EVERYDAY LIFE
IN THE SHADOW OF TERROR

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On the cover: Street raid – round-up. People captured in round-ups were sent to forced labour, imprisoned, or shot.
The first round-up in the streets in Warsaw took place in May 1940.
Author unknown. Warsaw, 1940–1944

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EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE SHADOW OF TERROR

GERMAN OCCUPATION IN POLAND 1939–1945

Gdańsk 2015

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Introductory remarks

On 23 August 1939, the Third Reich and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact. In addition, the treaty included a secret protocol anticipating "territorial and political rearrangement of Polish territory," setting the border of the spheres of influence of both signatories along the line formed by the Rivers Narew, Vistula and San. Thus, they effectively agreed on the partition of Poland. At dawn on the 1 September, German troops crossed the Polish border along its entire length, supported by Slovak troops from the south.

Despite the work that had been undertaken in the 1930s to create a modern army, the Polish military forces were inferior to the German army, both in terms of equipment as well as size. General mobilisation was announced at the last minute, so on the 1 September only 70 per cent of combat readiness of troops was achieved. The army, however, continued fighting valiantly – by the end of the September Campaign the remaining German stocks of ammunition would suffice for no more than two weeks fighting. A considerable proportion of equipment was also destroyed. It took the German army several months to replace those losses.

The Polish defence plan assumed maintaining resistance until reinforcements would arrive from France and Great Britain, which – according to guarantees Poland had received in May – were to begin an offensive against the Third Reich and engage German troops in the fighting in the West. Although the two countries declared war on Germany on 3 September and France announced mobilisation, no decisive action was undertaken. The situation is now known in historiography as the Phoney War.

From the very beginning, the victims of the first armed clashes in Poland were mainly civilians. The outbreak of war caused unimaginable chaos. Crowds of refugees camped at railway stations, blocking roads and buying goods from shops in panic. The German air force – the Luftwaffe – not only destroyed strategic targets but bombed entire cities, brutally attacking columns of fleeing refugees – roadsides were full of abandoned equipment, damaged vehicles and dead horses that no one had time to remove. People who were killed were buried where they fell.

Advancing Wehrmacht divisions encroaching on Polish territory were followed by the SS units, with both formations committing acts of terror. The Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) sent Special Operations Groups (Einsatzgruppen) to Poland, whose task was to "combat elements hostile towards the Reich." They supported the volunteer corps composed of Nazi-sympathizing representatives of the German minority in Poland (Selbstschutz). Their activities consisted mostly of identifying and detaining Poles who might in the future be a source of resistance – the intelligentsia, political and social activists, or vet-

erans of the struggle for independence from the 1918–1921. Also defined as a „hostile element" were the Jews; they were persecuted and killed from the beginning of the war, and their registration was conducted in order to prepare the ground for further repressions.

On 17 September, following the secret protocol of the Pact of 23 August, the Soviet Union joined the military action against Poland, citing as the official reason the alleged disintegration of the Polish state and the desire to aid Ukrainians and Belarusians living in Poland. Soviet propaganda presented the aggression as an act of liberation, at the same time bringing a reign of terror to the occupied territories. Officers of the NKVD (Soviet security service) made numerous arrests among the Polish population. Over 20,000 captured officers and government officials were killed in the spring of 1940 (it became known as the Katyń Massacre).

Upon receiving the news of the Soviet attack, the President and the government of Poland left Polish territory via Romania, where they were interned. On 30 September, they resigned their offices, handing over their responsibilities to the Government in Exile, which had been formed in France and later moved to London following the French capitulation in the summer of 1940. Thus, the continuity of Polish state institutions was maintained throughout World War Two, representing the interests of Poles in dealings with the Allied Forces. In late 1940, the government appointed the Government Delegation for Poland as its representation on occupied Polish territory. The Government Delegate was in charge of the secret organisations structures of the Polish state, including its armed forces – the underground Home Army (called the Union of Armed Struggle before 1942), formed to fight the German and Soviet occupiers through sabotage, subversion, and for groundwork for the future armed uprising. Communication between the Delegation and the authorities in London was maintained through a network of couriers and emissaries, who, risking their lives, carried commands and reports on the situation in the occupied territories. One such emissary was Jan Karski. During his stay in Warsaw, he managed to reach the ghetto – his report on the situation of the Jews imprisoned there was then submitted to the Polish government, which in turn decided to inform the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States.

On 28 September 1939, the Soviet Union and the Third Reich signed the Boundary and Friendship Treaty, which confirmed the partition of Poland and revised some of the earlier stipulations regarding the boundaries of the German and Soviet occupation zones. In accordance with the decrees issued by Hitler, the western and northern parts of the Second Republic of Poland occupied by the Germans were annexed into the Reich. They were merged with the existing Gaue (regions) of Silesia and East Prussia, and new administrative units were created: the Reichsgau Wartheland (Warthegau) and Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia (Danzig-Westpreußen Reichsgau). The remaining former Polish territory became the General Government, divided into districts (until 1941 there were four: Cracow, Lublin, Radom and Warsaw). The General Government was administered by the imposed Civil Administration, headed by the Governor General of the occupied Polish lands. Hans Frank was appointed to that office. After the attack on the Soviet Union in the summer 1941, the General Government annexed the District of Galicia (with Lvov as the main centre). In the subsequent months, also established were the Reich Commissariats for Ukraine and the East (Reichskommissariat Ukraine, Reichskommissariat Ostlad), which included the eastern part of the Second Polish Republic and the Białystok District (Bezirk Białystok), subject to the administration of the Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia.

In the areas annexed to the Reich, mass deportations of Poles and Jews to the General Government were conducted. The remaining non-German population was deprived of their businesses and homes, and all Polish and Jewish institutions were closed (including schools). In Prussia and Silesia, the locals were arbitrarily classified as Germans and forced to sign the German Ethnicity List (Deutsche Volksliste). Registration on the list entailed an obligation to enlist in the Wehrmacht. Evading the signing of the Volksliste could end with imprisonment in a concentration camp.

The General Government was intended to provide a resource base and serve as a temporary reservation for non-Germans (including the Jews, prior to the decision to murder them). Polish and Jewish men

between 14 and 60 years of age were obliged to work, which meant that they could be forced by the occupiers to perform forced labour. In areas inhabited by persons representing various categories of population, the Germans carried out a policy of ethnic segregation: establishing ghettos for the Jews, seizing land for their own needs, confiscating houses or entire neighbourhoods, shops, properties, parks, and even assigning benches where only the Germans where allowed – *nur für Deutsche*. As part of the Master Plan East (Ost Generalplan), the Nazis also sought to expand their "living space" for the Germans. An example of such activities was "the first German settlement area" established in the General Government in the vicinity of Zamość. Between the autumn of 1942 and the summer of 1943, more than 100,000 Poles were displaced, some of whom were sent to extermination camps. At the same time, throughout the territory of the General Government and in the Białystok District the Reinhardt Operation (Aktion Reinhardt) was carried out, as a result of which about 2,000,000 Polish Jews were murdered in the extermination centres.

The policy of the occupying authorities was opposed by local population. Various survival strategies were adopted – those at risk of execution, arrest, or deportation went into hiding. The most dramatic in this respect was the fate of the Jews, only a small number of whom survived the occupation at the mercy of strangers, often in hiding, without being able to move for fear of denunciation or refusal of further assistance (to provide any aid to the Jews was punishable by death by the Germans). Most Poles struggled to obtain even the most basic products, since they were subject to rationing from the beginning of the occupation. Soon, as in the case of other occupied countries, a black market developed on the Polish territory. Millions of people were involved in the black market trade, by producing, transporting and buying goods officially unavailable for sale. Regulations of the occupying authorities were also evaded through bribery.

In occupied Poland, the Germans were also faced with active resistance, the scale of which was incomparably greater than in any other European country. Subject to the Polish Government in Exile, the Polish Underground State consisted of about 500,000 sworn members of the conspiracy. Its armed forces, the Home Army, in the summer of 1944 numbered about 350,000 soldiers. However, the range of influence of underground structures included the majority of Poles; for example, the Underground State issued universally binding regulations, mainly concerning prohibition of cooperation with the occupier (known as "collaboration"). Breaking such regulations incurred sanctions imposed by underground court judgments, including the death penalty for the most serious offenses. The activity of the Office of Information and Propaganda of the Headquarters of the Home Army, waging a psychological war against the occupier and being responsible for the information and propaganda service, helped to maintain the hope of victory. The effects of its actions were visible publicly in the form of inscriptions on the walls, leaflets or the underground press (the main press release – "Biuletyn Informacyjny" (Information Bulletin) had an average circulation of almost 50 thousand copies and in the period from November 1939 until October 1944 there were more than 300 issues published).

The aim of the Home Army was to maintain combat readiness, train and gather forces, which were to start an open fight for independence at a convenient time. When the defeat of the Germans in the war against the Soviet Union launched in June 1941 began to indicate their imminent downfall, preparations were made to fight for the liberation of the occupied territories. The intention was to ensure that when the advancing Red Army troops approached those lands would already be controlled by the Poles, acting as fully-fledged hosts. In the autumn of 1943, Polish underground structures began to organise Operation "Tempest" (Akcja "Burza") – in July 1944, the Home Army commander, General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, gave the order to launch it. The objective was to liberate major cities in open battle with the Germans. The culmination of the operation was the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising on 1 August 1944. Warsaw became the scene of bloody battles fought over the course of two months, until the surrender of the Polish forces on 3 October. The Germans decided to suppress the Uprising and destroy the city completely. The Red Army, which in early September seized the right-bank part of the city but on the orders of Stalin refrained from helping, adopted a passive attitude towards the slaughter of insurgents and civilians.

In other areas occupied by the Germans, Soviet troops often acted in tandem with the Home Army, which had some real successes in many cities, especially in the east. However, as soon as an area was liberated, the Soviet NKVD security forces took charge, carrying out arrests of soldiers and activists of the Polish underground. The end of the German occupation brought the recovery of Polish statehood, albeit not the sovereignty. It marked the beginning of the totalitarian regime and the dark period of Stalinism. Borders were moved about 150 kilometres to the west – nearly 50 per cent of the pre-war Polish territory was lost as the price for the acquisition of German lands. This change resulted in millions of people being forced to migrate.

* * *

The intention of the book is to show the widest possible range of phenomena associated with the Nazi occupation in Poland, including some unique, individual cases. Of interest here is neither the war itself nor the great politics, but the consequences they brought for ordinary people (although, in order to convey the atmosphere of that time, the album also features photographs of the Nazi occupation elites). There are no photos of Nazi concentration camps and prisons in this collection. Such an important element of the reality of war would require a separate chapter devoted entirely to this issue, and it has already been the subject of many publications available today. In this photographic collection, the terror of the occupation is shown only if it played out in the public space, yet the images collected here prove beyond any doubt that during the occupation Polish citizens permanently lived in the shadow of violence. This album makes an indirect reference to extermination camps – in the telling absence of Jews deported from the ghetto, or a photograph of a deserted street in Cracow with abandoned luggage strewn around.

Individual chapters show parallel worlds: the Germans, Polish towns and villages, the Jews, and also the underground. On the one hand, these realities overlapped each other; after all, the war and the policy of the occupation authorities were their common denominator. On the other hand, they remained largely independent – the German occupation system introduced division of the population according to the criterion of "race," which determined one's legal status, economic situation, access to individual goods and obligations (such as military service or forced labour). Many Poles involved in the clandestine activities led a double life: official and underground, according to completely different rules. The fate of a large group of Polish citizens who found themselves beyond the reach of the Nazi occupation has been partially shown in other album publications. The Museum is also planning an album dedicated to the Soviet occupation of Poland.

The album features more than four hundred photographs from the collections of about fifty Polish and foreign institutions and individuals, as well as those from the collection of the Museum of the Second World War. Most of them have never been published in book form before. Many photographs were taken by unknown German soldiers, but there are also pictures taken by Polish and Jewish photographers. Where possible, efforts have been made to identify their authors, as it is of great importance for the interpretation of those images. Photographs are accompanied by a commentary in the form of fragments of diaries, journals, accounts and court testimonies, and by selected items from the collection of the Museum of the Second World War.

Using principally the image in the form of photographs available today, it is not possible to cover all aspects of life in occupied Poland. Many phenomena, such as ethnic conflicts, including the exacerbation of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict, or pogroms against the Jews in the summer of 1941, could only be presented in a calendar at the end of the book. While the author of the album has intended to introduce the reader to the atmosphere of the occupation through the details and micro history contained in each of the photographs, the calendar is meant to organise scattered information and provide the book with an element of traditional narrative.

Occupation through a camera lens

The history of war photography dates back to the mid-nineteenth century and the US-Mexican conflict (1846–1848). The significance of the subject, the widespread interest even in areas far away from the battle zone, and the power of images led to the rapid development of this genre. In the twentieth century, war photography and film ceased to be a documenting instrument – it has become a weapon.

Polish photographers and photojournalists during the German occupation

In September 1939, all attempts to organise Polish photo-journalist services failed. The government news agency: Polish Telegraphic Agency (Polska Agencja Telegraficzna), whose task was to document the most important events, proved to be unprepared for the dynamic developments. Its authorities evacuated out of the country and fled to Romania along with the government. Some photographers "stood their ground," such as Henryk Śmigacz or Jan Ryś, authors of the famous images of the burning Royal Castle on 17 September 1939. They were given official permission to move freely in the fighting capital, delivering their photographs to the Town Hall. The Mayor of Warsaw and the Commissioner of civil defence of the capital, Stefan Starzyński, also endeavoured to facilitate the work of the American photojournalist, Julien Bryan, realising the importance of the sending the message about the defence of the city and the suffering of its residents to the international public.[1] Bryan was not only the author of photos that showed the tragedy of the bombarded city, but he also shot the documentary film "The Siege," nominated for an Oscar in 1941. Relatively few professional and amateur photographers were active at the front: Stefan Bałuk, Franciszek Skibiński, or Antoni Jarema Bończa-Snawadzki, to name a few. The photographs they took in that period did not survive or they may remain unidentified [2].

Once the occupation started, the German authorities banned the Poles from unrestricted documenting of the surrounding reality by means of photography. Both in areas annexed to the Reich, as well as in the General Government cameras were subject to confiscation. In the district of Warsaw, on 30 June 1941, a regulation was announced prohibiting "professional photography in public streets, parks and green zones." Violating the prohibition was punishable with a fine or prison sentence[3]. Similar orders were introduced in other cities.[4] Contrary to popular opinion in Poland, the mere possession of a camera was not a crime; one could take photos for one's own purposes, provided they were devoted to themes neutral from the perspective of the occupant.

In areas annexed into the Reich, shops, workshops and photographic laboratories were usually seized from their Polish owners and handed to Germans. In the General Government, small businesses often remained with their former owners, furthermore, in Warsaw in November 1939; members of the Guild of Photographers were ordered to report for work.[5] The Germans needed their services, for example to take photographs for new identity cards that residents of the conquered territories were obliged to bear. The German Cracow and Warsaw Press (Zeitungs-Verlag Krakau-Warschau), with headquarters established in Cracow and affiliate offices in Warsaw, Częstochowa, and Radom and also later in Lvov, employed some of the former associates of Polish publishers that had been closed down. Photographers from the studio of Mieczysław Bil-Bilażewski and Jerzy Łuczyński in Warsaw (before the war working for a high-volume daily "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny"), received orders to document official events – theatrical performances or Nazi ceremonies, but also scenes that served propaganda purposes. The Studio of Photography, Graphic Design and Decoration run by the duo Szwedo and Strychalski in Cracow provided innocent images of landscapes and folklore. Julian Łukaczyński's Photography Laboratory in Jasło – specialising in photographs for documents and portraits for the local population – documented (perhaps under duress) German official celebrations and festivities.[6] Photographers, just as the rest of society, represented a whole spectrum of attitudes, including ones which might be described as collaboration. It is certain, however, that under the conditions of occupation in Poland, refusal to work for the German authorities meant problems, including shutting down of the business and arrest.

The staff and owners of studios and photo labs often chose to work to record evidence of Nazi crimes and documentation of everyday life under the occupation for posterity. One such activity was actually a widespread phenomenon and it involved making additional prints of photographs brought by the Germans to develop. Examples of such endeavours are featured in this album. Some prints later found their way to the Central Commission for Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, and so they fulfilled their task to the letter. They constitute evidence of individual resistance against the occupiers, often independently of any underground organisations. Other employees of photo labs worked closely with the resistance movement, especially the Home Army. In 1941, in the Fotoris studio in Warsaw, an underground cell of the Home Army was established, headed by Andrzej Honowski. Its task was to seize photographs essential from the point of view of the underground that the German clients brought to develop. In January 1943, the cell was exposed and Honowski was arrested (he died in prison as a result of injuries)[7]. Photos that could be a source of information about the situation in Poland and in the German army were sent on a regular basis to the Polish intelligence cells. Polish Government in Exile in London received them via couriers – some of those photographs have survived to this day and are presented in this album. Photography was also used to make copies of German documents.

The underground Home Army had developed structures responsible for information and propaganda (Office of Information and Propaganda of the Headquarters of the Home Army). There was also the Photography Section, headed by Wacław Żdżarski. Persons assigned to do photography work for the underground received training during special courses. Overall, a total of about 60 people were trained. Practical exercises included photographing German posters, street life and the manifestations of the occupation-related terror. The resulting archive was unfortunately destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Żdżarski managed to organise secret laboratories, used not only to develop negatives supplied by photographers, but also for legalisation activities (forging documents for members of the underground or persons at risk of arrest). Most of them were housed in private homes[8].

In Nazi-occupied Poland there were photographers – professionals and amateurs – who, risking arrest, took photographs showing the reality of war. Often, they took photos while hiding, hence so many blurry shots taken from a window, a tram, or "from the hip." Usually, such photos documented manifestations of Nazi violence seen in the streets – raids, public executions, or restrictions of public space – the ghetto fence, guards, and announcements of orders and prohibitions. Some-

times, authors conveyed a more complex image of the occupation in their works. An interesting example is the set of photos taken by an amateur photographer, Feliks Łukowski, who worked near Zamość in today's eastern Poland. He photographed both Poles and German colonists who arrived to replace deported farmers, as well as representatives of the occupation administration and numerous scenes involving them. His photos of village life in that area indicate that he had an outstanding understanding of composition and great sensitivity, combined at the same time with an astounding ability to gain the trust of those he photographed, regardless of their nationality.

Somewhere between the journalistic work in the service of the underground and pursuing independent interests, there are photos of partisan units. The official directives of underground authorities advocated highest confidentiality, but sometimes soldiers broke those rules, documenting their life in the forest, stays in villages, training drills and sabotage actions: "There were no official photographers in the resistance during the occupation, because clearly they were orders prohibiting collecting documents, taking photographic records, etc. Such prudence was dictated by the cardinal principles of conspiracy. "Along with the commander of the guerrilla group of the Peasant Battalions, we took pictures in breach of that prohibition. Those photographs were taken during training at the facility and also later in the forest," Jerzy Matuszkiewicz[9] reminisced. It should be added that the Office of Information and Propaganda of the Headquarters of the Home Army decided to set up a field section within its Department of Propaganda. It was led by Stanisław Ostrowski. Special propaganda patrols were organised, consisting of a press and a photo reporter, whose task was to document the situation among partisan troops. Such patrols reached the troops in the General Government[10].

Most of photographs depicting the living conditions of the troops that we have now were taken in the area of today's eastern Poland, where at the end of the German occupation guerrillas controlled large areas and therefore there was less fear of exposure. This set includes interesting photographs taken by a professional photographer Edward Buczek, who became a photojournalist for the Home Army, with the right to stay in all guerrilla camps in forests surrounding the city of Biłgoraj.[11] These images document the Spartan living conditions, training and preparation for combat, but also the lives of the local population.

A real revival of Polish war photography took place during the Warsaw Uprising, which broke out on 1 August 1944. A brief period of freedom and acquisition of German photographic equipment proved a photo opportunity for many soldiers – reporters, acting on their own initiative or on behalf of the Office of Information and Propaganda of the Headquarters of the Home Army. To name just two: Eugeniusz Lokajski and Małgorzata Bala, whose photos have been included in this album. Images recorded by those photographers featured mainly fighting and everyday life of the partisans. Portrayals of civilian life in the basements by Joachim Joachimczyk constitute a minority. Soldiers often took pictures of their brothers-in-arms and therefore a lot of group portraits have survived. When the uprising was crushed, buried under the rubble of houses was also the legacy of many photographers and photojournalists of Warsaw. The substantial collections in museums and private hands give but a glimpse into the real mobilisation of the residents of the capital to commemorate the partisans' everyday lives.

Between propaganda and tourism – German photography in occupied Poland

The photographic beginning of World War Two took place in Sopot, where the moment when German soldiers forced open the barrier at the border checkpoint was immortalised.[12] It was a staged scene, of course. Following in the wake of the frontline that pushed deeper and deeper into the Polish territory were the German propaganda companies, which consisted of specially trained filmmakers and photographers. Both the Wehrmacht and SS had such units at their disposal. Their first task was to provide evidence of atrocities allegedly committed by Poles against the German minor-

ity, the purpose of which was to justify the invasion of Poland before international opinion and to encourage the Germans to fight. Such companies operated according to instructions they received, responding to the needs of the Ministry of Propaganda.[13] While the alleged crimes committed by the Poles against the Germans were illustrated vividly with dramatic photographs in September 1939, propaganda soon began depicting fallen soldiers in monumental shots of cemeteries and graves – death in battle was to be exalted and noble.

Another task of propaganda companies was to provide material that would make Jews repulsive to the German population. To this end, they used portraits of faces and figures, showing, according to the instruction of 8 September 1939, "Polish Jewish types of both sexes and of all ages." As Janina Struk writes, photographs of "types" had been present in Europe even before the war, but in Germany they gained particular popularity due to the science of physiognomy, advocated also by photographers such as August Sander.[14] National Socialism used and vulgarised such pursuits dictated by scientific curiosity, bending them to fit the theories of the master race, and sub-humans and Jews who were to be isolated and eventually eliminated. The aforementioned instruction also applied to "Jewish professions, Jewish customs, Jewish stench and filth" as themes to be sought.[15] The new German order was to force the Jews to get a taste of hard physical labour (allegedly for the first time) – this was the message conveyed by photographs published in the illustrated press in the Third Reich. The companies spread the image of Jews as corrupt and lecherous; such a presentation was particularly humiliating for the victims of photographers, who were forced to stage the required situations. Another theme, seen, for example, in photographs taken by Ludwig Knobloch in the Warsaw ghetto, was the complete indifference of the wealthy residents towards the misfortunes of others.[16] Laziness, insensitivity, greed and the propensity for following base instincts – the propaganda image of Jews served to dehumanise them.

Scholars studying photography from World War Two often pose the question of the ethical and methodological aspect of the use of the legacy of the Third Reich propaganda. As Olivier Sander writes, pictures taken by photographers from propaganda companies "are a kind of window to the war, albeit not the way that war was, but the way its propagandists wanted it to be."[17] It would be difficult not to agree with his opinion. It is also worth noting that the pictures in this set depict situations that were noticed or initiated. In the former case, the perspective of a contemporary viewer is fundamentally different from the intention of the photographer. In the case of staged scenes, the message intended by the image is completely false, and as such it requires clarification and commentary.

Ordinary soldiers, government officials and regular employees of German institutions in occupied Poland were also eager to document their impressions. It is estimated that one in ten soldiers of the Wehrmacht had a camera, and before they became stuck in the snow and mud of the Eastern Front, they saw their service as an adventure, from which they wanted to bring mementos. They shared their experiences with their families sending them their photographic accounts. Also available were special albums, and printers even thought of appropriate titles (such as "My Service"), which they embossed on decorative covers.[18]

Soldiers, who had been fed Nazi ideology, arrived in Poland convinced of the fundamental cultural inferiority of the occupied areas of Eastern Europe. This was one of the reasons why the subject matter of photographs they took is different from those taken in the West. For many Germans, coming to Poland was their first time to come into direct contact with Orthodox Jews, so photography helped them to overcome their fear of otherness. As Susan Sontag writes in her essay „On Photography," to photograph means to tame, to possess ... and to destroy.[19] German soldiers especially liked to pose for photos with humiliated Jews, shaving their beards or forcing them to work. Interesting from this point of view is the story of photographs of the execution of Polish prisoners of war in September 1939 in Ciepielów, discussed by researchers Janina Struk and Jochen Böhler.[20] The photographer, a former German soldier, sent them several years after the war to the Polish Consulate in Munich. In an accompanying letter, he wrote that he had heard the sound of a machine

gun being fired, ran towards the incident and pressed the shutter. However, after the execution of one of the mountain troopers who had carried out the murder came up to him and posed for a commemorative photograph. He felt pride in being able to participate in an action against the Polish "partisans," who were in fact captured soldiers of the Polish Army. In September, 1939, crimes committed against the Polish prisoners of war often resulted from a "partisan obsession". Its effects were also immortalised in photographs.

German soldiers ventured into ghettos as tourists – either with a pass or illegally. Such "tours" were usually treated as a fascinating experience, they did not cause any mental shock in the visitors, at least not one that would change their attitude towards Hitler. Unauthorised photography, even if a soldier had a pass allowing him entrance to the ghetto, could be punished. During their expeditions to the closed district, Georg Willy and Joe Heydecker were stopped by patrols and their cameras were confiscated. Heydecker mentions that it was also forbidden to keep prints or negatives depicting the ghetto (apart from photographs taken by the propaganda company), but the only penalty was confiscation of materials and admonition.[21] German functionaries were free to take as many photos as they wanted – in the Łódź ghetto the chief accountant, an Austrian called Walter Genewein, was fascinated by the possibilities of colour photography. His workplace served him as a natural and convenient object.

A gruesome example of "commemorative" photography is the "Mensebach collection" and the album of the SS-Oberscharführer Hermann Baltruschat, preserved among the materials of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against the Polish Nation. Mensebach was a member of a company involved in the demolition of Warsaw, condemned to destruction by Hitler's orders in September and October 1944. He documented that operation with gusto. These photographs were found in March 1945 in an apartment he had vacated. The prints feature piles of corpses of murdered Varsovians and burning houses. Baltruschat, as a member of Einsatzkommando 3 of Einsatzgruppe V and the Gestapo, used to photograph action against the Poles and the Jews. Later, he put those photographs in the album, arranging them to form an intentional narrative, for example, he often juxtaposed images of victims before the execution and after their death. He died in Poznań in 1945, shortly after the Red Army marched into the city.[22] Mensebach's fate is unknown.

German amateur photographers exchanged their photos and inspired one another. A collector of photographs from that era drew my attention to the fact that certain places were particularly popular among amateur photographers. Most likely, the inspiration often came from the propaganda company, but certain shots (featuring, for example, specific dilapidated buildings) gained particular popularity for unknown reasons. German soldiers who were stationed for some time in Warsaw or Cracow also received guidance regarding places they should visit. They went there to do some sightseeing. We have now dozens of photographs depicting Warsaw's Łazienki Park as a garden *nur für Deutsche* (for Germans only). There are also numerous shots featuring the obelisk erected in memory of General Werner von Fritsch, who had fallen during the attack on Warsaw in September 1939.

Of course, not all soldiers conscripted to serve in the Wehrmacht shared the enthusiastic attitude towards Nazi ideology. Captions in soldier's photo albums tend to be hostile towards the Jews and Poles, sometimes they convey neutral curiosity, and often take a philosophical undertone, with a quite hypocritical reflection on the course of history. However, there are sets whose authors express empathy for the suffering and poverty of those they photograph.[23]

After all, it is first and foremost the German photography that comes to mind when one thinks of the iconic images of World War Two on Polish territory. One such example is the photographic documentation accompanying Jürgen Stroop's report, which is today the foundation of the world's collective memory about the Warsaw ghetto Uprising. If one were to attempt to choose an iconic image – symbol of the extermination of the Jews, what immediately comes to mind is the photo

of a boy with his hands up in the air and fear in his eyes, dragged out of a bunker. The Stroop report (originally titled "The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More!") and Friedrich Katzmann's "Solution of the Jewish Question in the District of Galicia" are examples of German extensive official reports accompanied with photographic documentation. Captions under the photographs prove how distorted a view of the world the perpetrators of the Holocaust had.[24]

Documents of the Holocaust

Jan Karski, courier and emissary of the Polish Underground State and author of a report on the Holocaust from the autumn of 1942, describing his visit to the Warsaw ghetto, noted: "It was a different Warsaw. A different world."[25] The terrible reality of ghettos was so different from the "Aryan" world and even more so from the pre-war times that several inmates (to-day we know of several such cases) decided to tell their own truth about the occupation in photography. The most famous example is the so-called Ringelblum Archive. Its authors, historians from the underground Jewish social organisation Joy of Sabbath (Oneg Shabbat) headed by Emanuel Ringelblum, realising the imminent liquidation of the ghetto, collected documents relating to the situation of the Jews in Warsaw, sealed them in milk cans and boxes and hid them. The documents were partially recovered after the war and 76 photographs were found among them. A similar archive was also collected in Łódź, creating a unique photographic chronicle of the ghetto. It has an unusual history, because the photographers Henryk Ross, Mendel Grossman and Arie Ben-Menachem were in fact employed by the Judenrat (Jewish Council of the ghetto) to take photographs showing the ghetto as an efficient manufacturing company. The Chairman of the Judenrat, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, saw that as a way to save the Jews of Łódź. His idea was met with opposition among the photographers. They took some photographs on their own, capturing quite a different message in them. A number of negatives survived, hidden in boxes, and many years after the war they became a subject of interest to historians.

Photography studios in ghettos took family portraits and photographs for documents, they also carried out orders of the Judenrat. In Warsaw, for example, there was a Jewish photography studio called Foto-Forbert. During the war, it was managed by Henryk Bojm. He also received an order from the Judenrat, and took a series of photographs to document the aid brought to the Jews of the ghetto by the American Joint Distribution Committee.[26] Those photographs were intended as evidence that the funds were used properly, so they do not reflect the full reality of the ghetto, but they were not artificially staged, like many pictures taken by the Germans. They depict institutions involved in social care – hospitals, shelters, and orphanages.

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Constructing the memory of the German occupation, we use photography as evidence. We are restricted by information on the back of those photos, the truth of the image and knowledge about the circumstances in which individual pictures were taken. The frequent lack of description that would enable us to ascertain location, date and author is sometimes a source of much confusion. It also happens that the circulating pictures from World War Two are entirely misattributed. Photography is a document, but also the work of art that takes on a life of its own. Today, we look at the occupation primarily through the eyes of the Germans, because we are overwhelmed by the amount and variety of material, while there are precious few Polish and Jewish sources. At the same time, we are witnessing the dynamic expansion of the base of images of the war and occupation in Poland. One of the reasons has been a series of subsequent discoveries of private collections of former soldiers of the Wehrmacht at online auctions, as well as a greater awareness of Poles who have inherited photographic legacies. Such a trend is certainly appreciated. There are also actions of collecting memorabilia; one of them is organised by Museum of the Second World War. A large portion of photographs presented in this album comes from private collections we have managed to obtain, which have never been published before.