

INTRODUCTION

On September 1, 1939, the Third Reich started World War II by attacking the Polish Republic. A few days later Wehrmacht (German armed forces) reached the Polish capital, Warsaw, which capitulated on September 28, following a siege of just three weeks. This marked the start of German occupational rule; it lasted until the arrival of the Red Army on January 17, 1945, and cost the lives of more than 600,000 of the city's original population of 1.3 million.¹ In the Generalgouvernement Polen (General Government of Poland), which Hitler established in October 1939, the local population paid a high toll in blood for the military defeat inflicted by the aggressor from the West. The policies of General Governor Hans Frank, who established his capital not in Warsaw, but in Krakow, together with those of the other institutions of the Nazi regime, resulted in the deaths of at least 4.5 million inhabitants of Poland, two-thirds of them Jewish.

There were more victims during the war in the Soviet Union than in Europe, which was invaded by German troops on June 22, 1941. The Soviet Republic of Belorussia was one of the first regions to come under German rule, and with 2.2 million dead from a prewar population of 10.6 million, it was also one of the most severely hit.² The Generalkommissariat Weißruhenien (General Commissariat of Belorussia), which was created by Berlin from parts of the Belorussian Soviet Republic and parts of prewar Poland, was directed by General Commissar Wilhelm Kube in Minsk. The capital, which was captured on June 28, 1941, and liberated on July 3, 1944, had some 240,000 inhabitants, of which more than half perished during the three years of occupation.³ Nazi policies resulted not only in the destruction of a large part of the population, but also in the destruction of both cities that form the subject of this work; these cities by the end of 1944 lay almost completely in ruins and had scarcely any districts left that were still habitable.

In Warsaw and Minsk German occupational rule also entailed the near complete extinction of the indigenous culture and way of life. Educational

institutions were closed down; theaters and museums largely shut their doors, or at least reduced their presentations and displays to a poor standard; sports and the media were subjected to strict controls and regulations. The social life of the population took on completely different forms than before the war since material shortages forced people first and foremost to secure their own existence. By contrast, the Germans created a wide range of cultural activities to meet their own needs, reflecting almost all aspects of life. This was the basis for a German society of occupiers that soon became established in the East—strictly segregated from the local population—and with its own distinctive norms.

This society of occupiers comprised many thousands of Germans, who, as soldiers, members of the German administration, policemen, or private individuals, secured and organized German rule and thereby also facilitated the genocide of the Jews, the mass murder of actual or supposed resistance fighters, the starvation of the local population, and the destruction of the two cities. The concept of genocide is understood here as a descriptive category, whose essential elements are the planned and actual destruction of an ethnic group; in this sense the German treatment of the Poles—at least in Warsaw—can also be characterized as genocide.⁴ Beyond this, violence here also includes the indirect use of force against noncombatants by individual and state actors, including, for example, the effects of enforced malnutrition and sickness.

This book aims to present a history of daily life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) for the German occupiers in Warsaw and Minsk. The German edition was published in Munich in 2010. In the years since, several relevant publications have appeared that also deal with the history of other cities under occupation during World War II, without, however, examining the perpetrators in close detail.⁵ Now as ever, the urban living space, with all its intertwined conflicts and tensions, remains a rich field for historical study. Increasingly, the traditional German–Polish dividing lines are being blurred and academics are reading the sources and literature in the respective other languages. Yet the regime change in Eastern Europe in 1989 is still setting the research agenda: the files of the Nazi occupiers held in the Eastern European archives and the history of Nazi crimes in Poland and the occupied Soviet territories are of much greater interest in Germany than they are in Poland. Polish academics had concerned themselves with this topic from the 1950s and published many studies that received recognition only decades later in the West. The newly acquired access to specific archives has been exploited by the historians east of the Elbe and the Oder mainly to focus on Stalinist crimes.

For future research, the comparative study of Stalinism and German National Socialism will prove to be an especially fruitful topic.⁶ Yet the

history of daily life during just one occupation can offer a new perspective because it not only facilitates the detailed description of crimes based on many facts, but also emphasizes the people involved and the nature of their lives. This presents also an opportunity to describe the fate and the actions of those who until now have often been characterized as passive victims, or—in the case of the occupiers—as an undifferentiated band of murderers. Furthermore, the history of daily life examines the significance of those structures that provide the framework within which people make decisions. And it can offer new perspectives, by including contemporary interpretations that make it possible to describe both normality and exceptional events. Especially in the East, where *Reichsdeutsche* (Reich Germans) and *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) were brought together in a new society, the question was also raised of what makes up the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community).⁷ The powerful influence of this concept can be seen more clearly in the East than anywhere else.

Such a perspective is also possible because the chronology and dimension of the crimes in both cities and regions have now been quite thoroughly researched. For Minsk the studies of Bernhard Chiari⁸ and Christian Gerlach⁹ are available, although these studies are not directly concerned with the city, but rather with Generalkommissariat Weißruthenien as a whole. Both books, with their wealth of information, also fill a large gap in research on Nazi occupation policies; prior research had scarcely taken any interest in this Soviet republic.

The state of research regarding Warsaw is quite different: here Polish academics have conducted the major studies of German crimes—some of which are available also in translation—while historical research in the country of the perpetrators has hardly produced anything. The classic study is still the book of Tomasz Szarota,¹⁰ which, moreover, is mainly devoted to the daily life of the local population. This reveals a key tendency that is still valid for Polish historians: they remain focused on their own compatriots as victims while describing the course of events, facts, and details accurately and comprehensively. Their knowledge about the occupiers usually remains limited. This explains why Czesław Madajczyk's comprehensive history of German occupation policy in Poland,¹¹ which in the original Polish version dates from 1970, still provides a convincing overview with respect to the occupiers.

The most important findings of the German research conducted since 1990 have not yet been integrated into a synthesis covering the entire *Generalgouvernement*: examples are research done by Dieter Pohl on Distrikt Lublin and Distrikt Galizien, or on the German civil administration by Bogdan Musiał, Robert Seidel, and Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk.¹² Surprisingly there have been no recent studies on Distrikt Krakau or the cap-

ital itself, or on Warsaw, the largest city in the General Government. For Warsaw many older works exist that cover various aspects of German occupational rule; almost always, however, these works are written from the perspective of the Polish victims and not the perpetrators. This applies also to the conditions facing the Jews in Warsaw, which have been thoroughly researched.¹³ In these studies the Germans are confined to the role of organizing the Jews' destruction, but no detailed analysis of the personnel involved has taken place. Despite certain changes in recent years, research has concentrated mainly on the role of the state and its mobilization of individual groups. The racist ideology of the Nazis and the central role of Berlin in planning the genocide are both heavily emphasized in these works; historians, especially the German historians, focus on the Jews mainly as victims in their studies of Eastern Europe.¹⁴

Research on the perpetrators that examines the personalities of the Nazi criminals as well as the specific causes that turn men into murderers has been in vogue ever since Christopher Browning's pioneering work in this field.¹⁵ Browning, who chose *Ordinary Men* as the title for his book in 1992, produced an interpretation of the crimes committed by members of Reserve Police Battalion 101 that assumed that under certain circumstances almost everyone is capable of becoming a murderer. Although this thesis has found general approval and individual studies have attempted to define these conditions more precisely, the majority of German researchers have concentrated on the biographical particularities of individuals¹⁶ or, in collective biographies,¹⁷ of groups, and uncovered thereby the disposition to commit murder not of "ordinary men," but rather of senior Nazi office holders and leaders.

However, purely in terms of numbers, these groups composed only a small part of the German occupation force in the East, and the other Germans, who also contributed to securing German rule and thereby the commission of genocide, have been researched to a much lesser extent, if at all. An exception is the senior postal official in Warsaw, Hermann Beyerlein, whose daily life has been documented together with many photographs.¹⁸ Yet despite the upsurge in academic activity resulting from the Wehrmacht Exhibition in Germany, not a single monograph has been produced, either on Poland or on Belorussia, that looks at the German troops stationed there. It seems to be little better with regard to the ethnic Germans, whose significance, especially in the General Government, can scarcely be underestimated, both in terms of their numbers and their contribution to the functioning of the German occupation regime.¹⁹ The same applies also to German women, who were deployed to the East in considerable numbers.²⁰ The available studies on the civil administration are concerned mainly with their administrative activities, but largely ne-

glect biographical aspects and the question of freedom of action in the local context.

Another significant topic, the public nature of the violence and the extent to which Germans were aware of the genocide, has also received much attention recently, notably in the book by Peter Longerich.²¹ His study is based on official reports on the mood of the population, propaganda, press manipulation, and other official assessments of German public opinion, but does not include any analysis of the flow of information within Eastern Europe itself. The overarching character of the book, therefore, does not provide the in-depth view of a local study. While Longerich pursues a mainly chronological approach to this question, Bernward Dörner, in his study of public opinion and the Holocaust proceeds thematically, and explains, using examples, the various possible ways that existed for Germans to become aware of the genocide.²²

Questions Posed and Methodology

There still remain many gaps in the research on German occupation of the East. Nevertheless, several recent collective-biographical studies, based mainly on the postwar criminal investigations of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) by the Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen (Central Office of the Regional Judicial Administrations, or ZSL) in Ludwigsburg, have considerably expanded our knowledge of the Nazi state and the personnel that implemented its criminal policies. Addressing the question of how the regime was able to turn so many people into murderers has, however, often been left by the historians to academics from other disciplines. Sociologists, in particular, have formulated wide ranging and stimulating interpretations concerning the situational aspects of violence that frequently, however, have not been secured by a sufficiently broad source basis.²³

From all these conclusions researchers have distilled out a wide variety of motivations among the perpetrators. On the one hand, there were people who believed in what they were doing on the basis of their ideological convictions or a corresponding socialization, and on the other there were also the “ordinary men,” for whom a variety of motives need to be considered. Alongside the bureaucratic implementation of orders, the pursuit of personal gain, careerism, and the anti-Semitism that was widespread in German society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there are also the effects of group dynamics. All of these causes have been identified as keys to understanding the Holocaust and the actual source of the violence.²⁴ However, the interrelations between these various factors, which

have been seen usually as mono-causal answers, still have to be examined in detail. This applies also in large measure to the relations between the occupiers and the occupied, which have scarcely yet been examined in academic studies.

Furthermore, no one has yet attempted to combine in one study various methodological approaches such as biographical, the history of daily life, and comparative history in order to reveal deeper insights into the intentions of the perpetrators. It is especially the formative experiences of those present on the spot and the interrelations between perpetrators and victims have yet to be incorporated within historical monographs. However, real progress can only be expected, given the already high standard of the academic works on German occupation and genocide in Eastern Europe, if an integrative approach is pursued. Perpetrator research has to combine the polar opposites of disposition and situation, examining them together, just as the commission of crimes was embedded within the daily life of the occupiers and the society they lived in.²⁵

In order to identify the conditions that first made possible the implementation of violence, we have to go beyond questions of plans and intentions. Only in this way can we even start to comprehend the complex nature of the genocide. There was more than one direction for the violence because various groups were targeted in turn. There was more than one group of perpetrators because all members of the society of occupiers were necessarily involved to a greater or lesser extent. There was more than one motive for the violence: economic, ideological, and behavioral factors were linked to state orders and norms that developed their own intertwined dynamic, with fateful consequences for the local population.²⁶ The causes of mass murder lie within the society in which it takes place—or that produces it—and have deeper roots than just state policy, although that policy sets many of the conditions under which genocide occurs. But structures explain at most *how* people act, not *why* they act.²⁷

The genocide in the East was a “collective enterprise marked by the division of labor.”²⁸ The participants included not only those people who directly ordered the murders or physically carried them out, but also those who prepared them, who created the organizational framework, who contributed to maintaining German occupational rule, or those—such as wives—who supported the social and emotional stability of the perpetrators. Almost all Reich Germans and ethnic Germans that spent time in Minsk or Warsaw during the war made their own contribution, one way or another, to enforcing the occupation, and thereby became implicated in the crimes of that occupation. As research has now clearly established, there was no ethical or social background, no age, religion, nor level of education that could protect one from becoming a perpetrator.²⁹ Exactly

for this reason the question must be posed: What were the conditions that made so many Germans active participants in the occupation, and thereby in the violence that it necessarily entailed?

This study attempts to answer this question using the cities of Warsaw and Minsk as examples, and thereby to make a contribution to understanding Nazi genocide.³⁰ The first chapter examines the various groups that composed the society of occupiers, such as the Wehrmacht, the Schutzstaffel der NSDAP (Protection Squad of the NSDAP; SS), the police, the civil administration, as well as Reich and ethnic German civilians. It presents an overview of those Germans who were present, their backgrounds, and also their functions, while also explaining why those individuals travelled to the East. The spectrum of causes ranges from those who headed directly to Warsaw as volunteers, through civil servants sent on official duty, on to the soldiers doing military service who were stationed there more or less by chance. Special attention has been given also to the spatial presence of the Germans in both cities, which not only influenced the relations within the group, but also the relations of the group with the local population.

Chapter 2 turns next to the question of what rules and patterns shaped the lives of the occupiers. Not only do we examine their official duties, but we also look at communal life in their shared quarters and the various forms of organized leisure activities. Political indoctrination in its various forms will also be taken into account. In view of the highly regulated nature of the occupiers' daily lives, the amount of freedom they enjoyed needs to be carefully weighed and contrasted with the extent to which their lives were determined for them by external forces. That the occupiers accepted such conditions reveals the potency of political instructions in the East and how much this differed from the Nazi penetration of daily life inside the Reich. It reveals the real circumstances under which the occupation took place and how they were experienced by the occupiers. What dividing lines—actual or only perceived—were drawn by the war between the home front and those Germans deployed outside the Reich?

This approach would be incomplete if the nonregulated aspects of daily life were excluded. Chapter 3 deals therefore with those activities that the Germans in Warsaw and Minsk developed that did not correspond to the wishes of the regime, or at least lay outside the framework of organized leisure. Prior to this, however, we will take a glance at the self-perceptions of the occupiers to clarify how they related to their own existence in the East; individual actions are determined in large part by whether someone is satisfied with or rejects the situation they find themselves in. Most important for one's subjective evaluation of things are the options that exist outside of the given norms: foremost among these is the area of supplies—also in the form of plunder—but especially supplies on the black market, in which

most occupiers gladly participated. But even religion or alcohol alleviated their daily existence. When dissatisfaction nevertheless emerged, most conflicts took place within the circle of comrades. It is important to measure the extent of this kind of adaptation to daily life, to name the likely reasons and consequences, and, in addition, to assess the reactions of those in power, in order to show the full spectrum of options for action.

The investigation of daily life makes it possible to illuminate those aspects of the society of occupiers that represent the special nature of deployment to the East, things that were not present in other places, and that proved fertile ground for excessive violence and genocide. Arising from these special conditions, there emerged a repertoire of behavioral patterns that distinguished the occupiers. It was expressed particularly in relations with the local population and in the appearances of the German occupiers outside their own closed society. We will sketch out the demands posed on individuals—not only by the offices and institutions, but also by colleagues and comrades—their practical effects, and the picture the occupants had of the Polish or Belorussian population. Here, the relations between the sexes—above all between German men and local women—are significant because access to sex was a yardstick for the Germans to measure their own position and their own self-perception within a starkly hierarchical rank structure that segregated them strictly from the occupied peoples.

From acceptance of their position and, above all, denigration of the local population, it was only a small step to violence against the occupied. Moreover, precisely this development demands very careful analysis so we can examine the legitimation of violence, as well as its presence in the public sphere. The evaluation of systematic repression, individual hangings, massacres, and finally mass murder and genocide depended considerably on its visibility; nevertheless, reports and rumors were discussed among colleagues. Therefore, the flow of information about these events is important, but the channels and content of communications are also important and play a key role. It has to be asked how the respective violence was viewed and how the occupiers judged themselves and their own contribution, especially toward their family members at home. The crimes and the course of events in Minsk and Warsaw are comparatively well-researched and therefore are not the subject, but rather the starting point for this study: What role did violence play in the life of the occupiers and how did people justify the violence of the occupation as well as the violence of the roles played by individuals? Or asked in another way: Was it not disturbing and terrifying for the Germans deployed to the East to live in an environment where mass murder was taking place?

In order to help explain and assess the issues outlined above, this study is based on the following methodological concepts.

1. Conditions in the cities of Warsaw and Minsk will be examined using a comparative approach. This makes it easier to identify local specificities and commonalities. Comparisons also protect historians from overemphasizing individual issues that under slightly different circumstances may have led to a different outcome. In addition, by studying two cities the relevance of the results is increased and—with great caution—their universal validity can be assessed more easily. The case studies of Warsaw and Minsk reveal initially the high degree of heterogeneity that distinguished the administration of the occupied territories, both regarding the formal relations with the authorities in the Reich and with respect to internal structures. This study excludes countries in Western Europe due to the comparatively low levels of violence there and focuses instead on the East. In the occupied Soviet territories, the drastic practices of the various civilian and military offices brought the Führer state to the fore, both with regard to its personalization and to its unpredictability. Conditions in the General Government were clearly different because Hans Frank, at the head of the administration, was the personification of the Nazi lawyer. In both Eastern European regions the occupiers committed crimes of excessive violence. Because rurally dominated regions are hardly suitable for study due to the small number of occupiers, the available sources encourage the study of one major city in Poland and one in Belorussia because there were plenty of Germans to be found there. Compared to the capital city of Warsaw, with more than a million inhabitants and the largest Jewish population in Europe, Minsk was a considerably smaller city with some 240,000 inhabitants. In order to remain focused, the study concentrates more on Warsaw; on the one hand there are more sources in Warsaw, and on the other it has been more intensively studied. Given the central importance of the city for German rule in Eastern Europe, the large number of occupiers living there, and especially the scale of the crimes, this focus appears justified. Minsk is placed alongside it as a comparative yardstick and as a contrast. In order to bring out the specific qualities of the East, reference will also be made to the Reich because it to some extent represents the normal case for German living conditions and daily life.
2. Central to the approach are concepts from the set of tools called *Alltagsgeschichte* developed in Germany mainly by Alf Lüdtke,³¹ which permit access to how the occupiers perceived the world around them because they sorted and internalized the experiences and uncertain meanings of daily life. On the one hand we can question the significance of the given norms. On the other hand, we need to assess the

extent to which these norms were really accepted; that is, the adaptation, relativization, softening, and ignorance that rules always undergo. With this approach, the conventional duality of personal and political—that is, private and public—will be dissolved, and thereby the horizon of structural history and perpetrator research opened to a complex and at the same time integrative understanding of Nazi rule in the East. If this makes it possible to avoid simply contrasting the public sphere, politics, and ideology on the one side against daily experiences on the other, then the mutual interdependencies can be shown, by which politics shapes daily life, and daily life also influences politics.

3. The experience of daily life had a direct influence on the still-forming attitude, which we call *habitus*, of the occupants. The concept of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu³² describes patterns of perception, thinking, and action that help people to demonstrate their social position in situations where those social positions are not clearly defined by the contextual relationships, as is the case, for example, among a circle of friends. A constitutive element of Bourdieu's hypothesis is that actions cannot be derived primarily from laws and rules because the actors themselves do not apply those types of theories, but rather develop their own adaptation of social behavior. Here there are overlaps with the idea of adapted daily life or the *Eigensinnkonzept* (concept of self-will) used by historians of daily life. Put more generally, the occupiers' attitude offers rules of interpretation under which the environment is ordered and classified, and that provide a basis for action. For Warsaw and Minsk the concept of self-will concerns first interactions with other occupiers who did not belong to the same group, but above all it concerns the contacts with the local population that frequently involved violence. In the course of its development and adaptation, attitude, which essentially is based on daily life, becomes something natural, taken for granted, and the internalized structures become second nature.³³

Attitude therefore makes social necessity into a virtue and becomes an expression of recognition for the ruling order. However, attitude is not determinism; rather it only delimits those practices that are possible and impossible. Yet it does not set the process in stone, but rather determines the manner in which it is implemented.³⁴ These practices are matched to the present and the expected near future. A study of daily life can show whether social structures have merely been reproduced or whether they were also transformed. In order to measure the role of violence in the occupiers' daily lives, we will not only describe its forms and consequences,

but also will make an assessment of how public it was. In connection with attitude, this will show how “normal” and legitimate it seemed to the occupiers to be constantly surrounded by violence and even to be personally involved. Therefore, we must analyze the degree of knowledge about those crimes that were not directly visible and how they were reported and evaluated within the public sphere of the occupiers.

In a central article on the public space in dictatorships Adelheid von Saldern proposed five models, including two that are particularly relevant for the circumstances of an occupation: closed public spaces and informal public spaces.³⁵ For the special conditions in the East, we identify a hybrid type that we will designate occupation public space. It is distinguished by daily communication, and at the same time by the maintenance of strict secrecy toward those outside the occupation circles.³⁶ This kind of public space cannot be simply shut down by the ruling elite; it can only be limited, for example, by using the deterrence of setting severe examples, if the circle of people aware of crimes becomes too great. It is possible to set the limits of what is permitted and what is forbidden by drastic measures, but also by informal and largely unspoken agreement, established through the mechanism of *habitus*.

Within a closed group like the society of occupiers certain topics of the internal public sphere reinforced the exclusivity of membership against those outside the group, even when the latter were in the majority. At the same time, it was possible for this small group via the mail or through visits home to expand the area of its public space in terms of both localities and people. In Warsaw and Minsk crimes of violence took place almost every day, but much of the killing was not conducted in public. Therefore, the manner and extent people communicated with each other regarding the violence are key elements in the functioning of occupation public space in these cities.

Sources and Source Problems

In order to answer the questions outlined above, a historian must examine a much wider range of sources than merely the classic official administrative records. In particular, the history of daily life demands an expansion of perspectives to include the ego documents of the actors. To reach these intimate documents we have used diaries, memoirs, and above all letters, such as those held in the *Sammlung Sterz in der Stuttgarter Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* (Sterz Collection of the Stuttgart Library for Contemporary History). This is the largest collection of letters from the front in the German language; other institutions have much smaller holdings. However,

even the more than forty available letters concerning Warsaw and Minsk can provide at best only snapshots of life in the East; detailed chronologies, complete pictures, or impressions that changed over time, cannot be found here.

Of the 30 billion to 40 billion letters sent home from the front, on average 430–570 postal dispatches per Wehrmacht member, just a tiny fraction has survived. There are also considerable methodological problems involved in using these letters because they contain only those things the writer considered worth mentioning and what they were able to describe. Clearly more important than the official censor were those restrictions imposed by the writers themselves, especially their consideration for the sensitivities of the recipients.³⁷ Previous investigations have revealed also that war crimes are mentioned only rarely, and hardly ever are described in detail.³⁸ The murders were not, however, banished into a taboo zone; the letters reveal above all the specific perceptions of the writer—the ghetto as revenge on the Jews or as German cultural shame, their motives for action, and especially how the writer viewed the victims of German war crimes. They provide some hints about certain patterns of behavior because they remain very personal documents.

With certain reservations most of these comments apply also to diaries and memoirs. For the history of daily life they are first rank sources, for here the experiences and views that an individual considered worth reporting are recorded over a longer period. This kind of complete record on the micro level is almost never found with other types of documentation. The situation for the German occupation in Eastern Europe is, nonetheless, quite desperate: even for very large cities, such as Warsaw, only a few personal diaries are available. It is likely that many occupiers kept diaries, but most have not been preserved or were never handed over to the archives. The important exceptions have mostly been published.³⁹ Still, in the *Deutsches Tagebucharchiv* (German Diary Archive) in Emmendingen and in the *Sammlung Primavesi* (Primavesi Collection) in the *Staatsarchiv Münster* (Münster State Archives; StAM), a few diaries and memoirs were discovered, and a number of fragmentary collections have been preserved in other places. It should be noted that the authors are all soldiers or members of the police who were quartered in barracks. Apart from the sheer size of these groups, one can only speculate about the reasons for the absence of diaries kept by others. A circular letter sent to around fifty German and Austrian non-professional history research groups also produced no useful results.

Extensive ego documents can, however, also be found in the numerous investigative files of the postwar judicial authorities. Among these, the trials in Poland are of less interest because there the statements, apart from

those of the defendants, are limited mainly to the victims. Instead it is the proceedings in East or West Germany that are useful. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the investigations were conducted by the *Staats-sicherheitsdienst* (Office of State Security), which often used coercion against those being questioned.⁴⁰ The central West German collections, now preserved in the Ludwigsburg branch of the *Bundesarchiv* (Federal Archives), have increasingly become a central focus of interest for historians over the past fifteen years. These investigations were conducted in accordance with proper legal principles and previously were relevant mainly for examining the course and conduct of mass crimes.⁴¹ Less considered, on the other hand, is the use of these sources beyond merely reconstructing the course of historical events or the attempts by the perpetrators to justify themselves; the aim of historians previously was mainly to repersonalize history by demonstrating individual guilt, moving from an impersonal account to one focused on the actions of individuals. However, the interrogations tell you much more. Precisely because many of those questioned had no genuine interest in conceding any guilt at all, they gladly talked about seemingly unimportant details. The investigators mainly asked the accused, but much more rarely the witnesses, specific questions, and they enquired only routinely after certain names and events; in this way they facilitated a largely unrestrained recall in which very often people talked about the daily life of the occupiers.

The protocols from the former GDR differentiate themselves in the way the investigations were conducted. In contrast to those in West Germany, the investigators often confronted witnesses repeatedly with the same or similar allegations. The sort of unrestrained recall that took place in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) was not likely to result from this interrogation technique. Therefore, there are scarcely any useful references for the history of daily life in these files. The same applies for the files in the *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* (Polish Institute of National Remembrance; IPN) in Warsaw, the Polish authority responsible for investigating both Nazi and communist crimes, similar to the *Birthler Authority* in Germany, which now holds the records of the *Staats-sicherheitsdienst*. The files of the investigations of German officials serving in Warsaw during the occupation contain mainly statements by the victims.⁴²

Nevertheless, numerous insights can be gained from this material, precisely because those affected personally always present a subjective view of events. Thus the sheer frequency of certain comments speaks volumes for their plausibility, especially if specific details are perceived by many to be common practice. On the other hand, if the aim is only to verify certain key facts within the specific context of the interrogation, particular details often prove not to be reliable, or only partially correct. If one takes into

account the time elapsed between the events and their retelling, nonetheless, significant discoveries can sometimes be made: an example might be when marriage partners are questioned and touch on aspects of marital life during the occupation, information that cannot be found in other sources. These statements because they reveal subjective perceptions and moments from that time that were important for those concerned, are of considerable relevance and their value should not be underestimated. Against this, some adventurous stories have to be dismissed as improbable if they are simply too fantastic to be true.

It has to be stressed that many assessments and perceptions are highly subjective and one encounters also some excessively positive or highly misleading impressions of the East in these postwar recollections. Therefore, it is essential to treat this material with caution because it concerns the reception of impressions that only subjectively approach the truth. The human tendency to cover up events in the past and to push away unpleasant memories must be taken into account, especially when the dominant social values between the time of experience and the time of retelling are diametrically opposed.⁴³ Clear guidelines for assessing what is accurate and what is not cannot be given here. Ultimately the historian has to evaluate the plausibility of each account by applying knowledge of the context and comparing it to similar events.

Problematic in this respect are reports about the public nature of violence. This was not usually the subject of questioning during interrogations. Furthermore, testimonies that do mention it are usually very fragmentary because they can easily become self-incriminating. If they are made, nevertheless, together with other sources they increase our knowledge of how the violence was seen by the occupants. In such cases, it is usually difficult to decide whether the witness is describing something that happened every day or something unusual. Of course exceptional perceptions are also a part of daily life, but assessing this can only be done with caution.

While remaining aware of the numerous pitfalls, this source can at least partially plug an important gap that needs to be filled due to the lack of other ego documents. The roughly one hundred statements by eighty-eight witnesses used for this study, taken from numerous files, tell the history of daily life in an unconventional, new way. More than one thousand other protocols were not taken into account because they did not contain any substantive information about daily life or perceptions of it. In accordance with German data protection regulations and archival laws, the names have been rendered anonymous, insofar as they do not concern persons in prominent positions.

It is of course difficult to determine how representative the sources are. Among those questioned by the public prosecutors there were only a few

civilians and members of the civil administration; the majority were from the ranks of SS and police units, and for this group at least, a fairly representative sample can be assumed, simply because the numbers of people questioned were so large. Equally, it was by no means intended to question a cross section of the society of occupiers. The available material, therefore, can only partially satisfy the ideal of universal validity; the questions posed by the history of daily life, however, are less interested in social statistics. Instead they are focused much more on the individual, whose life is observed in the context of his (or her) own self-evaluation. For this purpose, these sources are very well suited.

Next to this, daily newspapers take on an especially high relevance. Both cities possessed such publications; there was a *Minsker Zeitung* (Minsk newspaper) as well as a *Warschauer Zeitung* (Warsaw newspaper), although the latter appeared only until the turn of 1940–1941, at which time it was subsumed within the *Krakauer Zeitung* (Krakow newspaper), which included a regional section with numerous reports from Warsaw. Research on the occupational press has so far only really been conducted in detail with regard to Poland.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, with more than four hundred newspaper reports for Warsaw and almost six hundred for Minsk, it is clear that a significant body of text for the local perspective of the occupiers is available. In view of state control and the censor there are of course no critical commentaries or reports of crimes against the local population to be found; the news is distinguished rather by its trivial character. Sports reports, reviews of ongoing cultural and entertainment activities, mass and Nazi Party events, and reports on the exemplary constructive work of the Germans dominate the content.

The newspapers also reported on those things the occupiers experienced all the time and that greatly impacted their stay in the East. Even if it is not possible to speak of objectivity because the texts were shaped by ideology, the reporting of most events does correspond with accounts in other sources, even with those of the local resistance. If that were not the case, the newspapers would have risked losing their readership, since too great a divergence from one's own observations, which could easily have happened with local news, would have driven readers away. If one takes into account the intention to indoctrinate that was clearly present, nonetheless significant information concerning the realities of daily life for the occupiers can be found,⁴⁵ showing that newspapers can serve as an important supplement to the available ego documents.

In the Polish archives, it is mainly the voluminous reports of various German military and civilian offices that prove most relevant for answering the questions posed by the history of daily life. Here the monthly reports for Distrikt Warschau stand out as a key source for life in the city

because they not only describe numerous events with attendance numbers and other details, but they also present insights into the mood of the occupiers. In addition, they also demonstrate the perception of Poles by the Germans. On the other hand, despite regular reports under this heading, they actually tell us very little about the real mood among the Poles since these reports are based excessively on wishful thinking.

Another key source for this work were the surviving official collections, which for Warsaw can mainly be found in the Archiwum Państwowe m.st. Warszawy (State Archive of the Capital City Warsaw; APW).⁴⁶ Admittedly, complete records are not available for a single German office, but the amount of material preserved is very extensive: for example, for *Distrikt Warschau*, when the files of the *SS und Polizeiführer* (SS and police leader; SSPF) are included, we have around forty disciplinary files. Especially this type of source involving investigative files can tell us much about the individual occupiers and also about breaches of the regulations while on duty and the ensuing sanctions, which can help us to answer the questions posed by the history of daily life. This applies also to the extensive court records: the documents of the *Sondergericht* (Special Court) served as a central collection in this study for the question of norms and deviation from the norm in the behavior of the occupiers. Of the roughly 1,800 files, not quite a hundred—that is, about 5 percent—were evaluated including all those that were concerned with Germans and ethnic Germans. This gives us a complex picture of the forbidden and tolerated modes of conduct. Although no administrative documentation of the court has survived, the collection permits a central insight into those spheres of daily life that are only very rarely touched on in letters, diaries, or even newspapers. Especially those acts of violence against the local population not carried out while on official duty—and their limits—can thereby be exposed. The collection cannot, however, make any claim of being statistically representative because it is not clear how many files were destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising and the hasty evacuation of the German authorities in the fall of 1944. Nevertheless, on account of the large number of cases, a certain critical mass is achieved that makes it possible to describe certain patterns of behavior. These sources are in any case at least sufficient to document certain decisive events and turning points in the lives of individuals.

Finally, it is necessary to make a few comments regarding the terminology used by the perpetrators that is dominant in the sources. In view of the frequent intention to cover up or at least render harmless, above all, mass murder, this linguistic distancing from events sometimes reaches its limits. The choice of completely different words is not always possible and occasionally quotation marks have to be used. Problematic also is the use

of the word “Jew.” It cannot always be avoided and for the occupiers it had in most cases an arbitrary definition; the most significant characteristic of these Jews was that the Germans did not count them among the “Poles” or “Belorussians” or “White Ruthenians”, as the Christian population was called.⁴⁷

Before the publication of this book, I undertook several years of intensive research and discussions in Poland and Germany. I believe it was especially fortunate that I was able spend several months in Warsaw and not only read paper sources there, but also move among the historic sites mentioned in this work, insofar as they were still extant. In January 2010 I returned to Warsaw to take a position as an academic researcher at the Deutsches Historisches Institut (German Historical Institute), which had already provided me with accommodation during my previous research visits to Warsaw, and that has now also provided the financial support necessary for this English translation. I owe for this a debt of gratitude to the institute’s directors Klaus Ziemer, Eduard Mühle, and Miloš Řezník.

Without Piotr Wróbel (Toronto) and Steven Feldman (Washington, DC) this English edition would not exist. The German edition was made possible primarily by my supervisor Hans Günter Hockerts (Munich), whose guidance and suggestions contributed considerably to the success of the work. The role of second adviser was warmly accepted by Horst Möller (Munich), and additional key tips and stimulating advice were received from Dieter Pohl (Klagenfurt). Peter Lieb (Sandhurst and Potsdam) generously made available to me his transcript of Carl von Andrian’s diary. Representative for the support of all the archival staff and librarians over the years, I would like to recognize especially here Jan Bańbor of the Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of New Documents) in Warsaw, who has supported this—and more-recent projects—with access to files and professional advice. Editors of the German edition were Petra Weber and Angelika Reizle of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Institute for Contemporary History) in Munich; in Poland Jürgen Hensel and Patrycja Pieńkowska-Wiederkehr provided additional editorial services. And without my parents, of course, the book would never have been written.

Notes

1. Borodziej, *Aufstand*, pp. 16, 189–190.
2. Gerlach, *Morde*, p. 11.
3. Schlootz, *Propaganda*, p. 75; Cerovic, *Paix*, pp. 78–79.
4. On the definition and problematic nature of this concept, see Gerlach, *Societies*, pp. 455–456.
5. Cohen, *Smolensk under the Nazis*; Czocher, *W okupowanym Krakowie*; and Mick, *Kriegserfahrungen*.

6. Böhler and Lehnstaedt, *Gewalt und Alltag*; see also Snyder, *Bloodlands*.
7. On this, see Steber and Gotto, *Visions of Community*.
8. Chiari, *Alltag*.
9. Gerlach, *Morde*.
10. Szarota, *Warschau*.
11. Madajczyk, *Okkupationspolitik*.
12. Pohl, *Judenpolitik*; idem, *Judenverfolgung*. Musiał, *Zivilverwaltung*. Seidel, *Besatzungs-politik*. The book reflects largely the structure adopted by Musiał, but deals with Distrikt Radom rather than Distrikt Lublin. Apart from a chapter on forced labor, there are no significantly different insights to be gained. Młynarczyk, *Judenmord*, examines the murder of the Jews in Distrikt Radom, but also takes into account the perspective of the victims.
13. Gutman, *Jews*; Sakowska, *Menschen*; Engelking and Leociak, *Warsaw Ghetto*.
14. On this general tendency in genocide research, see Gerlach, *Societies*, p. 466. A recent and instructive overview of German research on Poland can be found in Pohl, *Ermordung*.
15. Browning, *Männer*.
16. There is an extensive literature, and we list only a few of the more recent (and short) biographies of German perpetrators in Warsaw and Minsk: on Curt von Gottberg, see Klein, *Gottberg*; on Wilhelm Kube, see Zimmermann, "Ehrenbürger"; on Georg Heuser, see Matthäus, *Heuser*; on Ludwig Hahn, see Kur, *Sprawiedliwość*; on Ludwig Leist, see Walichnowski, *Rozmowy*.
17. The most prominent example is certainly Wildt, *Generation*. For Eastern Europe see Birn, *Polizeiführer*; and Birn, *Sicherheitspolizei*.
18. Jaworski and Peters, *Alltagsperspektiven*.
19. Stimulating and instructive on this issue are Bergen, "Volksdeutschen"; and ibid., "Concept." For the period immediately after the start of the war, see Jansen and Weck-becker, *Selbstschutz*. See also Lehnstaedt, "Volksdeutsche."
20. Harvey, *Women*; Schwarz, *Frau*.
21. Longerich, *Gewusst*.
22. Dörner, *Deutschen*.
23. See, e.g., Sofsky, *Traktat*; and Sofsky, *Prinzip*. Specifically focused on Nazi crimes and the "very ordinary men" is Welzer, *Täter*. In 1967 the lawyer and criminologist Herbert Jäger published a study that examined the causes and conditions for individual guilt on the basis of judicial records: Jäger, *Verbrechen*.
24. On these typologies, see Mann, "Perpetrators," pp. 332–333; Paul, *Psychopathen*, pp. 61–62.
25. Longerich, "Tendenzen," p. 3; Herbert, "Vernichtungspolitik," p. 31.
26. Gerlach, *Societies*, p. 458.
27. Bauer, *Rethinking*, p. 30.
28. Paul, "Psychopathen," p. 15.
29. Ibid., p. 62.
30. On the "explicitability of the Holocaust," and whether this can ever be achieved, see Bauer, *Rethinking*, pp. 14–38.
31. Lüdtke, *Alltagsgeschichte*. A new collection of essays is Geschichtswerkstatt, *Alltags-kultur*; the best overview examining the problems involved is: van Laak, *Alltagsgeschichte*. Detailed methodological remarks can be found in this volume, chapter 2,
32. Bourdieu, *Theorie*, etc. pp. 165 and following.
33. Bourdieu, *Rede*, p. 84.
34. Schwingel, *Bourdieu*, pp. 69–70.
35. From Saldern, "Öffentlichkeiten," pp. 451 and following. For a discussion of both models, see chapter 5, this volume.

36. On the ambivalence of communication between public space and secrecy, see West-erbarkey, *Geheimnis*.
37. Latzel, "Feldpostbriefe," p. 172.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
39. E.g., on Warsaw see Hosenfeld, "Retten."
40. Leide, *NS-Verbrecher*, pp. 112, and 120 and following.
41. On the trials, see Ruckerl, *NS-Verbrechen*. Historians working with the statements recently include, e.g., Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*; Musiał, *Zivilverwaltung*.
42. In addition, IPN also holds a collection of original documents that we have used quite extensively in this study.
43. In general, on the problem of people self-adopting modes of interpretation, see Ju-reit, *Generationenforschung*, esp. pp. 12–13.
44. Jockheck, *Propaganda*, esp. pp. 99–114. See also Kołtunowski, *Strategia propagandy*.
45. On the value of occupation newspapers as sources, see Lüdtke, "Fehlgreifen," p. 68.
46. Important publications for this work include the official diary of Hans Frank (Präg and Jacobmeyer, *Diensttagebuch*); the war diary of Police Battallion 322 in Warsaw (Leszczyński, *Dziennik*); the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Soviet Union (Klein, *Einsatzgruppen*); a collection of documents on genocide in *Reichskommissariat Ostland* (Benz, Kwiet, and Matthäus, *Einsatz*), as well one on Nazi rule in Eastern Europe (Röhr et al., *Europa*).
47. On the linguistic problems, see Friedländer, *Kitsch*, pp. 78 and following; and Pohl, *Judenverfolgung*, pp. 21–22.