Christoph Kreutzmüller

A Deceptive Panorama

Photos of Deportations of Jews from Germany

Abstract: The paper analyses the visual traces of the deportation of Jews from 37 communities in Germany and argues that the pictures of deportations follow a pictorial tradition. Marching people as well as Jews being taken to an unknown destination were a set motif – or even a *sujet* – in Nazi Germany. As millions of Germans and thousands of police precincts had cameras, it rather seems surprising that so few photographs of deportations have been found, yet. The corpus of photos we know today offers a rather deceptive panorama of the deportations. The visual sources stage the perpetrators, humiliate the victims and offer a glimpse of the onlooking neighbors. The perspective of the deported Jews is not represented. They were being looked at but were not in a position to take pictures themselves. The paper shows that the photographs are disproportionately scattered: The cities with a large Jewish population are completely underrepresented. The larger the Jewish community was, it seems, the less likely it is that photographs of the deportation exist. Apart from a geographical there is a chronological bias, too, as we do not have any photographs of deportations of Jews from 1943 to 1945.

Introduction

On October 13, 1941, shortly after her escape from camp Gurs in southern France and, incidentally, just a few days before the systematic deportations of Jews from Germany began, Carola Loeb recalled her experiences. In a long letter to her children, she reviewed how her neighbors in Mutterstadt had treated her and what had happened to her during the deportation to southern France one year before:

> We went by bus to the courtyard of the Maxschule in Ludwigshafen, money was exchanged there, there was not enough for us. There was food; soup, bread and sausage. We couldn't eat anything. [...] I sat on the floor in the middle of our luggage like a gypsy mother. People took photos and gawked. We were indifferent to it.[1]

1 Letter from Carola Loeb to her children, 13.10.1941, printed in Christoph Kreutzmüller (ed.): *Gurs 1940. Die Deportation und Ermordung von südwestdeutschen Jüdinnen und Juden/Expulsion*

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110746464-010

Racist clichés about Sinti and Roma aside, in the eyes of Loeb, being deported went hand in hand with being photographed. Even so, at first sight it seems astonishing just how many pictures of deportations were made, survived the war and were (and are) kept in local archives and private collections.[2] One of the reasons why there are so many pictures, I will argue, is that the motif was customisable. Pictures of deportations followed a pictorial tradition and can be viewed as part of a certain *sujet*. This will be discussed in the first part of my paper. Taking the corpus of photos of deportations known today, I will then develop a panorama, discuss what was photographed by whom and what is missing. The focus will be on pictures of deportations of Jews from Germany, excluding Austria as well as the deportation of Sinti and Roma that deserve a deeper analysis.[3] My *tour d'horizon* is not only limited in its scope, it is somehow preliminary, too. The project "#LastSeen. Pictures of Nazi Deportations" that was established after my presentation in the conference "Deportations in the Nazi Era – Sources and Research" in November 2020 is likely to trace more pictures and will be able to offer much more information; on the photos of the deportation of Sinti and Roma, too. The project and valuable hints after my talk have already contributed to the following.

Looking at the photos, the structural violence that the pictures show and their making expresses immediately leaps to the eye. Plain to see, nearly all photographers were close to the perpetrators and/or part of the crime. Their cameras had become weapons that further degraded the depicted. Even though Loeb maintained she was "indifferent" to it, she noticed being photographed – and was not asked for consent.[4] Whether or not to show these photos taken "against their will"[5] and "regard [...] the pain of others"[6] is a difficult ethical question,

et Assasinat de la population Juive du Sud-Quest de L'Allemagne, Berlin: House of the Wannsee-Conference, 2021, 27. Translation by the author.

2 Klaus Hesse and Philipp Springer: *Vor aller Augen. Fotodokumente des nationalsozialistischen Terrors in der Provinz*, Essen: Klartext 2002; Klaus Hesse: "Bilder lokaler Judendeportationen. Fotografien als Zugänge zur Alltagsgeschichte des NS-Terrors", in Gerhard Paul (ed.): *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, 149–168.

3 Frank Reuter: *Der Bann des Fremden. Die fotografische Konstruktion des "Zigeuners"*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014.

4 Letter from Carola Loeb to her children, 13.10.1941, in Kreutzmüller, Gurs, 27.

5 Cornelia Brink: "Vor aller Augen: Fotografien wider Willen in der Geschichtsschreibung", in *Werkstatt Geschichte*, 47, 2008, 61–74.

6 Susan Sontag: *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin, 2003.

today.[7] However, at times, the discussion obscures the fact that using them in an illustrative sense can do violence to the images (and the people depicted), too. Neglect, after all, is a form of violence. So is disdain. After all, photos are an extremely important source. Well read, they can reveal information that cannot be obtained by studying written or oral sources. In the end, the Shoah was an extremely violent process, and we have to face the violence but treat the photos and the human beings on them with respect.

Shooting Pictures: The Camera

Photography became a mass phenomenon in the 1920s.[8] In the preface to the second edition of his bestselling handbook *Der Photo-Amateur*, Hans Windisch rightly stated in 1936 that the "photo amateur of today works differently [...] than ten years ago".[9] Technical developments – above all the introduction of small frame cameras – made photography easier and cheaper. The number of camera owners rapidly increased in Germany. In 1927, their number is estimated at almost two million, i.e. around three percent of the population. By 1939, it is said to have been ten percent.[10] Of course, not everybody could afford a Leica. Many just used simple box cameras.[11] Colour films were expensive and the standard black and white films had a light sensitivity of just 64 Asa, which in turn meant the photographers had to rely on a fair amount of light to take a picture.

The extent to which technical factors limited even professionals in the early 1930s, becomes clear from a photo that Georg Pahl, owner of the ABC Press Agency, took on January 30, 1933.[12] Carefully composed along the diagonal, it shows SA men marching from the top left to the bottom right. As we read photos like Latin print the men were marching forward – into the picture and into the

7 Jennifer Evans: "Photography as an Ethics of Seeing", in idem., Paul Betts, and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (eds.): *Photography and Twentieth-Century German History*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2019, 1–22.

8 Harriet Scharnberg: *Die "Judenfrage" im Bild. Der Antisemitismus in nationalsozialistischen Fotoreportagen*, Hamburg: Hamburger Editionen, 2019, 27–33; Janina Struk: *Photographing the Holocaust. Interpretations of the Evidence*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004, 16–19.

9 Hans Windisch: *Der Photo-Amateur. Ein Lehr- und Nachschlagebuch*, Munich: Photo-Schaja, 1936[2], 5. Translation by the author.

10 Timm Starl: *Die Bildgeschichte der privaten Fotografie in Deutschland und Österreich 1880 bis 1980*, Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 1985, 98.

11 Hans-Dieter Götz: *Box Cameras Made in Germany. Wie die Deutschen fotografieren lernten*, Gilching: VfV, 2002.

12 Photo by Georg Pahl, 30.01.1933, 102–02985 A, German Federal Archives, Berlin.

city. Yet, the light sensitivity of film and lens were not sufficient for an atmospheric night photo and the flash was not strong enough. The smoke from the torches obscured the view. Since the SA men were also not 'properly' aligned and the attitude of the bystanders was by no means clear, the SA march was re-enacted at least twice. This produced images that seemed more appropriate to the occasion – and are still being reproduced today.[13]

What could be photographed by whom was usually determined by racist criteria, always relied on proximity to the Nazi Party, local standing and, of course, the motif. Officially, only fortifications and aerial views were subject to a ban on images in 1930's Germany.[14] In March 1942 pictures of motorways, railway tracks and trains were also banned.[15] Still, shooting violent acts needed the consent of the offenders and/or the cover of the police. As early as 1933, the author of a handbook for press photographers, Carl Dietze, addressed obstructions to photographers and explicitly mentioned that police officers did not have the right to 'snatch' cameras if they thought someone ought not to have taken a picture.[16] Seemingly that had already become common practice. During the pogrom-like riots in Berlin in the summer of 1935, a Danish journalist was attacked by the crowd. Investigating the case, the police chief claimed that he had been attacked "because of his Jewish appearance" and because "he tried to photograph the crowd while standing in his car. By this behaviour he was bound to incur the displeasure of the crowd, which was itself agitated".[17] Needless to say, the film was destroyed. To this day only two fairly nondescript pictures of the riots have been found.[18]

Being assaulted, it was often impossible but always dangerous for Jews to take pictures and thus depict their view. Some still did. En route from Berlin to Amsterdam in August 1935, Fritz Fürstenberg took more than two dozen photographs of town entrance signs on which Jews were forbidden to enter. Natural-

13 "Der Siegeszug durchs Brandenburger Tor wie am 30. Januar 1933", in *Völkischer Beobachter*, 31.01.1936. Available at: https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/fackelzug-durch-das-brandenburger-tor-1936.html. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

14 Windisch, Photo-Amateur, 193. Cf. Bernd Boll: "Das Adlerauge des Soldaten. Zur Fotopraxis deutscher Amateure im Zweiten Weltkrieg", in *Fotogeschichte*, 22, 2002, 75–87, here: 80.

15 "Photographierverbot", in *Kleinfilm-Foto. Hefte für Kleinfilmphotographie und –Projektion*, 5, 1942, 74–75.

16 Carl Dietze: *Presse-Illustrations-Photographie. Fachweiser für die Verwertung der Gebrauchsphotographie im Dienste aller Gebiete, Wissenszweige und Berufe*, Leipzig: Carl Dietze, 1933[8], 38.

17 Letter from Helldorf to the Ministry of the Interior, 28.08.1935, R. 100269, Political Archive of the Foreign Ministry, Berlin. Translation by the author.

18 Christoph Kreutzmüller, Hermann Simon, and Elisabeth Weber: *Ein Pogrom im Juni. Fotos antisemitischer Schmierereien in Berlin 1938*, Berlin: Hentrich, 2013, 26–27.

ly, the Jewish entrepreneur had to act secretly. For fear of the Gestapo's long arm, the face of his fiancée was whitened when the pictures were presented in a "lantern slide show on the German refugee problem" in Amsterdam.[19] During the pogroms of November 1938 basically the only motif left for Jews was the inside of their – ravaged – homes.[20] In November 1941, just when systematic deportations had started, Jews were banned from owning cameras even though not all of them followed the Reich Security Main Office's orders.[21] It is a telling fact that leaflets explicitly stated that cameras were not allowed to be taken onto the deportation trains.[22]

Staging Deportation: The Development of the Motif

Pictures of deportation follow a certain pictorial tradition: In the nineteenth century the expulsion of Jews had become a widespread motif on antisemitic postcards. Viciously, these cards presented individuals or groups being kicked out of cities or being sent across a border to an unknown destination – sometimes literally into the desert.[23] Most of the postcards presented drawings. This was partly because the exodus of Jews was just a racist phantasy and partly because it only became possible to photograph masses of moving people in the late nineteenth century.

Having made a big technical leap photography was recognized as an important weapon of propaganda in the First World War. Accordingly, hundreds of pictures of men joining the army and soldiers boarding trains were taken.[24]Taking up the military tradition, the Nazi 'party soldiers' marched continuously until, in

19 Christoph Kreutzmüller and Theresia Ziehe: "Crossing Borders in 1935. Fritz Fürstenberg's Photographs of Persecution in Nazi Germany", in *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, 64, 2019, 73–89.

20 Christoph Kreutzmüller: "Bilder der Bedrohung. Von Juden aufgenommene Fotos der Verfolgung", in *Medaon*, 12, 2018, 1–6.

21 "Order by the Central Security Office, 13.11.1941", in Joseph Walk (ed.): *Das Sonderrecht für die Juden im NS-Staat. Eine Sammlung der gesetzlichen Maßnahmen und Richtlinien. Inhalt und Bedeutung*, Heidelberg: UTB, 2013[2], 355.

22 Leaflet by the Jewish Association, Inv. No. 2003/81/3, Jewish Museum, Berlin.

23 Johannes Heil: "'Deutschland den Deutschen'. Judenvertreibungen und Vertreibungsphantasien im Postkartenformat", in Helmut Gold and Georg Heuberger (eds.): *Abgestempelt. Judenfeindliche Postkarten auf der Grundlage der Sammlung Wolfgang Haney*, Heidelberg: Umschau/Braus, 1999, 241–250.

24 Hermann Rex: *Der Weltkrieg in seiner rauen Wirklichkeit*, Oberammergau: Hermann Rutz, 1927, 9–24.

the end, death marches became the murderous swan song of the NS-Regime. The afore-mentioned pictures of the re-enactment of the march of SA men through the Brandenburg gate were used as a symbol of what the Nazis referred to as the 'national awakening'. In the propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* Leni Riefenstahl staged near endless parades of various formations in 1935. Soon the rapidly growing Wehrmacht joined in. Apart from parades, the viewfinders of the cameras caught religious and carnival processions.[25] How to organize an 'Aufmarsch', a proper march, was even discussed in dance magazines.[26]

While becoming an ever stronger symbol of inclusion, marching was used as a form of exclusion, too. In 1933 political opponents and/or Jews were being marched through the streets – and quite frequently photographed especially in small towns.[27] Yet, in April 1933 police manhunt in the poor Jewish quarter "Scheunenviertel" east of Alexanderplatz in Berlin was not only covered by press photographers but also by the radio because sound could transmit something light could not. Aired were the voices of men that were not native German speakers in order to 'prove' the propaganda claim that Jews were not Germans.[28] In 1935, marches shaming Jewish/non-Jewish couples were – as in the case of Norden (near Emden) – not only photographed, but the photographs were sold and send as postcards.[29] Due to constant mobbing and recurring violence, more and more Jewish families decided to leave their homes, often moving to larger towns in Germany.[30]

Early 1936, the ghastly antisemitic weekly *Der Stürmer* received a series of seven prints of the departure of the "last three Jews" of Roth, near Nuremberg, to nearby Regensburg.[31] One print is stamped "Photo Müller". Whether this was

---

25 Linda Conze, Ulrich Prehn, and Michael Wildt: "Sitzen, baden, durch die Straßen laufen. Überlegungen zu fotografischen Repräsentationen von 'Alltäglichem' und 'Unalltäglichem' im Nationalsozialismus", in Annelie Ramsbrock, Annette Vowinckel, and Malte Zierenberg (eds.): *Fotografien im 20. Jahrhundert. Verbreitung und Vermittlung*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013, 270 – 298; Linda Conze and Sandra Starke: "Die visuelle Chronik einer Kleinstadt. Fotografien zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit", in Thomas Medicus (ed.): *Verhängnisvoller Wandel. Ansichten aus der Provinz 1933 – 1949. Die Fotosammlung Biella*, Hamburg: Hamburger Editionen, 2016, 65 – 98.

26 Erich Jantetz: "Der Aufmarsch", in *Gymnastik und Volkstanz*, 12, 1937, 15 – 16.

27 Hesse and Springer, Vor aller Augen, 42 – 66.

28 A partial transcription of the radio report can be found in Eike Geisel: *Im Scheunenviertel. Bilder, Texte, Dokumente*, Berlin: Severin und Siedler, 1981, 138 – 139.

29 Christoph Kreutzmüller and Julia Werner: *Fixiert. Fotografische Quellen zur Verfolgung und Ermordung der Juden in Europa. Eine pädagogische Handreichung*, Berlin: Hentrich, 2016, 23.

30 Jewish Museum Berlin: "Topography of Violence". Available at: https://www.jmberlin.de/topographie-gewalt/#/en/info. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

31 Inscription on the back of the photo, 31.12.1935, E 39, 56/1.

the photographer or the shop that made the print is unknown. It is also unknown who send the pictures to the *Stürmer*. But he or she certainly knew a lot about the family.[32]

Fig. 1: Unknown Photographer, Roth, December 31, 1935, E 39, 56/7, Stadtarchiv Nürnberg.

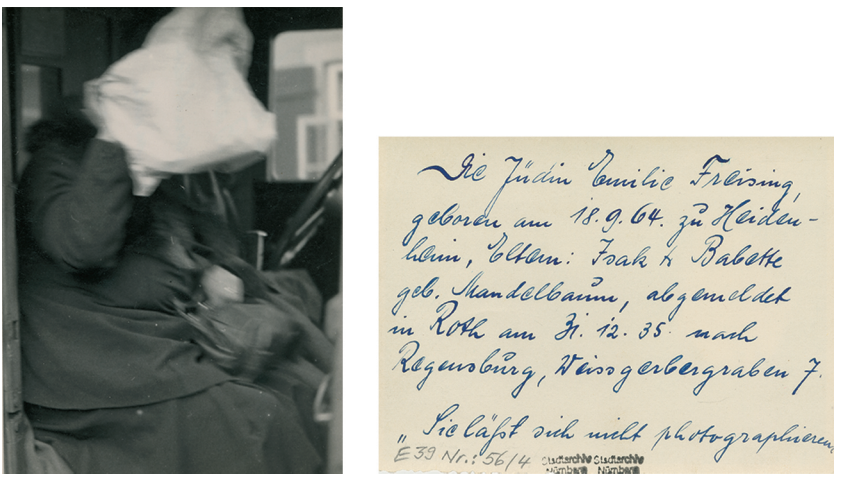

Fig. 2: Unknown Photographer, Roth, December 31, 1935, E 39, 56/4, Stadtarchiv Nürnberg.

32 Unknown photographer, Roth, 31.12.1935, E 39, 56/1–7, Stadtarchiv Nürnberg (StAN). Just like many other photos send to the *Stürmer* the series was not published.

The series shows the family leaving their house in a narrow alleyway among neighbors standing and staring. After the moving truck had been loaded it left the town "mit Vollgas" (at full throttle), as the writing on the back had it. On the back of another print of the series the sender remarked with a self-righteous meanness so typical: "She does not let herself be photographed". Six years later, the resilient woman, Emilie Freising, was deported via Nuremberg to Theresienstadt where she perished on August 23, 1943.[33]

When in October 1938 some 25,000 Jews were expulsed to the Polish border, this was photographed, too, albeit – as far as we know – only in Dortmund, Nuremberg and Rendsburg.[34] The expulsion was a sign of the ever more radical approach the Nazi regime took and eventually produced the pretext for the November pogroms. Again, marches accompanied plunder, destruction and murder. On November 10, 1938, Jewish men were being photographed while they were being walked through the streets in many places from Baden-Baden to Bautzen.[35] The onlookers doubled as cordon and audience – needed to complete humiliation. As the photos from Baden-Baden show, some onlookers had taken their cameras along.[36]

At the same day in 1938 in Edenkoben (near Speyer), an unknown photographer took a series of six pictures that shows Jewish men from the village being forced by SA to board a bus. "To Palestine" a sign decorated by a little swastika flag reads.[37] Though many men in the bus certainly wished to have had a chance to emigrate, the bus only took them to nearby Karlsruhe and left them stranded there. Some were deported to Dachau others returned home and were deported to Gurs two years later.

Clear to see, the expulsion of the unwanted had become a set motif by 1938. So had the boarding of trains: Pictures and postcards of soldiers getting onto trains (eventually similar carriages that were used for mass-deportations from 1942 on) were widely spread in and after the First World War. From 1933 on special trains (*Sonderzüge*) became a frequent sight again; be it on Nazi organized

---

33 German Federal Archives: "Entry Emilia Freising, born 18.09.1864", in *Memorial Book. Victims of the Persecution of Jews under the National Socialist Tyranny in Germany 1933–1945*. Available at: https://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/en868980. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

34 Andrea Löw and Kim Wünschmann: "Film and the Recording of City Space in Nazi Germany: The Demolition of the Munich Main Synagogue", in Natalia Aleksiun and Hana Kubátová (eds.): *Places, Spaces, and Voids in the Holocaust*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021, 25–54.

35 Hesse and Springer, Vor aller Augen, 110–116.

36 Christoph Kreutzmüller: "Photographing Bystanders", in Christina Morina and Krijn Thijs (eds.): *Probing the Limits of Categorization. The Bystander in Holocaust History*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2018, 131–147.

37 Unknown photographer, Edenkoben, 10.11.1938, X3, 2925–2931, Landesarchiv Speyer.

summer holidays, at the party rallies in Nuremberg or – from 1939 – during the so-called resettlement of Germans from Rumania or the USSR. How to capture a departure by train was known amongst photographers.[38]

Alongside humiliating pictures capturing Jews as mere objects there are quite a few pictures taken by Jews, too: On September 1, 1936, Herbert Sonnenfeld took a series of 42 photographs of Jewish teenagers on their journey from Berlin's central station, the Anhalter Bahnhof, to Palestine. Working for the Zionist weekly *Jüdische Rundschau* Sonnenfeld joined the youth on their way to Marseille and took a few pictures out of the train, thus preserving a rare view back onto the platform and the people who stayed behind.[39]

Fig. 3: Photo by Herbert Sonnenfeld, September 1, 1936, FOT 88/500/106/015, Jewish Museum Berlin.

Picturing Deportation: The Corpus of Photos

Deporting 'unwelcome aliens' back to Poland or 'Russia' or maybe to put those who could not be deported in some kind of a 'concentration camp' was being dis-

38 Elizabeth Harvey: "Documenting Heimkehr. Photography, Displacement and 'Homecoming' in the Nazi Resettlement of Ethnic Germans", in Evans, Betts, and Hoffmann, Ethics of Seeing, 79 – 107.

39 Maren Krüger: *Herbert Sonnenfeld. Ein jüdischer Fotograf in Berlin*, Berlin: Nicolai, 1990, 139 – 142. Thanks to Theresia Ziehe, Berlin, for additional information.

cussed in Germany as early as 1920.[40] Against this backdrop it is not surprising that the first mass-deportation of the Nazi regime was the expulsion of 25,000 Polish Jews in October 1938.[41] As mentioned above, in Dortmund, Nuremberg and Rendsburg this was photographed. While there are no photographs of the deportations from Stettin and Schneidemühl to occupied Poland in February 1940, there are visual sources from eight places of the deportations from Southwest-Germany to Gurs eight month later.[42] In 1941 and 1942, the deportations "to the East" were photographed in at least 24 places. Then the traces disappear. The last visual record of a deportation is a film by a member of the lab staff of the famous camera producer Zeiss-Ikon who filmed the forced transfer of Jews from Dresden to a nearby labour camp in November 1942 – which strictly speaking was only indirectly linked to the deportation.[43] There are neither photos of the murderous climax of deportation of Jews from Germany in early 1943, nor from the scattered smaller deportations until March 1945.

The time the pictures were taken determines which deportation destinations were depicted. The deportations to Gurs stand out with particularly dense visual traces. Strongly featured are also the deportations to Riga, whereas the deportations to Theresienstadt and the ghettos in occupied Poland (both the General Government and the Warthegau) are underrepresented. There is no visual source of the deportations to Kowno and Minsk in 1941/1942 and no single photo is known of the deportations to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The transports of Jews from Germany to the 'metropolis of death' (Otto Dov Kulka) only had started in autumn 1942 – just when the visual traces disappear.

Taking into account that in Dortmund and Nuremberg photos were taken both in 1938 and in 1942, photographs of the deportation of Jews exist from at least 33 German communities: Bielefeld, Birkenfeld, Brandenburg (Havel), Breslau (now Wrocław), Bretten, Bruchsal, Coesfeld, Dortmund, Eisenach, Emden, Fulda, Gailingen, Hanau, Hattingen, Hohenlimburg, Kerpen, Kippenheim, Kitzingen, Laupheim, Lörrach, Ludwigshafen, Moers, Munich, Neustadt/Saale, Nu-

40 "Konzentrationslager für Ausländer", in *Vossische Zeitung*, 04.01.1920; "Ausländerkonzentrationslager Ohrdruf", in *Vossische Zeitung*, 07.03.1921.

41 Alina Bothe and Gertrud Pickhan (eds.): *Ausgewiesen. Die Polenaktion. Berlin, 28.10.1938*, Berlin: Metropol, 2018.

42 Kreutzmüller, Gurs 1940, 24–25.

43 Norbert Haase, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, and Hermann Simon: "Einleitung", in idem. (eds.): *Die Erinnerung hat ein Gesicht*, Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1998, 9–18, hier: 12; "Erich Höhne mußte Film über 'Judenlager' drehen", in *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 07.08.1997. See also the contribution by Elisabeth Pönisch in this volume.

remberg, Regensburg, Rendsburg, Siegburg, Tauberbischofsheim, Weingarten, Wetzlar, Wiesbaden, and Würzburg.[44]

In addition, five film-sequences can be traced: Four of departures (Bruchsal, Dresden, Hildesheim, and Stuttgart) and one clip of the arrival of exhausted occupants of a train from Magdeburg in the ghetto of Warsaw.[45] As both a film and a photo from Bruchsal exist, there is a total of 37 communities with visual sources of deportations known today. Only twelve of these places – i.e. less than one third – had more than 100.000 inhabitants and counted as cities.[46] As Klaus Hesse put it, photographing deportation was a "small town sensation".[47] Considering that the majority of Jews lived in cities (a fact that was further amplified by rural exodus due to persecution in the 1930s), this is a surprising find. To take the argument even one step further: Of the five cities with the largest Jewish communities only one (Breslau) is represented – with just two photographs. So far we do not know of neither pictures from Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Cologne, nor from Berlin.

The astonishing misrepresentation indicates that the corpus of photographs is scattered and the panorama dented. This might be partly due to the fact that photos were regarded as second-class sources or mere illustrations and were therefore not collected systematically for a long time. By chance, the photo-albums from Würzburg were discovered and preserved by Isaac Wahler as early as 1947.[48] But most of the other pictures were handed over to the archives in

44 Klaus Hesse lists 27 communities where photos were taken between 1940 and 1942. Cf. Klaus Hesse: "Die Bilder lesen. Interpretationen fotografischer Quellen zur Deportation der deutschen Juden", in idem. and Philipp Springer, Vor aller Augen, 185 – 212, here 187. Not listed are Breslau, Bretten, Tauberbischofsheim, Nuremberg, and Weingarten. Cf. Katharina Friedla: *Juden in Breslau/Wrocław 1933 – 1949. Überlebensstrategien, Selbstbehauptung und Verfolgungserfahrungen*, Cologne et al: Böhlau, 2015, 432.

45 Hesse included Bruchsal, Dresden, and Stuttgart but not Hildesheim and Magdeburg in his list. For Hildesheim see "Deportation of the Jews of Hildesheim". Available at: https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1003952. Last accessed: 21.10.2021. For Magdeburg see "Jewish Deportees from Magdeburg in the Warsaw Ghetto". Available at: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/film/jewish-deportees-from-magdeburg-in-the-warsaw-ghetto. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

46 As cities counted Bielefeld, Breslau, Dortmund, Dresden, Ludwigshafen, Magdeburg, Munich, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, and Würzburg.

47 Klaus Hesse, Die Bilder lesen, 187. Translation by the author.

48 Sworn Statement Isaac Wahler, 05.09.1947, Die Evakuierung der Juden aus Würzburg, Rep. B-2, Nachlass Wahler, 1, Archive of the House of the Wannsee-Conference, Berlin; Herbert Schultheis and Isaac Wahler: *Bilder und Akten der Gestapo Würzburg über die Judendeportation 1941 – 1943*, Bad Neustadt a.d. Saale: Rötter, 1988. See also the contribution of Alfred Eckert in this volume.

the 1970s/1980s, sometimes coupled with the statement that the photos had been taken secretly even if simple appearances refute this.[49]

More research still needs to be done how the photographs were presented or meant to be presented. We know that sometimes pictures were put into albums and therefore assembled to form a narrative. Arranging the album in Würzburg, police secretary Elfriede Röllich quoted a popular folk song (that Elvis Presley would cover 18 years later) as a caption – and knowingly or not – perpetuated a tradition of antisemitic postcards.[50] The director of the city museum in Bielefeld added some snide remarks onto the pages of his "war chronic".[51]

While in 1940 photos were still also taken by onlookers, the majority of pictures after 1941 seems to have been made by policemen or professional photographers for internal documentation and as a proof of performance. Just like in Würzburg, it was often a member of the identification service who worked at the camera.[52] In Bielefeld the assistant police officer Georg Hübner actually worked for the director of the city museum.[53] In Eisenach, too, the pictures were made for the municipality. It is very likely that Theodor Harder, a local photographer, who had worked for the town before, took the photos in May 1942.[54]

In Kitzingen, where the first deportation had already been photographed by the Würzburg police in March 1942, the Nazi Kreisleiter asked his son to "take a few photos of the removal of the 'last Kitzingen Jews'"[55] in September 1942. When the train departed, the 16-year old had taken two photos and reached the end of his film. Only the first half of the last frame was exposed.

Moving freely and taking pictures at will, the unknown photographer who took a series of thirteen pictures of the deportation from Hattingen (near Dortmund) in April 1942 obviously worked for an official agency. Yet the quality of the equipment (or his/her training) was rather poor. Nearly half of the photos

---

49 See, for example, the description of the photographs from Wiesbaden. Available at: https://photos.yadvashem.org/photo-details.html?language=en&item_id=97784&ind=11. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

50 Protocol, 29.03.1949, 407I (volume 5), StA Würzburg; Heil, Deutschland den Deutschen, 243.

51 Helmut Gatzen: *Befehl zum Abtransport, Juden und "Mischlinge 1. Grades" 1933–1945 in und um Gütersloh*, Güterloh: Flöttmann, 2001, 72–75.

52 Protocol, 29.03.1949, 407I (volume 5), StA Würzburg; Heil, Deutschland den Deutschen, 243.

53 Stadtarchiv Bielefeld: "Die Bielefelder Polizei 1933–1950. Deportation von Juden 1941–1945". Available at: https://www.stadtarchiv-bielefeld.de/Portals/0/PDFs/Online-Ausstellungen/Ordnung%20und%20Vernichtung/04_Deportation.pdf. Last accessed: 21.10.2021; Gatzen, Befehl zum Abtransport, 72–75.

54 Order of the mayor of Eisenach, 18.08.1937, Hauptamt 11–002–13, Stadtarchiv Eisenach.

55 Letter Lothar Heer to Staatsarchiv Würzburg, 22.06.1995, Lichtbildersammlung, 289, StA Würzburg. Translation by the author.

Fig. 4: Photographs by Lothar Heer, Kitzingen, September 21, 1942, Lichtbildersammlung, 289, StA Würzburg.

are blurred.[56] However, by chance he or she caught a glimpse of the entrance door of the forced residence being sealed or locked by an official in uniform, marked with a star.

Fig. 5: Unknown photographer, Hattingen, April 28, 1942, 0126, Stadtarchiv Hattingen.

It was probably an even bigger coincidence that the transport to Zamosc to which the Jews were added was photographed in Dortmund, too. It is unclear who took the two photographs of the Jews on a football green on April 28 and, two days later, marching through the city. But as he or she kept distance, these photos might have been actually taken clandestinely[57] – just like another picture taken in Regensburg.[58]

The photos differ considerably in their quality and scope. Again, Würzburg stands out because of the sheer number (139). In many places the photographer seemingly filled a film roll of twenty plus frames, but sometimes only one or two pictures were taken (or survived). What the pictures share is their panoramic view. Only a dozen or so were taken in portrait mode. In Wiesbaden, an unknown policeman portrayed an old, but well-dressed man with a walking stick and dark glasses who might have been blind but certainly was confused and walked in the 'wrong direction'. Just like his colleagues in Auschwitz did in

56 Thomas Weiss: "'Sie hat mich auch gesehen und mir zugewunken'. Das Ende der Synagogengemeinde in Hattingen", in Ralf Piorr (ed.): *Ohne Rückkehr. Die Deportation der Juden aus dem Regierungsbezirk Arnsberg nach Zamość im April 1942*, Essen: Klartext, 2012, 109–130, here 117.
57 Rolf Fischer: *Verfolgung und Vernichtung. Die Dortmunder Opfer der Shoah. Ein Gedenkbuch*, Essen: Klartext, 2015, 174–175 and 215.
58 Unknown photographer, Regensburg 1942, 104 A07, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

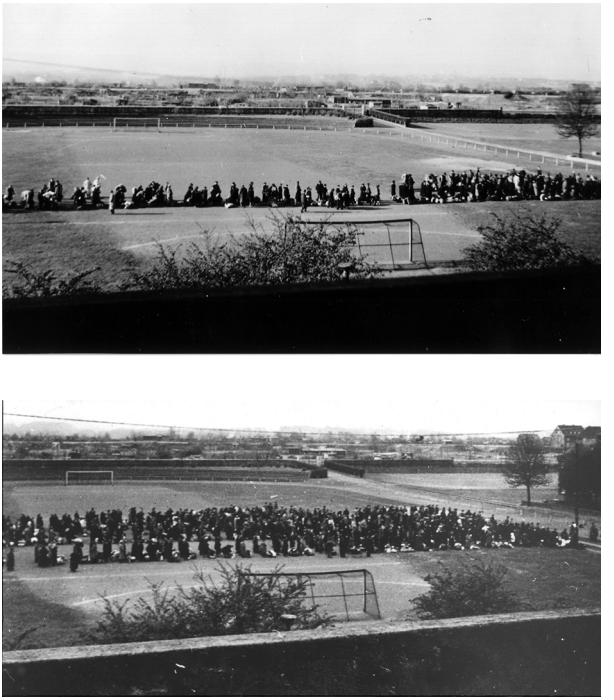

Fig. 6: Unknown photographer, Dortmund, April 28, 1942, 502 – 01/032 – 21 – 01, Stadtarchiv Dortmund.

the album that has become known as the Lili Jacob Album, he portrayed the handicapped, the odd one out.[59] Maybe he was even making mean fun, playing with the fact that the Jew did not know, could not see, what he knew and foresaw.

As they were made as an internal proof of achievement, the photos present an orderly, smooth running process without any disturbances, without any resistance on the side of the heavily loaded, elderly deportees. Yet, while in 1940 the photos focus on the Jews being led away from their homes and being taken to (and then from) the assembly points like schools, most series from 1941 onwards focus on the trains. All series feature the guards (ordinary police as well as Gestapo) but hide the physical violence that was part of the deportation. Also mis-

59 Tal Bruttmann, Stefan Hördler, and Christoph Kreutzmüller: *Die Fotografische Inszenierung des Verbrechens. Ein Album aus Auschwitz*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2019, 145 – 146.

Fig. 7: Willi Rudolph (?), Wiesbaden, August 29, 1942, 1046/6, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

sing are the bureaucratic routines that led to the deportation – from timetable conferences to mission briefings. Even though some policemen took shots of the registration, the luggage and body searches the deportees had to undergo, most photographers focussed on 'the action', the walk to the station and embarkation. Doing paperwork, after all, is not an exciting motif. Often taking place indoors, it was more difficult to capture. Due to the technical limitations – or the timetables –, most photographers took their pictures at daytime and outside. Only in Coesfeld, Munich and Würzburg the photographers worked with artificial lighting or with a flash.

The trains we see are (old) third class coaches. So far, no photos have been found showing the deportees getting onto freight trains. Some of the series taken in 1941 and 1942 show deserted stations or side tracks, others were taken in regular stations. As they got on the regular train to Weimar, the deportees even mixed with the non-Jewish passers-by on the forecourt and in the railway station of Eisenach. As mentioned, the picture was taken by a local photographer. In-

Fig. 8: Theodor Harder (?), Eisenach, May 9, 1942, 41.3-J-491, Stadtarchiv Eisenach.

conceivable that a policeman would have taken such a picture, showing an – albeit short – loss of control

So far, neither pictures of the shunting nor rolling trains have emerged or have been recognized. Missing too are views into the carriages. The only exception known so far is not from the Reich. It is a short sequence of a film Rudolf Breslauer took for the commandant of the transit camp Westerbork in the Netherlands in 1944, which of course might have included Jews from Germany that had fled to the Netherlands before 1940 and were then deported, too.[60]

Apart from three pictures showing the arrival of unidentified transports walking from the nearby train station to Theresienstadt and a sequence staging the arrival of Jews from Magdeburg in the Warsaw ghetto there is only scattered visual material of the arrival of deportees in ghettos,[61] shooting sites and camps. On some photos taken in the Litzmannstadt ghetto, German Jews can be spotted

60 Film "Uitgaand Transport", 1944. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnA_NdgWII4. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

61 Václav Krejza: "Photographies of the transport of Jewish men and women to Terezin". Available at: https://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/31629, https://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/31635, and https://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/31637. Last Accessed: 22.11.2021. Thanks to Aletta Beck for this information.

with the yellow star on their left breast.[62] In a series SS-Hauptscharführer (sergeant) Bernhard Walter took for an album with the title *Die Umsiedlung der Juden aus Ungarn* (The resettlement of the Jews from Hungary) on May 15 or 16, 1944, in Auschwitz' spoil-collection point Kanada I, luggage of a transport from Theresienstadt can be seen. One inscription on a suitcase reads "III/1", the number of the first transport from Cologne to Theresienstadt in June 1942. On another the name Ricke Flatauer can be reconstructed. The 73-year-old woman had been deported from Berlin to Theresienstadt on August 25, 1942, and perished there less than five months later. Her suitcase was then apparently passed on and taken by someone else on what most probably was his or her last journey.[63]

We know that SS photographer Walter also got his camera in the Kanada-complex in Auschwitz. It probably had been taken there by a deported Jew and was then stolen. We also know that the films in cameras taken to Auschwitz as well as the prints were immediately destroyed.[64] No one will ever know how many visual sources were burned in the pits of Auschwitz. However, one thing is certain, being deported among many other monstrosities meant the loss of all photographs for the Jews. This, of course, is yet another reason why the visual sources made by Jews are lacking. There are only very few exceptions: Just before she decided to go into hiding Annemarie Kuttner took a picture of her mother and herself in their apartment at Uhlandstraße in Berlin. Although she knew it might be the last picture she decided to focus on a certain normality and photographed herself and her mother sitting around a table that is decorated by a cloth. A portray of the deceased father/husband on the desk completes the picture. Only the fact that the foot end of the bed cranes into the picture betrays how cluttered the room was and that the picture was taken in a '*Judenwohnung*', a forced residence.[65]

62 Ingo Loose: *The Face of the Ghetto. Pictures taken by Jewish Photographers in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, 1940–1944*, Berlin: Topography of the Terror Foundation, 2010, 57, 65–66.

63 Bruttmann, Hördler, and Kreutzmüller, Die Fotografische Inszenierung, 241–247.

64 National Committee for Attending Deportees (DEGOB): "Report by a woman from Budapest, born 1915". Available at: http://www.degob.org/index.php?showjk=701. Last accessed: 21.10.2021.

65 Kreutzmüller, Bilder der Bedrohung, 5.

Conclusion: A Deceptive Panorama

Photographs are considered 'windows to past realities' but they never simply depict what happened.[66] Just as photos often stage what they pretend to only record, taking pictures was (and is) often voyeurism in the disguise of documentation. Nevertheless, photographs are also instructive sources, but – like any other source – they have to be read critically. Since photographs can in principle be reproduced at will and because for a long time they were considered a secondary source – if not even mere illustrations – the history of transmission and the historical context of the pictures have all too often been lost and can nowadays only be reconstructed with great effort. This complicates the analysis. One of the tasks of future research – as for example with the project "#LastSeen. Photos of Nazi Deportations" – will be to reconstruct context and establish precise object biographies for all the photos.

Marching people were a set motif – or even a *sujet* – in Nazi Germany. Picturing Jews being taken to an unknown destination followed a tradition, too. And millions of Germans had cameras. The number of photos known today are just the tip of the iceberg. We can expect to discover more photographs of deportations. The panorama presented in the photographs we have so far is not only deceptive in reproducing the view the perpetrators wanted to keep, i. e. blanking out violence as well as any other disturbance. It is also biased. Firstly, while photographing deportation seems a 'small town sensation' it is almost certain also a small-town collection. In smaller municipalities archives seem to have been more successful collecting photos. As most photographs were acquired in the 1970s and 1980s when local initiatives in West Germany were busily researching 'their past', West German municipalities are overrepresented. There are fewer photographs in local archives of the former GDR and nearly no visual sources of the deportation of the towns and cities in what is now Poland or Russia.

The second bias is connected to the first but poses a paradox in its own right. The larger the Jewish community was, it seems, the less likely it is that photographs of the deportation exist. The biggest void is Berlin where more than one third of the Jews in Germany lived and from where approximately 50,000 Jews were deported.[67] We know that out of fear that unwelcome pictures might be published by the international press, the Nazi regime kept a tight con-

66 Jens Jäger: *Fotografie und Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009, 83.

67 Akim Jah: *Die Deportation der Juden aus Berlin. Die nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik und das Sammellager Große Hamburger Straße*, Berlin: Be-Bra, 2013.

trol on photography in the German capital. We also know that the files of the Berlin Gestapo were destroyed at the end of the war. Still, it seems unlikely that no one took a photo of one of the far more than 100 transports. In May 2019, the House of the Wannsee Conference published a call for photos which drew quite a lot of media attention but was not met with success. Still, recent examples of Vienna and camp Vught in the Netherlands show that new photos can be found.[68]

The third bias is perhaps the most confusing and important one. Why do we not have any photographs of deportations of Jews from 1943 to 1945? Was it that the would-be photographers had gotten used to deportations and therefore did not regard the motif as worthy of photographing anymore? Or did the growing intensity of air raids and the destruction of cameras, films and the growing fear of losing the war play a role? Or was it that camera-owners (like everybody else in Germany) knew all too well in 1942/1943 that the deported would be murdered on arrival? Or was it a mix of all aspects?

The corpus of photos we know today offers a rather deceptive panorama of the deportations. The visual sources stage the perpetrators, humiliate the victims and offer a glimpse of the onlooking neighbors. The presence of spectators certainly influenced Klaus Hesse's choice of the title of his important study. *Vor aller Augen* (in plain sight) is apt and catchy, but it reflects only the perspective of the non-Jewish part of the society, perpetrators and onlookers alike. The perspective of the deported Jews is not represented. They were being looked at – but could not photograph back!

68 Dieter Hecht, Michaela Raggam-Blesch, and Heidemarie Uhl (eds.): *Letzte Orte. Die Wiener Sammellager und die Deportationen 1941/42*, Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2019; "Voor het eerst kijk je recht in het gezicht van de gedeporteerde Joden uit kamp Vught. Hoe doken deze unieke beelden ineens op?", in *De Volkskrant*, 25.05.2021.