed at others.

The Layout of Female-Related Violence Experiences

Nazi Propaganda towards Rape and its Attitude to Future Rape

Even before the Allied forces occupied the German territories, Nazi propaganda warned the Germans of a mass rape which would probably happen in the event that the Red Army conquered Germany. The Soviets were presented as sub-humans (*Untermenschen*) and animals. Pictures of

³⁰³ See, for example, Biess, 2006; Gebhardt, 2017; Heineman, 1999.

Mongol barbarians who invade and rape German women were a significant part of the propaganda efforts to strengthen the morale on the Eastern front and to recruit the home front to the campaign. Until the end of the war, most of the German women had already watched the newsreels that presented women who were raped, old men who were beaten, and children who were murdered. These images instilled fear in them.³⁰⁴

Moreover, Germans knew about the crimes that were carried out by the SS and the *Wehrmacht* on the Eastern front. Thus, they assumed that the Soviets would seek revenge, and this revenge was not late to come.³⁰⁵ In Berlin, for all the women that gathered in the cellars during the days of mass rape from April 24, 1945 until May 8, 1945, it seemed like the horrible prophecies of Goebbels on the Soviet threat were indeed fulfilled.³⁰⁶

Erich Kästner claimed in his diary that Nazi propaganda regarding possible future rape drew public criticism. He wrote in his diary on February 12, 1945 from Berlin, that there was a general public resistance to the “Horror Propaganda” which had been conducted for many days. The women of Berlin did not doubt that rape acts would indeed be happening soon, but they resented the so-called patriotic Nazi propaganda that accompanied the news.³⁰⁷ German women openly discussed the possibility of being raped. Some women claimed that there were worse things than rape, like murder, and in fact belittled the importance attributed to the expected future rapes. As the hairdresser of Kästner’s wife declared: “Better to have a Russian on the stomach than a broken house on the head!”³⁰⁸

The anonymous woman who kept a daily record of life in Berlin during the city’s fall to the Red Army and the first weeks of occupation complained in her diary on April 20, 1945 about the cutoff of the communications media because no one knew anything about what was going on around them. The distribution of the Nazi party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, stopped, and even the radio ceased broadcasting four days earlier. Prior to that, one of her acquaintances would read her the morning paper and mention the list of daily rapes. And the headlines were as follows: “Old woman of seventy defiled. Nun violated twenty-four times.” The lady enjoyed reading to her these horror stories for her eyes were always widened and sparkled during the

³⁰⁴ Grossmann, 2007, pp. 50-51.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

³⁰⁷ Kästner, 1966, 1961, p. 27.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

reading. The assumption was that these headlines were to encourage men to defend Berlin in order to protect the women. This was seen by the anonymous woman as absurd. To her mind, the news only caused thousands of women and children to flee westwards, where they could die in a bombing or starve to death.³⁰⁹

Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, who fought against National Socialism, referred in retrospect to the Nazi propaganda about the rape threat. On May 6, 1945, after hearing the testimony of Inge Zaun, who was raped numerous times, Andreas-Friedrich complained that four years earlier, Goebbels warned them that the Soviets would rape the German women and the women did not believe him. “Horror Propaganda,” they called it, as did Kästner above, and awaited the day that the Allied forces would liberate them. And now, the thought that Goebbels was truly right was a bitter pill to swallow.³¹⁰

Suicides of Young Girls and Women

Cases of women and girls committing suicide were not a rare event during this period. Two common causes specifically for women to commit suicide were to avoid the expected rape or the cultural shame that followed the rape.³¹¹ In the months around the end of the war, it was a common thing for people to carry cyanide capsules. Women in Berlin also carried razor blades with them.³¹² One estimate suggests that around ten percent of the women that were raped, killed themselves following the occurrence.³¹³

Helga Grebing detailed in her memoir the bitter fate of the wife of her mother’s stepbrother, Else Heimann. Since the stepbrother was a prisoner of war, Heimann lived alone with her two small sons in the American sector and brought Grebing to live with them, too. Heimann had been repeatedly raped by Soviet soldiers, and as a result, suffered from a venereal disease. Grebing explained that it made her very miserable. And because of this, when she heard that her husband was returning from American captivity, she committed suicide by jumping out the window.³¹⁴

³⁰⁹ Anonymous, 2005, p. 21.

³¹⁰ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, pp. 22-23.

³¹¹ Goeschel, 2009, pp. 164-170.

³¹² Ibid., p. 158.

³¹³ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 422.

³¹⁴ Grebing, 2012, p. 86.

Moreover, at the end of the war, there were common events of parents that killed their own children and then committed suicide. These acts indicate the extreme despair of the people, and their identification with the Nazi propaganda that had warned of the Soviet's cruelty.³¹⁵ In Lichterfelde, a locality in southwestern Berlin, a woman poisoned her eight-year-old daughter, and afterward took an overdose of sleeping pills. Her husband was declared missing, and she was afraid that he could not protect her from the Soviets.³¹⁶

However, the suicidal atmosphere was not limited to the family circle; it was everywhere. According to Andreas-Friedrich's records in her diary, there was an event in which a teacher in a school for girls made it clear to her students two days before the "collapse" that if they were raped, there would be no other solution for them other than death. The result was that more than half of the girls in the class had drowned themselves in the nearest lake.³¹⁷

Outbreak of Mass Rape

The rape acts that the Nazi propaganda had warned of were executed almost from the very beginning of the Soviet occupation in Berlin. In most cases, the first encounter with the Soviets passed peacefully, because their main purpose was to occupy the area and clear it of all hidden German soldiers. But, usually, the soldiers of the second wave were more demanding.³¹⁸ Altogether, the rape phenomenon in Berlin throughout the period of the Battle of Berlin until the German surrender and the subsequent creation of the Soviet Military Administration on June 9th was severe. Not only Red Army soldiers but also released Soviet POWs and forced laborers took part in the overall rapes and plunder.³¹⁹

There are varying estimates about the number of rapes. According to one estimate, one out of three women from around 1.5 million women in Berlin were raped by the Soviets. Numerous women were raped more than once, and in some cases, they died afterward.³²⁰ While I am aware that there might have been male rapes as well, I did not find any mention of it in the sources. When the Soviet soldiers entered the cellars and bunkers in Berlin, they often raped the

³¹⁵ Goeschel, 2009, pp. 162-163.

³¹⁶ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 413.

³¹⁷ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, p. 23.

³¹⁸ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 417.

³¹⁹ Naimark, 1995, p. 79.

³²⁰ Grossmann, 2007, p. 49.

women under gun threat, sometimes in front of men and children. Some of the women were also gang-raped.³²¹

Karl Seyfert, who was a child in 1945, remembered years later about the time that he stayed with his family in a cellar at *Alexanderplatz*. When it was clear that the Soviets were just hours away, the women were transferred to hide in another cellar. From his experience as a child, he claimed that the behavior of the Soviets was ambivalent. On the one hand, they were nice to him and the other children, but on the other hand, they took all the watches and sometimes became violent.³²²

In Prenzlauer Berg as in the whole of Berlin, the women suffered as well from the ongoing rape acts. Prenzlauer Berg was one of the last districts in Berlin that was occupied, and the Soviet troops advanced there slowly.³²³ The battle on the district was hard for the Red Army, for it was a confusing area with narrow streets and varied, unpredictable buildings with many courtyards.³²⁴ Once the Red Army arrived at the border of the district, the rumors of lootings and rapes in the already-conquered suburbs began to spread.³²⁵ In her school essay from 1946, Liane H. recounted that a woman that fled from the neighboring district, Weißensee, arrived at a cellar in Prenzlauer Berg just a few days before the Soviets occupied the place. She reported that in Weißensee, the Soviets spared no woman, and raped them even in front of the children.³²⁶

Werner W. reported in 1946, in his school essay, that on April 22, 1945, the first Soviet soldiers appeared at Schivelbeiner Strasse in northern Prenzlauer Berg. Two Soviets entered the cellar in his house, and searched for German soldiers and weapons. One of them took a watch under a gun threat from one of the tenants. After they left, five other soldiers entered and took with them five women on the pretext that they had to clean the officer's place. They then took them to one of the ground-floor apartments that was open and raped them.³²⁷

³²¹ Naimark, 1995, p. 80.

³²² Karl Seyfert, "Unsere Flucht zum Alexanderplatz," in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 38-39.

³²³ Renate Tepper, "Erinnerung und Mahnung," *extraDrei: Die Zeitung für Pankow-Prenzlauer Berg-Weißensee*, May 2005, p. 5.

³²⁴ Gröschner, 1998, p. 22.

³²⁵ Gröschner, "Als die Ostfront mitten in Prenzlauer Berg lag," *Die Welt*, April 30 2015. December 11, 2015 www.welt.de/140328748

³²⁶ Liane H., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 178-179.

³²⁷ Werner W., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 26-27.

At Gleim Strasse 55, a Soviet soldier threatened a woman by saying that if she did not come with him, her child would be slaughtered together with her. Not far away at Gleim Strasse 50, Frau Z. told years later in an interview about the horrible encounters with the Soviets in the cellar of her building; they walked around with torches, lit the faces of the inhabitants, and took out women. On the first night, there were around two hundred Soviet soldiers in the house.³²⁸ Frau Z. testified about her personal experience as well. Down in the cellar, she and her sister hid behind their father. But then one Soviet put a gun in their backs and tried to take her sister out to the street. Frau Z. ran after him and pulled her sister back. Both sisters managed to come back into the cellar.³²⁹

After the mass rape in the bunkers and cellars, the rapes and pillaging in apartments throughout Berlin began.³³⁰ Shortly after her first rape, the anonymous woman was raped by Petka, a soldier from Siberia. He entered through the back door to her temporary residence at the apartment of her friend, the widow, along with three armed soldiers. Even though they had sealed the broken back door with furniture, the soldiers had no trouble breaking in. They rummaged through the kitchen drawers, chatted, and wandered freely in the apartment. The anonymous woman was waiting to be attacked. She knew from reading the newspapers that she was likely to be raped, possibly ten, maybe even twenty times. When Petka came up to her, she begged him to have sex with only one of them, she did not care with whom. Petka took her into the front room and closed the door behind them. He laid her on the bed frame that had no mattress and raped her. She was dizzy, but she did not resist and just waited for him to finish.³³¹

The situation at the buildings in Prenzlauer Berg was no different. Back in Gleim Strasse 55, a woman inhabitant revealed that the Soviets brought women to her apartment and raped them on the sofa, while all the other house inhabitants heard it.³³² Hilde of Stargarder Strasse remembered the several encounters in her apartment with the Soviets that lived only a few streets away. They were fascinated by a silver watch that she had and always looked at it. She claimed that she was always one step ahead of them when they were around. Once she even jumped from

³²⁸ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 162.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 264.

³³⁰ Naimark, 1995, p. 80.

³³¹ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 74-77.

³³² Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 162.

the window and shouted “Kommandant.” Hilde did not elaborate on the reason for her jumping and asking for rescue. After that incident, they feared her.³³³

In a book collection of personal stories that was published in 2001, Dr. Annemarie Scherner recounted how glad she was that her family’s apartment in Prenzlauer Berg was on the third floor, because when the soldiers were drunk they preferred not to climb the stairs. Scherner was a young girl when, night after night, the soldiers entered the apartment on the first floor in search of women. But their search resulted in nothing because the women and girls hid on the balconies.³³⁴ Certainly, there were some Soviets who did climb the stairs, as Marie Jalowicz Simon³³⁵ testified years later about her being sexually harassed while sleeping in the attic room. She heard downstairs the loud shouts of her acquaintance and helper, Johanna Koch, who had also been raped. Simon looked out of the window and saw a Soviet soldier walking away. She explained that as a result of this rape, Koch became pregnant, after years of unsuccessful attempts to conceive.³³⁶

Walking alone in the streets of Prenzlauer Berg was dangerous as well. In interviews held throughout 2006-2007, Elsa Arndt testified how she was warned not to go out alone in the streets so close to the houses when it was already dark, because quite frequently a Soviet soldier would appear suddenly, ordering the typical saying: “woman come” (*Frau komm*). Such an encounter, she explained, could have ended in rape.³³⁷ During the mass rape days, many German women began fraternizing with Soviet soldiers. Inge, who lived in the eastern part of Prenzlauer Berg, on Böttzow Strasse, described in a later interview that in the evenings, music was playing in the corner of her street. Young girls that were hungry danced there with Soviets. But then the

³³³ Hilde, 1998, p. 42.

³³⁴ Dr. Annemarie Scherner, “Rosinen, Wodka und ‘Stube für Mädchen,’ ” in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 81.

³³⁵ Marie Jalowicz Simon was a young Jewish woman who survived the war in Berlin. In 1942, she decided to remove her yellow star, take on an assumed identity, and disappear into the city, in order to avoid the concentration camps. From then until the end of the war, she took shelter wherever it was offered. Over fifty years later, Simon agreed to tell her story for the first time.

³³⁶ Marie Jalowicz Simon, *Untergetaucht: Eine junge Frau überlebt in Berlin 1940-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2014), p. 358.

³³⁷ Elsa Arndt, “Da waren wir frei,” in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 33-34.

evenings turned into nights, and the girls yelled for help. People blamed them for acting stupid, and no one came to help them.³³⁸

Soviet authorities attempted to stop the rampant rape and pillage. From the autumn of 1945, Soviet soldiers were generally punished for their sexual crimes against German women. However, the severity of the punishment varied from extreme punishments, such as frontal executions in front of a battalion in cases of rape and murder, to detention or imprisonment in labor camps. But, quite often, there was no punishment at all.³³⁹ Klaus Kordon, who grew up in Prenzlauer Berg in the postwar years, noted in a later interview that after weeks of rape that followed the end of the war, the Soviets were not allowed to touch German women, and they could be shot dead for doing so.³⁴⁰ Hilde of Stargarder Strasse also remembered that the Soviets were shot for raping or hurting women. She felt relieved that they had received severe punishments for their actions.³⁴¹

As mentioned in chapter one, one execution place was at *Falkplatz* in Prenzlauer Berg. There, Soviet soldiers were shot dead for not adhering to the pillage and rape ban that was imposed after the end of the fighting. The Soviet military justice performed very short trials for them, and the women that were harassed had to be at *Falkplatz* when the shooting took place.³⁴² But rape went on despite the threat of severe punishments. As historian Norman Naimark explains, only in the winter of 1947-1948, when the Soviet troops were confined to strictly-guarded posts and camps, were German women freed from the constant threat of being raped.³⁴³

The Wide Range of the Raped Women

The Soviets did not make much differentiation between one female to another, and those who came their way were not spared. They violated young girls, old women, nuns, pregnant women, and also breastfeeding mothers. Even Jewish women and freed force laborers were raped. If the Soviets had options, they preferred the young, especially blondes, and tried to avoid thin girls who looked less healthy to them.³⁴⁴ All women walking outside on the street were at risk of

³³⁸ Inge, 1998, p. 189.

³³⁹ Naimark, 1995, pp. 90-92.

³⁴⁰ Kordon, 2004, p. 253.

³⁴¹ Hilde, 1998, p. 42.

³⁴² Gröschner, 1998, p. 50.

³⁴³ Naimark, 1995, p. 79.

³⁴⁴ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 418-419.

harassment without exception, as Dr. Annemarie Scherner testified. They could have been young, old, ugly, or pretty; it did not matter to the soldiers.³⁴⁵

Gerda recalled the time she spent with her family in an emergency shelter located at a school on Bötzw Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg. The Soviets were also based at this school. During the day the Soviets were friendly, but at night they walked around, shining their flashlights at the women, selecting the ones they wanted to rape. Gerda was twelve years old. She laid with her younger sister on a bench. She was exposed, on the outer side of the bench. One man came and slapped her on the buttocks. There was nowhere to hide, so she just lay face down against the wall. The man proceeded to the next bench, where there was an old woman seventy-two years old. He took her upstairs and raped her. Gerda's mother was still young, nearly forty years old, but her bad teeth saved her. The Soviets ran away whenever she showed them her teeth.³⁴⁶

Other Violent Phenomena Relating to Rape

The sexual violence that was directed towards German women on many occasions entailed additional violence, such as mental abuse, physical violence, and verbal violence. In most rape cases, the soldiers exercised the use of force against the women. The night hours became the most dangerous hours for women because then the soldiers were already drunk and often searching for women. Attempting to resist from being raped might have gotten you killed.³⁴⁷

On April 27, 1945, the anonymous woman described in her diary, one of her first encounters with the Soviets, in the cellar of her building. One drunken soldier entered the cellar and began chasing after the distiller's wife while waving his revolver. She tried to resist when suddenly a shot was fired from the revolver, and the bullet hit the wall. The tenants, as well as the soldier, panicked from the shot, and he left the cellar.³⁴⁸

In a police investigation from September 1945, a woman from the district of Lichtenberg reported that early that morning, her son's ex-wife had arrived at her home. They were sitting in the garden when a Red Army soldier accompanied by another Soviet entered. The men were both drunk and sat down on either side of the divorcee. The soldier was nervous. He cursed the SS and called them both fascists. The soldier tried to approach the divorcee, and when she asked his

³⁴⁵ Scherner, 2001, p. 81.

³⁴⁶ Gerda, 1998, pp. 68-70.

³⁴⁷ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 418-420.

³⁴⁸ Anonymous, 2005, p. 70.

friend what the soldier wanted, he replied that his commander was looking for a woman. The older woman tried to persuade them to leave, claiming that there were enough women walking around on the street. But then he aimed his gun at the divorcee and fired one shot at her head. She bled, walked a few steps and collapsed. The two Soviets fled the scene.³⁴⁹

Extremely violent rape and murder happened in the street of Wolf-Dieter Glatzel from Berlin. Born in 1941, Glatzel testified in a book portraying different narratives of many “war children” (*Kriegskinder*) about this incident. Glatzel explained that when the Soviets arrived, there was a loud noise in the villa opposite his family’s house. His grandmother decided to go there and check what was happening. A mother and daughter laid there on the bed. They were being raped, naked, and their throats cut. His grandmother shouted at the drunken Soviets until they finally withdrew. His mother, who was a doctor, then buried them in the garden after determining their death.³⁵⁰

Another kind of particularly violent rape cases, were the brutal public group rapes, in which the soldiers stood in line and waited for their turn. In some events, bodies of women were slit open, and in others, women were killed afterward.³⁵¹ As can be seen, in many cases experiencing rape was not only a sexual act but included other forms of violence that enhanced the overall effect of this phenomenon against women.

Complex Relationships between German Women and Soviet Troops

As the cultural historian Hsu-Ming Teo poses, there were varied sexual encounters between Allied troops and German women. Beyond forced rapes, fraternization was very wide. In addition, prostitution was very common. In Berlin, there were many professional, semi-professional and amateur prostitutes.^{352 353} Great ambivalence and complexity existed within the diverse sexual encounters and relationships between the occupied German women and the occupying Soviet soldiers. Although there were different experiences and relations, rapes, prostitution, and fraternization, there was not a definite criterion to every form of relationship.

³⁴⁹ LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1561.

³⁵⁰ Wolf-Dieter Glatzel, “Wolf-Dieter Glatzel, 1941 in Berlin,” in: *Kriegskinder*, Frederike Helwig and Anne Waak, eds. (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2017), p. 50.

³⁵¹ Grossmann, 2000, 1997, p. 43.

³⁵² Teo, 1996, p. 191-192.

³⁵³ Although there was prostitution in Berlin at this time, sources rarely elaborate on that. They did mention fraternization quite often.

As for mass rape, there was a wide range of rape acts, such as ongoing rape by the same perpetrator, one-time rape, group rape, and more. Moreover, there was a wide range of fraternization relationships, such as loving bonds created between the occupying forces and the occupied women, or pragmatic sexual relationships in which the occupied women benefited from gaining protection or basic supplies in exchange for sex.

Since mass rape was analyzed at length above, I will turn to discuss the phenomenon of fraternization. Back in Prenzlauer Berg, Hilde of Stargarder Strasse claimed that all the troops had female friends. First, German women fraternized with the SS men, then with the Soviets, and afterward also with the Americans.³⁵⁴ Elsa Arndt suggested an explanation for the wide fraternization with the Soviet troops; there were women whose men were at war, and they had children that were in hunger. Under those circumstances, they fraternized with Soviet soldiers that brought them food from their barracks. She explained that this phenomenon was born partially because of the distress, and hence she did not judge them.³⁵⁵

The widespread rape and the high chance of being a victim to repeated sexual assaults led some women to decide to have sexual relations in order to receive protection and living support.³⁵⁶ For example, the anonymous woman thought in a very practical way about how to survive the ongoing rapes. After being raped several times, she was determined to find for herself a Soviet officer with a high rank that would keep the other predators from her.³⁵⁷ In early May 1945, the bookseller neighbor of the anonymous woman updated her on two young sisters, one of which was a war widow with a little child, who had moved to a vacant apartment in their building. They hung out with soldiers in the apartment day and night.³⁵⁸

Brigitte Eicke knew many young girls who fraternized with the occupation troops. One evening she saw an acquaintance of her dancing with, using her description, a Mongol Soviet officer. Eicke could not understand how she could be with him, explaining that he looked so Asiatic. She noticed in one of the dancing places she frequented that there were only a few German boys, but a lot of young German girls and American boys. The girls besieged the

³⁵⁴ Hilde, 1998, p. 39.

³⁵⁵ Arndt, 2007, p. 34.

³⁵⁶ Jeffrey Burds, "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," *Politics & Society* 37.1 (2009), p. 55.

³⁵⁷ Anonymous, 2005, p. 85.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

Americans and waited until they were addressed by them.³⁵⁹ Eicke explained in an interview that was held with her in 1995, that after the war women tried to get married quickly. She was born in 1927, and her ex-husband in 1923. From these age groups, only a few men returned from the war, and those who returned were in a miserable condition. Hence, it was very common for women in a relationship to hold on to their men regardless of their condition.³⁶⁰

In many cases, the relationships with the occupiers were very ambivalent, as demonstrated in the next case. As already mentioned above, Marie Jalowicz Simon was also raped, part of the mass rapes in Berlin. The Soviets were raping women in the houses, she explained over fifty years later, and her turn to be raped came too. Simon recalled sleeping in the attic, and one Soviet who, according to her, was friendly, visited her at night. Her attitude to his actions was that she did not care much. Also, the positive aspect of this relationship was that he then wrote a note and hung it on her door, explaining that his wife lived there, so she would be left alone. From then onwards, no one bothered her again.³⁶¹

The Layout of Male-Related Violence Experiences³⁶²

Deadly Military Service

On September 1, 1939, 1.5 million German soldiers invaded Poland and World War II officially began.³⁶³ Gradually, as the war continued, more and more German men were required to join the war effort in the various units and fronts. The highest German death toll occurred in the final phase of the war, when the Allied victory became obvious and it was only a matter of time. As an illustration, between July 20, 1944, the date of the assassination attempt against Hitler, and the unconditional surrender in May 1945, more German soldiers were killed in action than in the

³⁵⁹ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, pp. 308, 361.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 390.

³⁶¹ Simon, 2014, p. 358.

³⁶² The following violent experiences that related to the fighting and usage of violence against troops and civilians were mainly male experiences, and the sources also detail mostly about their experiences.

However, it is important to point out that some women who served in various units or were Nazi party members described similar experiences, but it was on a very small scale compared to the men.

³⁶³ Gordon Corrigan, *The Second World War: A Military History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010), pp. 1, 80.

entire previous war years.³⁶⁴ In January 1945, the month in which the Soviets launched their great Vistula–Oder offensive on the Eastern front, the numbers of dead German soldiers reached over 450,000. From January on, the Germans continued fighting, though it was evident that they had already lost the hope of winning. Even though the *Wehrmacht* was outnumbered and outgunned, the fighting continued without consideration for the shortage of materials and the countless losses of men.³⁶⁵

Looking at the various groups who were recruited to the German Armed forces, which included the *Wehrmacht*, SS, police, and, by the end of the war, the *Volkssturm* (People’s Army), especially cruel was the conscription of young boys in the later period of the war. Their conscription was a part of the effort to mobilize the reserves for the continuation of the war. In the Horst-Wessel-Gymnasium in Prenzlauer Berg, for the first time in February 1943, seventeen-year-old pupils were sent to serve as air force assistants in Germendorf, north of Berlin.³⁶⁶ The following year, on September 25, 1944, Hitler ordered the draft of every male aged 16 to 60 that was still not in the military service to the *Volkssturm*, a semi-military organization of home-defense units.³⁶⁷ In October 1944, shortly after the order was issued, the school registered twenty-four air force assistants.³⁶⁸

In Prenzlauer Berg, the *Hitlerjugend* used the house on Hosemann Strasse 14 to serve as a central youth home in the district until 1945. From 1943, the cellar of the building was used as an air raid shelter for the neighborhood’s residents. The young people, some of them under fourteen years old, were used as youth guards in the building. Also, young people that were not in the *Hitlerjugend* visited the house. The boys got five *Reichsmark* per week to be air raid guards. In December 1944, the age group that was born in 1929 joined the different armed branches. The *Waffen SS* men stayed in the large hall on the third floor, the floors below were the *Wehrmacht*, *Luftwaffe*, and Navy troops. In 1945, during the fighting in Prenzlauer Berg, thirteen

³⁶⁴ Michael Geyer, “Endkampf 1918 and 1945: German Nationalism, Annihilation, and Self-Destruction,” in: *No Man’s Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), p. 37.

³⁶⁵ Bessel, 2009, pp. 11-12.

³⁶⁶ Klaus Grosinski, “Ein Schulpalast im Berliner Norden. Vom Luisenstädtischen Gymnasium zur 11. Grundschule Prenzlauer Berg,” in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), p. 111.

³⁶⁷ Gröschner, 1998, p. 20.

³⁶⁸ Grosinski, 1998, p. 111.

and fourteen-year-old boys from the house were ordered to join the fight against the Red Army that was rapidly advancing from Weißensee; many of the boys died.³⁶⁹

On April 27, 1945, the Berliner newspaper *Der Panzerbär*³⁷⁰ reported on the bravery of the Berliner *Hitlerjugend*, which was also used as an auxiliary force. In Prenzlauer Berg, the *Hitlerjugend* member F. took two Soviet tanks out of action, and the seventeen-year-old member Helmut Sch. took an additional down.³⁷¹ Even though these events were published by a newspaper whose main goal was to serve as a Nazi propaganda tool, cases of *Hitlerjugend* members that fought against the advancing Soviets tanks were quite common.

Werner Gollnick from Prenzlauer Berg was eleven years old at the end of the war. In an interview that was held with him in 2015, he recalled his experiences from the war's end. In April 1945, he and his fourteen-year-old brother had planned to go to the Reich Chancellery and register as volunteers. Without telling their parents to their mother, they left their house on Meyerheim Strasse and walked across to the corner shop, where food was still being distributed. Gollnick waited in front of the shop when a grenade was thrown next to him. When his brother came out of the shop, he yelled at him to get up, but Gollnick could not move. When his brother tried to lift him, he saw a large pool of blood. As Gollnick needed medical attention, two people escorted him to the *Waffen SS* station at Duncker Strasse. On their way there, grenades suddenly began exploding, and he fell to the ground in the middle of the street, as grenades exploded next to him from left and right. Finally, he was dropped off at the *Waffen SS* station.³⁷²

At the end of January 1945, the Allied forces started their almost constant air raids on the city. These air raids lasted for more than fifty days.³⁷³ After Berlin was declared a fortress on February 1, 1945, the men that were left in the city were gathered to build barricades.³⁷⁴ On March 9, 1945, the high command of the *Wehrmacht* issued the order to prepare for the defense of Berlin. The defense system consisted of three-block rings, of which the third inner ring was identical to the *S-Bahn* ring. The Battle of Berlin was to be carried out with fanaticism, over each

³⁶⁹ “80 Jahre Jugendarbeit – die Geschichte des Hauses Hosemannstr. 14,” *Medienzentrum Pankow*, 28 February 2020 <https://www.mezen-berlin.de/70-jahre-jugendarbeit/>

³⁷⁰ The Berliner newspaper *Der Panzerbär* was published only seven times between 23 and 29 April 1945. It provided Nazi propaganda regarding the fight for Berlin against the Red Army.

³⁷¹ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 151.

³⁷² Werner Gollnick, “Mein Kriegsende in Berlin,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5.5.2015. 28.2.2020 <https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/mein-kriegsende-in-berlin>

³⁷³ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 149.

³⁷⁴ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 157.

house and block. But in point of fact, the Berliners were tired of the war, and in Prenzlauer Berg, people faced two additional massive bombings on March 11th.³⁷⁵

Nevertheless, during the Battle of Berlin, most of the men that were in the city took part in the war effort to fight the Nazi “Total War.” Around 80,000 soldiers were gathered to protect Berlin. They were from different units in quality and experience. Half of them were members of the *Volkssturm*, many of them were without weapons or any proper training. The others were soldiers, but their units were improvised and they were exhausted. The morale in those units varied; most of the troops were determined to fight the Red Army. But there was also exhaustion from the war, even among the SS divisions, that intensified during the hard and continued battle in the city. The morale of the *Volkssturm* members was not high, considering that many of them were youngsters.³⁷⁶

The Red Army arrived at the northern border of Prenzlauer Berg on April 22, 1945. In that part of Prenzlauer Berg, located north of the *S-Bahn*, the war was over by April 28th at the latest. On May 1st, the inner-city was already liberated, and the advancing Soviet troops attacked Prenzlauer Berg from the south. On the morning of May 2nd, General Weidling, the commander of the Berlin area, surrendered. However, at the *S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee*, the battles carried on until the afternoon. As already mentioned above, the *Schultheiss-Brauerei*, which was occupied by the SS, was one of the last fighting places in Berlin. Hours after the official truce and after tough negotiations, the remaining SS men agreed to surrender.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Gröschner, 1998, p. 21.

³⁷⁶ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 403-404.

³⁷⁷ Gröschner, 2015.



Image 6. The streets of Prenzlauer Berg in the heart of the battlefront (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA032738)

German Violence against German Troops

Apart from violence in battle, German men were faced with another sort of violence, and that was violence that was directed at them from their own regime. During the final months of Nazi rule, soldiers and soldiers-to-be were frequently charged and punished for different crimes. First, there were countless cases of soldiers-to-be who attempted escaping conscription, which resulted in severe punishments. In Prenzlauer Berg, the father of one anonymous pupil was drafted to the *Volkssturm* just a short while before the Red Army troops arrived in Berlin. The father noted that if he refused to be drafted, he would be shot within twelve hours.³⁷⁸ In addition, there were many cases of desertion of soldiers or attempts at desertion from the army, especially in the last weeks and months of the war, when the German defeat became more apparent. Those caught retreating were shot and hung in public.³⁷⁹

Back in Prenzlauer Berg, the husband of Hilde of Stargarder Strasse was a deserter who was captured more than once. He was sent to serve in a punishment unit, and died shortly before

³⁷⁸ F.B., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 268-270.

³⁷⁹ Bessel, 2009, p. 76.

the end of the war, on April 8, 1945. Hilde did not mention the cause of death, but it can be assumed from her description that he died while serving in the punishment unit.³⁸⁰

Towards the end of the war, the internal violence reached its most extreme; the SS performed field court-martials and executed soldiers and officers. Additionally, the army command did not allow medical treatment of soldiers who were suspected of betrayal, or of causing their own wounds.³⁸¹ The National Socialist guerrilla movement, the *Werwolf*, was also suspected of carrying out acts of violence. For instance, Maria R., a teacher from Prenzlauer Berg, claimed in 1946 that the *Werwolf* were responsible for a soldier hanged on a tree in the last days of the war.³⁸² Sights of dead soldiers hanging from trees or on electric poles during the last days of the war in Berlin were very common. They were hung in public with signs on their chests depicting the reason for the execution. This could have been a major or minor offense, such as treason, cowardice on the battlefield, or even improper handling of their personal weapons.³⁸³

Gisela Richter elaborated in 2008 on her service in a *Volkssturm* group located in Prenzlauer Berg during the last days of the battle. She was completely shocked by the sights of the soldiers as well as civilians hung on street lamps with traitor signs. One of the most dreadful events for her was that of a wounded soldier lying on the street in Prenzlauer Berg. He groaned in pain, but, because he was a deserter, he was forbidden to receive help. Other soldiers drew a large circle around him, and no one was allowed to pass. He laid there all day and towards evening one officer finally shot him.³⁸⁴

In the early morning hours of May 2, 1945, surrounded from the south and north, the remaining German troops in Prenzlauer Berg began to move towards *S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee* in an attempt to break north. Dieter Borkowski, who was then a sixteen-year-old anti-aircraft assistant, took part in the battle. In front, the heavy tanks led, followed by anti-aircraft assistants and *Volkssturm* men, and behind them marched the *Waffen-SS* officers who pushed the forces to keep going by pointing guns at their backs. Then the Soviets let the tanks pass, and a

³⁸⁰ Hilde, 1998, p. 35.

³⁸¹ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 405-406.

³⁸² Maria R., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 12.

³⁸³ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 405-406.

³⁸⁴ Gisela Richter, "Kriegsende - mein Einsatz für Berlin," *LEMO Lebendiges Museum Online*, June 2008. 10 February 2016 www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/gisela-richter-kriegsende-mein-einsatz-fuer-berlin.html

horrifying battle started. After the German troops began to flee back, the Soviets stopped firing. Both sides did not want to keep on fighting. But the SS officers together with Nazi party members threatened the ones who returned with their guns.³⁸⁵

German Violence against German Civilians

During the war, there was also extensive terror against ordinary German people executed by German men who served in the police, *Wehrmacht*, SS, and *Volkssturm*. For instance, Werner Gollnick from Prenzlauer Berg remembered the terrible incident that he saw at the *Waffen SS* station, where he arrived to get medical help during the Battle of Berlin. There was a man there who had been shot badly in the face but was still alive. They were not sure as how to treat him, and so they shot him. Gollnick commented on the fact that he was shot to death by his own people.³⁸⁶

But the terror against ordinary people was not limited to direct physical violence; in addition to this, during the battle in the city, there was a strategic plan of action to burn down buildings in order to improve the positioning of the fighting. At Kniprode Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg, SS men burned down a line of houses to have a clear shooting field from the near high bunker in Friedrichshain.³⁸⁷ In fact, the arson operation was more extensive than this specific street; SS units set on fire the entire neighborhood between Werneuchener Strasse (today: Margarete-Sommer-Strasse) and Braunsberger Strasse (today: Hans-Otto-Strasse), which until that time had survived the bombings quite unscathed. Forty-eight buildings were burned down. The inhabitants were evacuated.³⁸⁸

By and large, the corner buildings were strategically important for the fighting on the roofs, and hence they were frequently set on fire. However, not only residential houses were set aflame, but also other designated places like food or weapon storages that could have fallen in the hands of the enemy troops. On the opposite side of Prenzlauer Berg, SS men burned down their own main storage place on Gleim Strasse and fled towards the Humboldthain-Bunker. People risked their lives trying to save the leftovers of these food supplies. On their way to the

³⁸⁵ Kotte, 2007, pp. 52-53.

³⁸⁶ Werner Gollnick, "Mein Kriegsende in Berlin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5.5.2015. 28.2.2020
<https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/mein-kriegsende-in-berlin>

³⁸⁷ Gröschner, 1998, p. 23.

³⁸⁸ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 151.

bunker, they also set fire to several other houses on the same street.³⁸⁹ Moreover, as part of the preparations for the defense of Berlin, on March 12, 1945 Hitler imposed the destruction of all the facilities of the military, transportation, news, industry, and supplies which the enemy could use to their advantage during the fighting. This order was aimed at all the *Wehrmacht* units and at Berlin itself.³⁹⁰

Unlike the acts mentioned above, which simultaneously affected entire parts of the population, there was also direct violence of German forces against individuals who did not behave in accordance with the Nazi policy. The case of the painter and caricaturist E.O. Plauen, who worked at the weekly Nazi party newspaper *Das Reich* is an example for this type of violence. The German writer Hans Fallada³⁹¹ was surprised to hear that his acquaintance, Plauen, committed suicide by shooting. He refused to believe that a man that had so much joy in life had shot himself. The episode that ended in his death began when Plauen's studio at the center of Berlin was bombed. He then sent his family to the south of Germany and shared with a friend a temporary apartment near Berlin in the city of Fürstenwalde. In the evenings, they used to sit together and tell tales. But they did not know that for six months, their landlord had eavesdropped on their conversations and recorded every word they said. The landlord gave the incriminating notes to the *Gestapo*. Even Goebbels could not have saved his own private caricaturist. The only gesture that was offered to Plauen was by placing a gun in his cell. Fallada believed that Plauen laughed when he died because as a caricaturist, he only knew to laugh at the world.³⁹²

Towards the end of the war, there was an escalation of violence of the German forces against civilians who refused to fight the Nazi "Total War" until the very end. Günter Fortange, who in 1945 was only nine years old, recalled more than fifty years later how the entire neighborhood called *Winskies* in Prenzlauer Berg was sealed with barricades as a preparation for the invasion of the Red Army. SS and *Gestapo* units were constantly walking around the streets of the neighborhood. They went repeatedly into cellars and recruited people to the *Volkssturm*.

³⁸⁹ Brederick, Siebelitz, 1998, pp. 163, 166.

³⁹⁰ Gröschner, 1998, p. 21.

³⁹¹ "Hans Fallada" was the pen name of the writer Rudolf Ditzgen. Fallada was passively opposed to the Nazi regime. He was briefly arrested by the SA in 1933 but refused to leave Germany like other German writers during the Nazi rule.

³⁹² Hans Fallada, *In meinem fremden Land: Gefängnistagebuch 1944* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2009), pp. 143-148.

The ones who were selected received combat equipment; a weapon, a helmet, an arm bandage, and a gas mask. They were positioned along the barricades to protect the neighborhood. Many of them were not willing to get hurt in the last minutes of the war; therefore, they hung their guns on the barricades and went back to the cellar. If the SS men found them once again in the cellar, they were then shot at the church at Immanuelkirch Strasse. Fortange claims it was a real massacre.³⁹³

Moreover, during the battle days in Prenzlauer Berg, out of fear of getting shot by the Soviets, people wore white bands when they went out to the streets.³⁹⁴ Unfortunately, they have then encountered a threat from their own regime, as Heinrich Himmler, the supreme commander of the replacement army, ordered: “all male persons from a house displaying a white flag are to be shot.”³⁹⁵ The danger of the response of SS men to expressions of surrender during the fighting in Prenzlauer Berg was constant. For instance, Helga O. mentioned in her school essay from 1946 that during the battle days in Prenzlauer Berg, her building was just across from a block where there was a large group of SS men. A man from her building was shot by these men because he dared to wear a white band.³⁹⁶ The pupil Heinz M. wrote in his school essay in 1946 that during the battle on Prenzlauer Berg, he like many others, always wore a white band when he went out to the street. But in case the SS noticed him or others wearing a white band, they immediately shot at them, and they had to run back to the cellar.³⁹⁷ In a school essay from 1946, the boy Karl P. explained that the tenants in his building hung white flags at the time that the Soviets arrived at their street, Kopenhagener Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg. But then a German officer entered their cellar and notified them that the *Volkssturm* and the *Wehrmacht* had occupied the street again. He yelled at them that if they did not remove the white flags immediately, everyone would be shot.³⁹⁸

³⁹³ Günter Fortange, “Günter Fortange, Jahrgang 1936,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 105.

³⁹⁴ See, for example, Heinz M., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 114; Siegfried B., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 177-180; Aribert K., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 198-199.

³⁹⁵ Richard Bessel, “The War to end all Wars: The Shock of Violence in 1945 and its Aftermath in Germany,” in: *No Man’s Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), p. 76.

³⁹⁶ Helga O., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 28.

³⁹⁷ Heinz M., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 114.

³⁹⁸ Karl P., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 193.

Suicides of Young Boys and Men

The psychohistorian David Beisel claims that in the last days of the war, many Germans were willingly ready to die “in an orgy of collective suicide.”³⁹⁹ Suicide became nearly a mass phenomenon towards the end of the war. In April 1945 alone, almost 4,000 suicides were reported in Berlin, and there were many others that were not recorded.⁴⁰⁰ Numerous Germans put an end to their lives during wartime for various reasons; the Allied bombings, Nazi terror and the fear of it, as well as fear of the consequences of German defeat.⁴⁰¹

Apart from the above-mentioned suicide causes that were shared by men and women, there were specific motivations for men to commit self-murder. To begin with, soldiers committed suicide because they were afraid to fight in a war that they thought was already lost. As the war proceeded and victory seemed far out of reach, suicide rates among the army soldiers increased.⁴⁰² Lots of young troops committed suicide or asked their commanders to shoot them after they realized that the Soviets would soon occupy their lines of defense.⁴⁰³ But not only ordinary soldiers, even prominent military leaders committed suicide because they did not want to face defeat.⁴⁰⁴ Beyond soldiers, Nazis in lower ranks also committed suicide in different ways, such as shooting, hanging, drowning, and poisoning.⁴⁰⁵ Especially in 1945, numerous Nazis put an end to their lives. Some of them killed themselves after hearing the news about Hitler’s death, or right after they heard about the unconditional surrender of their country. Although there were a considerable number of suicides in the high ranks of the army, the highest suicide rates were among the Nazi party and SS members. The reasons for these suicides were probably fear of revenge by Allied forces and a strong will to self-sacrifice.⁴⁰⁶ Additionally, there was the *Wehrmacht* strategy in the final months of the war to continue fighting even though its resistance was no longer effective. This strategy led to numerous battles at a time when the inevitable end to the war was near, amongst them the battle around Berlin, which could almost be considered a collective suicide.⁴⁰⁷

³⁹⁹ David R. Beisel, “The German Suicide, 1945,” *The Journal of Psychohistory* 34.4 (2007), p. 305.

⁴⁰⁰ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 414.

⁴⁰¹ Goeschel, 2009, pp. 130-138.

⁴⁰² Ibid., pp. 138-152.

⁴⁰³ Beisel, 2007, p. 305.

⁴⁰⁴ Bessel, 2006, p. 79.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

⁴⁰⁶ Goeschel, 2009, pp. 138-152.

⁴⁰⁷ Bessel, 2006, pp. 79-80.

Meticulous Men Hunt

The Soviet Union held around three million German POWs, and estimations are that around one million of them died in captivity.⁴⁰⁸ Most of the German POWs in Soviet captivity were captured during the last months of the war. In the Berlin area alone, Soviets captured 330,000 German POWs.⁴⁰⁹

During the battle days in Berlin, the first goal of the Soviet troops was to take over the area and find every hidden German soldier and weapon.⁴¹⁰ Not only were the German troops afraid of getting caught, but also ordinary Berliners were afraid of the Soviet response in case they would find weapons or soldiers hiding in their house. In the cellar of the house of the anonymous woman from Berlin, just before the Soviet troops capitulated the area, a defecting German soldier informed the housing community that people in uniforms should not be allowed in the cellar, because then the Soviet martial law would apply to them, and they would be executed.⁴¹¹ Klaus R., a pupil from Prenzlauer Berg, wrote in his school essay that the Soviets threatened quite often to shoot his father when they entered his building's cellar because they thought that he was a German soldier.⁴¹² Klaus R. did not specify whether his father was a soldier or not.

On April 28, 1945, the Soviet colonel-general Nikolai E. Bersarin was appointed commander of Berlin. In 'Order Nr.1,' Bersarin assumed administrative and political power in the city.⁴¹³ By the order, each member of the Nazi party and the Nazi organizations, the police, the *Wehrmacht*, the SS, and the SA had to register with the Soviet occupying authorities.⁴¹⁴ A few days after, on May 2nd, the day Berlin surrendered, 134,000 German soldiers and officers were captured in the Berlin area.⁴¹⁵ Throughout the summer of 1945, the Soviets conducted constant house searches in order to find weapons and Nazis, as Jürgen Bergk from Bremer Höhe recalled. Bergk's grandfather had a gun in a hiding place, from his time in the imperial navy.

⁴⁰⁸ Frank Biess, Mark Roseman and Hanna Schissler, eds., *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 119.

⁴⁰⁹ Biess, 2006, p. 20.

⁴¹⁰ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 417-418; see, for example, Christa H., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 207-208; Werner W., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 26-27.

⁴¹¹ Anonymous, 2005, p. 62.

⁴¹² Klaus R., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 180.

⁴¹³ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 151.

⁴¹⁴ Bessel, 2009, p. 115.

⁴¹⁵ Gröschner, 1998, pp. 23-24.

One time, his brother took the gun and started playing with it in the building along with two other neighbors. At that moment, three Soviets entered the building and began searching from apartment to apartment. The children quickly fled out of sight into one of the neighbors' apartments. But then the Soviets rang the doorbell. The neighbors' wife did not know what to do, so she put the gun in a pot of pea stew and mixed it.⁴¹⁶



Image 7. People reading 'Order Nr.1' of the Soviet city commander in Berlin from April 28, 1945 (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA032731)

In order to avoid arrest, many German soldiers tried to transform themselves into ordinary civilians. They got rid of their uniforms, their weapons, and any evidence that would link them to the military or the Nazi party, like badges or identifying papers. Instead, they wore regular clothes and hoped to be identified as civilians. For example, in one courtyard in Prenzlauer Berg, some SS men got rid of their weapons and stripped off their jackets. Their plan

⁴¹⁶ Kotte, 2007, pp. 54-55.

was to leave Berlin and head south, to Bayern.⁴¹⁷ In the courtyards of the Bremer Höhe residential buildings, weapons and uniforms were buried by fleeing German soldiers out of fear of getting captured. Bergk's brother told him that weapons, ammunition, and uniforms were buried in one of the courtyards between the sandpit and the kindergarten fence. That happened after the battle of *S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee*. The fleeing German soldiers buried all identifying items because they did not want to get shot by the Soviets. Georg Kulecki, also from Bremer Höhe, remembered that while he was playing in one of the courtyards in August 1945, he was warned by one of the tenants not to dig too deep.⁴¹⁸

Anna from the *Zeitungsviertel* recalled the camouflage attempts of the German troops in the bunker when the first Soviets arrived there. When she got up from her seat, she was surprised to find out that someone hid a gun under her skirt. Anna also noticed that the toilet bowls at the bunker were full of Nazi party badges.⁴¹⁹ The extensive hunt by Red Army soldiers terrified both civilians and soldiers. After being hunted toward the end of the war by German troops for wearing white bands or raising white flags, in the immediate period after the capitulation of Berlin, fear of being captured by Soviet troops or of being punished for concealment was a strong feeling that was engraved in the minds of many contemporaries.

3.2 Alteration of Gender Roles

The historian Frank Biess argues that the last two years of World War II also served as the beginning of the postwar period, in which German society began to cope with the military defeat and its consequences. The transition from war to the postwar period contained not only a social-structural transformation, but also a change in peoples' approaches and their expectations towards the future.⁴²⁰ Following that path, in the years from 1943 to 1948, the wide transformation within German society consisted also of an alteration of sex-based social structures of gender roles as well as gender images and a fundamental change in the balance of power between men and women. These developments had a crucial effect on gender-based acts of violence.

⁴¹⁷ Valentina, 1998, p. 123.

⁴¹⁸ Kotte, 2007, p. 54.

⁴¹⁹ Anna, 1998, p. 267.

⁴²⁰ Biess, Roseman, Schissler, 2007, pp. 118-119.

Nazi culture drew out specific, distinct gender roles to German men and women, which led to a distinct dichotomy between the genders in the Nazi years. The “Ideal Woman” according to Nazi doctrine was an “Aryan” woman, who was a “socially conformist wife and mother.”⁴²¹

Of course, women had other roles during the war. They participated in the colonization of the East and took part in the war industry as well as in the air-defense battalions.⁴²² But even though women contributed to the war effort, they were limited mostly to more traditional female roles, such as cooks, nurses, and social workers. The young Gisela Richter, for instance, served with her female friend in a *Volkssturm* group. As the only two women in their group, they were put in charge of the food preparation. The only time that the men asked her to contribute to their fighting efforts was when they needed someone unsuspecting who would not draw attention from the Soviets. Without a doubt, the fact that she was a woman made her the least suspicious.⁴²³

The “Ideal Man,” according to the Nazis, was a “new man” who should be engaged in heroic activities and be willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good of the state. These virtues were embodied in a soldier, and hence the expectation from the German men was to embrace the soldier’s mentality and to join military organizations. Another crucial aspect of the ideal man was to marry an “Aryan” woman and establish a big family, in order to fulfill the racial duties.⁴²⁴

A distinct example of the male and female desires and expectations within the Nazi cultural context is presented in the diary note of Brigitte Eicke, dating from Christmas 1942, when she was sixteen years old. The young rural boy that she dated wanted to pursue a career as a soldier in the *Wehrmacht*. Eicke was pleased because she did not want to become a farmer’s wife. She already dreamt of having a new apartment and a nice comfortable life as the wife of an officer.⁴²⁵

During the early war years, women were caught between the adapting situation of the wartime mobilization and the traditional expectations from them within Nazi society.⁴²⁶ Due to the fact that an entire generation of men went to fight in the war, the war on the home front had a crucial effect on gender relations and influenced tremendously the Nazi idealized conceptions of

⁴²¹ Heineman, 1999, p. 17.

⁴²² Biess, Roseman, Schissler, 2007, p. 128.

⁴²³ Richter, 2008.

⁴²⁴ Nicole Loroff, “Gender and Sexuality in Nazi Germany,” *Constellations* 3.1 (2011), pp. 49-50.

⁴²⁵ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, pp. 19-20.

⁴²⁶ Schreiter, 2017, p. 364.

womanhood and manhood.⁴²⁷ As the war progressed, wartime necessities dictated radical changes in the roles of women. Numerous jobs for women were allocated due to the absence of men who went to fight in the war, and the needs of war that demanded extra working hands. After the war ended, women continued to occupy numerous positions that were previously dominated by men. Ursula Klaffert recounted many years later that at the age of twenty-three, although she was a qualified accountant, she started working in a construction company that participated in the reconstruction of Prenzlauer Berg. She carried out assignments such as cleaning stones for apartment repairs and carrying heavyweight stones across the streets to the buildings' rooftops.⁴²⁸

However, the process of transformation of the women was much deeper and wider. As the historian Atina Grossmann summarizes it, the collapse of Nazi Germany and the initial steps towards its reconstruction were experienced in terms of gender and significantly influenced German women. They were the ones who stayed behind and cleared out the ruins, took care of the food, and more. Many of them were raped at the time in which the German men were killed, wounded, or captured. The women were perceived as mothers battling for their children's lives, but also as victims of mass rape, especially in the Soviet occupation zone and in Berlin, as well as fraternizers with the occupation soldiers, especially Americans.⁴²⁹

Eventually, many women became the main providers for their families. They were also the key figures in the social and economic reconstruction of Germany, since so many German men had died in the war, were captured and put in POW camps, or returned home suffering from mental and physical disabilities.⁴³⁰

The fundamental change in women's positions within the family and in the socio-cultural structures exposed them to multiple threats. At the outset, these threats had to do with the fact that women spent significant amounts of time in public spaces. First, during the war, being outside made them more exposed to the air raids and the shooting on the streets. Throughout the fighting in Prenzlauer Berg, people went out from the cellars under fire to get food and water. They often walked a great distance to fetch water from still-functioning pumps and stood in line

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 348.

⁴²⁸ Ursula Klaffert, "Die Verwandlung von Fisch in Fleisch," in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 32.

⁴²⁹ Grossmann, 2007, pp. 48-49.

⁴³⁰ Petra Goedde, "From Villains to Victims: Fraternization and the Feminization of Germany, 1945-1947," *Diplomatic History* 23.1 (1999), pp. 6-7.

for hours. It was mainly the women who cared for the constant supply, and many of them did not return from these excursions.⁴³¹ Second, after the fighting stopped, being outside brought other dangers, especially for women. Women that walked outside were easy prey for the Red Army soldiers. Dr. Annemarie Scherner explained in her testimony that while the Soviets treated children nicely, the way back home from fetching water or getting bread at the bakery was risky for women.⁴³²

Except for the occasional encounters on the streets, women were also engaged in several outside activities under the supervision of the Soviet troops. Scherner was seventeen years old when she started working for the Soviets in order to get a ration card. She filled packages that were destined for the Soviet Union. One day, she was sent with other young women to another barracks, where several soldiers were staying. The soldiers tried to approach the women, they gave them raisins and vodka, but the women rejected the food and drinks. Luckily, an officer that appeared put an end to the hustle, and thus, they succeeded temporarily in avoiding further harassment.⁴³³

One central task that was done mostly by German women was the removal of rubble in Berlin. Around five to ten percent of all working women in Berlin participated in this clearing project in the first years after the war.⁴³⁴ In her 2014 book, historian Leonie Treber dismantles the German myth of the rubble women as heroic women who rehabilitated the country after the Nazi era, arguing that there was not a large number of women who participated in the clearing-out project, and, more than that, most of them did not volunteer for the project.⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, even if their numbers were limited and they were forced to work, the women's participation in the rubble removal is significantly documented in the sources.

Erika Meusel from Prenzlauer Berg remembered years later of her participation in this wide-scale project, during the years from 1945 to 1947. She testified that the "women of the ruins" were incredibly successful in quickly bringing order to the streets. She helped to clear the ruins at the hospital on Danziger Strasse. After half a year of work, the debris was gone, and

⁴³¹ Gröschner, 1998, p. 22.

⁴³² Scherner, 2001, p. 81.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Steege, 2007, p. 29.

⁴³⁵ Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen: Klartext, 2014).

after another half a year the place was all clean and functioning again.⁴³⁶ The work of the “women of the ruins” of moving piles of rubble from one place to another was very risky. On Greifswalder Strasse in Prenzlauer Berg, for example, anti-tank rocket launchers and hand grenades were found buried under the debris. Some of them were loaded, and thus exploded and injured several women severely.⁴³⁷

Women who did not work under the Soviets were in danger of encountering forces. Klaus Kordon’s mother ran their family’s *Kneipe* in northern Prenzlauer Berg alone after his father died in the war. One day, Soviets came looking to buy some bottles of alcohol, but she told them that she had run out of alcohol. Behind the counter were several bottles of alcohol containing tea for advertising purposes. The Soviets did not believe that they were not full of alcohol, and after trying them, they became angry with her and smashed half of the place.⁴³⁸

A most important aspect regarding the alteration of gender roles was the way the mass phenomenon of rape in Berlin was influenced by the change in male and female roles. Current historiography recognizes German women as the sole victims of sexual violence. As historian Miriam Gebhardt argues in her recent book: *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War*, women suffered from rapes committed by Soviet soldiers and Western allies throughout Germany. They also continued to be the victims of doctors, welfare workers, and the broader German society, which until today has tended to ignore this subject.⁴³⁹

Yet even though being in the public space exposed women to even greater acts of violence, and, as I have shown, not only sexual violence, to treat women only as victims is to miss the bigger picture, put their experiences out of context, and, most importantly, to overlook their essential and powerful roles at this period. As Atina Grossmann contends, women were not just victims; they also functioned as agents who fought to provide food and shelter and negotiated with the occupation soldiers to gain protection for their children and for themselves. There were cases of mothers who offered themselves in exchange for the protection of their daughters. In other cases, women deliberately fraternized with one soldier, preferably an officer who would protect them from others and give them privileges.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ Meusel, 2000, p. 110.

⁴³⁷ W.M., Rep. 134/13, Nr. 182/2, Bl. 100-101.

⁴³⁸ Kordon, 2004, p. 253.

⁴³⁹ Gebhardt, 2017.

⁴⁴⁰ Grossmann, 2000, 1997, p.43.

Certainly, the fraternization occurrences can be put together with the rape events and treated from a victimization perspective. The claim would be that in the chaotic postwar period, when male domination was total, women's choices were extremely limited. Although this may be true, the reality was much more complex; women made absolute conscious choices to fraternize with the soldiers, for they knew it would keep them from random rapes and they would also get food and other consumer goods from their male friends. The act of fraternization made them feel powerful in controlling and manipulating the situation on their own behalf.⁴⁴¹

Similar to those of women, the roles and the images of German men also changed significantly during the period of war and occupation. The men fought a brutal war until its very end, and to a certain extent fulfilled the Nazi-desired image of the strong, heroic soldier. Nonetheless, war experiences, captivity time in prison camps, and the experience of returning home from being conquerors to conquered all influenced them significantly, both mentally and physically. Under these conditions, many of the men felt humiliated and defeated, and found it difficult to maintain their previous position and duties at home and in society.

Born only in 1943, Klaus Kordon often dreamed that his father, who had died in the war, was returning to him. Kordon described how he, along with the other kids in his neighborhood in Prenzlauer Berg, were essentially free from parental supervision. Although it was forbidden for them to do dangerous things, such as play in the ruins of the houses, there were no fathers around to enforce it. The fathers were either in the war, had died, or were in captivity. Those who did return were disabled in one way or the other, making it more difficult for them to be attentive parents. Children roamed the streets and initiated their own "education system;" the older ones were the educators of the younger ones, and he thought it worked out perfectly.⁴⁴²

The lack of actual, functioning fathers in the lives of children demonstrates the change of male roles within the family; they lost their paternal authority and, more importantly, their role of being fathers to their children. Furthermore, the fact that the men were no longer the strong, functioning male figures also influenced the experiences of violence. Their weakness and inability in this period were clearly evident in their reluctance to protect the German women from ongoing rapes. This passive behavior left the women vulnerable and alone in the battle against the sexual violence of the Red Army soldiers.

⁴⁴¹ See, for example, Anonymous, 2005, pp. 85-92, 97.

⁴⁴² Kordon, 2004, pp. 249-252.

Irmhild Zinow elaborated in an interview in 2015 on her experiences from the end of the war that included the inconsiderate and even selfish behavior of the men. Zinow was nine years old when she experienced the end of the war at the *U-Bahnhof Potsdamerplatz*, in Berlin's city center. According to her memory, the men at this point first took care of themselves. She stayed there with her mother and two siblings. She recalled that, at some point, the water began to flood the tunnel where they stayed, and all the people there started panicking and tried to move forward to any of the exits. It was horrible, as everyone tried to get out of this inferno. The water reached their necks. She recalled that everybody was pushing hard, but worst of all the men, including soldiers. Many soldiers committed suicide by shooting, many other soldiers were still trying to take off their uniforms.⁴⁴³

Anna from the *Zeitungsviertel* was in her twenties at the end of the war. After the Soviets first entered the bunker where she stayed, a very unpleasant night began. She claimed that it was actually the first time that the Red Army troops were permitted to "let off steam" over the Germans. Her mother decided that it would be best to sit down on the first bench in the open space of the bunker, so when the soldiers got down the stairs, they would look over and search for women further inside. Anna watched all the thick boots walking past her. When it became too dangerous, her mother ordered her to hide under the bench, and meanwhile, the mother sat there and covered her legs with a coat. Anna spent the rest of the night under the bench without moving. Throughout the night the rapes continued; the soldiers carried the women back to the cellar only partially covered.⁴⁴⁴

In Anna's story, there is no mention of the German men in the bunker, although it can be assumed that an entire bunker also had German men present, which probably indicates the lack of involvement of the men in trying to prevent or resist the rape of women in the bunker. However, Anna did mention her mother's attempts to save her from the soldiers. This again demonstrates the active role of the mothers, who took the initiative and acted to protect their daughters.

By exploring the changing gender roles of the German men and women and its effect on the violent acts, one important aspect is revealed: the common argument among historians is that

⁴⁴³ Irmhild Zinow, "Mein Kriegsende in Berlin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5.5.2015. 28.2.2020
<https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/mein-kriegsende-in-berlin>

⁴⁴⁴ Anna, 1998, pp. 266-267.

the Germans fought until the very end of the war.⁴⁴⁵ But then, surprisingly, after the total surrender of Germany, they stopped fighting at once, and there were rare cases of resistance to the occupation forces.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, Frank Biess claimed that the collapse of the Nazi dictatorship resembled the failure of the men to defend their country and their families against the Red Army. This failure also prevented potential resistance based on the ideological ground to the conquering armies.⁴⁴⁷

However, a closer look from a gendered perspective on the postwar period shows that this view is deficient because it refers solely to men, and only to a militant resistance. This view tends to ignore the many daily aspects in which there were acts of resistance occurrences against the enemy, but mostly by women. During the Battle of Berlin and during the occupation period, women fought for their lives and the lives of their loved ones in various ways. They fought daily with the Soviet troops—even physically—over rape, food, and water, protection for their families, housing, and so on. And these daily battles led to further violent encounters between Allied soldiers and German women.

Hsu-Ming Teo concludes that while the war might have ended for the European men in May 1945, the war against the German women continued during the years of Allied occupation.⁴⁴⁸ Of course her claim relates mainly to sexual violence. In cases of killing within the family, it is interesting to discover that not only the fathers, but also the mothers in some cases killed their own children and then themselves because they did not see any future for themselves near the end of the war. The very fact that it was mothers who killed their children indicates a change in the role of the men since the beginning of the war. To summarize it in a very basic way, German men had failed in their overall roles.⁴⁴⁹

It is interesting that in some cases mothers killed their children, but in other cases, they protected them. Even though these are two contradictory acts, they indicate the same conclusion: women played an active, dominant role, whereas men demonstrated passive and weak behavior. Whether they were away or at home, they projected a feeling of absence.

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, Bessel, 2006, p. 77.

⁴⁴⁶ See, for example, Biess, Roseman, Schissler, 2007, p. 119.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 128-129.

⁴⁴⁸ Teo, 1996, p. 192.

⁴⁴⁹ Goeschel, 2009, pp. 162-163.

3.3 Lack of Common Ground between the Sexes

There was a decisive influence of gender-based violence on the relations between men and women. In the first place, gender-based violence led to a crucial disproportion between the sexes. In 1945, German society became disproportionately female because of the wartime losses and the millions of German POWs. This situation of a majority-female population in German society remained so for decades.⁴⁵⁰

Furthermore, the completely different violent experiences that men and women encountered distanced them fundamentally from one another. It almost seems like they lived in two different dimensions which existed one next to the other without any point of intersection. Inevitably, this situation created an enormous gap between the two sexes which was hard to bridge. Under those circumstances, it was hard for them to communicate, for they had no common ground of experience. First of all, men and women experienced opposing sexual experiences during war and occupation. As the historian Elizabeth Heineman argues, the wartime experiences of the German men involved also sexual violence towards women. The *Wehrmacht* soldiers had sexual contact with women in occupied territories, and their sexual acts included rape, contact with prostitutes, and relationships with women in exchange for food or protection. Even incidents that were not clearly violent could have become deadly. In some incidents, German men committed brutal rape, along with verbal humiliation, beatings, and murder.⁴⁵¹

After these experiences, it is not surprising that the Red Army aspired to revenge the rape by Germans with rape acts of their own. Their striving for revenge was escalated by what the historian Kerstin Bischl portrayed as individual soldiers' uncontrolled outbreaks of pointless violence against the enemy as a part of the Stalinist state pressure to commit collective violence.⁴⁵² And so, the Red Army soldiers treated the German women the same; they raped them, sometimes with extreme violence, they had sexual contact with sex workers or stable contact with women who were offered food and protection. Hence, it is not difficult to observe that the soldiers of the Red Army and the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* experienced similar experiences as perpetrators against native women of the conquered territories. From this gendered perspective, the emphasis is on the fact that men who were on the winning side raped

⁴⁵⁰ Bessel, 2012, p. 190.

⁴⁵¹ Heineman, 2005, p. 48.

⁴⁵² Kerstin Bischl, "Presenting Oneself: Red Army Soldiers and Violence in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945," *History* 101.346 (2016), pp. 464, 478–479.

and dominated women who are on the defeated side. The reasons and motivation for the battle itself between the two sides were less important.

This point reveals another interesting aspect regarding how little German men and women had in common during this period. They literally stood on opposite sides as sexual perpetrators and victims, and, no doubt, this contributed to their difficulty in contacting and communicating with each other. The communication between men and women encountered another major setback. In his essay, “Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945,” historian Jeffrey Burds presents psychologist Erika Hoerning’s observation while working in postwar, Soviet-occupied East Germany about the attitudes of German men and women towards each other regarding rape. Hoerning claimed that the women who were victims of rape by Soviet soldiers in 1945 usually remained loyal to their men, and did not blame them for their own suffering. The men, on the other hand, denied the sexual assaults of the women and quite often turned the blame on the women by saying that they were fraternizing with the enemy troops.⁴⁵³

Moreover, as the historian of everyday life Paul Steege notes, it was hard for the German men who returned to Berlin to accept the open, sincere, and even brutal conversations of many women about the experiences of rape, and their tough struggle to survive.⁴⁵⁴ But even if the women wanted to ignore or repress the issue of rape, the inevitable implications of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases prevented them from doing so. They could not simply erase these existing implications, and had to confront them. And thus, as men could have chosen whether to address the issue of rape and face the violated women, the women, on the other hand, were forced to deal with it in one way or another.

The difficulty and at times unwillingness to find ways of communication was illustrated in the relationships between the anonymous woman and her boyfriend, Gerd. In late June 1945, Gerd returned from the Eastern front. Once he came back, he started behaving in an alienated and detached manner, and there were more than a few frictions between him and her. The anonymous woman let him read her diary, which he read only shortly, and returned to her, claiming he could not understand it with all her shorthand and abbreviations. Gerd was amazed to find out that one abbreviation meant rape. When she was in a good mood and shared with him

⁴⁵³ Burds, 2009, p. 61.

⁴⁵⁴ Steege, 2007, p. 90.

her experiences of the past weeks, it led to a fight. He was furious and said that she and the other women in the house had lost their morals and become shameless.⁴⁵⁵

The growing chasm between the sexes also manifested itself in the institution of marriage. The divorce rate doubled after the war in comparison to the prewar period. The main reason for divorce was the long period that the couples lived apart. War marriages, where a couple was acquainted only shortly before the marriage, were especially destined to fail. Another reason was the independent development of the women, for their work turned into a central component in their lives and in German society. On the other side, there were the men, who suffered from numerous humiliations due to their loss in the war. They had difficulties finding jobs, and were therefore dependent on their wives.⁴⁵⁶

Furthermore, the participation of women in the labor market during and after the war contributed to more free sexual behavior which undermined traditional marriage. Rape was another factor in undermining marriages. For some women, rape created sexual confusion. Many others were infected with sexually transmitted diseases without proper treatment. At the same time, around forty percent of the returned German POWs were not fit to work, and some did not function sexually because of injuries, trauma, and malnutrition. Furthermore, they were not able to prevent the rape of their wives and had a tough time identifying with the trauma that they had experienced. The women who got pregnant or had a child after being raped were rejected by their returning husbands. After the mass rape, the men perceived the women as “whores.” All these aspects clearly sharpened the stresses on marriage in the Soviet zone.⁴⁵⁷

3.4 Attitudes towards Gender-Based Violence

Attitudes of Women towards their own Violent Experiences

Many German women fought back against the threat of rape in various ways; some hid from the attackers or tried not to stand out. They pretended to being sick or disguised themselves to look older by dirtying their faces with dust, wearing multiple layers to cover their body, or covering their heads with rags.⁴⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, another way of fighting against the threat of rape

⁴⁵⁵ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 304-308.

⁴⁵⁶ Naimark, 1995, pp. 125-126.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁵⁸ Moorhouse, 2012, pp. 421-422; Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 269.

was to become the lover of one soldier in order to avoid the sexual assaults of others. The most extreme solution to escape rape was committing suicide.

A major portion of German women perceived mass rape as part of the general war effort. Women and young girls prepared themselves for the possibility of being raped and experiencing other violent phenomena by the Red Army soldiers in case they reached German soil. Grossmann asserted that in 1945, German women, especially in Berlin and east of the city, experienced rape as a collective event in a situation of total crisis, and as a part of the apocalyptic atmosphere. The narrative of rape was incorporated into the general narrative of survival in ruined Germany.⁴⁵⁹

This treatment of the intimate sexual violation as a collective experience in a time of war and occupation reduced the personal significance of these acts for the women, and also served as a means for them to cope with it. The anonymous woman mentioned in her diary one old woman who claimed that she did not grant any significance to the rapes, but if her husband would ever come back from the Western front, she would not want him to know that she was raped. After a direct hit on her home, she was buried along with other tenants in the cellar. As someone who experienced the two extreme situations of rape and bombings, she agreed with the common phrase that “Better a Russki on top than a Yank overhead.”⁴⁶⁰ In other words, being raped by a Soviet soldier was better than the American bombings of the buildings.

Erich Kästner witnessed a conversation between two women mentioning a woman who had died after she was raped thirty times. Even though they were disgusted by the act, the death itself did not horrify them. They were very realistic and analyzed the horrible event in a cold, rational way.⁴⁶¹ The anonymous woman wrote in her diary about a sixteen-year-old girl who lost her virginity to the Soviets. However, the anonymous woman claimed that, after the Soviets evacuated their neighborhood, the girl had the same expression of self-satisfaction as always. She was certain that the girl's reaction would have been different if she had been raped in peacetime and was going through the whole regular process of a police investigation, local gossip, and newspaper reports. But the current situation of rape was an inevitable part of their present, a “collective experience,” which was both feared and expected.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Grossmann, 2007, p. 52.

⁴⁶⁰ Anonymous, 2005, p. 257.

⁴⁶¹ Kästner, 1966, 1961, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁶² Anonymous, 2005, p. 174.

Nevertheless, not all the women managed to treat their personal experiences of rape with such indifference, and the multiple varied expressions can be seen in their use of language. Rape was described in many ways; tragically, ironically, cynically, and more than once, apathetically. In certain cases, the sexual assaults were narrated down to the last detail, and sometimes they were motioned only in hints. The anonymous woman wrote in her diary about the sexual assaults with uncompromising directness. She presented in detail her and other women's experiences of rape. Writing about rape served as a way for her to cope with the horrible situation.⁴⁶³ Moreover, she specifically referred to the "language of rape," especially to the choice of words and their meanings, used by those who spoke about rape. "What does it mean-rape?" She asked herself, admitting that when she pronounced the word "rape" aloud for the first time, "it sent shivers down my spine." After a while, she could think and reflect on it, and write the word in her diary "with an untrembling hand." The word "rape" sounded to her "like the absolute worst, the end of everything," but she knew that it was not really the case.⁴⁶⁴

"There is only silence-an eerie silence," she wrote after the Soviets had left her neighborhood. She believed that, just as the rape was mass rape, coping with it would also be collective. If a woman who was raped could open up and talk about her experiences, she would enable other women to share their suffering with the rest, although there still might be cases of women who would not be able to overcome the rape experiences and continue with their lives or would suffer from mental disorders.⁴⁶⁵

Some women did not want to talk about their rape experiences at all. Christa G. from Prenzlauer Berg was only fourteen years old in 1945. In an interview from the 1990s, she explained that many of her classmates were raped, but she cannot remember any of them talking about it.⁴⁶⁶ In other cases, mass rape definitely did not pass in silence. Many women checked and probed what happened to others. They shared their experiences, especially with other women who went through similar experiences. When the anonymous woman met with acquaintances and even total strangers, she was concerned about whether they had been raped, and if so, how many times. At the beginning of May 1945, she noticed that people slowly began to regard the

⁴⁶³ Anonymous, 2005.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 173-174.

⁴⁶⁶ Christa G., "Christa G. (Aufsatz Nr. XVII, 13)," in: *Ich schlug meiner Mutter die brennenden Funken ab: Berliner Schulaufsätze aus dem Jahre 1946*, Annett Gröschner and Prenzlauer Berg Museum, eds. (Berlin: Kontext, 1996), p. 355.

whole phenomenon of rape with black humor. One month later, she met with her female friends. They all were in a cheerful mood and succeeded in outdoing one another with rape jokes.⁴⁶⁷

Another fascinating aspect of the women's attitude towards the Soviet rapings was that it confirmed their expectations and strengthened their feeling of cultural superiority.⁴⁶⁸ This attitude stands in contradiction to the German men, whose violent experiences caused an absolute decline of their previously powerful male image. Although women went through experiences of rape and other kinds of physical violence that supposedly manifested their "weakness" as victims of violence, their image as strong and independent women just intensified.

This occurred for a number of reasons: after years of Nazi horror propaganda that warned of the arrival of the Red Army soldiers, women were completely aware and prepared for the possibility that such rape acts would indeed happen. Furthermore, the violent experiences did not demolish their own perception of racial superiority over the Soviet troops. And lastly, women needed to focus on themselves and their families' daily survival, so that their constant focus was on daily life and not on their private suffering. The fact that most of the women did not break down and continued to fulfill their roles as mothers and workers also strengthened their self-image as powerful and productive figures.

Attitudes of Men towards the Violent Experiences of the Women

As mentioned above, German men did very little to prevent rape acts. The common solution of the men to the constant threat of rape was to stand aside and do almost nothing. Fear of Soviet reactions was the main reason that the men did not act against the rapes, or against consensual sexual relations between German women and the Soviet troops. One astonishing example of male response to those acts was a notice that was hung outside a storefront. In the notice, which was addressed to German women, men pleaded with the women to stop embarrassing them.⁴⁶⁹

This desperate response shows again the complete lack of communication between the genders, for the men needed to hang a general-public notice in order to convey their thoughts to

⁴⁶⁷ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 146, 166, 192-193, 278.

⁴⁶⁸ Grossmann, 2007, p. 52.

⁴⁶⁹ Filip Slaveski, "Violence and Xenophobia as means of Social Control in times of Collapse: The Soviet Occupation of Post-War Germany, 1945-1947," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54.3 (2008), p. 398.

women and hoped that women would just submit to their wishes. But it also reveals how weak men were at this stage, for they needed to urge the women to stop their acts through a random sign, instead of initiating direct confrontation with women or with the soldiers who threatened them. This example joins many other cases in which German men sent threatening letters to German women. On many occasions, the ways of communication turned even more violent, where women suffered from verbal abuse by German soldiers for being “Allied whores.”⁴⁷⁰

Andreas-Friedrich brought in her diary the story of Inge Zaun, an eighteen-year-old virgin girl, who was raped sixty times, until she became the mistress of the attackers' captain. She confessed that she could not protect herself when every night new soldiers came into her home, banging on the door, and firing in all directions. But the worst act for her was the first time when the soldiers forced her father to watch them rape her. She thought she would die at that moment.⁴⁷¹ The humiliation was not only hers, but the soldiers also humiliated the father by forcing him to watch the act and do nothing. In doing so, they emphasized his weak and powerless position.

One radical, but nevertheless, not so rare reaction of men towards the threat of or the actual rapes of their wives and daughters was to “push” them to commit suicide, since they perceived the act of rape as a desecration of honor of German women. Andreas-Friedrich reported in her diary about one stunned father who said to his daughter, after she had been raped twelve times, that if one’s honor is lost, then all is lost. The father reacted in complete shock. He handed her a rope, and the obedient daughter committed suicide hanging herself from the window.⁴⁷² Hsu-Ming Teo presented an even more extreme claim in stating that some women were forced to commit suicide by their own fathers because of their “dishonor,” while others were killed by their husbands for having consensual sexual relations with enemy soldiers.⁴⁷³ This “solution” turned women into victims of even more violent acts which resulted in their deaths. Certainly, this response does show that, in some cases, men made use of their male power, but once again it was directed against women, and not against the attacking soldiers.

⁴⁷⁰ Teo, 1996, p. 191.

⁴⁷¹ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, p.22.

⁴⁷² Ibid., p.23.

⁴⁷³ Teo, 1996, p. 191.

Although there were some rare cases of male resistance to the rapes,⁴⁷⁴ the most common male reaction was ignoring and repressing the mass rape that took place around them. In a building in Prenzlauer Berg, a Soviet soldier took from the cellar the mother of Frau Z.. The other cellar inhabitants heard her screaming from the stairs. The father of Frau Z. wanted to go and help the mother, but the other men in the cellar held him and convinced him to leave her be. When the mother returned to the cellar, she kept a distance from the others.⁴⁷⁵ Women resented men for their weak behavior and powerless positions regarding the acts of sexual violence they experienced. The anonymous woman thought that German men showed their worst side given their behavior towards the threatened women. One woman shared with the anonymous woman her experience that when the Soviets “fell on her” in the cellar of her house, a male neighbor yelled at her: “Well, why don’t you just go with them, you’re putting all of us in danger!”⁴⁷⁶

Attitudes of Men towards their own Violent Experiences

The “Total War,” along with the total defeat, had a dramatic impact on the physical and mental health of the German men who returned home from war and captivity. Their physical and psychological suffering shows that the war and the defeat continued to affect them long after the war ended.⁴⁷⁷ Most of the sources that I have been able to obtain about violent experiences were written by women, children, and youth. The testimonies about the experiences of the men were written primarily by family members and acquaintances. For this reason, although I possess detailed descriptions of their experiences, I can say less about their own attitudes towards their violent experiences and towards the violent experiences of the women.

On April 22, 1945, the anonymous woman watched from her doorstep as a troop of discouraged and exhausted soldiers passed by in silence. She asked them where they were headed, and no one answered. One of them murmured something. Another spoke to himself: “Führer, command! And we will follow, even unto death.” On the walls appeared letters that apparently were supposed to lead the troops to an assembly point. Two posters hung on one tree. The first warned against surrender and threatened death by shooting or hanging. The second poster entitled: “To the people of Berlin,” requested all the men to fight and warned against

⁴⁷⁴ See, for example, Anonymous, 2005, p. 156.

⁴⁷⁵ Bredereck, Siebelitz, 1998, p. 264.

⁴⁷⁶ Anonymous, 2005, p. 96.

⁴⁷⁷ Biess, 2006, pp. 70-71.

rebellious foreigners.⁴⁷⁸ This case demonstrates how the German soldiers accepted without resistance the dead-end to which they were headed. On the one hand, they stood against the advancing Red Army troops, and on the other hand, against the threats from their own regime. Their attitude to the deadly situation was to withdraw into themselves until the point that they did not properly communicate with their surroundings.

Attitudes of Women towards the Violent Experiences of the Men

Women felt sorry for and, in some situations, despised the defeated German men. Throughout the war, and especially towards its end, women's perceptions of men changed completely.⁴⁷⁹ If at the beginning of the war they perceived the men who went to battle as strong, undefeated figures that held racial superiority over other nations they fought, by the end of the war, there was not much left from that perception. Even the male image within the family circle became fragile, for in many cases, the men were no longer needed.⁴⁸⁰

The anonymous woman had mixed feelings of pity and contempt toward the above-mentioned group of soldiers that passed by her on April 22, 1945. Their faces were expressionless. Some were limping while slowly and disorderly progressed towards the city center. She displayed a brutal illustration of the men; they looked to her as already defeated and captured, “so little like men any more.” No one expected anything from them.⁴⁸¹ The women’s compassion for the young boys that were recruited to military and semi-military organizations like the *Hitlerjugend* and the *Volkssturm* was far more extreme, and they were frequently perceived as victims of a fatal policy. Although some of them took part in the fighting enthusiastically, as if it was a children’s game, their participation was often perceived as crossing a moral red line. Andreas-Friedrich mentioned in her diary that on April 20, 1945, ten-year-old boys were drafted for the first time to the *Hitlerjugend* and pledged allegiance to Hitler. She criticized this act that turned innocent children into *Werwölfe* and called it “a bloody fable.”⁴⁸²

After the defeat of the German forces in the battle at the *S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee* in Prenzlauer Berg on May 2nd, thousands of dead bodies lay there under the elevated railway; most

⁴⁷⁸ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁸⁰ Kordon, 2004, pp. 249-251.

⁴⁸¹ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁸² Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, p. 249.

of them were underage soldiers.⁴⁸³ Waltraud Garstecki, who in 1945 was a twelve-year-old girl, stated years later that many of them were just kids. They were evacuated later with a truck to an unknown place.⁴⁸⁴

3.5 Conclusion

Exploring men and women in their daily lives in Prenzlauer Berg throughout the period from 1943 to 1948 reveals the many different violent experiences that the two gendered groups experienced side by side. On the one hand, German women experienced mass rape by the advancing and occupying Soviet troops, and there were cases of womens' suicides before and following the "immoral" rape acts. On many occasions, the rape acts were particularly brutal, as mental abuse, verbal or extreme physical violence were an inevitable part of the rape acts. The sexual encounters with the occupying forces were anything but simple. In romantic relationships, through fraternity, in acts of prostitution and rape, it can be clearly said that all of those encounters were complex, relationships changed constantly, and not in all cases it was possible to clearly determine who was the winning side and the losing side or who was the attacker or the victim.

On the other hand, German men faced deadly military service and violence directed from the Nazi regime against soldiers as well as civilians that punished them for different crimes, such as desertion, treason, and so on. Like the women, many soldiers and Nazi officials also committed suicide towards the end of the war. With the Soviet occupation of Berlin, German men also confronted extensive arrests and captivity.

Throughout the years 1943-1948, there was a widespread alteration in gender roles and gender images, and the balance of power between men and women changed completely. These transformations had a huge impact on gender-based acts of violence. Women became the main providers for their families, working, searching for food, negotiating with the occupying troops, and filling most of the previous roles of the dead, missing, and wounded men. As a result, women spent a lot of time outside, which exposed them to threats, such as threats of bombings or sexual assault. Moreover, the various experiences of gender-based violence experienced by men

⁴⁸³ Gröschner, 2015.

⁴⁸⁴ Garstecki, 2000, p. 107.

and women alienated them until they lived in almost two separate worlds, making it increasingly difficult for them to communicate with each other.

Many German women tried to fight rape. They hid, impersonated others, made themselves ugly, fraternized, and even committed suicide. Many of them believed that the rapes were part of the war effort, which helped them deal with sexual assaults. Other women could not cope with these experiences with such indifference. In contrast to women's activities regarding rape, German men did almost nothing to help women against rape. This was mainly because they feared the Soviet response. The German men who returned from the war and captivity were deeply affected by the "Total War" and its aftermath, which continued to affect them long after. The attitude of German women towards the defeated men, who were perceived at the beginning of the war as strong and undefeatable, ranged from pity to utter contempt.

Chapter Four

Perceptions of Past, Present, and Future in the Historical Present

The three different time zones; past, present, and future, were a topic of great significance for contemporaries during the ongoing historical present of the years between 1943 and 1948. As the sources repeatedly show, this subject occupied them greatly and they pondered quite a bit on the various meanings of time. It is important to note that in their testimonies, contemporaries reflected more about their lives in the historical present and the future ahead than about the past. Hence, in accordance with the sources, this chapter focuses less on their past and more on their present and future.

As presented in the previous three chapters from different aspects and angles, the daily lives of the people in the last phase of the war and the occupation period were undoubtedly violent, and throughout this brutal era, contemporaries were very concerned with thoughts about the past, their present lives, and the uncertain future. The extraordinary violence within the fragile and unstable present of the contemporaries during the last years of the war and also at times in the postwar period became a very dominant element that decisively affected their lives. These violent experiences not only affected their present, but also profoundly affected their memory of the past and their expectations for the upcoming future. Thus, there was much tension between their perceptions of the present and looking back to the violent past or thinking ahead about the unknown future that awaited them and might turn out to be either peaceful or violent. This tension was a central feature of the way they looked at these two points in time. Overall, contemporaries had ambivalent thoughts about the past and future that included both positive and negative emotions. As the Israeli historian Boaz Neumann maintains, human beings do not settle for their present world. Instead, they create for themselves other worlds of forgetfulness and memories as well as other future worlds that they either long for or fear.⁴⁸⁵

4.1 Attitudes towards the Past

From the standpoint of the postwar period, the war's past events that contemporaries in Berlin and, specifically, in Prenzlauer Berg, experienced directly and personally were engraved and evaluated differently in their memories. One very evident attitude towards the past events of war and Nazi rule in general in the immediate years after the war was a strong desire to forget, ignore, or deliberately erase this memory of the near past. This feeling was radicalized among

⁴⁸⁵ Boaz Neumann, *Being in the World: German Worlds at the turn of the 20th Century* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2014), p. 15.

some people to the extent of a total repression of this era. However, many people failed at repressing the past events and thus, an opposite outcome emerged; they were forced to keep on living with the sensitive memories of past experiences. Contrary to the will to repress, there were also people with a different approach who were unwilling to simply ignore this crucial era and wanted to confront it.

Repression of the Past in the Postwar Era

Historian Richard Overy argues that as soon as the war ended and even earlier, Germans who supported the Nazi regime tried to distance themselves from any connection to the Third Reich. After the defeat, the past faded away almost at once. Many Germans decided to blue-pencil and erase their recent past.⁴⁸⁶ Moreover, the German writer and literary scholar W.G. Sebald argues that at the time when Germany was beginning to rebuild itself, the enormous destruction of German cities in the last years of the war as a result of the strategic bombings was enshrined in the collective memory of the past only in a general and vague way. The experience of destruction seems to have left almost no pain in the collective consciousness; it has not been deciphered, and has been largely erased from a retrospective understanding of the Germans.⁴⁸⁷

Indeed, looking back from the standpoint of the historical present, towards the end of the war and throughout the occupation period, many German contemporaries shared the feeling that the recent past of the war and the Nazi state, was a chaotic and violent period that was irrelevant to their changing present and the upcoming future. Thus, they preferred not to reflect on or confront this period, choosing to simply forget about it. Their wish was to erase their recent past memories, up to the point of repressing these experiences completely.

It is important, however, not to confuse their acts of erasure and repression of their recent past with thinking that it led to and represents a kind of “zero hour,” symbolizing a complete historical break with the past towards a fresh start. For, it has already been proved in many aspects in previous chapters, that there were continuities in various spheres of life that transcended 1945, even if people who lived in that period wanted to ignore them. The contemporaries’ desire to erase the past was directly connected to their strong will to focus on their “new” present lives in occupied Berlin. Kurt Lütge from Prenzlauer Berg, who was a young

⁴⁸⁶ Overy, 2012, p. 61.

⁴⁸⁷ W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 3-4.

man at the end of the war, addressed this pattern of behavior. Looking back on the time after the collapse of the Third Reich, he maintained that, once the terrifying period of Nazi rule ended in 1945, people wanted to forget as soon as possible all about this time, and proceeded with their lives. Lütge claimed that what helped in the forgetting process was going out to places such as the cinema, stage shows, or modest celebrations, where people danced to the music of German and Russian songs.⁴⁸⁸

The pupil Traute S. portrayed the last days of the Battle of Berlin until the city's defeat in her school essay from 1946. At the end of the essay, she admitted that now, from her point of view in 1946, everyone hoped that soon things would get better, and for this reason, everyone wanted to help with the reconstruction of the city. She claimed that once things got better, they could forget about the year 1945.⁴⁸⁹

This approach of repression, whether intentional and conscious or unconscious, continued for many years. This can be clearly seen in the case of Renate Steinert. Born in 1938, Steinert lived during her childhood on Danziger Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg. In 1944, she started school at Duncker Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg. According to a text written by Renate Steinert and interviews with her that were held in the first decade of the 2000s, she mentioned that when she started school it was a time of constant threat from the air raids. She could not remember her first day at school and what kind of school bag she had. Those memories were completely erased. She assumed that her repression might be related to all the terrible experiences that she experienced during that time.⁴⁹⁰

Inability or Unwillingness to Repress the Past in the Postwar Era

On the other hand, during the occupation period, quite a significant number of people found it rather difficult to forget about their experiences in the war, even if they wanted to. To begin, there was the Allied policy of a "re-education" program that brought the Germans to directly

⁴⁸⁸ Kurt Lütge, "Von Festen, Politik und der verschwundenen Braut," in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 48-50.

⁴⁸⁹ Traute S., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 150-151.

⁴⁹⁰ Renate Steinert, "Nachkriegserinnerungen," in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 229, 235-236.

confront their Nazi past.⁴⁹¹ For example, on July 25, 1945, just a short time after Berlin capitulated to the Red Army, Brigitte Eicke and her mother watched a Soviet documentary film about the Battle of Berlin. They found it hard to watch. Eicke maintained that the Soviets should not have put them in the position of watching such a film. She thought that screening this film three months after the end of the war was not wise; perhaps after a couple of years, it would be possible.⁴⁹²



Image 8. A destroyed tank in the postwar period with a sign hanging on it: “Cannons instead of butter that was the slogan of the fascists” (*Kanonen statt Butter das war die Losung der Faschisten*). Meaning that the Nazis called with their well-known slogan “Cannons instead of butter” for the German nation to prioritize arms over food, and now the German people can see that this strategy had failed with Germany’s loss in the war. (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA032468)

⁴⁹¹ Inga Scharf, *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home* (New York, London: Routledge, 2008), p. 16.

⁴⁹² Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 307.

Eicke had been a member of the *BDM* during the war. Although after the end of the war she distanced herself from her Nazi past and created a new life for herself working for an anti-fascist youth organization, her comments showed that the recent past was still very sensitive for her, and she preferred not to confront it. Nevertheless, it is not clear from her remarks whether on this occasion watching the Soviet documentary was forced by the occupation forces or not.

In addition, a great number of people felt that the near past of war and Nazi rule was very vivid in their present and they could not simply shake it off. On May 30, 1945, Marta Mierendorff admitted that there were days she felt so hopeless that she wanted to die. On the surface, people were beginning to return to normal life. But on a deeper level, she felt the presence of death. She had to gather her courage every day to fight her depression.⁴⁹³

Undoubtedly, there were Jewish people who had a tough time repressing past events. As was extensively mentioned in the first chapter, Hella Frankenberg and her family suffered greatly during the Nazi period and especially the wartime for being a mixed-race family. She concluded that once Berlin was capitulated, one period had ended and another one had begun, but the pain remained. Furthermore, she maintained that her mother never really recovered, for she could not erase her past experiences. Also, as elaborated in chapter one, the grave of Hella Frankenberg's sister, Vera, in the Jewish cemetery in Prenzlauer Berg was vandalized again and again over the years. With tears, Hella admitted fifty years after Vera's death, that her sister had never found peace.⁴⁹⁴

A not so rare outcome of the inability to break free from the past was that the violent experiences of the past simply erupted into violent behavior patterns in everyday life. This was clearly apparent in Renate Christian's description. Christian from Prenzlauer Berg was born during the war, in 1941. She explained that her father was very strict and frightening, and she and the other kids in the neighborhood were afraid of him. He shouted and hit when he was in a violent temper, and he invented tough punishments. Her mother was extremely busy taking care of the household, the children, and the business. And so, Christian spent most of her time hanging around outside the house. She recalled that in the postwar period people were very aggressive, and there had been many disputes and jealousy over food. Christian and her siblings also fought and were angry at each other over different matters such as food, clothes, and piano

⁴⁹³ Mierendorff, 1996, p. 122.

⁴⁹⁴ Scheer, 1997, pp. 60-61.

practice, while her mother always tried to settle arguments between them. Both she and her siblings, she admitted, were neurotic and traumatized.⁴⁹⁵

Furthermore, there were people such as Helga Grebing, who was, like Brigitte Eicke, a member of the *BDM* from 1940 onwards, who were clearly unwilling to erase the near-past events. Grebing's memoir reveals that she recorded her reflections about the recent Nazi past and, more specifically, Nazi ideology in her diary as early as April 1946. Grebing's position towards Nazism was radically reversed, and it is possible that this position, which is so totally opposed to Nazism, can be seen as the very foundation of fascist thinking that is going to extremism. She maintained in her diary notes that she had finally parted with National Socialism and was willing to take an opposing stand against it for the good of Germany. She recognized that National Socialism was a worldview which stood in violation of the laws of God, and thus everything that existed in this world. And as a result, this ideology had no right to exist.⁴⁹⁶

4.2 Views and Attitudes of the Historical Present

In Berlin, including Prenzlauer Berg, the years from 1943 to 1948 were everything but an easy time. These years of being at war on the home front and being under occupation following Germany's unconditional surrender brought many challenges, struggles, and difficulties. Under these circumstances, people quite often contemplated their altogether massively violent daily present, and thus, it is interesting to observe the ways in which they viewed and dealt with the present.

Not surprisingly, contemporaries' reflections were mostly of a negative nature. Many of them regarded their current situation in the last years of the war and the occupation period as living in a kind of "limbo" in which nothing was certain. One common way of dealing with their present lives was to simply surrender to the current state of things by accepting life as it was. Another way of addressing their present lives was to detach themselves from the German collective fate and responsibility and treat themselves as victims caught up in the unfortunate state that Germany was in. However, there were also more positive attitudes during this period; some people approached the difficult situation of war and occupation with hope, by fighting back

⁴⁹⁵ Christian, 2000, p. 19.

⁴⁹⁶ Grebing, 2012, pp. 57, 104.

with a strong will to stay alive. After the end of the war, there was also a feeling of happiness and relief that the war was over and the reconstruction of their lives began.

Living in “Limbo” during the War and Occupation

During the last war years and the occupation period in Berlin, many contemporaries had the strong feeling that they were living in a temporary state of uncertainty, in a chaotic stage that was not really defined or clear. In this uncertain time, they felt trapped between two stages: on the one hand, the defined and clear past as they remembered and perceived it, and on the other hand, an unclear future of some kind.

First, the period of the continuing air raids presented one kind of living in limbo, in which people lived under uncertain conditions. The Berliners were basically forced to live a double life in which they were daily in danger of their lives, and had to, both for their own safety and following the demand of the authorities, defend themselves and find shelter from the bombs in designated places. Prolonged sitting in the cellars of the houses and the bunkers reinforced the feeling of being in a kind of intervening period, outside the normative frameworks of life. At the same time, they also attempted as much as they could to continue the daily routine. All in all, they were living without knowing whether they would survive, and their lives as well as their daily routine depended on the Allied air raids and the alarms.

In Prenzlauer Berg, Eicke illustrated in her diary the feeling of instability in life during the bombings and the constant threat to life that could end at any second. On February 3, 1945, a massive air attack on Berlin took place during the morning hours. Eicke was in the cellar at the time and described it as if “the whole cellar went like a swing.” The light in the cellar went out and people were screaming. They believed that this was their last hour alive.⁴⁹⁷ On March 2, 1945, Eicke went to the movies at midday. During the screening, the electricity went out. Eicke was disappointed because she liked the movie, and felt as if she was awakened from a nice dream.⁴⁹⁸ Her image of waking up from a dream captured her feelings about the present, that there was no real escape from the terrible reality of the daily present. After she came back home,

⁴⁹⁷ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 239.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 246.

there were two air raids during the evening, one after the other. Eicke complained that the Allied air forces did not give them a moment's rest.⁴⁹⁹

In addition, the daily lives of the children in the education systems disintegrated as the war progressed. And so, the children got into a kind of limbo, where their routines were constantly changing, and the previous definitions of school and studies became irrelevant to the point of being meaningless. For example, Inge V. was born in Pankow in 1930. When she was eight years old, her parents divorced and she moved to live with her grandparents in Prenzlauer Allee. During the war years until 1944, she attended school nearby, at Heinrich-Roller-Strasse 18. In interviews conducted between 2006 and 2007, Inge V. explained that in 1944, due to the air raids, she and the other pupils in her class were discharged from the seventh grade, and did not have to attend the eighth grade. They were very happy about it. Despite their dismissal, they received the school certificate of the "Eighth Grade," and the reason below was due to war conditions.⁵⁰⁰

As already mentioned in chapter two, during the war, there was a large transfer of school children from Berlin to rural regions.⁵⁰¹ This process undoubtedly increased the chaos in the lives of the children. The fact that they were excluded from their homes, as well as their cultural and educational frameworks, shows exactly the limbo situation that they were in: a temporary undefined stage in which they found themselves outside of the known and normative social-cultural frameworks which existed until then, without knowing how long this interim stage would last and what would be expected of them afterward.

Another kind of limbo was experienced by the Jewish minority that managed to remain in hiding in Berlin during the war. These Jewish people were living outside of any social framework and in a terrifying, unclear, temporary state. One of them was Marie Jalowicz Simon, who spent the last days of the war with her acquaintance Johanna Koch in Kaulsdorf, a locality in eastern Berlin, until August 1945, when she managed to arrange for herself her own apartment in Pankow. Simon explained that at the very last stage of the war, the alarm was activated almost constantly. She did not hide from the neighbors anymore as she did before, and instead of going to the bunker as they did before they all went to the slit trench. They sat there for hours, and

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Inge V., "War auch 'ne schöne Zeit," in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 99-100.

⁵⁰¹ Grosinski, 2008, 1997, p. 130.

people chatted about banal things. It annoyed her that the war was ending in such a boring and banal way and that she was not standing at the heart of the battle.⁵⁰²

A fundamental aspect of life in limbo from 1943 onwards, during the air raids and the slow collapse of the Nazi regime, was the contemporaries' acknowledgment that they were living in an ongoing temporary state which also contained great uncertainty about the outcomes of the war. Given the temporary, and unclear situation, many contemporaries tried to be pragmatic. They did not know whether it was worthwhile to remain loyal to the regime or wait patiently and quietly for the Soviet occupation which seemed increasingly inevitable. During the Battle of Berlin, this difficult crossroads led to great violence both for those who decided to remain loyal to the Nazi regime and for those who tried to "desert" to the Soviet side.

As mentioned in detail in chapter three, numerous German troops deserted or attempted to desert their divisions, but whoever was caught was shot or hung. Many Berliners raised white flags from their houses or wore white bands when they went outside during the Battle of Berlin out of fear of getting shot by Soviet troops, but they risked getting shot by the German troops. In this chaotic period, although it was clear to the contemporaries that they were facing a transitional stage, there was great uncertainty as to the way to survive it.

Towards the end of the war, Erhard from Prenzlauer Berg was in a youth choir situated outside of Berlin. On Easter 1945, shortly before the Soviets won the war, the choir director took the choir children to the woods and instructed them on how to behave in case of encountering the Soviets, telling them to stay still and do nothing. Although they received *Volkssturm* training, which trained them to fight back by, for instance, expelling air from the wheels of the Soviet tanks, Erhard admitted that the choir director's advice helped them survive the whole turmoil at the end of the war.⁵⁰³ Brigitte Eicke noted in her diary towards the end of the war, on April 20, 1945, that the Soviets were now in Bernau, north of Berlin. At this point, she really doubted that victory was immanent, and everything seemed awful to her.⁵⁰⁴

As a German-Jew who had lived in hiding for several years in Berlin, Marie Jalowicz Simon was not sure at the moment of occupation on which side to situate herself. Once the Soviets arrived, Simon and the neighbors sitting with her in the slit trench all climbed out with their arms outstretched. Simon raised her hands slightly but thought to herself that she was not

⁵⁰² Simon, 2014, p. 355.

⁵⁰³ Erhard, 1998, p. 224.

⁵⁰⁴ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 262.

surrendering. Although formally she was on the side of the vanquished, emotionally she felt that she was on the side of the victors. She hugged the first Soviet she encountered and thanked him in German for her liberation. He in response seemed rather scared of her gesture.⁵⁰⁵

With the occupation of Berlin, another period of feeling in limbo started for the Berliners, as they felt outside of the “ordinary” or familiar socio-cultural frameworks. This feeling, right at the start of the occupation of Berlin was captured very clearly by Inge of Bötzwow Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg. She stated that once the bombings stopped at the end of the war, it was a “no man’s land” (“*Zum Schluß waren wir dann Niemandesland*”).⁵⁰⁶

Marta Mierendorff pointed out an interesting aspect of life outside of an agreed-upon collective social rhythm. Shortly after the capitulation of Berlin, on May 12, 1945, Mierendorff maintained that it was difficult to estimate what time it was, as there were no watches available because the Soviets looted them all from the Germans.⁵⁰⁷ A different aspect of life outside the known frameworks was the abolition in some cases of socio-economic commitments. As the anonymous woman mentioned, the rent for May 1945, the first month of the occupation period, was canceled, and so she did not have to pay it. She explained that this month would not count in the official records.⁵⁰⁸ Another interesting remark of the anonymous woman about living in a time and a place that is beyond “normal” civilized life was her observation that the celebration of Pentecost Monday passed by with little to no distinction, since most of the people did not hold a regular job in those days. “Berlin is on an extended vacation,” she claimed.⁵⁰⁹

Accepting Life as it is-Apathy and Submission during the War

From 1943 to 1945, throughout the last stage of the war, a common attitude among the contemporaries towards their current lives was to simply acknowledge that their lives are a harsh and difficult reality. This radical acceptance which was their way to deal with the violent daily events was followed by feelings of submission and apathy.

Even more so, the persecuted Jews in the Nazi period had such difficult experiences that some of them converted the everyday feelings of insult, bitterness, and fear into complete apathy.

⁵⁰⁵ Simon, 2014, p. 356.

⁵⁰⁶ Inge, 1998, pp. 187-188.

⁵⁰⁷ Mierendorff, 1996, p. 118.

⁵⁰⁸ Anonymous, 2005, p. 272.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 236.

For instance, Hella Frankenberg, who grew up as a child of a mixed-race couple, admitted that the feeling of fear had become so familiar to her sister and herself that they did not really feel it anymore.⁵¹⁰

The bombing war during those years had a great impact on peoples' hard feelings. Historian Roger Moorhouse asserts that the state of mind among the Berliners during and following the bombings ranged from fatalism to total indifference.⁵¹¹ Sebald claimed that during the bombings and the mass destruction that followed, "People's ability to forget what they do not want to know, to overlook what is before their eyes, was seldom put to the test better than in Germany at that time." The Germans decided, he maintained, first out of panic, to continue with their lives as if everything stayed the same.⁵¹²

Jürgen Bergk recalled an incidence in which his mother reached a state of utter indifference in the face of the constant terror of the bombings while endangering herself and her children. That happened in one of the air raids in March 1945, when his mother decided to stay with him and his three siblings in their apartment. They were all just too tired to go down one more time to the cellar. His mother told them that today they were going to stay at home, and either they would survive the bombing or they would die together. And so, they gathered around the kitchen stove and held hands. His mother's perception was extreme, leaving no grey area. Bergk admitted that it was dreadful. Then, in later attacks, they all went back to the cellar, as instructed by their grandfather, who lived nearby.⁵¹³

Ilse Klempau from Pankow elaborated in interviews that were held with her many years later about the deep feelings of surrender and indifference that took over her during the bombing of Berlin. She explained that after finishing her state exams on a fall day in 1944, she hurried back home because she feared the everlasting threat of the air raids. Although she did feel fear, Klempau admitted that she was already very worn out and exhausted from the bombings like all Berliners at that time, and so she carried out her daily tasks with utter indifference, as if they were alien to her. As an experienced traveller of Berliner trains, she entered the train back home as if she did not exist. The train was full with no seats available. She turned back to the door and looked at the ruins in the streets outside while feeling completely apathetic and almost sleeping

⁵¹⁰ Scheer, 1997, p. 58.

⁵¹¹ Moorhouse, 2012, p. 369.

⁵¹² Sebald, 2004, p. 41.

⁵¹³ Bergk, 2007, pp. 59-60.

standing up. At the back of the train, there was an older officer sitting and also a group of Soviet prisoners with their guard. Although she tried to ignore them, the officer asked the guard that one of his prisoners would give her his seat, but the guard refused. The incident soon deteriorated, as the officer and the guard were ready for a duel with drawn pistols. As Klempau recalled, she probably felt imprisoned and so, while approaching the next station, she opened the doors during the ride and jumped out of the moving train. Klempau fell on her head but luckily her briefcase slipped under her face and protected her during the fall.⁵¹⁴

In early February 1945, Erich Kästner spent several days with friends in a country house on the Havel River near Berlin. He described in his diary the chaotic situation prevailing in Berlin and its surrounding, which stood in complete contradiction to their pleasant time in the country house and the indifference that they felt to the outside world. Kästner maintained that he and his friends were enjoying themselves and dining while the Soviet tanks were already standing close, at Frankfurt and Küstrin on the Oder. They drank and danced while only a day before they had sat in the cellars in the western districts of Berlin, as one thousand and two hundred airplanes dropped their bombs above them. Kästner admitted that they were occupied in playing poker and smoking imported cigarettes, while at the same time around them convoys of refugees were fleeing from the East to an unknown destination.⁵¹⁵

Other feelings of indifference to the outside world were found in children who were born or raised during the war and knew only the war reality. They reluctantly accepted this reality of war as it is since this was the only way of life that they knew or remembered. For instance, Werner Lohaus from Prenzlauer Berg, who was born in 1936, grew up in the shadow of the war. He detailed how he perceived his life as a child during the war. Lohaus explained that when he returned to Berlin after the evacuation, he was busy looking for the children in his surroundings he had known before because he wanted to play with them once again. Lohaus maintained that the war did not exist for him because there was always war in his childhood and nothing else.⁵¹⁶

This feeling of indifference to life during the war permeated so strongly among many that it was difficult to shake it off even after the war was over. Once the Red Army conquered the

⁵¹⁴ Ilse Klempau, "Meiner treuen Schultasche zum Geleit ins Altenteil im Museum (1931-1999)," in: *Kiezesgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 2, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2008), pp. 85-86.

⁵¹⁵ Kästner, 1966, 1961, p. 17.

⁵¹⁶ Lohaus, 2000, p. 101.

city, the young Jewish woman, Marie Jalowicz Simon, was finally free. But the feelings of apathy throughout the war were deeply ingrained in her. Thus, as Simon later testified, she would have liked to cry at this moment out of joy and relief, but instead, she did not manage to feel a thing.⁵¹⁷

Self-Victimization

Throughout the years 1943-1948, there were numerous narratives of victimization among the German population in which the emphasis was on German suffering during the war and postwar phases. A great many ordinary Germans saw themselves as victims of the present situation of war and occupation, and, in fact, excluded themselves from any collective responsibility for the violence during the war and the occupation. Instead, they focused mostly on their own personal experiences of physical and mental suffering.

Erhard from Prenzlauer Berg, for instance, maintained that the German's hunger period started only in 1945. And from that time on, there were no euphoric remarks. Consequently, the end of the Nazi era was not referred to as "liberation" (*Befreiung*), this term became more common later on, while in the beginning it was frequently referred to as the "collapse" (*Zusammenbruch*), for so much had collapsed.⁵¹⁸

The anonymous woman summarized well this feeling of self-victimization among Berliners. Shortly after Berlin capitulated, on May 11, 1945, the anonymous woman stated that all the talk around her revolved around the same issues. Everyone renounced their support and involvement with Hitler and the Nazi party. Each and every one had been persecuted, and no one ratted on anyone. Unlike them, she believed that it did not matter whether she was in favor of or against Hitler, because she lived and existed under this regime, and it affected the entire German population, even if they did not want it to affect them.⁵¹⁹

The Will to Survive

A prominent recurring theme in numerous witnesses' testimonies about their experiences of war and occupation was their strong will to live. This will to life provided them the power to fight for self-preservation. It was a direct component of survival that was impacted by hope. In her diary,

⁵¹⁷ Simon, 2014, p. 356.

⁵¹⁸ Erhard, 1998, p. 230.

⁵¹⁹ Anonymous, 2005, p. 197.

on January 3, 1944, Andreas-Friedrich noted that the British radio commentators were surprised by the eagerness of the Germans to quickly reconstruct the ruins. They interpreted the rapid evacuation of the rubble after each air raid as an expression of the German population's attachment to Nazism. Andreas-Friedrich objected to this interpretation and claimed that the evacuation of the rubble and the partial reconstruction stemmed from the Germans' desire to survive. She maintained that it was the same will to survive that drove them to seek refuge before nightfall and prior to the activation of the alarms.⁵²⁰

The strong will to survive was also expressed in the interpersonal communication between people as they expressed support for each other in light of the difficult reality. At the beginning of 1943 at Zeuthen, a municipality located near the southeast of Berlin, Marie Jalowicz Simon said goodbye to and thanked profusely the artist Camilla Fiochi, with whom she had taken refuge. Fiochi offered her to come back to stay with her for another four weeks, if the war continued and if Fiochi were not hanged, and Simon was still living in hiding. Simon noted that it was a casual thing during the war for many people to say goodbye to each other. Simon responded to the nice and generous farewell words with the greeting: "You stay safe" (*"Bleiben Sie übrig"*).⁵²¹

Eicke also mentioned this farewell greeting in her diary. On March 26, 1945, as the war drew to a close, Eicke stated that at the end of each working day, she said goodbye to her friend, Margot, using the usual greeting that was common in those days in Berlin: "Stay safe" (*"Bleib übrig"*). She also noted that every evening after work everybody was very happy to meet again in good health after another day of bombings, and every morning at work, everybody was happy to see each other again.⁵²² This routine shows how people wished to stay alive against all odds by maintaining their daily lives as long as they could.

Towards the end of April 1945, the anonymous woman shared in her diary about her own will to live. She said that undoubtedly the threat against one's life strengthens the life forces, for she had more drive and passion than she had before the bombings. For her, every new day was a victory, as if she was getting stronger with each day that passed, because she managed to survive once again.⁵²³ On April 24, 1945, the anonymous woman stated that in a conversation about

⁵²⁰ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, p. 117.

⁵²¹ Simon, 2014, p. 211.

⁵²² Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 255.

⁵²³ Anonymous, 2005, p. 31.

child mortality that took place while she was waiting in line, one old woman recommended giving the babies chewed-up bread mixed with saliva in case there was no milk. The recommendation of the old lady demonstrates exactly the very functional thinking that arose towards the end of the war that served for survival even in the most terrible situations. The anonymous woman felt sorry for the babies whose breast milk had dried up. She expected that even the mothers that still had milk would dry up now, considering the expected ruthless future that lay ahead of them.⁵²⁴ Towards the end of June 1945, in the last paragraph of her diary, the anonymous woman concluded her urge to cling to life: “I only know that I want to survive - against all sense and reason, just like an animal.”⁵²⁵

Happiness and Satisfaction during Postwar Reconstruction

Sebald maintained that in the immediate postwar period the Germans treated the sights of debris and ruins everywhere indifferently, and correspondingly, they immediately referred to the current state of things as a “new beginning” and turned to their new mission of reorganizing and clearing the cities.⁵²⁶ Indeed, many Germans were satisfied and relieved that the war was over and that they had survived it. Thus, they wished to simply ignore the sites that reminded them of the near past and were very glad to participate in the reconstruction of their city, for they felt that they were rebuilding their lives again by themselves and for themselves.

In Prenzlauer Berg, the pupil Ruth F. of Bornholmer Strasse maintained in her school essay from 1946 that for six years the war had only caused misery for the Germans. When the war ended, she claimed that they could see nothing but the terrible experience of the war in front of them, so they could not believe that they would have peace. It seemed almost impossible for them to turn the ruined city into a clean city again. But immediately after the end of the battles, the construction work began. Everything was then striving for reconstruction, she explained. Only the ruins that reminded them of the difficult bombings were waiting now to be demolished so that a new life would emerge from them.⁵²⁷

In his school essay from 1946, the pupil Fritz K. noted that it was horrifying to think back on the month of May 1945. “The sad war was over,” he explained, and had left behind her

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p. 308.

⁵²⁶ Sebald, 2004, pp. 4-5.

⁵²⁷ Ruth F., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 476-478.

debris. He claimed that the senseless destruction was everywhere. No trains or busses drove in the city, and the people stood for hours waiting to pump drinking water.⁵²⁸

But after almost a year, in April 1946, everything looked different; there was, with almost no exceptions, water and light, and the trains worked again almost regularly. Plenty was accomplished during this year, and they forgot about past experiences, such as walking for hours and days to reach their destination. Moreover, people could now get food at any time. They even survived the winter pretty well, even though it was often very cold inside their buildings. Fritz K. claimed that the past would soon be forgotten once everything was alright again. He said that they had become very modest with their expectations, and their hope was that the year 1946 would bring them a little more food supplies of vegetables and fruits.⁵²⁹

4.3 Different Future Views and Attitudes

The present violent daily events during the war encouraged contemporaries to reflect greatly about the future, for better or for worse, especially towards the end of the war, as the air raids intensified and the battles arrived on the streets of Berlin, and Prenzlauer Berg included. At this time, people spent more and more time indoors in the houses, cellars, and bunkers, and there was not much left for them to do other than passively waiting and reflecting about what would happen next and what their future would look like.

All in all, their reflections about the future ranged from hopes and expectations for a bright future to anticipation of the end of times. Many people chose to stay optimistic and envision in their minds a harmonious, conflict-free future. In contrast, there were people who feared further violence, many of whom lost hope completely and thought that there was no future for themselves. As a result, some of them committed suicide.

Wera, who lived at the previous Landsberger Strasse, near *Alexanderplatz*, maintained that towards the end of the war, there were different ideas about the end of the war. First, there was the thought that the war should finally come to an end, as there were people who knew that they would continue to work as they did until the Nazi era, resume political activities, or

⁵²⁸ Fritz K., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 1181/1, Bl. 295-298.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

establish contacts. However, the thought about the end of the war was also accompanied by fears of reprisals and rape.⁵³⁰

Fears of the Future

Fear of getting Killed

Fear of being killed was a feeling that accompanied Berliners from 1943 until the end of the war. This fear stemmed from various reasons: To begin with, during the war under Nazi rule, Jews, as well as other ethnic, religious, and political groups, were afraid of Nazi persecution which could lead also to death. Ordinary Germans also feared Nazi persecution if they did not take part in the “Total War,” especially towards the end of the war. Moreover, from 1943 until the end of the war, Berliners were afraid to die as a result of the fighting-first, as a result of the bombing campaign, and in the last weeks of the war, during the Battle of Berlin, as a result of the fighting itself on the city streets. But the fear of being killed did not end with the end of the war. Once the Red Army forces occupied the city, as already mentioned in detail in chapter three, German men were afraid of encounters with the Red Army troops which could lead to their death. German women were also afraid of encountering these troops, because of sexual assaults, which could, in extreme cases, end in death.

Hans Fallada expressed his own fear during the bombings. While in prison, Hans Fallada admitted in his diary in September 1944, that his decision to stay in Germany was not an easy one. Life in Germany under the Nazi regime and during the war was much more difficult than in any other country. For example, in Berlin, he was forced to spend many hours sitting in the cellar and seeing how “the windows turn red.”⁵³¹ Frequently he felt a deep fear.⁵³²

Irmgard Hähnel was in her early twenties during the air raids. She confessed in interviews held during 2006 and 2007 that the worst period in her life was the period of the bombings. It was a terrible time, she admitted, a time of hopelessness, where people did not

⁵³⁰ Wera, “Das versunkene Viertel. Wera aus der Landsberger,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 183-184.

⁵³¹ Fallada did not explain why the windows were red. Presumably, this is a literary description that refers to the physical injuries that occurred during the bombings when he was sitting in the cellar.

⁵³² Fallada, 2009, p. 20.

know whether they would come out of it alive.⁵³³ During an air raid in March 1945, Jürgen Bergk sat in the cellar with his family as the house shook. They believed that this was their last hour alive. His brother asked their grandmother if they would all have to die now. She said no, explaining that children keep on living in the minds of the survivors, so they are immortal.⁵³⁴

On the night of April 21, 1945, the anonymous woman confessed in her diary that she could not shake off the “fear of death” that gripped her since the day that her house was hit in a bombing and she helped to rescue people buried under the rubble.⁵³⁵ On the next night, she confessed that daily life in the shadow of the bombings was difficult and frightening to bear. She felt helpless as she waited and prayed that the war would be over. “These are strange times,” she claimed, “history experienced first hand, the stuff of tales yet untold and songs unsung. But seen up close, history is much more troublesome - nothing but burdens and fears.”⁵³⁶

On April 16, 1945, Marta Mierendorff described the atmosphere of fear of the bombings and the upcoming battle reaching the city that prevailed in the Lichtenberg district of Berlin. Every night there were alarms, and numerous bombs fell in the area. Fears of death and of losing the building were at the front of people’s eyes every day. Mierendorff refused to believe that all the people around her; men, women, children, sick people, old people, and foreigners, would have to die in agony when the battle reached Berlin. Everyone hoped to be saved, but for her, hope seemed rather foolish. She was certain that already at this point thousands of people had been killed, but people in her surroundings did not know it and hoped to stay alive.⁵³⁷

Three days later, Mierendorff confessed that the artillery noise was so close that the shock waves shook the windows and walls of her house as well as her heart. Two days later, on April 21, 1945, Mierendorff noted that the Battle of Berlin, that everyone was afraid of, had begun. She claimed that every step outside the cellar was life-threatening as the bullets whistled around, and therefore she moved from her bombed-out apartment to the cellar and replaced the daylight with the darkness.⁵³⁸

⁵³³ Irmgard Hähnel, “Das Leben ist eine Gabe,” in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), p. 66.

⁵³⁴ Bergk, 2007, pp. 59-60.

⁵³⁵ Anonymous, 2005, p. 27.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵³⁷ Mierendorff, 1996, pp. 103-105.

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

The fact that the Soviets reached Lichtenberg in the suburbs of Berlin was unimaginable for Mierendorff. Now, she claimed, people might be afraid of the *Wehrmacht* and not the enemy. Mierendorff and her mother lay on their mattresses in the cellar and breathed the moist air. She complained about the inhabitants of the house who kept talking about senseless things. The electricity, gas, and water were cut off and even radio broadcasts ceased. But, she thought, all this was nothing compared to the future battle that awaited them and which she feared.⁵³⁹

As the Red Army troops reached Berlin, and the Battle of Berlin started, feelings of fear and dread of dying skyrocketed. Anna from the *Zeitungsviertel* mentioned the feelings of fear during the Battle of Berlin. She recalled years later that as the artillery fire began, it was very scary. According to her, they were not afraid of the Soviets, but only of the shooting itself.⁵⁴⁰

Wera, who lived close to *Alexanderplatz*, recalled her strong feeling of fear too during the last war events. She, along with her mother and grandmother, went through the streets under fire to the subway station in *Alexanderplatz* to seek refuge. However, the state of affairs at the subway station was very polarized, as the SS troops were present as well as foreign workers, along with frequent shootings. Thus, after a while, they decided to return home and managed to get out of the subway station before it was flooded. They felt tremendous fear as they walked back through the streets under grenade bombardment at the fastest pace they could walk. They repeatedly sought shelter in niches and hid there until it was quiet again. Wera confessed that she was really scared while racing through the streets. She explained that although it was a five minute route which normally did not take long to pass, it seemed like a lifetime to walk through when you are scared to death.⁵⁴¹

After escaping from the subway station, they went to the cellar of their home and waited for the war to end. Wera remembered that at this final stage of the war people started praying. She did not recall the exact details of how and when they crawled out from the cellar, but they were completely exhausted mentally.⁵⁴² In 1946, an anonymous pupil in her fourth year at primary school remembered how during the fighting in Berlin her mother was often absent because she had to wait in lines for hours for water and meat. In her absence, they were afraid that something might happen to her and were always relieved when she returned. Once the fire

⁵³⁹ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

⁵⁴⁰ Anna, 1998, p. 264.

⁵⁴¹ Wera, 1998, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁴² Ibid., p. 183.

stopped on May 2, 1945, they were finally able to go shopping without fearing being shot or not returning home.⁵⁴³

Back in Prenzlauer Berg, on April 21, 1945, Eicke noted in her diary that the Soviets should be already in the northern neighboring district Weißensee and that the place was burning badly. She was very afraid that they would not live much longer and was certain that she specifically would not live much longer. She did not elaborate in this section why she thought that she would surely die, but it was presumably related to her being a Nazi, as only a few lines after, she noted that on that day it was reported that the papers and lists with information on the Nazi party had, fortunately, already been burned.⁵⁴⁴ Furthermore, in an interview that was held with Eicke in 1995, she explained that once the war was over, she had a difficult time accepting the new reality of being defeated and occupied by the Red Army. According to her, the belief was that now the Soviets would kill them all, especially the *BDM* girls.⁵⁴⁵

During the conquest of the city by the Red Army troops which involved a mass rape of the German women, women feared getting killed during or after being raped. As already mentioned in chapter three, the soldiers mostly used physical power against women when they raped them. Any attempt to resist the rape might have ended with getting killed. Ilse, a friend of the anonymous woman, shared the fear of death she experienced during the rape. Ilse was attacked once in the cellar and the other times in an empty apartment on the first floor. They pushed her into the apartment by holding a gun to her back. One of her attackers tried to lay on her with the gun. She got scared and so she motioned for him to understand that first he had to put his gun aside, and he did.⁵⁴⁶

Fear of What the Future Might Bring

During the war, people were anxious and worried about the uncertainty of both the near future and the distant future, and had different assumptions, thoughts, and beliefs about it. First, during the war and especially throughout the Battle of Berlin, they were occupied immensely with what the near future held for them. On the last day of the year 1944, Brigitte Eicke reflected on what the next year would be like. She wondered if the year 1945 would bring peace. However, the

⁵⁴³ I.H., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 133.

⁵⁴⁴ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 263.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 2013, p. 383.

⁵⁴⁶ Anonymous, 2005, p. 239.

state of affairs did not look very promising with the German troops retreating and major parts of East Prussia having already been capitulated. And so, everyone was afraid of this upcoming year. She concluded that they would have to wait bravely.⁵⁴⁷

Towards the very end of the war, the anonymous woman described the extremely pessimistic feelings of her neighbors and herself about the upcoming future. On the morning of April 26, 1945, the anonymous woman and the other neighbors who stayed in the cellar were terrified of the fighting around them, and felt lost in the face of future possibilities: On the one hand, they thought, the Soviets would surely succeed in exterminating them. On the other hand, if the Soviets missed, the American air raids would ultimately bury them alive in the cellar.⁵⁴⁸

Ian Kershaw maintained that in early 1945, although it seemed that the German defeat would be devastating, there was a saying among the Germans that it would be better to have “an end with horror to a horror without end.”⁵⁴⁹ Bergk recalled the same way of thinking with regard to the reflections and fears of the future that surrounded him towards the end of the war. Knowing that the war was soon coming to an end, he recalled that there was a lot of uncertainty about what would come after the war’s end, and many horrifying stories about this near future circulated in his building. But despite this lack of knowledge of what the future held, Bergk claimed that many thought, “better an end with horror than this horror without end.”⁵⁵⁰

As the war advanced, the political position and support of many Germans changed or were adjusted more than once according to their fears of the near future. As stated by historian Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, many Germans continued to support the Nazi war because of their expectation of violent reprisals both by the advancing Red Army and the British and American aerial warfare. Yet simultaneously, many Germans abandoned National Socialism during the final phases of the fighting, so that by the end of the war, most of the population did not want to be identified as Nazis. Hoffmann maintains that, even in contemporaries’ dreams, as documented in their private chronicles, one can see their perception of anticipation of subjugation and catastrophic defeat.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁷ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 222.

⁵⁴⁸ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁴⁹ Ian Kershaw, 2011, p. xiv.

⁵⁵⁰ Bergk, 2007, p. 58.

⁵⁵¹ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Germans into Allies: Writing a Diary in 1945,” in: *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943-1947*, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and Olivier Wieviorka, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), pp. 71-72.

After the conquest of Red Army soldiers, the fear of the unknown among Berliners did not subside. On the morning of April 23, 1945, Marta Mierendorff woke up at 6:30 as she heard screams that the Soviets were already in the building. The tenants in the cellar refused to believe it until three Soviet soldiers accompanied by a German man who served as a translator entered. The Soviet soldiers were nice and calmed them down, and so the first encounter passed quietly. In the background, there were still the artillery noises but they were no longer as loud as before. Mierendorff thought that now the American combat planes might stop the bombings, but she was not sure if the worst was yet to come.⁵⁵² With the occupation of Berlin, feelings of fear of the coming days as well as of the overall future were felt across the city. As the anonymous woman summarized it on June 8, 1945, the German defeat was very bitter since fear was felt everywhere: fear over food, over work and getting paid, and of the future.⁵⁵³

“There is no Future”-Loss of Hope

As the war went on and became more present in daily life in Berlin and Prenzlauer Berg as well, numerous contemporaries felt deep despair, for they did not see an end to this tedious and ongoing routine of warfare. On October 18, 1943, the Berliner Jewish pianist Cäcilie Lewissohn admitted in her diary that she did not even bother to get out of bed when the alarm was activated the previous night. She thought that it would not be so terrible if she got hurt. At least in this way, she would be saved from her feelings of fear and suffering. In the end, it was a false alarm. Two days later, Lewissohn complained that every day that went by the sirens were activated earlier. She came back from work exhausted and just wanted to go to bed early.⁵⁵⁴

On January 31, 1945, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich described the utter hopelessness expressed by many German refugees who arrived in Berlin. They cursed these damned times. They were no longer afraid to express criticism and frustration that they felt, because whoever lost everything, Andreas-Friedrich maintained, had also lost his sense of fear. She said that for them it was all the same where death would find them.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵² Mierendorff, 1996, p. 108.

⁵⁵³ Anonymous, 2005, p. 291.

⁵⁵⁴ Cäcilie Lewissohn, “ ‘Ich könnte immerzu heulen über die Aussichtslosigkeit, hier je wegzukommen,’ ” in: *‘Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.’ Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 73-74.

⁵⁵⁵ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, p. 178.

Towards the end of the war and immediately after the collapse of the Nazi regime, there was a widespread perception among many Germans that everything was coming to an end and there was no future for them beyond the Third Reich. As mentioned briefly above, in an interview that was held with Eicke in 1995, she elaborated about the moment when she realized that the war was lost. Eicke admitted that even when they were in the cellar during the heavy ongoing air raids, she still believed that Hitler would rescue them and that some kind of a magic weapon was already on its way. She explained that this was what they were told, and they truly believed it, especially the younger people. When she heard about Hitler's death and that the war was over, she completely collapsed. She even had to wear an eye patch for several days, because she cried so much and her eyes were inflamed. Eicke could not believe this reality. They thought that now the Soviets would kill all of them, especially the *BDM* girls. However, she explained, they were lucky and that at least physically they got by well.⁵⁵⁶

Because of the widespread arbitrary violence in everyday life throughout the last years of the war and the immediate postwar period, a great number of people felt hopeless and that there was no future for them. They sensed that there was no real possibility for a person to create a different reality for himself. One's actions, the fact that one acts violently or not, belonged to a particular ethnic or religious group, age group, or class—all of these factors did not change the fact that one's destiny was quite often in the hands of external factors.

An example illustrating such arbitrary violence was the death of the conductor Leo Borchard. In August 1945, Andreas-Friedrich elaborated in her diary about Leo Borchard's death. She referred to him as Andrik, and maintained that it was an unfortunate chain of events that brought to his death. She explained that, as it happened almost every night, on the night of August 22nd, exchanges of gunfire between Soviets and Americans took place in Berlin's city center. It was possible that this time it was worse than usual, prompting the Americans to stop every car entering the American sector after 23:00 and shoot without warning if the car did not stop. On August 23rd, Andrik conducted his last concert in front of Allied troops. After the concert, Andrik's English friend drove him home. American troops shot at the English car of Andrik's friend because the car had strong lights, apparently no one noticed the English license plates, and when the car did not stop, they thought it was a Soviet vehicle. A stray bullet fatally injured Andrik. Andreas-Friedrich maintained that the shooters did not mean to shoot Andrik;

⁵⁵⁶ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, p. 383.

they only intended to obey orders and merely blew off steam. However, the shot did kill Andrik.⁵⁵⁷

As mentioned in the first chapter, a distinct example for arbitrary violence was the case of the mixed Jewish-German couple after the arrival of the Soviet troops. Although they had waited for months for the liberation of the city, in their first encounter with the Soviets in the cellar, a stray bullet injured the man during a fight that started because the Soviets' attempt of harassing the women. When the wife begged the soldiers for help, they raped her in the hallway, even though she screamed that she was Jewish. The husband died and the wife fled. After hearing the story, the anonymous woman commented that "no one could invent a story like this: it's life at its most cruel - man blind circumstance." The friend of the anonymous, a former employee of the dead husband, commented with tears, " 'if only it were over, this poor bit of life.' " ⁵⁵⁸

Suicides all around

As described in detail in the previous chapter, the phenomenon of suicide in Nazi Germany became very widespread towards the end of the war. According to historian Christian Goeschel, who explores the subject of suicides in Nazi Germany: "The suicides which occurred in Germany before the Nazi regime's downfall had in common a general feeling of insecurity and the lack of a future perspective."⁵⁵⁹ Ian Kershaw maintains that towards the end of the war, suicidal thoughts were extremely common among ordinary Germans, especially in Berlin and eastern German territories, because of the despair and fear they felt.⁵⁶⁰

These feelings and the resulting suicide acts had already existed earlier in the war, as can be seen in the following police murder report: On December 30, 1943, the body of a child was found on the railroad tracks in the area between the *S-Bahnhof Grunewald* and the *S-Bahnhof Nikolassee*. The doctor who performed the autopsy determined that two shots in the head caused the child's death. Only afterward did the killer place the child on the railroad tracks. The six-year-old boy lived with his grandmother in Berlin. His father served in the *Wehrmacht*. With the

⁵⁵⁷ Andreas-Friedrich, 1977, 1947, p. 273; Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁵⁸ Anonymous, 2005, p. 230.

⁵⁵⁹ Goeschel, 2009, p. 149.

⁵⁶⁰ Kershaw, 2011, p. 356.

beginning of the great air raids in Berlin, his father took him to stay with a baker in Karlsbad. But before Christmas, he came back to take him, and they headed toward Berlin.⁵⁶¹

The police investigation concluded that the father had murdered the child. One main piece of evidence that strengthened their suspicion was a farewell letter that the father wrote to his sister. In the letter, he stated that he wanted to save his son from the worst things happening during this terrible period. He did not elaborate any further on which kind of things. This letter joined a series of letters that he wrote to his sister expressing his fears and his intention to die with his son in order to save him from all the terrible things. The farewell letter and the fact that he deserted the *Wehrmacht* showed that he had apparently planned to commit suicide after the murder.⁵⁶² In the end, he did not find the courage to commit suicide right after the murder and was found dead on the tracks somewhere else. A passing train had ripped his head off his body. The police assumed that he must have been depressed and afraid to be sent to the war front because he believed that no one would take care of his son during these difficult times.⁵⁶³

Another ground for suicide acts during the war was the great fear of being occupied by the Red Army forces. According to another police report, on June 6, 1944, a pensioner found in the Treptower Spree in Berlin the body of a two-year-old girl. On the riverbank nearby, a white stroller was found. The girl had traveled with her mother from their home in Magdeburg to Berlin. She had drowned in the Spree River the day before, after her mother threw her into the river. That night, the mother headed back home alone. A few days later, the mother committed suicide in her apartment using gas. She also had a twelve-year-old son who was staying with his grandparents. Her husband, who was at the time outside the city, reported to the police that he had received a letter from her telling him that she wanted to go with her two children to the water. She did not elaborate more on that matter. The police claimed that she had murdered her daughter because of a nervous breakdown. The woman left behind a letter explaining her actions, stating that she could no longer tolerate the terror air raids, and was afraid of the Communists who, she believed, would eventually conquer Germany and kill German children. The police assumed that she had murdered the girl and wanted to commit suicide immediately after the incident, but did not find the courage to do it and retreated. But then, after she saw in the

⁵⁶¹ LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 554-555.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

newspapers that the body of the child had been found, she committed suicide because she feared punishment.⁵⁶⁴

In a book that brought together various narratives of *Kriegskinder*, Helmut Zeh from Berlin, who was born in 1940, recalled how a married couple from his house in Karlshorst shot themselves with a pistol. Zeh did not specify when this incident took place, whether during the war or after the Soviet occupation. Neighbors carried them rolled up in their blankets to the garden of the neighboring house. Zeh, together with another boy from the neighboring house, sat on the stairs and watched them secretly.⁵⁶⁵

After the occupation of Berlin by the Red Army, thoughts of suicide, attempts to commit suicide, and suicide acts continued to occur among the Berliners. Suicidal thoughts or actual suicides were often associated with mass rape in this period. On May 6, 1945, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich and her friend Frank visited Hannelore Thiele, who was a victim of gang rape. Seven men had raped her one after the other. “Like animals,” she said, shaking. “One should kill himself... One can not live like this!” she said crying.⁵⁶⁶

Not too long after, on May 15, 1945, the anonymous woman overheard a woman telling her friend about her suicide attempt. After being raped several times, the woman tried to kill herself with poison. But she did not know at the time that in order for the toxin to function, the stomach must be acidic. The poison was not absorbed in the stomach and the suicide attempt failed.⁵⁶⁷

Expectations of the Future-What does the Future hold?

Longing for “Ordinary Life”

As noted in multiple sources, a repeated expectation of the future during the war and the immediate postwar period was to have a calm and orderly life in contrast to the violent and chaotic present life. In a book collection of personal stories that was published in 2008, Traute Romahn, who served towards the end of the war as a sound locator in the Reich Labour Service

⁵⁶⁴ LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 534.

⁵⁶⁵ Helmut Zeh, “Helmut Zeh, 1940 in Berlin,” in: *Kriegskinder*, Frederike Helwig and Anne Waak, eds. (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2017), p. 76.

⁵⁶⁶ Andreas-Friedrich, 1986, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁷ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 211-212.

(*Reichsarbeitsdienst*) in Hannover, expressed her strong desire to leave the service and simply return home to her family. After Easter 1945, and after months of being away, Romahn wanted to return to her home in Kastanienallee, Prenzlauer Berg, and finally see her parents again. It took her almost four weeks to arrive in Berlin. Her parents' house remained relatively unscathed, and also her entire family had survived the war. The shooting was over, and she was extremely happy to be back home and to hug her parents and two siblings again.⁵⁶⁸

The will to return home to ordinary life after war and captivity was also expressed by Gerhard Jeschke, who served as a soldier in a news unit of the German air force, the *Luftwaffe*. Towards the end of the war, Jeschke fought in the Battle of the Oder against the Red Army. On May 1, 1945, he was captured by the Americans and later transferred to English captivity. On July 1, 1946, he arrived at his mother's house in Metzger Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg after defecting with four other friends. Yet in order to stay in Berlin, he had to be registered as a resident of the city at the Soviets' district commander in Prenzlauer Allee. At first, his request was rejected, because, at this time, Berlin agreed to take new residents only in exceptional cases. But then Jeschke came up with a good reason: Shortly after the end of the war, his mother was injured severely in an ammunition explosion at Kopenhagener Strasse, in the eastern part of Prenzlauer Berg. This explosion was known to the Soviets, and he could show proof that his mother was a victim of this explosion and in need of help. For this reason, his registration was approved, and he was finally home after three years of absence.⁵⁶⁹

Hoping for Past Life Restoration

Throughout the war and occupation in Berlin and, specifically, Prenzlauer Berg, a common feeling towards the prewar past was sentimentally idealizing and romanticizing it. For instance, after being raped several times, the anonymous woman felt repulsed by her own skin and did not want to touch it or look at it. Her present feelings about her skin made her reflect on her childhood and her parents' attitude towards her and, specifically, her skin. The picture of the past was drawn positively in comparison to the difficult present. She recalled her mother telling her many times how proud her parents were of their little pink and white baby. When her father was

⁵⁶⁸ Traute Romahn, "Meine Odyssee," in: *Kiezesgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 2, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2008), pp. 115-118.

⁵⁶⁹ Gerhard Jeschke, *Heimkehr aus der Gefangenschaft*, Museum Pankow, Archiv: Dokumentenbestand Prenzlauer Berg.

drafted in World War I, he reminded her mother never to forget to put her lace bonnet on to protect her from the sun, so that her neck and face would be lily-white. She explained that this was the fashion then for girls from good homes. The anonymous woman argued that there was so much love for her and care for things like sunbonnets, bath thermometers, and evening prayers, and all of this for the “filth” that she was at the present.⁵⁷⁰

In most cases, to idealize and romanticize the prewar past meant to perceive it as “ordinary” and “normal,” by remembering it as a quieter, secure, and peaceful time. Definitely, this vision of the past was also completely not “objective,” and relied on the comparison with the people’s present lives that was perceived as “dramatic,” as it was full of extreme, brutal violent interactions. This positivist, nostalgic way of remembering the prewar period assisted and supported the contemporaries in believing that, just as the past was better than the difficult present, there might be a better life for them in the future. And so, some contemporaries hoped to restore in the future their past lives before the war.

In interviews held with her in the 1990s, Hilde of Stargarder Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg, explained that the war was an uncertain period, but people believed that it had to end at some point, and then things would be better once again.⁵⁷¹ However, this wish for restoration during the war had often dissipated in light of the bitter reality. Elsa Arndt from Prenzlauer Berg, who was in her early thirties towards the end of the war, recalled that as the war progressed, the times became gradually more serious: Dancing was banned, and the bombing war simply made places vanish from one day to another. Constantly, everywhere around, there were bombed-out, burning places. Despite the difficult situation, people still tried as long as possible to enjoy their lives—for instance, by finding a restaurant that was still open and having a nice time, or by talking to other nice young people. At first, people believed that the war could not spoil their whole lives, and they would return to live happily, but later on, when the war progressed, people realized that it did affect their whole lives.⁵⁷²

After the fall of the Third Reich, people still tried to hold on to the hope that parts of the life they knew before the war would return. Ruth Lütge of Pankow stated that after the war ended, for many German women including her mother, an excruciating period of hope began. Women tried to find out through the Red Cross and by exchanges of information with others

⁵⁷⁰ Anonymous, 2005, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁷¹ Hilde, 1998, p. 45.

⁵⁷² Arndt, 2007, p. 33.

what had happened to their fathers and husbands. They did not want to tell their children that their fathers had died. But their power faded with the dissipation of hope. Before she died, her mother explained to her and her other four siblings that the reason that children are in this world is that the parents wanted them, and therefore, parents are obliged to do whatever possible to make their children happy.⁵⁷³



Image 9. Class foto of a first grade class from the Struwwelpeterschule in Prenzlauer Berg, from 1946 (estimated time) (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA058173)

Hoping for a “New” Future

As the war progressed and during the occupation of Berlin, many people hoped for a fresh new beginning, different from their present or their near-past life at the home front of the war. At the end of April 1945, as Horst Schulze from Prenzlauer Berg who was then a boy about fourteen years old elaborated years later, the flags were changed several times on Bornholmer Strasse in the north of Prenzlauer Berg. White flags were hung in the street when people thought the Soviets were arriving. Then as soon as they heard the *Wehrmacht* troops were coming back, the swastika flags were hung again. When the German counterattack turned out to be just a rumor, the white flags reappeared. After the surrender, the Soviet commandment ordered that each

⁵⁷³ Ruth Lütge, “Wenn aus Kindern Eltern werden,” in: *Kiezesgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 22-23.

house would mark the victory by hanging the flags of the four Allied forces. Finding the materials for making the flags was not easy, but the Germans tried to prepare the flags and hang them because it was important to them that the forces recognize their goodwill. Schulze maintained that the colorful flags wonderfully harmonized with the fresh plants of the spring, and new hope was felt in the air.⁵⁷⁴

The “new” future meant for many people to start a different life, which they hoped would be distinct from and even better than their current lives as well as their past lives. As a former Nazi, Eicke was not at all optimistic about her future during the first weeks under Soviet occupation. Because of her Nazi background, she was obliged to do hard labor work. However, at the end of June 1945, Eicke got lucky and was transferred to a new office job where she used her typing and shorthand skills. Eicke was very glad that now she could foresee a bright future for herself, different than the dark one that she had anticipated before.⁵⁷⁵

The pupil Waltraut B. summarized the general expectation for the future in her school essay in 1946. She explained that although less than a year had passed since the end of the war, much had been done in the field of rehabilitation. And yet, that was just the beginning. Despite all the difficulty and misery, she noted that they confidently look forward to a better future.⁵⁷⁶



Image 10. People clear the debris using wagons (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA031771)

⁵⁷⁴ Horst Schulze, “Flaggenwechsel in der Bornholmer,” in: *Kiezigeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 104.

⁵⁷⁵ Gröschner, Meyer, Felsmann, 2013, pp. 292-294.

⁵⁷⁶ Waltraut B., LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 520.



Image 11. Reconstruction workers at Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Sportpark on the side of Cantian Strasse (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA066298)



Image 12. Reconstruction work of debris removal (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA037280)



Image 13. Working in reconstruction: Behind the two smiling workers a sign stating that their family cleared approximately 500 meters of rubble in 225 half shifts. (Museum Pankow-Archiv, FA035402)

4.4 Conclusion

In 1943 and throughout 1944 until the collapse of the Third Reich in the spring of 1945, Berliners experienced massive deadly violence from the Allied bombing campaign and the Battle of Berlin, as well as from their own Nazi political regime. With the occupation of the city by the Red Army and during the following years, the violence did not cease, and the Berliners faced the consequences of their defeat; the mass rape of German women, and violence of the Soviet troops against German men. The violence and the overall chaos of war and occupation in the Berliners' daily lives during the years from 1943 to 1948 frequently inspired contemporaries to reflect about their past, their lives in the present, and the future. Moreover, the experiences of violence and chaos all around had a great impact on these reflections.

To begin with, during the postwar years, there were two major and opposing attitudes towards the near past of war and Nazi rule: one was to completely repress this sensitive time, while the other was the reluctance and at times inability to repress it. Looking at their present lives, contemporaries had different views and attitudes about them. These ranged from a feeling of living in some sort of limbo during the war and occupation to apathy and total submission to the continuing state of being at war, to feelings of victimization, a strong survival impulse, and a kind of contentment and joyfulness in the postwar reconstruction era. These varied views about the present collided at times; people sometimes changed their approach from one approach to another or held multiple approaches simultaneously.

From the point of view of the historical present, the contemporaries frequently contemplated the unknown future. There were three major attitudes about the future: fears about the future of getting killed or of the unknown, a feeling that there was no future, which led at times people taking their own lives, and different expectations towards the future, from wishing for a calm and orderly life or for the restoration of their past prewar lives to hope for a new, different future.

Conclusions

This dissertation tells the story of violence in the Prenzlauer-Berg district of Berlin in 1943-1948. In this research, I sought to focus on a specific, particular geographical and chronological framework in order to explore in depth the different expressions of violence and how the violence was perceived. For this purpose, I concentrated on the perception of an act as violent and the ways in which violence was expressed through common experiences of ordinary people in their everyday lives. My research objectives were to present and explore different aspects and variations of the phenomenon of violence. For this purpose, I based my exploration on varied contemporary accounts as well as retrospective narratives. Violence is a historical-anthropological phenomenon, and in those years under investigation here, was highly present and extremely meaningful in the contemporaries' lives.

This is certainly not the only study of its kind written on the subject of violence in Germany during those years. There have been numerous studies written from different perspectives on the subject of violence in Germany throughout the 1930s and 1940s. However, the uniqueness of this study is that it is a micro-historical study that focuses on a specific time and space which portrays and examines the historical narrative of “small histories” of violence through the eyes of contemporary, ordinary people. Therefore, the significance of this research lies not in an attempt to discover new facts, but rather in the exposure of the vast and varied types of violence and how they were *experienced* and *perceived* by contemporaries.

1. Historical Conclusion

At the beginning of the study, several questions and issues were raised in regard to the phenomenon of violence in Germany during the 1940s. First, did Germans support the ongoing war or long for it to end? Second, did the violence that occurred during World War II cease immediately and completely after the collapse of Nazi Germany? And if that is true, was it due to the Allied external intervention? Lastly, was the transition from the “war” to “peace” period perceived as a suppression of violence, a defeat, or rather as a victory or liberation?

In order to answer these questions, I deliberately avoided trying to create a narrative that tells the story of Germany from war to occupation. In other words, I did not seek to artificially impose a narrative that includes beginning, middle, and end, and this methodological approach differentiates this study from its predecessors. Moreover, while intentionally ignoring the usual definitions of “war,” “peace” or “occupation,” violence was examined here exclusively in the

manner in which it manifested itself in various situations and by its consequences and implications.

Who was activating violence and against whom was it activated towards was another crucial question I asked at the beginning of this dissertation. More specifically, was the violence only directed against war enemies? Were violent measures taken against the German population by government institutions? Were there cases in which ordinary Germans used violence against their own people? Was there domestic violence? For this purpose, the issue of violence was explored without determining from the outset which groups, individuals, and institutions would be examined and I deliberately avoided the questions of whether it was “necessary” violence during war or violence enshrined in law.

The study was divided into four main themes that recurred in the sources regarding the phenomenon of violence. Initially, in Chapter One, I explored the differentiated violence in Prenzlauer Berg according to social diversity and different geographical locations within the district. Prenzlauer Berg was a very heterogeneous district. In the district were various neighborhoods in which diverse ethnic, socio-political, and religious groups lived. I showed that there was a considerable difference in the violent attitude towards the varied groups, which was manifested in different violent acts and a different acceptance of these acts by the violent victims and their surroundings. The Jews were the most prominent group in terms of experiencing violent treatment.

The first crucial thing that is evident is that almost all the residents of Prenzlauer Berg felt at risk, and no one escaped the fear of violence. Each person could be a target of violence directed from the Nazi regime, groups related to the regime, or by the occupation forces based on his affiliation or belonging to a certain group, or because of attempting to help other people from a particular group.

For the most part, there had been good relationships between the different groups of socio-economic classes, religious, ethnic, and political groups that lived side by side in the district. However, the relationships between the varied groups were mainly personal relationships between individuals. Consequently, the perception of the others was based on the individual and not in accordance with their belonging to a certain group. Hence, common perceptions about various groups of people did not match the daily reality of the population. In other words, contemporaries’ actions and perceptions were not in line with the widespread

common perceptions of the period. General ideas had an effect only in exceptional cases whereas a person did not know people from a particular group. By and large, there were good relationships between the German locals and Jewish locals in Prenzlauer Berg until the process of the persecution of the Jews, and especially their deportations. This process emphasized the differences between the German locals and the Jewish locals and gradually drew them apart to the point where there was no more connection between them.

There were different attitudes among the population towards the different violent events. Quite often the contemporaries just accepted in submission the violent events that occurred, particularly with regard to violence against local Jews, although there were also events where people or groups attempted to fight back against the violence directed towards them or their fellow neighbors. Additionally, during the investigated period, different severe acts of violence arose in several central places throughout Prenzlauer Berg; at the *Flakbunker Friedrichshain*, *Falkplatz* and *Gleimtunnel*, *Schultheiss-Brauerei*, and the *Wasserturm Prenzlauer Berg*. In each of these places, different acts of violence occurred which designated them as places of violence in Prenzlauer Berg during those years.

In Chapter Two, I analyzed the subjects of bodily and spatial intimacy, in order to achieve a deep understanding of the meaning of intimacy for the contemporaries through the last phase of the war and the occupation period. Here questions of privacy and intimacy of body and space in everyday-life experiences were examined. Firstly, the physical aspect of death, the sights of death that appeared both in the private space and in public space on the streets, in public parks, and so on were immense during these years. There were different ways in which contemporaries understood and dealt with death that became an inseparable component of daily life in the district. A broad spectrum of effects and reactions to death can be clearly seen, from tremor and total shock, apathy, a deletion of separation between the dead or the living, and showing very little respect for the dead, nor taking it very seriously.

In these years, when death was everywhere and dead bodies were very much accessible, contemporaries developed a close, intimate bond with the dead. This intimacy reached the point that the permanent and unchangeable state of being dead started to blur for the living people. Contemporaries had daily interactions with dead bodies. Exploring the intimate aspects of the process of death and the bodies of the dead shows how, during the war and occupation periods in

Berlin, death and dead bodies were not treated in privacy or as sacred. Quite the opposite- they were publicly exposed and desecrated.

Furthermore, during these years, people's most intimate spaces, their homes, were invaded and violated over and over again. The exposure of homes occurred for various reasons: the Allied bombings and artillery shootings' damage and destruction of the homes, the looting of private spaces by the occupation forces as well as the German population, and the Red Army invasion and confiscation of houses during the occupation period. Through this process of the exposure of homes, the boundaries between the private sphere and the public sphere collapsed, which led to a total disintegration of intimate space and, as a result, affected contemporaries physically and mentally.

The disintegration of intimate spaces led to the creation of other intimate spaces in alternative places which demanded that contemporaries adjust and change their behavior within these new places. One most common alternative place was the cellar, which served contemporaries quite often during the long period of the bombings and which they came to treat as a protected, intimate, private space. Another common alternative space was other apartments, whether friends' and relatives' apartments or vacant apartments, sometimes inhabited by other people who had lost their homes with whom they built and maintained new intimate relations. In other cases, the disintegration of the intimate spaces led to the recreation of intimate spaces in the contemporaries' exposed homes, and consequently, to the rebuilding of their private lives.

A close examination of the different spaces in Prenzlauer Berg has shown that the public sphere also went through a dramatic transformation during the years investigated. In correspondence with the private sphere, the overall violence was the ground for this transformation. But the public sphere was also affected by contemporaries' change of perception of their private space. The evident result of this development was that the geographically nearest public spaces of the contemporaries, such as their street and their small neighborhood, became more private spaces in which intimate relationships developed.

In Chapter Three I explored the subject of gender-based violence. In 1943-1948, the violence that one experienced or directed at others differed completely according to the biological sex of the person. The thick description of sexual violence towards women in Prenzlauer Berg led to interesting findings: First, German women were "prepared" for the possibility of being raped since Nazi propaganda infiltrated them with the likelihood of rapes by

Soviet soldiers in case of occupation. Second, cases of women and girls committing suicides were not at all rare, either because of trying to avoid expected rape or from the shame that followed the rape. Third, the Soviets did not make much differentiation between one woman and another, resulting in a very wide variety of women being sexually assaulted. Fourth, in many events, sexual violence included additional violence, for instance, mental abuse, physical violence, and verbal violence. All in all, the Soviet soldiers relied mostly on their strength against the women. Fifth, the sexual encounters and relationships between the German women and Soviet soldiers were very varied and complex. In many cases, they can not be reduced to a more precise definition of what is considered sexual assault, prostitution, or fraternization. There were cases, for instance, where the sexual assaults involved fraternization, or where fraternizing could be mistaken for a sort of prostitution.

When exploring the male-oriented experiences of violence, the first prominent theme is fighting to the death as part of military service. Especially in the last phase of the war, when the German defeat was already certain and only a matter of time, the highest number of German deaths occurred. In this last phase of the war, the conscription of young boys in order to have reserves of troops for the continuation of the war resulted in death even for those in lower age groups. The second evident theme is the violence that German troops and soldiers faced from their own regime. This internal violence was most radical towards the end of the war, when the ones who deserted or were caught retreating were shot and hung publicly. Additionally, there were also court-martials that executed soldiers, and cases of the denial of medical care for soldiers suspected of treason or of self-harm. In Prenzlauer Berg, in the last weeks of the war, the violence on the part of the regime against the German troops was unbridled and extremely severe.

Nonetheless, the violence from the Nazi regime carried out by German men from different units was not only addressed towards German troops; it was also directed deeply inward towards German civilians. And so, the ongoing daily violence also included violence organized by the government against anyone who did not align with Nazi state policy, for example, the violence against Germans who refused to fight Hitler's "Total War." Additionally, the regime's violence against the German public towards the end of the war served the warlike strategic needs of the Nazi state while totally disregarding human life. This can be clearly seen in Hitler's order

during the preparation for the Battle of Berlin to destroy all facilities that the enemy troops could use on their behalf during the battle.

As part of the mass suicide in Germany towards the end of the war, soldiers, Nazi officials, and SS members killed themselves. This was due to several reasons: a will to self-sacrifice, fear that the war was lost, or fear of being occupied and probably facing the revenge of the Allied forces. Furthermore, the *Wehrmacht* strategy to keep on fighting in the last months of the war could also be perceived almost as a kind of collective suicide. Another expression of violence against German men during the process of occupation was the hunting of the Red Army troops after hidden German soldiers and Nazi members. In order to avoid getting caught, the soldiers tried to change their look and get rid of anything that could link them to the military or the Nazi party.

As the war progressed, sex-based social structures of gender roles and images were altered and the relationships between men and women changed. The boundaries of traditional female roles that the Nazi ideology had promoted were broken since wartime necessitated a lack of men on the homefront and required radical changes in the roles of women. Eventually, many women became the main providers of their families. Also after the end of the war, primarily women were in charge of the reconstruction efforts, since many men had died in the war, become POWs, or returned home with disabilities. The transformations in women's roles exposed them to gender-based violent acts since they spent much time in public in these chaotic, risky years of war and occupation. Altogether, male-female relations were greatly influenced by gender-based violence. Primarily, gender-based violence led to a female majority in German society. Moreover, the different violent acts that men and women experienced created a distance between them to the point that makes their perception of life too different to bridge. The enormous gap between the sexes was clearly seen in the divorce rate that doubled after the war.

The attitudes of German women towards their own violent experiences were varied; quite a few women tried to resist the threat of rape in different ways. There were women who regarded the ongoing rapes as part of the war effort. The rape hurt them physically, but it did not put them in a weak victimized position of identity. This was the result of Nazi horror propaganda that had prepared them for the possibility of rape acts if the Red Army occupied them, and also the result of Nazi ideology, according to which German women felt racial superiority over their foreign rapists. Another reason was that they needed to focus on other survival difficulties, thus their

emphasis was on their daily conduct and not on their suffering. Of course, there were also women who experienced rape as a most personal difficult experience. Male reactions to the rape of the women entailed mainly inaction and standing aside. The women in response felt pity and even despised them.

In Chapter Four, the last theme that was examined was the meaning of the three different time zones: past, present, and future, as the contemporaries in Prenzlauer Berg perceived them from the perspective of the continuing historical present throughout the years from 1943 to 1948. Throughout my research, I discovered that in this violent era, a major theme that occupied contemporaries was thoughts and reflections about the past, present, and future. Their reflections were characterized by a tension between their difficult present, hopes for a future, and dark past, at times allowing them to be hopeful and at other times, a place of fear in which they could not even imagine a future for themselves.

The contemporaries' reflections on their present lives between 1943 and 1948 were mostly negative due to the violent experiences of war and occupation. During this period, living in a sort of "limbo" of uncertainty where nothing was really defined was a common feeling among the contemporaries. In this uncertain time, they seemed to be caught between two stages: on the one hand, the defined and clear past as they remembered it, and on the other hand, an unclear future of some kind. Accepting life as it was with a strong feeling of apathy was another key approach to dealing with the difficult present life of war between 1943 and 1945. Additionally, numerous people felt themselves to be victims of the present situation. They excluded themselves from any collective responsibility for their violent present and acknowledged primarily their own personal experiences of physical and mental suffering. They saw themselves as victims in the face of current events happening around them. But there were also positive approaches among contemporaries. There were people who decided to embrace hope and fought for self-preservation. Furthermore, when the war ended, happiness and relief were common feelings and many people joined the reconstruction of the city as well as their lives.

However, not only the present had been violated, the violent experiences in the historical present affected and violated also the contemporaries' memory of the past and their expectations of the upcoming future. People treated the past events of the war and Nazi rule in the immediate years after the war in a number of ways, such as trying to forget and simply erase this near past,

or even to repress it completely. Others did not succeed in repressing it and kept on living with the sensitive past. While an opposite attitude was the will to confront this past.

With regard to the future, people were very much concerned with the questions of what the future would look like. The contemporaries imagined it in various different ways; many of them were afraid of it. For instance, during the war people feared getting killed, or feared what the future might bring. As the war progressed, there were people who lost hope completely and thought that there was no future for them. This perception led some of them to commit suicide. Other contemporaries had a strong will to survive the war and occupation and had different expectations of the future. Many of them just longed for “ordinary life,” and sought a calm and organized life that contrasted with the gloomy, violent, and chaotic present during the war and occupation periods. Another two common but contradicting expectations were the hope for a restoration of the past life before the war, and the wish for a fresh new beginning, which would be distinct from their past and present lives.

2. Historiographical Conclusion

This dissertation’s unique and explicit contribution to existing historiography includes research on and analysis of the history of violence in Germany that is completely different from how other researchers address time and periodization during the 1940s in Germany. Most researchers tend to make a traditional division of this period into the Third Reich period including World War II, the period of occupation, and the two German states. This division derives from basing the investigation on the chain of politically constitutive events as leading the historical narrative.⁵⁷⁷

One of the basic assumptions which initiated this analysis was that history has no true borders which separate between periods. Therefore, I decided to focus in this research on these six crucial years between 1943 and 1948, which includes both the last phase of the war and the postwar period under Soviet occupation. My reinterpretation of the historical timeline—that is, the choice to explore the sequence of years beginning in 1943 and ending in 1948, stems from my intention to shape an alternative framework of history. I believe that the validation based on the

⁵⁷⁷ See as an example the following studies that base their research theme and analysis within the boundaries of the political periodic cut: Ian Kershaw, *The End: Hitler’s Germany, 1944-1945* (London: Allan Lane, 2011); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Paul Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

turning point of “1945” is artificial, or at least prevents us from seeing different historical and historiographical opportunities.⁵⁷⁸ By using this time frame starting in 1943, when contemporaries began to feel on a daily basis the chaos, violence, and distress of war, and ending in 1948, just before Germany was divided into two, that is, in the year preceding the founding of the two separate German states, I suggest a historical reinterpretation of the periods of war and postwar in Germany.

In addition, as illustrated in numerous daily experiences throughout the research, the phenomenon of violence in wartime Berlin, and within it in the Prenzlauer Berg district, continued after the war. The violence of the last years of the war took place in the atmosphere of the coming defeat, accompanied by massive bombings and, eventually, in the last weeks of the war, fighting in the streets. This violence could not have ended in one fell swoop following the announcement of the end of the war. It only changed its form. Therefore, I refer to the last period of the war and the postwar period as one complete unit. In fact, contemporaries experienced those years as a continuous period rather than an artificially severed period.

The geographical framework of my research was the district of Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin. Producing a micro-historical study that is focused on one distinct district of Berlin, over a six-year period, has allowed me to conduct a more comprehensive examination and extensive analysis of the phenomenon of violence in the context of Germany in the period under investigation. According to the sources and literature, the case of violence in the Prenzlauer Berg district can be generalized in some respects; many other urban areas in German cities suffered from massive bombings as well, mass rape also took place in former German territories in the East as the Red Army advanced westward, and, during the Soviet occupation, suicide cases and sights of dead bodies lying around were definitely not common to this district alone.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁸ An example of a recent study that explores a different time frame than the usual periodic cut: Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and Olivier Wieviorka, eds., *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943-1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

⁵⁷⁹ For further reading on the varied violent experiences in other cities during the war and occupation, see, for example, the case of Königsberg as illustrated in Hans Deichmann diary: *Ich sah Königsberg sterben: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Arztes* (Schnellbach: S. Bublies, 2000), and the case of Dresden as portrayed in Victor Klemperer diary: *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1945*, Walter Nowojski and Hadwig Klemperer, eds. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1995).

Although this may be true, within Germany, if one looks at the phenomenon of violence, there were some unique characteristics in the case of Berlin. As the capital city of Germany, Berlin was a major target in the Allied war against Germany. The Battle of Berlin in the last weeks of the war did not look like any other battles in the other German cities. In addition, after the city was conquered by the Red Army, it was the only city in Germany divided into four different occupation areas. Within Berlin, the case of the Prenzlauer Berg district is fascinating due to its unique characteristics in the period. It was a district with a most heterogeneous population that also changed in part over the six years under investigation. The district was damaged during the Allied air raids but overall suffered less destruction relative to other parts of the city. In some parts of the district, the fighting continued even after the official surrender of Berlin. After the defeat, Prenzlauer Berg belonged to the Soviet sector, but due to its central and accessible location, there was an easy connection to the rest of the city. Hence, the combination of all these characteristics together creates a unique test case most worthy of the comprehensive research presented here, and it would be extremely difficult and in my opinion, also wrong to compare this case study with other German areas in this period.

Moreover, looking at Prenzlauer berg today, it is a bohemian chic district, with many young, prosperous people and with lots of families. The district is a center of long-settled expats from all around the world. A place condensed with kindergartens and playgrounds, small cafes, healthy food stores, gourmet markets, and a unique sustainable shopping scene. But going back around seventy-five years, Prenzlauer Berg has seen a very dark era and was very much different than today. As a piece of visible evidence, one can look at the ruined house in the figure. 4, where today there is a lively kindergarten. This exploration of the historical period of war and occupation in Prenzlauer Berg has revealed an entirely different narrative of this area: A totally unpolished narrative of chaos, misery, and unconstrained violence in todays one of the most modern, trendy, international, and colorful districts in Germany.

3. Methodological Conclusion

This micro-historical analysis has revealed everyday life at the anthropological level. The large number of anecdotes, small stories, and reports have allowed us to look at the different perceptions that existed at that time about what was considered meaningless, important, negligible, normal, unusual, and more. All in all, I have analyzed the violent experiences and the

perceptions towards violence as much as possible through the eyes of the contemporaries of Prenzlauer Berg at their time. Their gaze is undoubtedly complex, as they experienced both destruction and rehabilitation; they felt sadness, despair, and indifference at times, but also pure joy and a sense of relief after the total defeat. Violence was an inseparable part of their daily lives, and as such, it became an almost unavoidable phenomenon, whether in contemporaries' experiences as accomplices to crimes, as victims of violence, or as silent observers. In that respect, the main thing that is evident is that their perspectives on the various acts of violence that occurred around them or that they experienced personally were not at all similar to or in accordance with today's public perceptions and behaviors towards violent acts.

The decision to base this research primarily on personal accounts-a "history from below" that describes everyday life experiences-stemmed from my desire to observe everyday life through the eyes of the writers and narrators. My aim was to track down stories of violence that would appear in sources of this kind and which would reveal different and less conventional aspects than many existing studies on the subject of violence in wartime Germany. I soon realized that the references to violent acts in the sources were countless. What helped my analysis in this respect was the fact that the study was limited to a relatively small geographical area.

I encountered an additional methodological challenge, which was how to reconstruct this historical period, because of the broad scope of violent descriptions at various points in time. On the one hand, there was a great deal of similarity between the various experiences of violence presented by the writers and narrators, and many events were repeated in different versions. On the other hand, each description expresses a concrete world of experience and therefore stands on its own. Thus, my approach in analyzing the sources was to address each case by understanding it on its own merits rather than examining the same multiple masses of descriptions on a narrative basis and uniting them into one metanarrative.

By using this method of investigation, this dissertation has contributed to narrating the history of violence in Germany in the period from 1943 to 1948, during the last phase of World War II, and through the period of occupation. It has enabled me to provide an alternative to existing narratives about the period under investigation and the phenomenon of violence. All those "small histories" of violence presented and examined throughout the study also undermine the very existence of one great historical narrative of violence in the period.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Anna J., *Der Kampf um die Flaktürme im Friedrichshain*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 115-116.

Aribert K., *Im Niemandsland*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 198-199.

Christa H., *Die Russen kommen!*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 207-208.

Elfriede R., *Ein Jahr Wiederaufbau im Bzk. Przl. Berg*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 256.

Elli L., *Der Kampf um Berlin!*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 107.

Fritz K., *Berlin im Mai 1945 und im April 1946*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 1181/1, Bl. 295-298.

F. B., *Die Beschießung*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 268-270.

Gisela V., *Der Gleimtunnel*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183.

Hannelore W., *Unser Haus!*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 424.

Heinz M., *Der Kampf um den Bezirk Prenzlauer Berg*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 114.

Helga O., *Kämpfe um unser Wohnviertel*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 28.

Horst B., *Die Bevölkerung plündert den Wasserturm Belforter Straße*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 284.

H.G., *Unser Haus brennt*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 180/2, Bl. 473.

Ingrid H., *Die Russen kommen*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 229.

I.H., *Anstehen beim Beschuß*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 133.

Jeschke, Gerhard. *Heimkehr aus der Gefangenschaft*, Museum Pankow, Archiv:
Dokumentenbestand Prenzlauer Berg.

Joachim H., *Unsere Wohnung*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 348-349.

Karl K., *Unser Haus brennt*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 180/2, Bl. 429.

Karl P., *Weißer Fahnen*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 193.

Klaus R., *Die Russen kommen*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 180.

LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 534.

LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 554-555.

LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1560.

LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1561.

LAB, A Pr.Br.Rep. 030-03, Nr. 1811.

Liane H., *Die Russen kommen*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 183, Bl. 178-179.

Lieselotte J., *Lebensmittellager werden geplündert*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 298-299.

Maria R., *Der Endkampf um Berlin*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 12.

Ruth F., *Unsere Straße im Wiederaufbau*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 476-478.

Siegfried B., *Die letzten Kämpfe*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 177-180.

Traute S., *Die Niederlage von Berlin*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 150-151.

Ursula T., *Unser Kellerleben*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 141-142.

Waltraut B., *Unsere Straße*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/2, Bl. 520.

Werner W., *Meine Erlebnisse während der Kampfzeit*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 178, Bl. 26-27.

Wolfgang S., *Lebensmittellager werden geplündert*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 181/1, Bl. 293-294.

W.M., *Frauen räumen auf*, LAB (STA), Rep. 134/13, Nr. 182/2, Bl. 100-101.

Published Primary Sources

Andreas-Friedrich, Ruth. *Der Schattenmann: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1938-1945* (Berlin: Union, 1977, 1947).

Andreas-Friedrich, Ruth. *Schauplatz Berlin: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1945 bis 1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

Anna. "Eine richtige große Liebe. Anna aus dem Zeitungsviertel," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 248-279.

Anonymous. *A Woman in Berlin: Diary 20 April 1945 to 22 June 1945* (London: Virago, 2005).

Arndt, Elsa. "Da waren wir frei," in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 17-46.

- Becker, Erna. “ ‘Nun sollen wir plötzlich “artfremd” sein,’ ” in: *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.*” *Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 20-64.
- Bergk, Jürgen. “Bitteres Ende,” in: *Die Bremer Höhe in Berlin: ein Kiez im Prenzlauer Berg*, Tino Kotte, ed., (Berlin: Geschichtswerkstatt Bremer Höhe, 2007), pp. 58-63.
- Bredereck, Elke and Konstanze Siebelitz. “Die Blutordenträger und die Opernsängerin. Ein Interview (Juni 1995),” in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), pp. 257-272.
- Bredereck, Elke and Konstanze Siebelitz. “ ‘Und dann wurde unsere Gleimstraße das Kampffeld.’ Die Straße als Schlachtfeld,” in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), pp. 157-172.
- Buhl, Karl-Heinz. “Karl-Heinz Buhl, Jahrgang 1931,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 99.
- Christa. “Ich bin eine richtige bürgerliche Tochter. Christa aus dem Göhrener Ei,” in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 143-166.
- Christa G., “Christa G. (Aufsatz Nr. XVII, 13),” in: *Ich schlug meiner Mutter die brennenden Funken ab: Berliner Schulaufsätze aus dem Jahre 1946*, Annett Gröschner and Prenzlauer Berg Museum, eds. (Berlin: Kontext, 1996), pp. 353-358.
- Christian, Renate. “Renate Christian, Jahrgang 1941,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), pp. 19, 107.
- Deichmann, Hans. *Ich sah Königsberg sterben: Aus dem Tagebuch eines Arztes* (Schnellbach: S. Bublitz, 2000).
- Dembny, Horst. “Horst Dembny, Jahrgang 1933,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 102.
- Der Sprach-Brockhaus: Deutsches Bildwörterbuch für Jedermann* (Leipzig: F.A Brockhaus, 1949, 1935), p. 248.
- Doempke, Joachim. “Joachim Doempke, Jahrgang 1941,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 109.

Erhard. "Wir haben viele Waschungen erlebt. Erhard aus der Lothringer," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 212-247.

Fallada, Hans. *In meinem fremden Land: Gefängnistagebuch 1944* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2009).

Fortange, Günter. "Günter Fortange, Jahrgang 1936," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 105.

Garstecki, Waltraud. "Waltraud Garstecki, Jahrgang 1933," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), pp. 102, 105, 107, 109.

Gerda. "‘n Drama wie bei Ibsen. Gerda am Friedrichshain," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 47-96.

Glatzel, Wolf-Dieter. "Wolf-Dieter Glatzel, 1941 in Berlin," in: *Kriegskinder*, Frederike Helwig and Anne Waak, eds. (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2017), p. 50.

Gollnick, Werner. "Mein Kriegsende in Berlin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5.5.2015. 28.2.2020 <https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/mein-kriegsende-in-berlin>

Grebing, Helga. *Freiheit, die ich meinte. Erinnerungen an Berlin* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2012).

Gröschner, Annett, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann, eds., *Backfisch im Bombenkrieg: Das Tagebuch der Gitti E. Notizen in Steno 1943–45* (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2013).

Hähnel, Irmgard. "Das Leben ist eine Gabe," in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 47-66.

Hilde. "Glas ins Essen tun. Hilde aus dem Stargarder," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 31-46.

Hoffmann, Peter Friedrich Ludwig. *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache in ihrer Heutigen Ausbildung*, Martin Block, ed. (Leipzig: Friedrich Brandstetter, 1944, 1936), p. 227.

Inge. "Singen für die Siege. Inge aus der Böttzowstraße," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 185-193.

Inge V., “War auch ‘ne schöne Zeit,” in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 99-112.

Kästner, Erich. *Notabene 45: Ein Tagebuch* (Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg: Fischer, 1966, 1961).

Klaffert, Ursula. “Die Verwandlung von Fisch in Fleisch,” in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 32.

Klaffert, Ursula. “Stiller Widerstand und ein kleiner Hauptgewinn,” in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 40-41.

Klempau, Ilse. “Meiner treuen Schultasche zum Geleit ins Altenteil im Museum (1931-1999),” in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 2, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2008), pp. 79-87.

Klemperer, Victor. *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1945*, Walter Nowojewski and Hadwig Klemperer, eds. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1995).

Kordon, Klaus. “ ‘Irgendwie hat man so ein bisschen Solidarität gelernt.’ Interview mit Klaus Kordon,” in: *Prenzlauer Berg im Wandel der Geschichte: Leben rund um den Helmholtzplatz*, Bernt Roder and Bettina Tacke, eds. (Berlin: be.bra, 2004), pp. 247-254.

Kraft, Ilse. “Ilse Kraft, Jahrgang 1921,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 102.

Lewisohn, Cäcilie. “ ‘Ich könnte immerzu heulen über die Aussichtslosigkeit, hier je wegzukommen,’ ” in: *‘Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben.’ Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 67-96.

Lohaus, Werner. “Werner Lohaus, Jahrgang 1936,” in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), pp. 75, 101.

Lütge, Kurt. “Von Festen, Politik und der verschwundenen Braut,” in: *Kiezgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 48-50.

Lütge, Ruth. "Wenn aus Kindern Eltern werden," in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 22-23.

Margarethe. "Der Fuß, der das Bein war. Margarethe aus der Wins," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 131-142.

Meidow, Werner. "Werner Meidow, Jahrgang 1917," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), pp. 92, 106-107.

Meusel, Erika. "Erika Meusel, Jahrgang 1924," in: *Berlin Prenzlauer Berg. Alltag und Geschichte 1920–1970*, Jan Jansen, ed. (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), pp. 83, 102, 110.

Mierendorff, Marta. "'Jeder Tag des Wartens auf Gottfried ist eine Ewigkeit,'" in: *Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben. Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946*, Angela Martin and Claudia Schoppmann, eds. (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), pp. 101-148.

Paul, Hermann. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Karl Euling, ed. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1935, 1897), p. 211.

Richter, Gisela. "Kriegsende - mein Einsatz für Berlin," *LEMO Lebendiges Museum Online*, June 2008. February 10, 2016 www.dhm.de/lemo/zeitzeugen/gisela-richter-kriegsende-mein-einsatz-fuer-berlin.html

Romahn, Traute. "Meine Odyssee," in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 2, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2008), pp. 115-118.

Scherner, Annemarie, Dr., "Rosinen, Wodka und 'Stube für Mädchen,'" in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 81.

Schulze, Horst. "Flaggenwechsel in der Bornholmer," in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), p. 104.

Seyfert, Karl. "Unsere Flucht zum Alexanderplatz," in: *Kiezzgeschichten aus Pankow, Weißensee und Prenzlauer Berg*, Band 1, Kunstfabrik Köpenick, ed. (Berlin: Kunstfabrik Köpenick, 2001), pp. 38-39.

Simon, Marie Jalowicz. *Untergetaucht: Eine junge Frau überlebt in Berlin 1940-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2014).

Steinert, Renate. "Nachkriegserinnerungen," in: *Sesshaft im Prenzlauer Berg: Senioren erzählen aus ihrem Leben*, Gesina von Schroeder and Matthias Kehl, eds. (Berlin: Gesina von Schroeder, 2007), pp. 229- 236.

Walentina. "Das hat och Nerven gekostet. Walentina zwischen Hochmeister und Husemann," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 113-130.

Wera. "Das versunkene Viertel. Wera aus der Landsberger," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 167-184.

Willi und Trude. "Tango und Schrippen. Willi und Trude aus der Christburger," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 97-112.

Zeh, Helmut. "Helmut Zeh, 1940 in Berlin," in: *Kriegskinder*, Frederike Helwig and Anne Waak, eds. (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2017), p. 76.

Zinow, Irmhild. "Mein Kriegsende in Berlin," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 5.5.2015. 28.2.2020
<https://interaktiv.morgenpost.de/mein-kriegsende-in-berlin>

Secondary Sources

Antill, Peter. *Berlin 1945: End of the Thousand-Year Reich* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2005).

Barnouw, Dagmar. *Germany 1945: Views of War and Violence* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).

Beevor, Antony. *The Fall of Berlin 1945* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yavne, 2003).

Beisel, David R. "The German Suicide, 1945," *The Journal of Psychohistory* 34.4 (2007), pp. 302-313.

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

Bessel, Richard. "Leaving Violence behind: Thoughts on the Development of Germany after 1945," *Historia* 396 2.2 (2012), pp. 181-195.

Bessel, Richard. "The War to end all Wars: The Shock of Violence in 1945 and its Aftermath in Germany," in: *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), pp. 69-100.

Bessel, Richard and Dirk Schumann. "Introduction: Violence, Normality, and the Construction of Postwar Europe," in: *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds. (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-14.

Biess, Frank. *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Biess, Frank, Mark Roseman and Hanna Schissler, eds., *Conflict, Catastrophe, and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

Bischl, Kerstin. "Presenting Oneself: Red Army Soldiers and Violence in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945," *History* 101.346 (2016), pp. 464-479.

Black, Monica. *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to divided Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Blank, Ralf, ed., "Germany and the Second World War," Vol. 9/1, *German Wartime Society 1939-1945: Politicization, Disintegration, and the Struggle for Survival* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Bracher, Karl Dietrich. *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

Brockmann, Stephen. "German Culture at the 'Zero Hour,' " in: *Revisiting Zero Hour 1945: The Emergence of Postwar German Culture*, Stephen Brockmann and Frank Trommler, eds. (Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1996), pp. 8-40.

Burds, Jeffrey. "Sexual Violence in Europe in World War II, 1939-1945," *Politics & Society* 37.1 (2009), pp. 35-73.

Burleigh, Michael. *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

Carr, David. *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Cohen, Esther. "Violence, Cruelty and Subjectivity - Porous Boundaries," *Historia: Journal of the Historical Society of Israel* 9 (in Hebrew) (2002), pp. 5-21.

Corrigan, Gordon. *The Second World War: A Military History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010).

"Die Berliner Flaktürme," *Berliner Unterwelten E.V.*, November 28, 2018 www.berliner-unterwelten.de/verein/forschungsthema-untergrund/bunker-und-ls-anlagen/flaktuerme.html

Evans, Jennifer V., *Life among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Fisher, Jaimey. *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeducation, and Reconstruction after the Second World War* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007).

Frei, Norbert. *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews. The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

Friedländer, Saul. "On the Twists and Turns of the Germans with their Memory," in: *From Division to Unification. Germany 1945-1990*, Shulamit Volkov, ed. (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1994), pp. 147-157.

Friedrich, Jörg. *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Gebhardt, Miriam. *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

Geertz, Clifford. *Common Sense as a Cultural System*, in: "Local knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology" (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 73-93.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic books, 1973).

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

Geyer, Michael. "Endkampf 1918 and 1945: German Nationalism, Annihilation, and Self-Destruction," in: *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the 20th Century*, Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, eds. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), pp. 35-68.

Goedde, Petra. "From Villains to Victims: Fraternization and the Feminization of Germany, 1945-1947," *Diplomatic History* 23.1 (1999), pp. 1-20.

Goeschel, Christian. *Suicide in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Gröschner, Annett. "Als die Ostfront mitten in Prenzlauer Berg lag," *Die Welt*, April 30, 2015. December 11, 2015 www.welt.de/140328748

- Gröschner, Annett. "Der Falkplatz. Metamorphosen eines Stadtplatzes," in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), pp. 23-64.
- Gröschner, Annett. "Menschen an unserer Rückseite," *Annett Gröschner*. November 28, 2018 www.annettgroeschner.de/buecher/vorwort-jeder-hat-sein-stueck-berlin-gekriegt
- Gröschner, Annett. "Menschen an unserer Rückseite. Einleitung," in: *Jeder hat sein Stück Berlin gekriegt: Geschichten vom Prenzlauer Berg*, Annett Gröschner, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1998), pp. 11-30.
- Gröschner, Annett, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann. "Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber," in: *Backfisch im Bombenkrieg: Das Tagebuch der Gitti E. Notizen in Steno 1943–45*, Annett Gröschner, Grischa Meyer and Barbara Felsmann, eds. (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2013), pp. 10-13.
- Grosinski, Klaus. "Ein Schulpalast im Berliner Norden. Vom Luisenstädtischen Gymnasium zur 11. Grundschule Prenzlauer Berg," in: *Grenzgänger. Wunderheiler. Pflastersteine. Die Geschichte der Gleimstraße in Berlin*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, Prenzlauer Berg Museum, ed. (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1998), pp. 93-128.
- Grosinski, Klaus. *Prenzlauer Berg: Eine Chronik* (Berlin: Dietz, 2008, 1997).
- Grossmann, Atina. "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers," in: *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Robert G. Moeller, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, 1997), pp. 33-52.
- Grossmann, Atina. *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- Gruner, Wolf and Steven J. Ross, eds., *New Perspectives on Kristallnacht: After 80 Years, the Nazi Pogrom in Global Comparison* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019).
- Hayse, Michael R., *Recasting West German Elites: Higher Civil Servants, Business Leaders, and Physicians in Hesse between Nazism and Democracy, 1945-1955* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).
- Heineman, Elizabeth. "Gender, Sexuality, and Coming to Terms with the Nazi Past," *Central European History* 38.1 (2005), pp. 41-74.
- Heineman, Elizabeth. *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

- Herf, Jeffrey. *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).
- Hillgruber, Andreas. *Germany and the Two World Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).
- Hinze, Sibylle. "Der Anfang vom Ende," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 286-295.
- Hinze, Sibylle. "Mensch unter Menschen," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 68-70.
- Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig. "Germans into Allies: Writing a Diary in 1945," in: *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943-1947*, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and Olivier Wieviorka, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), pp. 63-90.
- Hoffmann, Stefan-Ludwig, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and Olivier Wieviorka, eds., *Seeking Peace in the Wake of War. Europe, 1943-1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).
- "Holocaust Encyclopedia," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, December 16, 2019 <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws>
- Jerke, Birgit. "Des Gotteshauses Bedeutung und Berechtigung," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 262-276.
- Jerke, Birgit. "Ein Tempel des Friedens," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 340-348.
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005).
- Karonen, Petri and Ville Kivimäki. "Suffering, Surviving and Coping: Experiences of Violence and Defeat in Post-War Europe," in: *Continued Violence and Troublesome Pasts: Post-war Europe between the Victors after the Second World War*, Ville Kivimäki and Petri Karonen, eds. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society/SKS, 2017), pp. 7-26.
- Kershaw, Ian. *The End: Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945* (London: Allan Lane, 2011).

- Koselleck, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
- Kotte, Tino. "Erinnerungen an die Kindheit 1939 bis 1949," in: *Die Bremer Höhe in Berlin: ein Kiez im Prenzlauer Berg*, Tino Kotte, ed. (Berlin: Geschichtswerkstatt Bremer Höhe, 2007), pp. 46-57.
- Kraetzer, Reinhard. "Vorwort," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 8-9.
- Kreutzer, Michael. "Über konzentrierte jüdische Nachbarschaften in Prenzlauer Berg 1886-1931," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 353-380.
- Lagrou, Pieter. "The Nationalization of Victimhood: Selective Violence and National Grief in Western Europe," in: *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds. (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 243-258.
- Laqueur, Walter and Judith Tydor Baumel, eds., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 451-455.
- Lepage, Jean-Denis G.G., *Hitler Youth, 1922-1945: An illustrated History* (North Carolina, London: McFarland, 2009), pp. 117-120.
- Lewy, Guenter. *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Loroff, Nicole. "Gender and Sexuality in Nazi Germany," *Constellations* 3.1 (2011), pp. 49-61.
- Lüdtke, Alf, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- Madanipour, Ali. *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003).
- Margalit, Gilad. *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers its Dead of World War II* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010).
- Martin, Angela and Claudia Schoppmann, eds., "Ich fürchte die Menschen mehr als die Bomben." *Aus den Tagebüchern von drei Berliner Frauen 1938-1946* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996).
- Möbius, Torben. "World War II aerial Bombings of Germany: Fear as Subject of National Socialist governmental Practices," *Storicamente* 11 (2015), pp. 1-21.

- Moeller, Robert G., "Introduction: Writing the History of West Germany," in: *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Robert G. Moeller, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 1-30.
- Moorhouse, Roger. *Berlin at War* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir, 2012).
- Naimark, Norman M., *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Neumann, Boaz. *Being in the World: German Worlds at the turn of the 20th Century* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2014).
- Neumann, Boaz. *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Waltham: UPNE, 2011).
- Neumann, Boaz. *New Histories of Nazism* (in Hebrew) (Moshav Ben-Shemen: Modan, 2019).
- Niven, Bill. *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the legacy of the Third Reich* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002).
- Overy, Richard. "Interwar, War, Postwar: Was there a Zero Hour in 1945?," in: *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, Dan Stone, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 60-78.
- Plant, Richard. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals* (New York: Henry Holt, 1986).
- Roder, Bernt. "Einführung," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 10-12.
- Roder, Bernt. "Vier Staatsbürgerschaften," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 62-67.
- Sandvoß, Hans-Rainer. *Widerstand in Prenzlauer Berg und Weißensee* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 2015, 2000).
- Scharf, Inga. *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home* (New York, London: Routledge, 2008).
- Scheer, Regina. "Der zerbrochene Stein," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturstadt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 56-61.

- Scheer, Regina. "Die Untergetauchte," in: *Leben mit der Erinnerung: Jüdische Geschichte in Prenzlauer Berg*, Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Prenzlauer Berg Museum für Heimatgeschichte und Stadtkultur, eds. (Berlin: Ed. Hentrich, 1997), pp. 84-88.
- Schreiter, Katrin. "Revisiting Morale under the Bombs: The Gender of Affect in Darmstadt, 1942–1945," *Central European History* 50.3 (2017), pp. 347-374.
- Sebald, W. G., *On the Natural History of Destruction* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
- Slaveski, Filip. "Violence and Xenophobia as means of Social Control in times of Collapse: The Soviet Occupation of Post-War Germany, 1945-1947," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 54.3 (2008), pp. 389-402.
- Steege, Paul. *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Steege, Paul, Andrew Stuart Bergerson, Maureen Healy and Pamela E. Swett. "The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter," *The Journal of Modern History* 80.2 (June 2008), pp. 358-378.
- Teo, Hsu-Ming. "The Continuum of Sexual Violence in Occupied Germany, 1945-49," *Women's History Review* 5.2 (1996), pp. 191-218.
- Tepper, Renate. "Erinnerung und Mahnung," *extraDrei: Die Zeitung für Pankow-Prenzlauer Berg-Weißensee*, May 2005, pp. 4-5.
- Treber, Leonie. *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen: Klartext, 2014).
- Van Dijk, Ruud, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
- Vormweg, Heinrich. "The Literature," in: *The Germans: 1945-1990*, Volume 1, (in Hebrew) Oded Heilbronner and Moshe Zimmermann, eds. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), pp. 392-402.
- Wilz, Jennifer R., *Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, 1870-Present: A Neighborhood on the Fringe of Germany*, (PhD Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment, Brown University: 2008).
- Wittlinger, Ruth and Steffi Boothroyd. "A 'Usable' Past at Last? The Politics of the Past in United Germany," *German Studies Review* 33.3 (2010), pp. 489-502.

Zimmermann, Michael. "Jews, Gypsies and Soviet Prisoners of War: Comparing Nazi Persecutions," in: *The Roma: A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago, eds. (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2007), pp. 31-54.

"80 Jahre Jugendarbeit – die Geschichte des Hauses Hosemannstr. 14," *Medienzentrum Pankow*, February 28, 2020 <https://www.mezen-berlin.de/70-jahre-jugendarbeit>

Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is the history of violence in the Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg district from 1943 to 1948. Throughout my research, I explored the expressions of violence and the perceptions of an act as violent through common experiences of ordinary people in their everyday lives.

From a historiographical point of view changes in patterns of violence were addressed and studied in great depth, usually interpreting them through the formal historical periods of World War II and the postwar period and classifying them according to the forms of violence or victims of violence. Contrary to the dominant historiographical approach, in this study of “smaller histories” of violence occurring in one small specific geographical space over the years 1943-1948, there is an attempt to establish an original alternative to the accepted narrative of the violence in Germany in the years under exploration.

The decision to create a different time frame for this research, which would start in 1943 and end in 1948 stemmed from the desire to explore these years in an unconventional way. I believe that the characterization of “1945” as a turning point in the history of Germany, forces a superficial end to the continuing sequence of events and thereby prevents a different approach to the exploration of this period. The decision to focus on one district, the Prenzlauer Berg district, allowed me to explore the widespread phenomenon of violence in the German space during this period in full depth.

I posit that the phenomenon of violence is a historical-anthropological phenomenon and as such, can be investigated from a social and anthropological point of view. Violence in the explored period was not a meaningless phenomenon. Quite the contrary, it was a significant part of the lives of the people. Furthermore, I maintain that the violence did not end with the defeat of Germany in World War II, it continued in other forms in the postwar period.

A major contribution of this research is the method that I have chosen in order to study the phenomenon of violence and its role in Germany, a micro-historic view using everyday life accounts, such as diaries, memoirs, interviews, school essays, and more. Following this method allows us to approach this era from a different perspective and uncover the lesser-known facts about the violent acts that occurred. Shining new light on these events also provides new conclusions on this piece of history.

The aim of the study is to trace the manifestations of violence and the development of violence in Germany during the years 1943-1948, the study has shown that the phenomenon of violence was much more complex than has ever been confirmed before.

Kurzfassung

Im Mittelpunkt dieser Dissertation steht die Geschichte der Gewalt im Berliner Ortsteil Prenzlauer Berg von 1943 bis 1948. Im Rahmen meiner Forschung habe ich anhand der Alltagserfahrungen gewöhnlicher Menschen untersucht, wie sich Gewalt ausdrückt und wann eine Handlung als gewalttätig empfunden wird.

Aus historiografischer Sicht wurden Veränderungen in Gewaltmustern thematisiert und eingehend untersucht, indem sie meist anhand der formalen historischen Perioden des Zweiten Weltkriegs und der Nachkriegszeit interpretiert und nach den Formen oder den Opfern der Gewalt klassifiziert wurden. Entgegen dem vorherrschenden historiografischen Ansatz wird in dieser Arbeit über "kleinere Geschichten" der Gewalt der Versuch unternommen, in einem kleinen, spezifischen geografischen Raum in den Jahren 1943 bis 1948 eine Alternative zur allgemein anerkannten Sichtweise auf die Gewalt in Deutschland in den untersuchten Jahren zu entwickeln.

Die Entscheidung, einen untypischen Zeitrahmen für diese Untersuchung zu schaffen, der 1943 beginnt und 1948 endet, entsprang dem Wunsch, diese Jahre auf unkonventionelle Weise zu erkunden. Meiner Meinung nach erzwingt die Charakterisierung von "1945" als Wendepunkt in der deutschen Geschichte ein oberflächliches Ende der fortlaufenden Abfolge von Ereignissen und verhindert dadurch einen differenzierten Ansatz bei der Erforschung dieses Zeitraums. Durch die Entscheidung, mich auf einen Stadtteil, Prenzlauer Berg, zu konzentrieren, konnte ich das weit verbreitete Phänomen der Gewalt im deutschen Raum zu dieser Zeit in aller Tiefe untersuchen.

Ich postuliere, dass das Phänomen der Gewalt ein historisch-anthropologisches Phänomen ist und als solches aus einem sozialen und anthropologischen Blickwinkel heraus untersucht werden kann. Gewalt war in der untersuchten Periode kein bedeutungsloses Phänomen. Ganz im Gegenteil, sie war ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Lebens der Menschen. Darüber hinaus vertrete ich die Auffassung, dass die Gewalt nicht mit der Niederlage Deutschlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg endete, sondern in der Nachkriegszeit in anderer Form weiterging.

Ein wichtiger Beitrag dieser Forschungsarbeit liegt in der von mir gewählten Methode zur Untersuchung des Phänomens der Gewalt und seiner Rolle in Deutschland. Ich habe eine

mikrohistorische Betrachtung anhand von Zeugnissen des täglichen Lebens wie Tagebüchern, Memoiren, Interviews, Schulaufsätzen usw. vorgenommen. Durch diese Methode können wir die Epoche aus einer anderen Perspektive betrachten und weniger bekannte Fakten über die damaligen Gewalttaten aufdecken. Ein neues Licht auf diese Ereignisse zu werfen, eröffnet zudem neue Erkenntnisse über diesen Teil der Geschichte.

Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, die Erscheinungsformen und die Entwicklung der Gewalt in Deutschland in den Jahren 1943 bis 1948 nachzuvollziehen. Die Untersuchung hat gezeigt, dass das Phänomen der Gewalt sehr viel komplexer war, als je zuvor festgestellt worden ist.