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LIVING UNDER WORLD WAR II OCCUPATION

Chapter I.

It is 2022 and a war is raging in Ukraine. Among European audiences, there is often the impression, that if the fighting stops, the war is over – and the (humanitarian) situation for the civilian population will improve. Media coverage from Ukraine with Russian soldiers perpetrating mass atrocities, committing acts of sexual violence or plundering and Russian administrators screening the populations of occupied cities like Mariupol for deportation to Russia, forcing local residents to pay in rubbles or to take Russian language classes prove otherwise. Lessons learnt from World War II fuel doubts as well. In fact, the famous British-American historian Tony Judt has argued that World War II was primarily "a war of occupation" and as such a civilian experience. This can be seen in the numbers of victims: In the countries once occupied by Nazi Germany like the then Soviet Union, Poland, former Yugoslavia, Greece, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway civilian losses outnumbered military ones.[1]

My part in this joint endeavour together with Gelinada Grinchenko and Laura Eckl will therefore be to focus on World War II occupations and outline what it meant to live under occupation more generally, though with references to Ukraine. To start, it is important to acknowledge that in many places, the occupying forces outnumbered the local population. This was true especially in places where German troops were stationed. Those who encountered "the Germans" were often women, children and the elderly as occupied societies differed from peace time societies in their age and gender composition: Many men

[1] Tony Judt: Post-War. A History of Europe Since 1945, New York 2005, p. 13 and p. 18.

were absent for war related reasons. In contrast to post-war narratives, contact with "the occupier" was often difficult to avoid, e.g., due to quartering.[2]

For those who stayed behind this had dire consequences, especially for women. They often had to suffer from being stereotyped extremely negatively by Wehrmacht soldiers; many of whom thought of "Russian" women – not distinguishing between Ukrainians, Belarussians or Russians – as being "overly rustic" and "very fertile".[3] Furthermore, many soldiers took to sexual assault, often from the early days of invasion and occupation on. For example, Marija Bortniker-Awerbuch (born in 1930) from Schargorod in Ukraine remembers that her neighbour Raja Schtekkel was shot because she helped her 17-year-old daughter and a friend to escape when harassed by German soldiers.[4]

Among the dire consequences for those staying behind family separations or – if permanent – destructions are a further issue to be mentioned. This was true for a number of reasons with drafting into the Red Army and labour deportation among them. Jewish families were especially hit. A Jewish couple, Aryeh and Malwa Klonicki, e.g., tried to survive by leaving Buczacz and finding a place to stay in the countryside. Rather quickly they came to realize, that families with small children often were denied access to bunkers. In the end, the Klonickis hoped to have secured the survival of their baby boy. They found a place for him in a convent, stating that they were "overjoyed of having succeed[ed] in arranging for our child's keep."[5] It is not known whether the boy survived the war; his parents though did not. Family separations, whether for a certain time or finally, were among the experiences connected to World War II – and they hit Jewish families especially hard.

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[2] Tatjana Tönsmeyer: Besatzungsgesellschaften. Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Erfahrungsgeschichte des Alltags unter deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 18.12.2015, URL: http://docupedia.de/zg/Besatzungsgesellschaften. (7.6.2022).

[3] Dieter Pohl: Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht. Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941-1944, München 2008, p. 132. See as well Bernhard Chiari: Grenzen deutscher Herrschaft. Voraussetzungen und Folgen der Besatzung in der Sowjetunion; in: Jörg Echternkamp (Ed.), Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, München 2005, p. 877-976, p. 969f.

[4] Generally see Regina Mühlhäuser: Eroberungen. Sexuelle Gewalttaten und intime Beziehungen deutscher Soldaten in der Sowjetunion 1941-1945, Hamburg 2010, p. 255. Episode refered to see Boris Zabarko: "Nur wir haben überlebt". Holocaust in der Ukraine - Zeugnisse und Dokumente, Wittenberg 2004, p. 63.

[5] Zoe Waxman: Women in the Holocaust. A Feminist History, Oxford 2017, p. 67.

Occupation, that is to say, affected societies on a fundamental level. This was true regarding their family situations but as well regarding housing and food supply. In fact, nearly all-over occupied Europe a housing crisis broke out due to destruction during fighting, requisitions and quartering. German settlement projects were another reason why people lost their homes. Tense as the situation often was, the Jewish population was again doubly affected – as their ghettoization or deportation was experienced by non-Jews as lessening the tension on the housing market.[6]

Occupation interfered in everyday life in even more ways: Supply with everyday goods was severely strained due to the war, German exploitation and, especially in Ukraine, hunger policies. As a consequence, whereas German soldiers in France were called potato bugs, in Ukraine, they were thought of as "hyenas".[7] This is especially plausible because according to German regulations, the Ukrainian population was only to be fed if working for the German war effort – and even then only with the lowest quality of foodstuffs and in quantities not securing survival.[8] In Southern Ukraine, it was stipulated, that no more than twenty percent of the working population could be considered of doing this kind of "useful labor" anyway – even if there hardly was any labor not directed at German interests – and therefore eligible for these rations.[9] Jews were – according to the head of the Reichskommissariat Ukraine, Erich Koch – only to be fed, if there were "leftovers" and only the amount, children under the age of 14 usually were entitled to. A rations' table from November of 1941 did not mention Jews any longer at all: Mass atrocities were being committed and German police, SS and army units had at that time already murdered more than 355,000 Jewish men, women and children.[10]

Be it the supply or housing situation, be it the tearing up of families – and the need to organize child care or care for the elderly – people needed to establish solidarity networks as well as coping strategies. These, though were difficult to find as the German regulations had

[6] See the new special issue Housing, Hiding and the Holocaust in Occupied Europe of the Journal of Modern European History 20/2022, ed. by Tatjana Tönsmeyer and Joachim von Puttkamer, with chapters on Poland, France, Norway and the Netherlands.
[7] Nicholas Stargardt: The German War. A Nation under Arms, 1939-1945, London 2015, p. 289f.
[8] Karel C. Berkhoff: Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule, Cambridge, Mass. 2004, p. 168.
[9] Ibid., p. 167.
[10] Wendy Lower, Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine. Chapel Hill, N.C. 2005, p. 139. Berkhoff, Harvest, p. 169. Alexander Krugolov: Jewish Losses in Ukraine; in: The Shoah in Ukraine. History, Testimony, Memorialization, ed. by Ray Brandon und Wendy Lower, Bloomington/Indianapolis 2008, p. 272-290, p.278f.

to be taken into account which criminalized many ways of trying to survive. For example, the German county commander for Nizhyn in Northern Ukraine issued on 1 May 1942: "The selling of meat (pork, beef, mutton, goat's meat, poultry etc.), lard, potatoes, wheat grain, millet, flour, other grains, milk, butter, cream, cheese and eggs is prohibited." Should one have wondered, what was allowed to be sold, the order informed that "The selling of rabbit meat and all other goods is allowed" whereas "barter of foodstuffs in exchange for other belongings is forbidden". Selling, the order went on, was only allowed for authorized persons who had to "bring their certificates of permission to sell". Approved price lists had to be nailed to each market stand. The order went on to clarify that "It is strictly forbidden to demand or to pay higher prices" and ends by stipulating that non-compliance was to be punished by imprisonment and a monetary fine.[11]

Another very important everyday life feature is, of course, labour. Labour deportations, either to the Reich or within Ukraine, concerned millions and did so in many ways. They were e.g. among the painful reasons for family separation. As Boris Rudnev from the town of Lebedin noted in his diary on June, 18, 1943: "The day before yesterday, two trains with citizens from Ukraine were sent to Germany (the cohorts born in 1922 to 1925). Unheard of scenes of violence happened. … Those deemed fit for work were forced into room # b of the 4th school, where they had been kept waiting for more than a day before being deported. Relatives and friends were not allowed in. All windows were blocked with planks. The picture resulting from this was terrible. Between the planks one could see the heads and hands of those locked in. Made me think of a wagon with cattle. I have witnessed tearful farewell scenes full of real tragic."[12]

As many of the examples referred to in this article show, violence was ever present in occupied societies, especially in Eastern Europe, but at least as a threat in Western and Northern Europe as well. Many further examples could testify to this but would go beyond the scope of this short introduction into what it meant to live under occupation during World War II. In summing it up, it should be stressed that occupation then – as in nowadays Ukraine – created a "new normal": Since occupation interfered on so many levels with the everyday life of millions of people – in fact 230 million between Northern Norway and the

[11] Fighting Hunger, Dealing with Shortage. Everyday Life under Occupation in World War II Europe. A Source Edition, ed. by Tatjana Tönsmeyer et. al., Leiden 2021, doc. 272.

[12] Rudnev B.K.: Dnevnik okkupatsii: G. Lebedin Sumskoi oblasti. Kharkov, 2011. URL: https https://prozhito.org/person/1442 [last accessed on July, 20, 2022].

Greek Mediterranean Islands and on territories between the French Atlantic coast and regions deep inside the Soviet Union – the general picture that emerges is of one occupied societies as societies severely under pressure, its members painfully under stress because they lost their everyday routines as well as convictions they had held as self-evident and they often no longer knew whom they could trust. In this context, social norms and accepted behaviour shifted. Turning to the present, there is nothing that we know from the years of World War II that allows us to assume that an occupation by an authoritarian or totalitarian regime reduces the threats and the violence civilian populations are confronted with.

Chapter II.

469 days in German-occupied Kharkiv.
And a human only needs 40 days to starve to death,
and just a few hours to freeze to death,
and just a few minutes to die in a gallows' loop.
There days were rich on these chances from October 25, 1941.
Yuriy Shevelov*, "I, Me, and Myself (and Around)"*

The citizens of Kharkiv – the second largest city in the Northeast of today's Ukraine – experienced living under German occupation for 22 months during the Second World War. Even though this time span between October 1941 and August 1943 was short in comparison with other German occupation regimes in Europe, this period inflicted an intense amount of suffering on the local population. Kharkiv accounted for the highest numbers of non-Jewish civilian deaths due to starvation in a city under German occupation during WWII.[13] Within one year alone from December 1941 to 1942, the municipal administration registered 13,139 deaths from starvation in the city, which at that time had some 450,000 inhabitants.[14] Johannes Hürter mentioned Kharkiv of 1941-42 as a ghetto of

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[13] Karel C. Berkhoff: „Wir sollen verhungern, damit Platz für die Deutschen geschaffen wird". Hungersnöte in den ukrainischen Städten im Zweiten Weltkrieg, in: Deutsche Besatzung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944. Vernichtungskrieg, Reaktionen, Erinnerung, ed. by Babette Quinkert & Jörg Morré, Paderborn 2014, p. 57.

[14] [illegible] –1943), Charkiv 2004, p. 279. See regarding individual months: Charkivs'kyj istoričiyj muzej imeni M. F. Sumcova. „O smertnosti naseleniâ", Inv. No. 7485, 18 Oktober 1942.

starvation and a "*Kahlfraßzone*" (land stripped of food) of the Wehrmacht.[15] The number of unreported deaths beyond those registered was probably much higher.[16] Soviet calculations immediately after the German occupation were that 70,000 to 80,000 people died of starvation in Kharkiv.[17] Dieter Pohl estimates – also because it is unclear whether infants were included in the statistics – that hundreds of thousands starved to death in Kharkiv.[18]

When we ask about similarities, differences, and specificities of occupation experiences throughout Europe during WWII, living in Kharkiv not "only" meant being hungry and persecuted – as most occupied societies in Europe experienced it – but being at high risk of starvation and total physical extermination. The experience of severe hunger and extreme everyday violence reshaped the city's social, physical, and moral spaces.

Starting with a short historiographical overview of research on Ukraine under occupation, this section of the article examines how Kharkiv was buffeted by violence and hunger, and what everyday life in a starving and persecuting city was like. We propose to analyze these points putting Kharkiv in the center of research focus as an object of the Nazi policy of hunger and violence and the subject of witnessing and survival.

Attempts to analyze the Nazi occupation regime in Ukraine began during the hostilities. They were mainly of a popular science and propaganda nature, focusing, first of all, on issues of partisan and underground struggle and population resistance, as well as on exposing the criminal nature of Nazism.[19] The peculiarities of post-war Soviet historiography clearly reflected this topic in the history of WWII: the inability/unwillingness to analyze various not always pleasant, and acceptable pages of the history of the occupation sanctioned the remoteness of its conceptualization. On one hand, the topic of the occupation was used to prove the criminal and cannibalistic character of Nazism, against which the whole country rose, from the front to the occupied territories and the rear. On the other, people who

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[15] Johannes Hürter: Hitlers Heerführer: Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/1942, Munich 2006, p. 507.

[16] Ibid. Skorobohatov emphasizes that in some cases doctors avoided the term "starvation death" when certifying death and recorded a different cause of death. The mortality rate figures associated with starvation therefore tend to be higher for Kharkiv.

[17] Gabi Müller-Ballin: Charkow 1941–1945. Nazi-Kriegsverbrechen in der Sowjetunion, Nuremberg 1991, p. 14.

[18] Dieter Pohl: Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht. Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944, Munich 2008, p. 199.

[19] See the last publication on historiography of WWII in Ukraine during Soviet times: V. Stetskiewicz: Radians'ka istoriographia Druhoi svitovoi vijny, in: Ukraina v Druhii svitovii vijni: pohliad z XXI stolittia, Kyiv, 2010, volume 1, pp. 43-142.

survived the occupation, from the very first days of liberation from the Nazis, fell for many years under the category of suspects. After all, as Styazhkina aptly writes, such a history of occupation was correct ”which emphasized death, victims, violence, resistance, but by no means the practice of everyday survival.”[20] This led to the fact that the period of occupation (of all war periods, the longest and most terrible in terms of consequences) was studied more poorly than all others.[21] And it is the daily survival, the daily life of war, and its routine experience during Soviet times which were almost never analyzed.

The newest historiography of the history of Ukraine during the Second World War has achieved significant success in the study of the occupation: specialists in women's and gender history, the history of the Holocaust, microhistory, oral history, and memory joined in its study. These researchers finally broke the Soviet ideological triangle of the occupation “hero-victim-traitor” (formulated by Olena Styazhkina). They began to study ordinary people's mundane, non-heroic, sometimes controversial and ambiguous everyday life. Such persons, who were (or could become) both the objects of history and its subjects, and it was their social practice that became the subject of research.[22]

CITY AND VIOLENCE

Violence as an everyday practice

From the very beginning, the occupation policy in Kharkiv was primarily aimed at intimidation, violence, and exploitation. The forerunner of this terror was the bombing of the city, which became a regular daily occurrence from August 1941 and was perceived by the townspeople as nothing but intimidation:

“The Germans carried out the bombing of Kharkiv with particular care: if the second raid was after 12 minutes, then the next ones would be with the same interval. The rhythm of the attacks was designed to augment the anxiety of people in anticipation of trouble. The sound of the engines of German planes was intermittent, howling, and the nerves, in

[20] Olena Styazhkina: Zhinky Ukrainy v povsiakdenni occupatsii: vidminnosti scenariiv, intencii I resursy vyzhyvannia, in: Ukrainski istorychnyi zhurnal, 2015, p. 43.
[21] Stetskiewicz, op. cit.
[22] See Alf Lüdtke: Introduction: What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are its Practitioners?, in: The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life, trans. W. Templer, Princeton, NJ 1995, pp. 3-40.

anticipation of the next raid, were stretched like strings. Adults were already numb from overexertion: they began to treat the bombings with indifference..."[23]

Eighty years later, memories of the bombing of the city remained the most emotionally terrifying in life of Kharkiv residents, who survived the war in the city:

"Suddenly an explosion blasted, a bomb fell, and mom saw the bomb had hit our house. She ran out into the yard and saw the bomb hit our flat... the wall was destroyed, reduced to shreds. She was terrified, torn in despair and cried: 'Valechka, my little girl, sweetheart, where are you?' And suddenly I got out from under the bed... [crying] there was an overturned trough my mother used to bathe me, and I didn't cry, I calmed her: 'Mommy, don't cry! I'm alive'."[24]

From the first days of Kharkiv occupation, the Nazis intimidated the population. They showed their strength and power. They prepared locals for the new regime which was to be introduced. A regime which for two long years was based on violence and persecution. The beginning of that regime was symbolic and terrible: during the first days of occupation Nazis hanged 116 Kharkiv residents. Inna Havrylchenko recounted one such demonstrative execution:

"They [Nazis] announced: 'Everyone who can move, shall appear at the Dzerzhinskiy Square.' We were afraid of these urgent announcements. We had to obey because getting shot to death was a common sentence for any act of non-observance. Loads of people packed the square. And then we heard a woman's cry. So we looked around and saw a few, two or three, I guess, German officers coming out and talking, and then the policemen started coming out one by one... they pulled a man with a noose around his neck to hand him over, to be hung!"[25]

It was also during the occupation of Kharkiv, when the massive use of gas wagons - a car in which people were poisoned with gas - was implemented in everyday life of intimidation and

[23] Victoria Prishchepina: Khar'kovskii dvorik, 2012, pp. 122-123.
[24] Interview with Valentina Miroshnichenko, project «Voices», Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, Kyiv.
[25] Interview with Inna Havrylchenko, project «Voices», Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, Kyiv. Here she mentioned the massacre on October 30, 1941; for the same information see: Michail A. Usyk: Den' za dnem. Khar'kov 20.11.41–23.2.43 gg. In: Gorod i vojna. Khar'kov v gody Velikoj Otechestvennoj vojny. Eds. E. I. Pivovar [et al.], Aleteyya 2013, p. 27.

violence. The use of gas vans for the mass killing was discussed at the Kharkiv trial in 1943, and many Kharkiv residents also remember this many years later:

"The vehicle looked like they were carrying bread in it. Its body was iron-plated. Some vehicles were of the "*Voronok*" (Eng. – "Black Raven") type, in which prisoners were transported. We wondered why there was no exhaust pipe sound when the vehicle started up. Then we understood. Well, the adults told us that the vehicle had no rear exhaust pipe."[26]

Representational spaces of the "new rule"

The physical space of the occupied territories of the Soviet Ukraine was also explicitly included in logic of violence. In an instruction to the Wehrmacht troops in the rear army area of October 10, 1941, it was stated with regard to dealing with objects that carried connotations of the Soviet regime:

"Moreover, the disappearance of the symbols of former Bolshevik rule, also in the form of buildings, is within the framework of the extermination struggle. Neither historical nor artistic considerations play a role here in the eastern region [*Ostraum*]."[27]

The "disappearance of symbols" could mean renaming, changing symbolic meanings, but also the destruction of space during various stages of the occupation and the course of the war. At the beginning of the occupation, the Army High Command formulated detailed orders about renaming the public space in order to make sure to rewrite the city's streetscape. The streets and squares that bore Bolshevik terms or names of Soviet personalities were to be renamed using "non-political terms," such as Main Street [*Hauptstraße*].[28] The majority of Kharkiv street names were reconverted to their historical pre-1917 designation.[29]

Furthermore, the occupiers overwrote certain localities of everyday life and political events by adjusting National Socialist symbols or moving in with their own authorities. Particularly

[26] Interview with Abram Garbin, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, USA.
[27] DAKHO f. R-3086, op. 1 spr. 1 ark 18ob. Annex 1 from 10 October 1941 „Verhalten der Truppe im Ostraum".
[28] DAKHO f. R-3086, op. 1 spr. 1 ark 1-1ob. Besondere Anordnungen für die Versorgung und für die Versorgungstruppen Nr. 69 of 22th November 1941.
[29] Andrei Paramonov: Ulitsi Starovo Kharkova. Kharkov 2020, p. 42.

common were flags with the swastika symbol[30] or portraits of Adolf Hitler, both in places of everyday life, such as the hall of the central market (*Zentralny rynok*) on the banks of the Lopan River,[31] and in offices of the municipal administration.[32] This was supposed to to serve as a constant reminder of who had taken over the ruling power in Kharkiv. The Gestapo HQ was situated on Kharkiv's main street, at 100 Sumska St. Three houses away, at 94 Sumska St., an assembly point was set up at the beginning of 1942, where people recruited for forced labor in the German Reich were to gather.[33] These buildings, less than 70 meters apart, became a dreaded block of houses, located on the main street, reminding Kharkiv residents of the ever-present threat of occupation as they made their way through the city.

The occupiers intentionally made use of places that formerly used to symbolize the Soviet regime for their demonstrations of public violence. Dzerzhinskiy Square in the city center had been designed as a chiffre of the first capital of the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s – its architecture was meant to embody an urban, industrialized and modern socialist city. The huge square incorporated the building of the Communist Party on the eastern side and extended to the west into a circular arrangement of the buildings of Derschprom, the National University and the Military School.[34] The occupiers used this carved in stone self-portrait of the Soviet regime for public executions, to mark the end of the old regime and the beginning of occupation rule. Thus, the occupiers inscribed new connotations in the center of the city – it was now associated with death, public insecurity and humiliation.

With the occupiers, the German language also moved into the city as a symbol of the new system of rule, occupying the city's landscape, claiming the infrastructure for itself, and echoing in the streets, mostly in the form of orders. Cafés and restaurants now had notices in German or suddenly bore German names, such as "*Café München*."[35] Most of the German signs were about prohibition. They read: "Parking prohibited, this prohibited, and that prohibited."[36] The occupiers took advantage of the Soviet public audio address systems to

[30] Alex Panasenko: The Long Vacation. A Memoir. Oak Ridge, TN, 2020, p. 33.
[31] DAKHO f. R-2982, op. 1 spr. 110 ark. 52.
[32] Usyk, Den za dnem, p. 76.
[33] Kharkovskii istoricheskii muzei imeni M. F. Sumtsova. "Povestka Kharkovskoi birshi," Inv. No. D-14738, 19 May 1942.
[34] Karl Schlögel: Kharkiv. Topographies of Twentieth-Century Violence. In: Paisajes de Guerra. Huellas, reconstrucción, patrimonio (1939-años 2000), ed. by Stéphane Michonneau, Carolina Rodríguez-López, & Fernando Vela Cossío, Madrid 2019, p. 73.
[35] Schlögel, ibid., p. 94.
[36] Alexander Werth: Rußland im Krieg 1941–1945, Munich + Zurich 1965, p. 414.

use previous announcements that had praised the Soviet regime to now glorify the German occupation forces and hatefully agitate against the Jewish population.[37]

The renaming and recoding of space turned into destruction, especially during periods when German troops had to withdraw from Kharkiv due to the advance of the Red Army. German troops used the last hours before their withdrawal in the spring of 1943, just before the Red Army's month-long interregnum, to blow up "the best buildings in the city," as the Kharkiv doctor Lev Nikolaev described them.[38] In August 1943, when it became foreseeable that the Red Army would recapture the city, the Wehrmacht destroyed the city extensively, including non-war buildings, such as residential houses and cultural institutions.[39]

Holocaust in Kharkiv

The persecution of the Jewish population of Kharkiv began immediately after the Nazis had captured the city. From the first days of the occupation, they arrested and held primarily "communists and Jews" hostage, as the Nazis themselves stated. Very soon the first shootings and hangings began. This persecution culminated in the mass shootings of Kharkiv Jews in late December 1941 – early January 1942, the Nazis shot more than 10 thousand Jews in Kharkiv in Drobytsky Yar on the eastern border of the city.[40]

Before the Drobytsky Yar massacre the city commandant ordered the relocation of all Jews to the barracks of the Machine-Tool Building Plant and the Kharkiv Tractor Plant, the so-called Kharkiv ghetto. After the Jews were evicted to barracks, it was checked whether all the Jews had complied with the order and moved. A terrible fate awaited those who did not want or could not move to the barracks for various reasons.

"A very nice girl Sofka Perman went to our school. Her mother said: 'Sofochka, we have a good reason, and after all, the Germans are a civilized nation, and they would understand us. We can't leave a paralyzed woman and its impossible to drag her on her back. We have a good reason not to go to the Machine-Tool Building Plant.' Well, someone

[37] Panasenko, p. 32.
[38] Lev Nikolaev: Pod nemetskim zapogom. Vipiski iz dnevnika (oktyabr 1941 g.–avgust 1943 g.), 17 February 1943.
[39] Gunter Friedrich: Kollaboration in der Ukraine im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Rolle der einheimischen Stadtverwaltung während der deutschen Besetzung Charkows 1941 bis 1943, Bochum 2009, p. 125.
[40] For details see Yuri Radchenko: Accomplices to Extermination: Municipal Government and the Holocaust in Kharkiv, 1941–1942. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 3 (2013): 443-463.

snitched on them, I don't know how, but I know that Sofka was hung from a lamppost, on Podolsk Lane, and her mother was not touched. Sofka was hanging for three days, and her mother went out of her mind. Her mother would walk around and say, 'Sofochka, baby. That's not good. Your braids are loose.' Their mother was shot on the third day."[41]

In the same December, the Germans forcibly placed elderly Jews, the disabled, and children who remained in Kharkiv and were unable to reach the ghetto territory on foot into the synagogue on Meshchansky Street; a large number of them froze to death, and others died of hunger. Altogether 400 persons perished inside the synagogue. In total, more than 12,000 Jewish residents died during the city's occupation.

Labor: exploitation and forced conscription

The German occupation policy of the military zone of occupation was aimed primarily at exploiting available resources and satisfying military needs. However, the available resources were insufficient in the fall and winter of 1941-42 because the Soviet troops, retreating, destroyed many objects, equipment, and facilities. And those enterprises that continued to work still felt a lack of labor in the winter of 1941/42: the workers did not want to work because the wages were not enough, and food rations were meager: in January 1942, a worker's bread ration amounted to only 100 g.[42]

Old and restored enterprises were provided with a labor force due to the introduction of compulsory labor. In November 1941, the Office of Labor Force was set up in the cities under the control of the military administration. They managed the work of the labor exchanges (*біржа праці*). These institutions kept records of the working population and registered the unemployed, after which they offered a mandatory job. A system of various punishments was introduced for evading registration or work.[43]

Many townspeople mention the labor exchange's harsh and violent methods of operation in Kharkiv. This institution showed particular rigor in recruiting and sending the city's able-bodied population to work in Germany. It should be noted that in the winter 1941-42,

[41] Interview with Inna Havrylchenko, project «Voices», Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, Kyiv.
[42] Victoria Naumenko & Victoria Nesterenko: Zona vijs'kovoii administratcii 1941-1943 rr: ostovni napriamy okupatcijnoii economichnoi ta sotsialnoi politiki, In: Ukraina v Druhii svitovii vijni: pohliad z XXI stolittia, Kyiv, 2010, volume 1, p. 383.
[43] Op. cit., p. 385.

mobilization for work in Germany was voluntary and aimed at the export of highly qualified labor. Townspeople signed up for these jobs mainly because of the incredibly difficult and harrowing conditions of life in the city: hunger, cold, and devastation. The first train from Kharkiv (and from Ukraine in general) was dispatched to Germany on January 18, 1942, transporting more than a thousand qualified metallurgical workers. From January 18, 1942 to April 14, 1942, i.e., for three months, 14,445 workers were sent from Kharkiv to Germany, 10,920 men and 3,525 women. According to the data of the Kharkiv city administration, 43,262 city residents were directly transported from the city to Germany in 11 months during 1942.[44]

But in the spring of 1942, mobilization for work in Germany became entirely forced conscript labor. People did not want to go to Germany anymore and were afraid: through information from the first workers, knowledge spread about the terrible living conditions and treatment of *Ostarbeiter* in Germany. Various types of punishments were introduced for ignoring subpoenas, and when such disregard became widespread, a genuine operation to hunt down violators was launched. Citizens were caught on the streets, in the bazaars, and literally pulled out of their homes. Reluctance to go to Germany drove people even to self-mutilation; for example, Oleksandr Galkina mentioned that her sister had scalded herself with boiling water, but luckily she survived. After all, there were cases when these self-mutilations led to death. Oleksandra went to Germany instead of her sister. This is how she recalls her life in Germany:

"They settled us in a barracks, then they took us to the factory. There is a factory, there is a barracks, and here is the Spree, a river, and along this river, we were taken on a steamboat. We couldn't go anywhere; there were 3 to 4 rows of barbed wire around. We were brought to the factory by steamer, and we worked, then again onto the steamer and back to the camp. And that's all; we didn't know anything else or see anything else. They didn't let us go anywhere."[45]

Work in agriculture was not easier. Maria Gorlo recalls that her working day began at half-past six in the morning and continued until late in the evening, the farm was huge, and more

[44] Gelinada Grinchenko: Prymus do pratsi: obrysy znevolennia. Natsional'na ta istorychna pamjat', 2013, issue 9, pp. 37, 40.

[45] G. Alexandra, Interview za471, 08.12.2005, Interview-Archiv „Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945," https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de/interviews/za471

than ten foreigners worked on it.[46] Both women were placed in forced labor at a very young age, Maria was 15 and a half, Oleksandra was 16 and a half at the time of departure. There were a great many of young Ukrainian girls like them in Germany, and they worked wherever the work of foreigners was introduced: in plants, factories, agriculture, and communal services.[47] A separate program also sent young Ukrainian girls to Germany to work in the household. According to this decree, for example, 3,143 young women were sent to German farms as servants from Kharkiv and the region in the frame of just one month (from mid-October to mid-November 1942). The total number of Kharkiv residents deported to work in Germany during the occupation amounted to more than 120,000.

CITY AND HUNGER

Nazi starvation policy and previous experiences

The intense situation of starvation in Kharkiv was the result of Nazi policies and specific location factors interlinking: as an urban area in the northeast of the Ukrainian SSR and close to the front, Kharkiv was particularly affected by starvation. Before the war, the Nazi leadership had propagated the expansion of the German Reich into a large-scale empire through the conquest of the Soviet Union, from which the Nazi ideologues expected economic autarky and "*Lebensraum* in the East."[48] In the course of these Nazi colonization and exploitation plans, the local population of the Soviet territories was to be deported, murdered, starved, assimilated or enslaved.[49] Pre-war discussions on the supply situation in the Soviet territories stated that "tens of millions" of the population of Soviet cities would starve to death, since harvest yields would no longer go to the local population, but to the Wehrmacht and the German Reich.[50]

The starvation policy of the German occupiers intentionally hit the population of the cities harder than the countryside. In September 1941, the Eastern Economic Staff had issued the

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[46] Marija G., Interview za473, 02.12.2005, Interview-Archiv „Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945," https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de/interviews/za473

[47] The total number of women.

[48] Czesław Madajczyk: Vom „Generalplan Ost" zum „Generalsiedlungsplan", in: Der „Generalplan Ost". Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik, ed. by Mechtild Rössler & Sabine Schleiermacher, Berlin 1993, pp. 12-13, 64-66.

[49] Timothy Snyder: Bloodlands. Europa zwischen Hitler und Stalin, Munich 2014, p. 173.

[50] Alex J. Kay: Verhungernlassen als Massenmordstrategie. Das Treffen der deutschen Staatssekretäre am 2. Mai 1941. Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte 11 (2010) 1, p. 87.

order that the urban population in the occupied territories of the eastern Soviet Union should have a maximum of 300 grams of bread per person per day at their disposal. Assuming that the population in the rural areas would be self-sufficient, they were not mentioned in food allocation.[51] The ideological reasoning was that cities were the centers of ”Bolshevism“ and home to ”hostile elements” while people in the countryside were imagined to be anti-Bolshevist after having experienced the forced collectivization of the 1930s.[52] Kharkiv Oblast, in addition to Kyiv Oblast, had suffered the highest losses from starvation during the Holodomor in 1932–1934 under the Stalinist regime. The excess mortality in those oblasts was 19% to 20% during this period.[53] Thus, specific to the Kharkiv region was also that its citizens had had previous experience with extreme hunger and starvation inflicted by political decisions.[54]

Political hunger deepens

After the German advance faltered in the winter of 1941/42, Kharkiv remained close to the front and under military administration, whereas most parts of the Ukrainian SSR were placed under civil administration.[55] The oblast became a direct supply area for the Wehrmacht.[56] The form of military administration contributed to the increased self-enrichment and chaos of responsibilities in supply matters. Wehrmacht soldiers ruthlessly plundered the areas near the front.[57] The Wehrmacht's growing transport problems and the stalled front intensified this exploitation.[58] Soviet evacuation practices contributed to the precarity of the supply situation in Kharkiv in the winter of 1941/42. The Soviet leadership

[51] TsDAVO, f. 3206, op. 1, spr. 9, ark. 14-16.
[52] TsDAVO, f. 3206, op. 1, spr. 9, ark. 14-16. See also: Berkhoff, „Wir sollen verhungern,“ p. 55; and Truman O. Anderson: The conduct of reprisals by the German army of occupation in the southern USSR, 1941-1943. [Order No. 9530711]. Diss., University of Chicago 1995, pp. 191-192.
[53] Serhii Plokhy: Mapping the Great Famine, In: The Great Famine Project, p. 5. https://gis.huri.harvard.edu/files/mapa/files/mappinggreatukrainianfamine.pdf [accessed 30 June 2022].
[54] The historian Andrea Graziosi has coined the term “political hunger“, see Andrea Graziosi et al.: Food as a Weapon. Andrea Graziosi interviewed by Idamaria Fusco and Desirée A.L. Quagliarotti. In: Global Environment 9/2, 2016, pp. 522-533.
[55] Berkhoff, “Wir sollen verhungern,” p. 57.
[56] Regulations for the Supply of the Wehrmacht in the Army's Rear Area: TsDAVO, f. 3206 op. 4, spr. 9, ark. 55f.
[57] Pohl, Die Herrschaft, p. 192.
[58] Alex J. Kay: German Economic Plans for the Occupied Soviet Union and their Implementation 1941–1944, in: Stalin and Europe. Imitation and Domination 1928–1953, ed. by Timothy Snyder & Ray Brandon, New York 2014, p. 169.

had endeavored to evacuate war-relevant factories, machinery, personnel and food from central urban areas. Everything that had to be left behind was to be destroyed before it could become of use to the Wehrmacht. Kharkiv – an important industrial center – was heavily affected by these measures: large parts of the infrastructure were demolished, the supply of electricity, gas and water was suspended, food had been destroyed or looted by the population in the meantime.[59]

German officials showed no interest in sufficiently supplying Kharkiv residents. The occupiers instructed the city administration to coordinate the supply distribution, but made it at the same time difficult to achieve this task by issuing harsh restrictions.[60] Food was allocated according to racist categorizations, according to which the occupiers hierarchized the local population, favoring, disadvantaging or deliberately starving them. The introduction of the urban rationing system underpinned this logic: the German economic staff fed only about 25,000 persons in Kharkiv's city population.[61]

Among this favored group were mainly workers in war-related enterprises, "*Volksdeutsche*" (ethnic Germans) and people who worked for the occupation forces.[62] The Jewish population – categorized as "hostile elements" and "useless eaters" according to Nazi racial ideology – experienced a much higher rate of starvation, as they received the lowest food rations and were only allowed to shop after all the other inhabitants, so that goods were usually already out of stock. In addition to the higher risk of starvation, the Jewish population also had to fear anti-Semitic persecution and murder.

Criminalizing supply strategies

Shortly after the beginning of the occupation of Kharkiv, the occupiers restricted travel into and out of the city. This caused immense shortages of goods in the local markets as

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[59] Klaus Jochen Arnold: Die Wehrmacht und die Besatzungspolitik in den besetzten Gebieten der Sowjetunion. Kriegführung und Radikalisierung im „Unternehmen Barbarossa." Berlin 2005, p. 303.

[60] Gunter Friedrich: Kollaboration in der Ukraine im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Rolle der einheimischen Stadtverwaltung während der deutschen Besetzung Charkows 1941 bis 1943, Bochum 2009, pp. 134-135.

[61] Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944, Ausstellungskatalog, Hamburg 2002, p. 345.

[62] Pohl, Die Herrschaft, p. 199. It should also be noted here that the occupiers prioritized Ukrainian workers, especially in the local administration sector. They classified most of the Ukrainian population as "anti-Bolshevik" allies who would welcome the German occupation as liberators from Soviet Russian rule. See Frank Grelka: Der Befreiungskrieg als Beutezug. Zur Verschleierung der Kriegsziele für den deutschen Vormarsch durch die Ukraine 1918 und 1941, in: Krieg und Verbrechen. Situation und Intention. Fallbeispiele, ed. by Tim Richter, Munich 2006, p. 99.

merchants from the countryside were mostly unable to bring goods into the city.[63] Everyone who wanted to travel outside of the city needed a permit which was issued arbitrarily.[64] Kharkiv quickly turned into a locus of starvation. Those who were mobile and able to get permission, went on "*meny*" (*менка*) – hoarding excursions to the countryside – to exchange consumer goods for food.[65] Similar to other societies under occupation in the WWII that were confronted with hunger and shortages, bartering, and hoarding of food, the use of substitute products, preservation or rationing and various forms of the black economy, such as the black market, became established as common supply strategies in Kharkiv Oblast.

City dwellers who were dependent on supplies of the local markets started to exchange all their belongings for food as money lost its value. As Lev Nikolaev, a Kharkiv doctor, pointed out, the conditions of exchanging goods in the city were even more unfavorable for the "buyer" than if one went out on a "*meny*":

"[…] one merchant offered to trade two beets for two jars of millet or a piece of pumpkin for five matchboxes. A box of matches costs 25 rubles at the moment, but it is impossible to buy matches for that money. […] one month ago – so under Soviet rule – it was possible to buy a box for 2 kopecks […]."[66]

The black market began to flourish, as the prices for goods went through the roof. During the occupation, the average prices for products in Kharkiv were as follows (the highest price level was recorded February 1, 1942): 1 kg of potatoes - from 33 to 100 rubles, onions - 30-110 rubles, rye bread - 80-220 rubles, wheat - 70-250, corn - 55-222, butter - 625-2400, lard - 750-2000 rubles. By comparison, retail prices officially approved by representatives of the occupation administration were as follows: 1 kg of potatoes - up to 0.60 rubles, onions - 1.20 rubles, wheat flour - 1.60 rubles, corn flour - 1 rubles, butter - 28 rubles, pork lard with skin - 24 rubles.[67]

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[63] Berkhoff, "Wir sollen verhungern," p. 57.

[64] The then teenager Mikhail Chernenko described how he obtained his permit at the district administration. See: Mikhail Chernenko: Chuzhie i svoi. Moscow 2001, p. 29.

[65] Skorobohatov, Charkiv, pp. 280-281.

[66] Lev Nikolaev: Moya voina. V okkupatsii. Moscow 2021, p. 97. The original version of Nikolaev's diary will soon be published by Viktoria Naumenko and Jochen Hellbeck, containing the critical passages on the Soviet regime that he deleted after the German occupation.

[67] Victoria Naumenko & Victoria Nesterenko, Zona vijs'kovoii administratcii…, p. 384

Those who had nothing to barter tried to negotiate or steal in the markets or grocery shops.[68] When selling, people also exposed themselves to risks. Mikhail Chernenko's father was arrested on the pretext of selling homemade food at a city market.[69] The German occupiers contributed to increasing the pressure on transactions in the markets and at the same time profited from it. Wehrmacht soldiers robbed people in their homes, sometimes directly on the street, and then offered the looted goods in the markets at horrendous prices.[70] The occupiers additionally criminalized supply strategies so members of the occupied society had not only to worry about starvation but about being punished or murdered for trying to survive.[71]

Female protagonists and shared living spaces

The occupiers' policies that intensified the hunger in the city and isolated its inhabitants from access to goods generated immense pressure on those who were not able to leave the city. This mainly affected persons with health issues or caring responsibilities towards children and the elderly. This group was more likely to obliged to seek contact with the occupiers or enter into other dependency relationships to improve their supply situation. Women became the main providers for their city-bound environment, as they constituted the majority of those present under occupation. Some met the immense supply and care pressure by working at multiple jobs.[72] In other cases, women with children who could not rely on family or neighborhood support networks began intimate relationships with Germans under the growing supply pressure. Lidia Tachtaulova's neighbor could not venture out on another "*meny*" due to a heart condition and therefore started a relationship with a German soldier to provide for herself and her son. Lidia Tachtaulova commented on her

[68] J. Polina, Interview za480, 26.04.2005, Interview-Archiv „Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945," https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de/interviews/za480

[69] Chernenko, Chuzhie i svoi, p. 23.

[70] Alexander Werth: Russland im Krieg 1941–1945, Munich/Zurich 1965, p. 415.

[71] Skorobohatov, Charkiv, p. 277. For example, the occupiers prohibited eating stray dogs, cats and pigeons. They expressed the "concern" that the ban would prevent diseases that were allegedly a threat by consumption of these animals. In fact, when bans were imposed, it was always a matter of harassing the population and clarifying one's own position of power.

[72] Leontina R. Alksnis: „Moya voyna", in: Gorod i voyna. Khar'kov v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny, ed. by E. I. Pivovar et al., Aleteyya 2013, p. 409.

neighbor's relationship with a German: "Somehow, one had to live."[73] Another woman had to feed two small children while her husband served in the Red Army. She began a relationship with one of the Germans who had taken up residence with her.[74] A shared living space with the occupiers allowed for additional supply possibilities, as German soldiers billeted in the house often relegated everyday household tasks, such as washing clothes or mending socks, mostly to female residents of the house in exchange for food.[75]

The physical landscape of hunger

The intense hunger situation did not only reshape social interactions und moral judgements, it also changed the physical city landscape. During the first winter 1941/42, Kharkiv residents described the city as cold and empty: “The silence of death prevails in the main streets which only a year ago were crowded with people and traffic.”[76] A lot of buildings were destroyed, many people had left, died, or had to move in with friends or strangers because their homes were bombed out or occupied by German soldiers. Electricity was not functioning, and heating material was scarce, so people were freezing in the dark and burning everything from books to garden fences.[77]

People only knew if neighbors had died when their windows started to completely freeze over.[78] Pigeons, wild cats and dogs disappeared from the streets because people had eaten them.[79] The sewage system was non-operational so human excrement piled up in the streets, drastically intensifying the danger of epidemics.[80] At certain times, empty streets suddenly filled up with individuals searching for food or heating material. Rumors of horse carcasses or unguarded potato fields spread throughout the city like wildfire and streams of persons soon were making their way there in no time.[81] Queuing was another occasion

[73] Lidija Vassilijevna Tachtaulova: Interview za501, 17. 9. 2014, Interview-Archiv, archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de, doi: 10.5072za501 [accessed 20 Feb. 2022], p. 30.
[74] Alksnis, „Moya voyna,“ p. 398.
[75] J. Polina, Interview za480, 26.04.2005, Interview-Archiv „Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945,“ https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de/interviews/za480
[76] A Citizen of Kharkiw: Lest we forget. Hunger in Kharkiw in the Winter of 1941-1942, in: Ukrainian Quarterly 4 (1948) Heft 1, pp. 72-73.
[77] Chernenko, Chuzhie i svoi, p. 22.
[78] Panasenko, p. 39.
[79] Skorobohatov, Charkiv, p. 278.
[80] Chernenko, Chuzhie i svoi, p. 22.
[81] Usyk, Den' za dnem, 4 Dec. 1941.

when people gathered in the hope to at least obtain a small amount of food from local shops. Persons forced to beg, often the elderly or children who had lost the ones who cared for them, sat on street corners. The image of starving people and dead bodies in the streets, also of those the occupiers had publicly hanged, became commonplace. Funerals were too expensive and consumed time and energy of the already exhausted population. As a consequence, dead bodies often long lay in cellars of buildings or in the streets. A Kharkiv resident, 11-year-old Leontina Alksnis, remembered: "You quickly get used to death when it's commonplace."[82]

Between morals and survival

Hunger seemed to be particularly powerful as a form of violence that influenced people's behavior. Someone who was hungry might not have been less afraid of being executed, but they were more desperate in an existential sense. Acting on being hungry became a priority despite other threats of violence. The Kharkiv citizen Michail Usyk described this dilemma: "That's what the Germans hang you for. But hungry, I have to take risks."[83]

Under conditions of starvation, moral standards shifted.[84] Some started working for the occupiers against their own political or moral convictions because in positions relevant to the occupation one could expect higher food rations. An acquaintance of Kharkiv economist Mikhail Usyk took a job in the economic staff of the city administration.[85] People had to be prepared to be judged by others for their coping strategies with hunger, while they developed self-justifications for their own actions. Many members of the occupied society drew judgmental, negative conclusions about fellow citizens who maintained contact with the occupiers. They saw these contacts as signs of a moral decline in society. Especially ostracized were women who offered sex to the occupiers in exchange for a payment to survive.[86]

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[82] Alksnis, „Moya voyna," p. 406.
[83] Usyk, Den' za dnem, p. 66.
[84] Sergey Yarov has pointed this out for the siege of Leningrad: Sergey Yarov: Leningrad 1941-42. Morality in a City under Siege, Cambridge/UK, pp. 19ff., 80ff.
[85] Usyk, Den' za dnem. Simferopol 2010, diary entries 25-26 Nov. 1941.
[86] See among others Agnes Laba: Besatzung und Geschlecht. Geschlechtergeschichtliche Analysen des männlichen Alltagslebens unter deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten Weltkrieg. In: Krieg und

Inna Havrylchenko remembered that particularly desperate persons opened fresh graves to eat human flesh.[87] On another occasion, the occupiers hung a man who was alleged to have sold human "meat" under false pretences.[88] Being hungry and under constant threat of punishment by the occupiers, moral standards shifted. Especially isolated hungry persons in the city faced difficult choices unimaginable under other circumstances. Moreover, it often did not matter if one made the "moral" or "amoral" choice, the occupiers could punish you either way.[89]

CONCLUSION

"At the turn of 1941/42 ... at the highpoint of German dominion, large swathes of the European continent and around 235 million people found themselves under German occupation."[90] This occupation took different forms and was based on violence and exploitation, which culminated in brutality in the occupied territories of Soviet republics.

The German occupiers sought to dominate the physical and social space of occupied Ukrainian cities by different practices of violence. In Kharkiv Nazis destroyed buildings and evicted people from their homes, killed them or coerced them into living with the ruling occupiers, destroyed and reduced their living space and rendered the known environment unsafe and estranged to its inhabitants. They imposed racist hierarchizations, ethnic segregation and extermination on the occupied society, causing great loss and fear.

Among different forms of violence, enforced hunger played a central role in Nazi occupation policy. Weaponized starvation became not only the Nazis' tool in regulating the life of occupied Kharkiv, it became a painful existential ordeal for citizens. Their struggle against being starved by oppressors changed their daily life, social ties, and moral norms. It transformed the city's landscape and left an indelible mark deeply etched in the memory of the city's inhabitants.

Geschlecht. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf Geschlechterfragen in der Kriegsforschung, ed. by Vincent Streichhahn & Riccardo Altieri, Bielefeld 2021, pp. 143, 154.

[87] Inna Wladimirowna Gawriltschenko, cited in Laurence Rees: Hitlers Krieg im Osten. Munich 2001, p. 117.

[88] Skorobohatov, Charkiv, p. 278.

[89] See inter alia Oleksandr Lysenko: Dejaki teoretytschni aspekty doslidshennja problem sozialnoji solidarnosti w period Druhoji switowoji wiiny, In: Storinky wojennoji istoriji Ukrajiny 17 (2015), p. 9.

[90] Tatjana Tönsmeyer et al. (Eds.): Fighting Hunger, Dealing with Shortage. Everyday Life under Occupation in World War II Europe. A Source Edition, Leiden 2021, p. X.