

In Their Own Voices

Stefania Zezza*

Abstract. In 1946 David P. Boder, an American psychiatrist, interviewed more than one hundred displaced persons, mostly survivors of the Holocaust. The interviews, taped with a wire recorder, are among the earliest oral testimonies to be collected. Boder aimed at letting American public opinion know the impact of catastrophe which had happened in Europe, focusing also on the emergency of the refugees, and to analyze the impact of *deculturation* on the survivors through the analysis of their linguistic choices. Boder was not a historian nor he had a detailed knowledge on the implementation of the Final Solution, which explains several misunderstandings in the interpretation and the translation of the interviews. He aimed at recording the survivors' accounts while the events were still fresh in their memory. In his opinion the recording and analysis of the interviewees' linguistic choices could help in identifying the effects of trauma, or as he called it, the deculturation, on their psyche. This is the reason why, in the majority of cases, he let the interviewees talk «not only in their own language, but in their own voices». Seven of the interviewees were Salonikan Jews, who had been deported partly to Auschwitz, partly to Bergen Belsen. These interviews provide the opportunity to seriously examine the dynamic of the transmission of memory, of the impact of trauma and of its relation with language. At the same time, in particular, those with the Salonikans, allow a deeper understanding of the fate of a Community, almost completely annihilated during the implementation of the Final Solution.

Keywords: Interview, wire recorder, Holocaust, displaced persons, refugees, language, trauma, memory, deculturation, Final Solution, Salonika

Introduction

At the end of July 1946, David P. Boder, a well known American psychiatrist, he himself an immigrant from the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, made the decision to come to Europe with the aim of interviewing with a wire recorder about one hundred displaced persons, mostly Jewish survivors, who were living in Displaced Persons Camps or in shelters provided by the Joint Distribution Committee in Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland at that time. These interviews are extremely interesting both from a documentary perspective, since they are among the first oral testimonies collected after the war, and methodologically, because they provide the opportunity to seriously examine the dynamic of the transmission of memory, of the impact of trauma and of its relation with language.

Boder's main purposes were, on the one hand, to collect, as soon as possible, human documents about the personal sufferings endured by European persecuted people, in order to make the American public opinion aware of the dramatic events related to the war and the Holocaust, on the other, to analyze in depth the psychological conditions and the reactions of the survivors to the experiences they had suffered.

The choice to interview the survivors and the refugees, who were still living in an insecure condition inside the DP Camps and temporary shelters, is particularly meaningful. Boder realized that their traumatic situation didn't finish at the moment of liberation neither their state of precariousness allowed the elaboration of their losses and traumas. He aimed at demonstrating, in particular to the Americans, that those people

«are not riffraff, not the scum of the earth, not the poor devils who suffer because they don't know their rights, not idlers who declaim that the world owes them a living. They are uprooted people» (Boder, 1949)

* Rome, Italy, E-Mail <stefania.zezza@gmail.com>.

Hence, Boder's work, which was forgotten for a long time by the Holocaust historiography deserves to be reconsidered and studied, also rereading and examining it on the basis of the current historical knowledge.

Boder was not a historian nor he had a detailed knowledge on the implementation of the Final Solution, which explains several misunderstandings in the interpretation and the translation of the interviews. He aimed at recording the survivors' accounts while the events were still fresh in their memory. In his opinion the recording and analysis of the interviewees' linguistic choices could help in identifying the effects of trauma, or as he called it, the deculturation, on their psyche. This is the reason why, in the majority of cases, he let the interviewees talk «not only in their own language, but in their own voices» (Boder, 1947).

Boder's work deserves to be considered extremely original and unique for several reasons. Firstly, he used a wire recorder to tape the survivors' accounts which were therefore immediate and not elaborated as the written testimonies. Secondly, the interviews were conducted at an early stage of the Holocaust studies, when the memory of the Holocaust was not fixed in a narrative (Deblinger, 2012). It was the first time the survivors were talking about their unprecedented experiences: this is evident both in the difficulties the interviewees had in explaining the events, and in the problems Boder had in understanding them.

To interview and to be interviewed are actions that imply an effective interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. From a methodological point of view, the information a witness can provide during an interview seems to be as important as the interviewer's questions and approach to the topic. The relevance of the linguistic issues, the importance of the interviewer's knowledge of the events and his awareness of the impact of trauma on the interviewee's answers must be considered crucial as well. An interview is a form of communication whose efficacy depends on the fact that the subjects involved share the same 'code', that is a language both of them can speak fluently in order to understand each other and to be fully understood, and a proper knowledge of the context. In Boder's work sometimes this issues brought about some mistakes and misunderstandings in dates, names, chronology and in the transcription.

It is also important to point out that the interviewees, refugees and displaced persons, were living in a limbo at that time, the feeling of precariousness and loneliness was going to be less strong in the following years and testimonies but then, in their accounts, the dramatic conditions of eradication and loss was extremely perceivable.

David P. Boder

David P. Boder was born in Latvia in 1886. He studied in Germany with Wilhelm Wundt, founder of Experimental Psychology, and in Russia with Vladimir Behkterev, the father of Objective Psychology, who both influenced him in considering the relation between the external influences of the context and the psychological reactions. Also the ethnographic studies of S. Anski on the Jewish communities played a significant role in the following studies done by Boder on the Jewish culture after the Holocaust.

In 1919 he moved to Mexico, where he worked in the field of criminology, and then, in 1926, to the United States. There he attended University and worked on the relation between language and psychology. At the end of the war, he began working on his project and planning his trip to Europe, where he interviewed more than one hundred victims of the persecution.

When he went back to the United States he translated some of the interviews: eight of them were later translated, commented and published in the book *I Did Not Interview The Dead* in 1949. Boder hoped that all the interviews could be published but he managed to do that only for 70 of them in the volumes of the *Topical Autobiographies*. In 1954 Boder published the article *The Impact of catastrophe*, a scientific essay based on the analysis of the language used by the interviewees, which he considered a milestone in his work. He then developed a Traumatic index according to which the interviews could be examined.

In the following years Boder tried to disclose his work and take it to Yad Vashem but couldn't manage to do that. The collection is now at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, many interviews

are available in the website of the Illinois Institute of Technology where they can be listened and read.

The project

David Boder began thinking about his project in May 1945, when he wrote a *Memorandum [proposing to interview European displaced persons]*. The absolute novelty of the project was his intention to record the interviews «for psychological and historical reasons» (Boder, 1945) since he aimed at analyzing the impact of the traumatic experiences through the linguistic choices of the interviewees.

In a letter to Archibald Mac Leish he wrote:

«The basic aim is to obtain several hundred verbatim records of people in one way or another affected by the war in Europe. Never before have verbal recordings of stories of such people been made, at least not in reasonable quantity... valuable data on the moods, grievances, hopes, and aspirations of the European peoples with whom we have dealt in the present conflict either as friends or foes. On the other hand, the materials would also illuminate the human condition in general, presenting the researcher with patterns of thought and behavior the analysis of which seems indispensable, if a better understanding of man is to [be] attained» (Boder, 1945b).

Boder knew that the American public opinion was not fully aware of what had happened in Europe and hoped that his work could play a role in making people more open and understanding towards the refugees. Being a refugee himself, he deeply understood the emergency of that time and the extraordinary condition of the displaced persons.

The impact of catastrophe: from deculturation to trauma

Boder firmly believed that the peculiarity of the Holocaust survivors' conditions could provide a fundamental opportunity to study the human psychology and the individual reactions to the traumatic events. In particular, about the Holocaust, he coined the word *deculturation*, the opposite of what John Dollard had called *acculturation*, which was the process through which an individual becomes part of a group, sharing its culture and language.

«Many of our recordings give precisely this picture of [the] gradual absorption of a human being into the swamps of concentration and extermination camps. To describe this process, we, of course, have to coin the antonym to Dr. Dollard's term—we have to speak of deculturation of personality» (Boder, 1948)

The *deculturation*, according to Boder, was not only related to the individual, who in the camps had been deprived of any natural and cultural reference point, but also to the camps themselves as deculturated environments whose outcome was a subcultural behaviour.

«We must attempt to study and teach the scope of human potentialities, toward good and evil under pressure of catastrophe, and become well aware of the diabolic danger of deculturation which may take its toll from the victor and vanquished alike. There are methods of injury much more painful than death—and that is the gradual reduction of man to a state of existence in which he may step by step divest himself of all virtues claimed for him by science, art, and religion» (Boder, 1949).

As a result, the collection of *human documents*, following the denomination coined by Gordon Allport, was a crucial means to identify the impact of *deculturation* on the victims. From Allport Boder took the idea of collecting interviews, that is *human documents*, to create topical autobiographies, which could be studied and compared in order to understand a topical event, common to all of them. In this case a traumatic event. The word *trauma* was used by Boder for the first time in his essay *The Impact of Catastrophe*:

«One must remember that the categories as well as the Traumatic Inventory were not a priori structures. They are a result of content analysis of spontaneously presented narratives by a methodology designated by

Bain as Logic-Systematic analysis (Blumer, 5) or what we would call, following Robert Penn Warren, a method of experimental reading» (Boder, 1954).

The traumas could be personal or environmental and the traumatic inventory was divided in eight sections according to the kind of trauma: socio-economical and geographical, cultural, medical, labor, violence, cleanliness and clothing, transports, food. Each theme was then divided in sections linked to any aspect of life and was codified with a number. The analysis of the interviews could allow to identify a prevalent traumatic area. The Boder's definition of trauma, as «abolition of traditions of dignity and decency» (Boder, 1949), diverges from its current meaning which depends not only on the indignity suffered, but also on the difficulty the victim feels in making sense of his or her experience.

In their own language, with their own voices

«The emotional states aroused by the recollection of episodes of such unparalleled stress definitely contribute to the peculiar verbal structure and the discrepancies in time and place found on occasion in the narratives» (Boder, 1949).

Boder believed that the analysis of the language used by the interviewees was crucial both for his psycholinguistic and ethnographic studies. This can be seen in the interviews with the Salonikan Jews: those deported to Auschwitz, who had suffered the worst experiences in terms of deculturation, showed more serious problems in talking about dates, numbers, chronology, distances, especially if they spoke a foreign language. Boder let them free to choose the language they preferred, even though it could limit their expressiveness and cause

«curtailment, straining, and oversimplification of content» (Boder, 1949).

«I kept in mind that most of the displaced persons had spent their time of imprisonment in camps among inmates of divergent tongues and dialects. For years they had been deprived of all reading matter (even prayer books), of religious services, of radios, and often of opportunities to talk with others in their own tongue. It is no wonder that their language habits show evidence of trauma» (Boder, 1949).

The Salonikan Jews who had been deported to Bergen Belsen were in a different condition: they were kept together, in a separate compound, and could speak their language.

In general whatever language they had chosen, the Salonikan Jews, who were often polyglots, mixed different languages during the interviews. This is what Boder called *polyglotism*:

«This polyglotism, or multilinguistics, if we want to call it that way, represents a psychological and ethical/ethnic/ problem at the same time» (Boder, 1949).

Sometimes the contents expressed in their own language were more direct and less mediated, but in general the words related to the Camps were in German, terms of that *Lagersprache* which Boder ignored.

I did not interview the dead: the technique of the interviews

The use of a wire recorder to interview the survivors was an extraordinary novelty in 1946, Boder himself realized that there was a huge «discrepancy between the abundance of visual material and collected on subjects of the war and the meagerness of first-hand auditory material available on the same subject.» (Boder, 1945)

Boder's interviews were original also because they were not biographical but topical: they could help in providing a *total picture* of the events happened during and after the war.

The technique used by Boder, as he said, was initially *non directive*, but later a *semi non-directive technique* was preferred.

«I want to state that since spool about #100 we have replaced the “absolutely” non-directive interview by slightly directive/methods/. That is, we are suggesting that they are talking/should talk/about the high points of their experiences. This is, of course, not exactly the best method because it has shown that if one gives them perfectly free reign, the ... certain experiences come out very freely. It is kind of a mixture/of methods/, and we are experimenting with it» (Boder, 1946).

Actually, even though the interviews with the Salonikan Jews were taken before the spool 100, Boder often intervened, especially when interviewing those affected by the most traumatic experiences.

The interviews, in particular those with the Salonikans, followed a pattern focused on some crucial events, which were more or less treated according to the interviewees' experiences:

- Situation of the interviewee when the Germans occupied the city;
- Information on family, background, nationality, previous experiences;
- Condition of the interviewee during the persecution;
- Deportation;
- Life in the camps;
- Liberation;
- Current situation as displaced persons.

Saying that he did not interview the dead, Boder demonstrated he was aware that the experiences told by the survivors were only a part of a much bigger event, whose meaning could be understood assembling the personal stories in an exemplary global picture.

Translation and transcription

David Boder aimed at providing the survivors with a voice, which the visual documents could not, and let this voice be heard by a large audience. From this point of view the recording of the interviews allowed a direct fruition of the testimonies and eliminated the problem of finding translators for all the languages spoken in the Displaced Persons Camps and shelters.

Nonetheless, when he went back to the US, he realized that a written translation would have been useful to reach a wider audience, since not many people owned a wire recorder or could understand foreign languages. He therefore worked on the translation of the interviews for more than ten years: after eight interviews, in *I Did Not Interview The Dead*, he published several others in the volumes of the series *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced People Recorded Verbatim in Displaced Persons Camps, With a Psychological and Anthropological Analysis*, in the Fifties.

He died before he could finish translating, but the Galvin Library at the Illinois Institute of Technology carried out a project, *Voices of the Holocaust*, focused on the transcription and the translation of the interviews. They can be read or listened in the website www.voices.iit.edu.

Boder's method of translation was peculiar: he listened to the original recording of the interview and recorded the translation, which was later transcribed by his assistants. No transcription of the original recordings was ever made while he was alive. The psychologist translated the recordings literally, keeping the English translation as close as possible to the original recording, even in opposition to the grammar rules. It was crucial to keep those *lacerations of syntax* (Allport, 1942) in order to understand how trauma had influenced the interviewee.

The Final Solution in Salonika

Salonika had hosted for four centuries the largest Sephardi community in Europe, which in the 1940 census numbered 48,965 people (in other sources the figure is higher), and consisted of only about 2,000 in 1945, as it appears in the archival documents of the Joint Distribution Committee.

The percentage of losses was about 95%, similar to that of Poland. What had been called for centuries the Jerusalem of the Balkans had vanished, it became, as the historian Mark Mazower states, a city of ghosts. Since the Nazis aimed at erasing and eliminating the Jewish presence in Europe, then, in Salonika they almost managed to achieve their goal.

When the Germans occupied the city, on April 9 1941, the Jews who were living in Salonika constituted the great majority of the about 75,000 Jews then living in whole Greece. The Salonikan Jews, who had been subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the previous four centuries, didn't consider themselves Greek in the years following the annexation to Greece (1912). Only during the Twenties and Thirties of the XX century they began to be hellenized.

The Jewish Community of Salonika, which dated back to the II century b. C. and was originally composed of Romaniotes, Greek-speaking Jews, was the result of consecutive migration flows also of Ashkenazi Jews from Germany, Hungary, Poland and of Italian Jews. Actually the most significant among these flows was the arrival of about 20,000 Sephardim from Spain and Portugal in the XV and XVI centuries, as a consequence of their expulsion during the Reconquista. They had brought with them their Spanish habits and the Ladino language (Judeo Espanol) which they spoke as their first language, up until the 1920's at least. The use of speaking Ladino played a significant role during the Holocaust because the older people, speaking only Ladino, could not hide among the Greek speaking Orthodox population and it became a sign of the Salonikans' identity and fate inside the camps

In 1912 Salonika was annexed to the Greek reign: the new rulers carried out immediately an Hellenization process that significantly affected the Salonikan Jews' conditions and way of life: the youngest generations learnt Greek while their parents kept on speaking Ladino or spoke Greek with a recognizable accent.

Several Jews held or could claim for foreign citizenship or status as Spanish, Portuguese and Italian protegés as a consequence of previous agreements, some dating back to the XVII century, or laws passed in Spain and Portugal. This situation was crucial during the deportations.

The Germans occupied Salonika on April 9 1941, as a result of their intervention in support of the Italians who had declared war against Greece in October 1940. Greece was divided in three occupation zones: the Italians ruled over Athens, the mainland and the Dodecaneso, the Bulgarians occupied part of Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, the Germans Crete, Salonika and its hinterland. This division of the Greek territories affected deeply the implementation of the Final Solution, since the occupants showed different attitudes towards the Jews.

When the Germans entered the city, the Jews constituted about a quarter of the total population, most of them were lower class people. Even though specific and harsh persecution measures were carried out during the first year of the occupation, the Salonikan Jews were deeply affected by the German occupation policy and the consequent famine they had to endure during the winter 1941/2.

The second phase of the occupation was that of the open persecution. It began on July 11, 1942 when 9,000 Jews were gathered in Plateia Elephtheria to be registered as forced laborers. They were forced to stay under the sun and perform physical exercises all day, while they were being beaten. About 7000 Jews were enlisted as forced laborers and were sent to work on roads and air fields under construction in several areas in Macedonia in the following weeks. Their living conditions were extremely harsh: they lacked of food, shelters, suffered from malaria and other diseases. The death rate was quite high. The Jewish Council had to help their families and provide them with food, clothes and money, as a result the Community elders signed the agreement for the release of the forced laborers, which implied also the destruction of the ancient Cemetery. These workers went back to Salonika in early November 1942.

The implementation of the Final Solution began in February 1943 and was carried out very quickly. The usual measures as elsewhere were applied to the Jews, but, given the peculiar features of the Salonikan Jewry, there were evident specificities which influenced the efficacy and the rapidity of the deportation, the selection of the people to be deported and their destination.

Eichmann sent Dieter Wisliceny and Alois Brunner to Salonika in order to carry out the deportation of the Salonikan Jews on February 6th 1943. They worked together with Max Merten, the head of the city's military administration, who signed the orders. From that day on the Nuremberg Laws were imposed on the city. The Jews were obliged to register themselves and their properties, which were confiscated or looted, to wear the Yellow star, and move to the ghettos established in the city obeying a curfew. On February 25th all the Salonikan Jews, except those

exempted because they had Spanish or Italian citizenship, were concentrated in specific areas of the city,

The main area was the Baron Hirsch neighborhood, in the proximity of the rail station: it was supposed to house 2,000 people but 8,000/ 10,000 Jews were gathered there at the time of the deportation. As soon as a train was loaded with 2,800 average deportees, other Jews were forced into the ghetto/transit camp from the other concentration areas: Regie Vardar, Kalamaria and n.151.

The Baron Hirsch ghetto was sealed off and fenced in early March, the deportations began on March 15 1943. The Salonikan Jews didn't know much of what the Jews were suffering in other occupied countries: the Jewish Council and Rabbi Koretz believed what the Germans told them about a resettlement of their Community in Krakow and obeyed the orders.

One of the peculiarities of the situation of Salonikan Jews lies in the different treatment of residing Jews owing a foreign citizenship. According to German sources, 852 Jews with foreign citizenship lived in Salonika at the time of the first transport, on March 15th 1943.(511 Spanish, 281 Italian, 39 Turkish, others Portuguese, Argentinian...). They were exempted from the anti-Jewish measures and initially avoided the deportation. The Italian consul, Guelfo Zamboni until June 1943, provided documents demonstrating the Italian citizenship of many Jews, so the number of the 'Italian citizens' and of those who were allowed to flee to the Italian occupation zone increased. Yet previously many problems had arisen between the Germans and the Italians about the implementation of the anti-Jewish measures also in the area under the Italian rule.

The Spanish nationals who lived in Salonika were mostly protected from the immediate deportation. According to previous agreement with Franco's government, which allowed the Jews to enter Spain temporarily, 367 of them were deported to Bergen Belsen, established originally as an exchange camp, on August 2 1943, they were later freed and sent to Spain. 78 members of the Jewish Council, among them Rabbi Zvi Koretz, were sent to Bergen Belsen with the same transport.

Unfortunately after September 8, day of the Armistice, the Germans took control of the Italian zone and many Jews, also Italian (750) and Spanish (150) nationals who had escaped from Salonika due to the efforts of the Spanish Consul in Athens, Sebastian Romero Radigales and the collaboration of the Italian authorities, were arrested there. They arrived to Auschwitz on April 10 and June 20. Others were deported on March 25 to Bergen Belsen, from where the former group of Spanish nationals, had been sent to Spain and then to Casablanca on February 1944.

From March 15 to August 1943 19 transports, deporting on average 2,500 Jews each, left Salonika and arrived to Auschwitz usually after about 5/7 days. Only few of them were selected to work: the youngest and the strongest people, a tiny percentage, about 20%. A common problem, both at the arrival and during their imprisonment, concerned the language. The Salonikan Jews were Sephardim who spoke mainly Ladino and/or Greek; Many of them could speak French and Italian but usually they did not speak the most widely spoken languages in the camp, Polish, German, *yiddish*.

Once they entered the camp, their relations with the Askenhazi Jews were problematic:

there was initially a sort of misunderstanding and mistrust for a different form of Hebraism, not even perceived as such. This led to a feeling of alienation which killed several of them but, at the same time, created a strong connection among them, a mutual support born from the will to resist.

According to the testimonies also the difference between the Greek warm weather and the Polish cold climate played a significant role in the survival of the Salonikan Jews.

Language was also an important element on which depended the tasks imposed to the Salonikans. Many of them were transferred to the KL Warsaw Gęsiówka camp in order to remove the debris of the Warsaw Ghetto and to collect all the building materials which were later sent to Germany. Non Polish speaking prisoners, among them many Salonikans, were transported to Warsaw in late August, October and November 1943: they were chosen since they couldn't speak Polish. In Gęsiowka camp not only the Salonikans could see the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto but also experienced the first 'death march' on July 1944: while the Red Army was approaching Warsaw, the greatest part of the prisoners was evacuated to Dachau and its subcamps. At the same time the few who were left in the camp were liberated by the Polish resistance and willingly joined

the partisans during the Warsaw uprising. Some of them died, some others went in hiding and were liberated later by the Red Army. Also those who stayed in the Auschwitz complex endured a peculiar fate: many of them, men and women, in high percentages were employed in Buna Monowitz or in the Auschwitz sub-camps where they are remembered as strong workers or, in the case of young girls, as aware of their destiny and decently resigned victims of the harsh conditions they had to cope with.

This language barrier could also have played a role in the selection of the Sonderkommando members at the eve of the arrival of the Hungarian Jews. Actually many members of the eleventh Sonderkommando were Greek, mostly from Salonika, who had been deported from Athens and arrived to Auschwitz on April 11, 1944. Those who survived the first selection were kept in quarantine and about 200 of them were selected in early May to be part of the Sonderkommando mainly in Crematoria III and IV. Several of them participated to the Sonderkommando revolt on October 7, 1944.

As a matter of fact the time of the arrival of the Salonikans, both in 1943 and in 1944, seems to be one of the main elements to understand their fate inside the camp. This is true for what concerns the Sonderkommandos' selections and proves to be extremely significant also in relation to the high percentage of Salonikans subjected to medical experiments: in particular those on sterilization on women conducted by Dr. Clauberg and on men by Dr. Schumann in Block 10. The first one hundred women who were taken there as Guinea pigs were Salonikans arrived with the ninth transport on April 17, 1943. Many others were added later. It was on April 1st 1943 that Dr. Clauberg set up the Experimental Block in Block 10 in Auschwitz 1, moving there from Birkenau.

Regarding the Salonikans who were deported also to Bergen Belsen: those with Spanish citizenship got there in August 1943 (the first group who left the camp in February 1944) and in April 1944 (a second group). They were treated as exchange Jews: they were kept in the camp and suffered from starvation, diseases like typhus, nonetheless they were not subjected to selections and extermination by gas. They were liberated in April 1945 while they were being sent to Theresienstadt as a result of Himmler's attempts to find an agreement with the Allies.

The others arrived there, as to many other camps and subcamps in Germany, during the evacuation of Auschwitz, when Bergen Belsen had lost its original function and had become the destination for thousands of prisoners during the death marches. People were left dying without housing facilities, food or water, since the camp, which had been originally designed for a few thousands inmates, hosted about 60,000 at that time.

When the Salonikan deportees came back to their hometown they found out that their world had been deeply affected, many others made the decision to never go back.

The interviews

On August 4th, 5th and 12th, 1946, David Boder interviewed in Paris seven Holocaust survivors from Salonika. Like thousands of other survivors they were waiting for visas to begin a new life. These interviews are extremely significant since they represent one of the few documents which provide direct information on the fate of the Salonikan Jews, which was neglected for many decades. The Holocaust of Sephardi Jewry, whose major center was actually Salonika, was not given the proper attention perhaps because of its numerical consistency, its geographical position, and its features, different from the Askenazi majority of North Eastern Europe. From this point of view these interviews indeed reveal much more than other testimonies in terms of historical details, perception of the events and information on the background.

When Alan Rosen writes about the Boder's interviews that

«...they do not they reveal more than other testimony distributed along similar lines of age, experience, and place. Their value lies in what they teach us about the history and nature of Holocaust testimony» (Rosen, 2010).

he refers maybe to the Germans, Hungarians, Polish Jews, whose stories and history have been studied and researched since the end of the war.

Also David Boder, given his natural lack of detailed knowledge on the Shoah and, in general, on the European Jewry, didn't expect to meet Spanish or Greek speakers among the survivors. As a matter of fact, according to the Memorandum he wrote on May 1st, 1945, neither Greek or Spanish had been considered among the languages spoken by the interviewees he thought he was going to talk to.

«It seems impossible that there are enough newspaper correspondents versed in the languages of Russian, Polish, Jewish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mongol, Dutch, Flemish, and even German sufferers in concentration camps that their stories could be recorded for contemporaries as well as posterity with sufficient detail and precision by the usual [“paper and pencil”] method of interview» (David Boder, 1945).

In a later version of the Memorandum he eliminated Mongol and inserted French, Spanish and English were added once the interviews had been finished.

Boder's interest in Salonikan Jews probably depended on the unexpected meeting with them; also Alan Rosen and Donald Niewyk, who wrote about Boder's work, focused specifically on the interviews with Jews from other countries. Although Boder could speak Spanish, only two interviews and a section of that with David Lea were conducted in Spanish (Ladino), three in German, one in English.

The situation of the Salonikans was the same as that of thousands of others refugees: one year after the end of the war they lived in a limbo, in a traumatic present due to their past experiences and the uncertainty about their future. Only three of them, who had been deported to Bergen Belsen because of their Spanish or Portuguese citizenship, had not lost their closest relatives, the others had lost all their families. Manis Mizrachi's parents, even though they had been deported to Bergen Belsen, had died during the evacuation of the Spanish and Portuguese citizens in April 1945.

The feeling of loss is therefore predominant in all the interviews, since the uncertain present prevented the survivors from elaborating their sufferings. None of them went back to Salonika, three hoped to settle in France, the others aimed at moving to the US or to Palestine.

The order of the interviews here is not chronological but topical: the first three interviewees were deported to Auschwitz from Salonika in 1943, the others to Bergen Belsen from Athens in 1944. The experiences endured by the two groups were different both for their citizenship, either Greek or Spanish/Portuguese, and for their destination which influenced also the course of the interviews.

David Lea: We don't feel well inside

David Lea, who was 28 in 1946, was interviewed on August 12 in the main office of the Joint Distribution Committee in Paris. His interview is quite peculiar since it shows some contradictions and misunderstandings. David Lea told his story in a disordered and syntactically confused way. This lack of logical/chronological order is more evident in the section of the interview conducted in German but is present also in that in Spanish.

Following his usual pattern, Boder began the interview asking Mr. Lea about his situation when the war broke out. The interviewee fought against the Italians in Albania, was a prisoner of war for six months, then went back to Salonika. He was later interned with his family in the Baron Hirsch ghetto from where he was deported to Auschwitz with the sixteenth transport from Salonika, on May 9. The greatest majority of the deportees, 1,685 on 2,500, were immediately murdered in the gas chambers, among them all David Lea's family members.

After talking about the selections at his arrival, the interviewee began cahotically telling Boder of the Hungarian transports, dating the events in November 1944 and mixing them with his being in Dachau Kaufering. He also told he had been in Buchenwald for three months and then in Fürth and Dachau, which he claimed was not a camp for Jews and where there was not a crematorium (maybe he meant the sub-camp Landsberg/Kaufering). This statement didn't match with the documents and with what he told later.

David Lea talked much about the Sonderkommando's activities and their revolt on October 7, 1944, and also about the Zigeuner Lager and its liquidation on August 2, 1944. Actually, even though he provided details about that, he was no more in Birkenau at that time. He had been sent to the Warsaw KL Gesiowka on Yom Kippur 1943.

DAVID BODER: [In German] *Mr. Lea sie sagten, . . . was wollten sie sagen von Auschwitz?*

DAVID LEA: *Von Warschau.*

DAVID BODER: *Oh. Sie sagten, sie waren in Warschau. Wieso sind sie nach Warschau gekommen?*

DAVID LEA: *Ich ging nach Warschau von nach Birkenau sechs Septembre.8 Jom Kippur.*

DAVID BODER: *Ja. Wieso sind sie befreit von Birkenau gewesen?*

DAVID LEA: *Von Birkenau Transport von die jüdisch nach Arbeit in Warschaua ... In Lager von Warschau ist großer Transport, Jom Kippur, kommen in, äh, Warschaua, nur griechisch, jüdische Barack. Warum, Unsinn diese Barack griechisch, nicht verstehen Polack, verstehen England. Die Deutsch hat gesagt, welche nicht verstehen Polack, kommen in Warschaua. Hat gesagt, guter [unverständlich], gut [unverständlich]. Unsinn, die jüdische Barack gehen in Warschaua. Warum, die Deutsch Angst. Wenn ich arbeit in Warschaua und ich verstehen Polack, muss weg. Aber nur die jüdische Barack nicht verstehen Polack. Die Deutsch kein Angst bei uns. Nachher Jüdisch Barack kaputt, komm . . . Polack Jüdische. Polack Jüdische, ungarische Jüdische . . . Lithuan Jüdische . . . von Krakau Jüdische, von Ukrainisch Jüdische. 40 Stunden Arbeit die Tage, Deutschlager, nachher die Nacht Appell drei Stunden, Schuhe, keine Schuhe, keine Strümpfe, Schuhe von Holz . . . kein Handschuh, Arbeit einmal Schuhe, einmal Mantel . . . ein Mantel. Wann kommen in die, in die Platz von Arbeit, die Kapos, deutsch, sagen, ausziehe die Mantel. (Unsere/Unsinn) ausziehe die Mantel, hat gemacht ausziehen, was man hat gesagt. Warum, tot schlagen. Draußen kalt jede Tage, mit die Schaufel mit die Pickel, eine Stunde Arbeit, nachher kaputt.¹*

The following section of the interview is more ordered chronologically: after the evacuation from Warsaw, at the end of July 1944, David Lea and the other prisoners were interned in Dachau, Landsberg, where he worked in the *Friedhofkommando*, the commando in charge of burying the dead. The document of his registration in Dachau, dated August 6, 1944, exists in the Bad Arolsen International Service Archives. The interviewee's account of his time in Landsberg is very detailed and the available data, among them the testimonies of the liberators, confirm it.

While he was telling about an episode of cannibalism happened in February 1944, Boder, clearly interested in the event, asked him if he could speak Greek or Spanish. The interviewee preferred talking in Spanish, since he could speak Ladino better than Greek, being a Sephardi Jew.

This means that Mr. Lea had to try to understand Boder's questions and answered them 'translating' his thoughts from his own language into German. The use of a language which was not the interviewee's mother tongue could affect the results Boder had expected, since he considered that the choice of verbs, adjectives and syntax played a significant role in showing the interviewee's personal situation.

¹ DAVID BODER: Oh. You said you were in Warsaw. Why did you come to Warsaw?

DAVID LEA: I went to Warsaw from Birkenau, 6 Septembre.34 Yom Kippur.

DAVID BODER: Yes. Why, were you liberated from Birkenau?

DAVID LEA: From Birkenau transport for the Jewish to work in Warsaw.

DAVID BODER: Oh, the—who took you there?

DAVID LEA: The SS.

In the camp of Warsaw big transport came, Jom Kippur, came to, eh Warsaw, only Greek Jewish barrack. Why—Nonsense, this barrack Greek, does not understand Polack, understands England. The German has said, those who do not understand Polack come to Warsaw. Has said, good [unintelligible], good [unintelligible]. Nonsense, the Jewish barrack go to Warsaw. Why—the Germans afraid. When I work in Warsaw and I understand Polack, must go. But only Jewish barrack not understand Polack. The Germans had no fear with us. After Jewish barrack finished, come . . . Polack Jewish. Polack Jewish, Hungarian Jewish . . . Lithuanian Jewish . . . from Cracow Jewish, from Ukraine Jewish. 40 hours work at day, German camp, after at night call for three hours. Shoes, no shoes, no stockings, shoes of wood . . . no gloves, Work, one time shoe, one time jacket . . . , one jacket. When come to, to place of work, the Capo, German, say, take off the jacket. ("Nonsense" or "Us"; German: "Unsinn" or "uns") take off the jacket, have done so, as he had said. Why—beat to death. Outside cold every day, with the shovel and the pickaxe, one hour work, then finished.

The differences in Mr. Lea's linguistic choices and expressions in the part of the interview in German and that in Spanish/Ladino are meaningful. While in the first part his poor fluency in German prevented him from using a complex syntax and a wide range of words, when he spoke Ladino he was able to express his feelings through more precise adjectives and nouns which have strongest shades of meaning. For instance, when the interviewee talks about the Germans, in German he refers to them as Deutschen, or SS in particular, on the other hand, in Ladino, he calls them *barbaros* and can comment «otras ciudades que estaban ocupadas por las bárbaras armadas enemigas de la Europa.» Which was translated as follows: "other cities which were occupied by the Armed Forces enemies of Europe." The adjective 'barbaras', barbarians/ evil, which is an indicator of Mr. Lea's opinion, is lost in the English translation.

It must be considered that the topic the interviewee was talking about was extremely traumatic and recent and its impact clearly affected his attitude and testimony. He spoke an elementary German, which often prevented him from understanding and replying clearly to the questions.

About the deportation of the Hungarian Jews, which he didn't see as it will be clear later, he stated:

*«La desgracia que hubo al 44 en el campo de Birkenau, más o menos no podía hablar porque no soy bueno en alemán . . . no me explico, mas en seguida lo voy a hablar en español».*²

Mr. Lea was aware of his linguistic difficulties and repeated in Spanish events he had already talked about in German. Even when the interviewee was speaking Ladino, which is quite different from modern Spanish, David Boder could not interpret some words, among them *preto*. This means dark and livid in Ladino: David Lea said that the bodies of the people murdered with lethal injections in Landsberg became *preto*, were all *preto*. As a matter of fact, also the names of the Nazis with whom Mr. Lea had contacts were spelled so that it has been necessary to do research in order to understand who these man were. And David Boder didn't have the necessary information to be able to do this at that time.

About a member of the staff in Landsberg, Mr. Lea said:

Después, en el campo 1 en Landberg, había el grande SS medical. El nombre era Blanca, tenía nombre español, un alto, moreno. Era como yo de grande.

DAVID BODER: *¿Una mujer?*

DAVID LEA: *No. Un hombre. Se llamaba Blanca. Un alto moreno, alrededor de 35 a 34 años. Este no podía ver a los judíos, mesmo a los judíos querían trabajar, que estaban en buena salud, unos cuantos, él ordenaba echarles inyecciones. Este fue matado, este mismo, tenía una criatura y una mujer. Fue . . . se mató*

DAVID BODER: *¿Cómo una criatura?*

DAVID LEA: *Un pequeño.*

DAVID BODER: *Ajá. ¿Un niño?*

DAVID LEA: *Un niño. Un pequeño. Tenía un pequeño y una mujer con él.*

DAVID BODER: *Sí.*

DAVID LEA: *Cuando los americanos se estaban acercando del Lager 1, él ya vio que se estaban acercando, no tenía más para hacer, nada para salvar . . . tomó al pequeño, lo mandó a la [ininteligible], tomó una inyección, mató [ininteligible] a la mujer suya en primero, después [ininteligible] y él. Y un compañero mío que se topa actualmente en París le quitó la hora y el anillo de la mano y . . . cuando vio que 2ya estaba muerto, le quitó el anillo y la hora de la mano.*

DAVID BODER: *¿Cómo se llama la hora? ¿El reloj?*

DAVID LEA: *El reloj. La hora y el anillo. Este camarado se topa actualmente en París y nos vemos cada día y cada noche.*³

² DAVID LEA: The tragedy that occurred in '44, in Birkenau camp, more or less, I could not speak because my German isn't good . . . I don't speak well, but now, I will speak in Spanish.

³ ... Also, in camp 1, in Landsberg, there was the big SS medical. The name was Blanca, a Spanish name . . . tall, dark. As big as myself.

David Boder A woman?

The SS doctor in Landsberg David Lea was talking about, calling him Blanca, was Dr. Max Blancke, who was in charge of Kaufering IV where there was a typhus epidemic at that time. This testimony confirms what was told by other survivors and during the Dachau Trial by one of the defendants: Dr. Blancke, who had previously worked in several camps, being involved in the action 14f13 (Dachau (1940), Buchenwald (1941), Natzweiler-Struthof (1942), Majdanek (1943/44), Plaszow(1944), Kaufering IV From 1944 to April 1945) made the decision to burn the huts where the prisoners had been sealed. In Kaufering IV, while the Americans were approaching, he gave the order to burn the huts where the prisoners lived. When the Americans entered the camp, they found about 400 corpses. He then committed suicide together with his wife on April 27, 1945.

Mr. Lea here mixes his memories with those of another survivor, telling his story as it were his own. To understand his attitude it is necessary to focus on a second significant issue which is related to the efficacy of the interview which can be affected both by the psychological traumatic state of the interviewee and also by the interviewer's knowledge of the interviewee's historical background. The lack of information, as general as it can be, can affect the progress of the interview and its results.

The trauma itself was perceived by Mr. Lea in himself and in other survivors with whom he was in touch in Paris:

DAVID LEA: *porque habíamos perdido la moral, cual la familia, cual las finanzas y cual no tenemos fuerza. Todos los judíos que tornaron de los campos de concentración de Alemania puede ser que estemos buenos de cuerpo, de facha, mas en el interior no estamos buenos. Estamos todos [ininteligible].*

DAVID BODER: *¿Por qué?*

DAVID LEA: *Porque el trabajo era mucho, la poca comida, la leña que nos daban, el frío y mucho. Estamos todos jalados en los pulmones, quien con reumatismo, quien con asma, quien los pulmones y . . . la más parte tienen . . . pierden . . . pierden su moral. Yo estoy hablando, un judío griego, [ininteligible] sephardito. Si me acuerdo más . . . podíamos [ininteligible] hablar más seguido, no me estoy acordando.⁴*

David Boder asked him why; this apparently naive question becomes the means which, in Boder's intentions, let the interviewee provide the American public opinion with further information on the Holocaust. At the same time David Lea talked about his memory, telling that it was not good.

Mr. Lea seemed to be perfectly aware of the problems related to his memory and of the deep relation between that and the physical and emotional trauma he had suffered. David Boder was not a historian, he was interested in the effects of trauma more than in the historical accuracy.. It is very important to underline this situation in order to fully understand both the extremely innovative work of David Boder and the value of the testimonies he was collecting, but, at the same time, the great importance of interpreting them properly.

Even though David Lea admitted he couldn't remember much he had detailed memories of events, but mixed them with the memories commonly shared by other survivors. David Boder perceived, for instance, the contradictions between the account of Mr. Lea's evacuation from

David Lea No. A man. His name was Blanca. A tall, dark man, about 35 or 34 years. He couldn't stand Jews, even those who wanted to work, who were healthy, quite many . . . he gave the order to give them shots. This one was killed, this same one, he had a child and a wife. He was . . . he killed himselfWhen the Americans were approaching Lager I, he saw that they were coming; he didn't have anything to do, nothing to save . . . he took the little boy, sent him to the [uninteligible], then he took a syringe and killed [uninteligible] his wife in the first place, then [uninteligible], and himself. And an acquaintance of mine, who is currently in Paris, took the time and the ring from his hand and . . . When he saw he was already dead, he took the ring and the time from his hand... The watch. The time and the ring. This comrade is now in Paris and we see each other every day and every night."

⁴⁴ "All the Jews who returned from the German concentration camps, we may look good physically, look well, but we are not well inside. We are all [uninteligible] Because work was much, food was scarce, we were beaten to death, and it was very cold. We are all [uninteligible] our lungs, some with rheumatism, some with asthma, some with the lungs . . . and . . . most of all have . . . lose . . . they lose their morale. I am talking, a Greek Jew, [uninteligible] Sephardic. If I remembered more . . . we could [uninteligible] talk more frequently, I am not recalling much."

Gesiowka, which happened in July, and his stating that he was in Birkenau in the same months, when the Hungarians were deported. David Boder, or his assistant, explained the discrepancy:

«There is an inconsistency here in Mr. Lea's testimony. In June and July of 1944, he was working as part of the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz during the deportation of Hungarian Jews. It is more likely that after working in Warsaw in 1943, he was sent back to Auschwitz where he remained until its evacuation on January 18, 1945. It was subsequent to this that he was put on the train he describes and, after a horrific journey, ultimately ended up in Landsberg».

An hypothesis for interpreting the discrepancies in Mr. Lea's testimony contrasts with what David Boder said for several reasons which depend on the documents I could find.

Firstly, there is no evidence of any transport sent back to Auschwitz from Gesiowka camp, neither David Lea's name could be found in any source where the names of the Sonderkommando members were registered or it is known that a selection for Sonderkommando's members took place in that period from transports coming from other camps. Secondly, David Lea himself never told he had been sent back to Auschwitz, on the contrary he said he had worked for 8/9 months in Warsaw and talked about the evacuation from Gesiowka to Dachau in July 1944 and there is evidence of his arrival in Dachau. Nor it was possible that, as a member of the Sonderkommando, he had been sent to the Revier to be treated when the Sonderkommando revolt took place: the Sonderkommando members had their own doctor who took care of them in their barracks or in the Crematoria, he was Miklos Nyiszli at that time. When asked by David Boder his being a member of the Sonderkommando, the interviewee told that he was part of that in Bavaria, that is in Kaufering at first.

DAVID BODER: *Haben sie im Krematorium gearbeitet? [Unterbricht]*

DAVID LEA: *Ja in Bayern. In siebenundzwanzig Tage hat gebrennet sechs, sechzig, hunderttausend jüdisch ungarisch.*

Mr. Lea never talked in detail of a death march to Dachau, on the contrary he was very detailed in talking of the transport from Warsaw to Dachau.

David Boder's perplexity about the discrepancies in this testimony were right but his explanation for them was not correct. It depended of course on the lack of information and of archival sources which were hard to get at that time.

On the other hand the problem implies further reflections. Why Mr. Lea mixed his memories and seemed to talk about two different stories? Mr. Lea's memory seems to be suffering from an accumulation of memories. This means that he accumulated memories of other survivors, with whom he had been and was in touch in the Displaced Persons Camps and then in Paris, mixing up his own personal experiences with other episodes or events, which are undoubtedly true but were part of a collective memory, shared by the former camps' inmates with whom Mr. Lea had contacts on a daily basis. The sharing of memories and the memory of episodes which were lived and told by other survivors may be found in many testimonies, also in other Boder's interviews. About this Primo Levi wrote in *The drowned and the Saved*, that he himself and other survivors had

«ever more blurred and stylized memories, often, unbeknownst to them, influenced by information gained from later readings or the stories of others» (Levi, 1986).

Levi referred to later testimonies, given after many years. This rule seems to apply also to earlier testimonies: the role played by the time in Primo Levi's reflection, here is played by the proximity of the traumatic events the refugees have recently gone through. Collective and shared memories of extremely traumatic events seem to be a way for the survivor to 'elaborate' his own trauma and to feel part of a group in a moment of loss, eradication, uncertainty about the future.

One example of this attitude can be found at the beginning of the interview when Mr. Lea said he had been an prisoner in Buchenwald. There is no evidence in his testimony which can document his

being a prisoner in that camp, while his friend, Henry Suchami, who was living with him at that time and was later interviewed by David Boder, had been a Buchenwald inmate. Mr. Lea never mentioned or gave any other information on his being in Buchenwald, while he talked in depth of the time he spent in Auschwitz and the Dachau subcamps.

From what Mr. Lea said in testimony, the situation of the displaced persons was tragic: they were living a double trauma, being in a condition of precariousness and uncertainty about their future.

One of David Boder's assistants commented the interview:

«It is perfectly understandable that a man who had suffered as much as Mr. Lea would find it difficult to sequence correctly all that had happened to him. The emotional and psychological traumas he had endured affected his memory though the individual incidents that he describes in the interview are vividly recalled and remain firmly etched in his mind».

The trauma was perceived as individual and collective: the current situation didn't let the survivors elaborate their loss and their only hope was to emigrate to Palestine.

DAVID LEA: «There are many deportees here in France, who are still suffering. And we want to go to Palestine, and we see the British barbarism, that if we . . . the young people who came from the camps, if we don't go to Palestine, we would never start working. I, a Lebanese, who am talking to you, wouldn't think to go to work to Palestine ever, I would think of taking the rifle or the machine gun, and claim for freedom. If you don't get freedom through war . . . if I don't get freedom with politics, I get freedom with war. I would never think of going to work. If I die in Palestine, some day my children or my siblings are going to come. Because I have already seen the camp when I was three, I saw the extermination of 6,000 Jews, and would never like this British politics. We, the survivors from the camps, want to go right now fight that dirty rac . . . that dirty British politics and we don't have the possibility because of where we are. Because there are currently in France many Jews, young people, that are migrating illegally».

Henry Sochami : I am alone in the world

Henry Sochami was interviewed by Boder in the Joint Distribution Committee's Office in Paris, on August 12, immediately after his friend David Lea. He had been registered in Auschwitz with number 109752, which indicates he was deported with the first transport from Salonika, on March 15, 1943. His testimony is extremely significant both for the experiences he underwent and because it shows the difficulties the first interviewers had in interpreting early accounts. The interviewer and the interviewee communicated in Spanish/Ladino. At the beginning of the interview Boder says: «He will speak Spanish, he can speak German but it's rather . . . slow, and we prefer to use the language he can speak most fluently.»

To be able to speak in his own language allowed the interviewee to reaffirm his identity in a multilingual environment, and to be able to use a wider vocabulary which makes quite evident the impact and the outcomes of deculturation. Mr. Sochami used Greek words in relation to his experience in the Greek Army during the Italo-Greek war, and French expressions when he told about his most dramatic experiences of loss and pain: the murder of his relatives, who had disappeared the day after their arrival, *le lendemain*, the compulsory physical activities during the quarantine, *gymnastique*, the *crematoire*.

After fighting in Albania, Henry Sochami went back to Salonika where his wife and three children were. On July 11, 1942, the *Black Sabbath*, the Germans gathered all Jewish men between 17 and 45 years in *Plateia Elephtheria*, Liberty Square, in order to register them as forced laborers. Henry Sochami was one of the 9,000 men who, during that hot summer day, were kept under the sun, mistreated, forced to do gymnastics being severely threatened and beaten by the Nazis. He was later sent to work outside Salonika in extremely harsh conditions. The situation was so hard that the Jewish community payed a ransom, comprised the area of the ancient Jewish cemetery, to the Germans to free these men in autumn 1942. When the Baron Hirsh neighborhood was sealed as a

ghetto, in late February 1943, Henry Sochami and his family were among the first Jews to be sent there and deported:

*«Nos cerraron en gueto, estuvimos ocho días en el gueto...Después de los ocho días . . . nos embarcaron tres mil quinientas personas . . . : Hombres y mujeres y criaturas. A los trenes cerrados».*⁵

The transport arrived at the camp on March 21, only 609 deportees were selected to work, the others, 2,191, were killed in the gas chambers. Henry Sochami told Boder:

«Las criaturas y mujeres y los viejos los subieron en unos camiones, y los llevaron a . . . Birkenau....: Ahí . . . los pasaron a la chambre à gaz, directamente, sin . . . quasi dificultad, a la mañana lendemain no existía ningunos.

DAVID BODER: *¿Y esto pasó a su familia?*

HENRY SOCHAMI: *Sí, yo, a mi familia también, si a mis criaturas, tres, criaturas y mi mujer.*

DAVID BODER: *Sí.*

HENRY SOCHAMI: *Después . . . a nosotros nos llevaron en Auschwitz, en Auschwitz nos empecharon noche entera, al baño».*⁶

After the quarantine Henry Sochami was sent to work in Birkenau which was being enlarged, since many new prisoners were arriving daily at that time. He worked in what, from the transcription of the interview, sounded like “Folgas” commando and was transcribed as it sounded. David Boder couldn't get the meaning of this word, which was not even transcribed in the translation. As a matter of fact, listening to the audio recording, it is possible to understand that Henry Sochami referred to the Vollgass Kommando, which was in charge of the sewage system in Birkenau. Also Otto Frank worked there. The same kind of misunderstanding happened again when the interviewer talked about his evacuation from Auschwitz-Birkenau and his deportation to Breslau Lissa: Boder, who didn't have the exact knowledge of the logistics, the names, the activities in the camps, couldn't understand the name of the camp, which is unintelligible in the transcription.

HENRY SOCHAMI: *Un mes antes que vinieran los rusos nos evacuaron el campo, me llevaron a Wrislaolita/bieslaolit. De Wrislaolita/Bieslaolit eran sólo cuarenta judios, el resto era todos cristianos.*⁷

Breslau Lissa was the first sub-camp of Gross Rosen, it was established in 1942 and in 1944 hosted the FAMO plant. Henry Sochami didn't tell much about his time in Auschwitz and in Breslau Lissa, but about the latter he said that the Christians were extremely aggressive towards the Jews and that in February 1945 he was evacuated to Buchenwald.

«Los cristianos nos batían enteramente, a los judios porque, no nos podían . . . hueler. Nos apartaban, nos batían, mismo nos llevaban el pan que tomabamos para comer. De ahí, antes que los rusos vinieran nos

⁵ «We were sealed in the ghetto, we stayed there for eight days... After eight days they loaded us, 3,500 people, men, women, children, in locked trains.»

⁶ « Children, women and old people were placed in trucks and sent to Birkenau.

DAVID BODER: To Birkenau?

HENRY SOCHAMI: Yes, Birkenau. Once there, they were sent to the gas chamber, directly . . . almost with no difficulties. The following morning, none of them were alive.

DAVID BODER: Did this happen to your family?

HENRY SOCHAMI: Yes. To all my family: three children and my wife.

DAVID BODER: Oh.

HENRY SOCHAMI: We were then sent to Auschwitz. Once in Auschwitz, we were left in the bathrooms all night long.»

⁷ HENRY SOCHAMI: A month before the Russians' arrival, the camp was evacuated and we were sent to a camp in [unintelligible name]. In [unintelligible name], there were only forty Jews, and the rest of the prisoners were Christian.

*llevaron empujando, nos metieron en unos vagones encerrados tres días y tres noches sin comer y sin beber nada».*⁸

Once again the transcription of the interview shows a misunderstanding: the word 'Buchenwald', recognizable in the audio recording, was interpreted as 'empujando'. Henry Sochami was one of the 7,800 Jewish prisoners who were sent from Gross Rosen to Buchenwald between 10 February and 5 March 1945. Hundreds of them died in the open freight cars, those who reached Buchenwald alive were exhausted, starving, seriously ill (<http://buchenwald.de/en/463/#.dpuf>).

He was housed in a Block where prisoners from many countries were kept; those who were fit for work were sent to camps in all Germany. He managed to hide but eventually was sent to what he called *campo chico*, in an overcrowded barrack. David Boder could not understand the meaning of those words but the interviewee meant the *Kleine Lager*, the *Little camp*, inside Buchenwald. It had been set up originally as a quarantine area and a transit camp in the northern zone of the Lager in 1942. Prisoners from there were sent on to sub-camps after some weeks. At the time when Henry Sochami arrived there, it was overcrowded due to the mass transports from the camps in the East. It was composed by 22 wooden windowless stables of the Wehrmacht, originally planned to house 50 horses. Each barrack was 40 m long and 10m wide, there were no sanitary facilities nor beds. The prisoners, approximately between 1,000 and 2,000, slept in each barrack in shelflike boxes. This is confirmed by Mr. Sochami's testimony who stayed there for three months.

*«De ahí, me tomaron me llevaron en un campo chico. Del campo chico, estuve en una barraca nos echábamos, mismo, mille doscientas a mille trescientas personas. Siete a ocho de ellas en un metro de lugar. Nos daban de comer a las diez de la mañana, un litro de agua, un pedacito de pan. Tres meses después los americanos se acercaban y en cada tarde a las tres nos llamaban todos los judíos que nos metiéramos para partir. Los cristianos dejaban a los judíos tomaba, yo escondía en todos los lugares mismo de dentro de los cristianos sin que me conocieran que yo era judío».*⁹

When the Americans were approaching the camp, on April 6, the camp commandant issued an order of evacuation. From the following day, about 28,000 prisoners were evacuated, the guards gathered all the Jews and later killed them on the road. The interviewee, whose Jewish identity was not known by the other inmates because the Jews were not recognizable as in Auschwitz, managed to hide in an underground bunker with some Russians and went out on April 11, when the Americans liberated the camp.

*«Cuando ví de todos que se besaban y se abrazaban afuera, metí me cabeza y ví de que todos están bailando que habían los americanos venir, y yo entonces salí, pesaba 38 kilos, de la hambrera, de todo lo que tenía me estaba cayendo, malheureusement mismo me caía el vaso, me metía a cantar y a bailar».*¹⁰

He was extremely weak and ill so he stayed in Buchenwald, which the Americans had transformed in a camp for refugees, and left on June 1945 with 53 Greeks on his way to Paris. He

⁸ «Christians battered us because they could not stand the mere sight of us. They would walk away from us, they would beat us, and they would even take our bread which was our only food. From there, before the Russians came, we were taken to Buchenwald. We were forced in cattle railcars and we were locked there for three days and three nights, with no food and nothing to drink. Nothing.»

⁹ From there, I was taken to a small camp. In that small camp, I was in a barrack hut with 1,200-1,300 people. There were 7 or 8 people per square meter. At ten in the morning, we were given a liter of water and a piece of bread. Three months later, Americans were approaching and every afternoon Jews were gathered to be taken away. Christians were not taken away, but Jews were. I would hide anywhere, and I even lived among Christians and they did not know I was a Jew.

¹⁰ Then I saw they were all kissing and embracing each other outside. I looked and I saw everybody was dancing because the Americans were coming, so I went out. I weighed only 38 kg because of the famine, and though I was falling down, I started singing and dancing.

was allowed to stay in France because he had been a soldier in the Legion étrangère, and was working for the Joint Distribution Committee, as a storekeeper. He didn't want to go back to Greece since he had lost 27 members of his family. He was alone in the world.

According to Boder's Traumatic Inventory, it is possible to evaluate the impact of the tragic experiences Henry Sochamy had faced analyzing the way he talked about them. He had undergone all the traumatic themes present in the Inventory: geographical (Brutal and abrupt removal of a person from most environmental stimuli which have formed the conditioning framework of his everyday life), cultural-affective (Death of relatives or ignorance of their fate, creation of prolonged (protracted) states of terror), medical, labor (slave labor), direct bodily violence, appearance/cleanliness/dress (Failure to provide facilities for keeping clean, lack of soap and water), transportation (Traveling for days in overcrowded boxcars without facilities or room to sit down, wash, or lie down; Impossibility of removing the dead from the crowded boxcars

for days en route), food (Compulsory change of nutritional habits both in kind of allotted food and in extreme reduction of its nutritional value and bulk. Creation of prolonged states of semi-starvation and thirst).

Rita Benmayer: I am left alone

Rita Benmayer was twenty years old when she was interviewed by David Boder in the Jewish Committee home for adult Jewish refugees in Rue Guy Patin 9 in Paris, on 5 August 1946.

She had been deported to Auschwitz with the first transport, like Henry Sochami, and was among the few women who survived the first selection. She was registered with number 38758.

The interview was conducted in German, which caused some hesitation and misunderstandings from both the interviewer and the interviewee, who sometimes also used Italian, Spanish or French words to communicate.

Miss Benmayer had lost all her family, except for one brother who survived the Camps and moved to Palestine. The trauma caused by the loss of her parents and siblings is extremely strong and clearly perceivable in the young woman, who talked often of her feelings of loneliness and bewilderment. The interview is particularly interesting since it provides also the perspective of a young girl, who found herself deprived of privacy, of her female appearance. This is evident in the attention she paid in describing the details of the train trip, the conditions of overcrowding and lack of sanitary facilities inside the freight cars, the cutting of her hair and the man's clothes she was given in the camp after the registration.

When the interviewee told about the trip, she said that it lasted eight days, actually the transport left on March 15 and arrived at Auschwitz in the night between 20 and 21 March. The tendency to reduce or to expand time in remembering traumatic experiences is frequent in the survivors' testimonies: it depends on the individual's emotional perception of events. The arrival at the camp coincided with the moment when every familiar bond was broken. Following his usual pattern, Boder asked the interviewee information about the life in the camp.

RITA BENMAYOR: *Warum, wir habt die Nummer ausgenommen, aber wir war mager, ganze Monat, wie— alle Monate hat Selektion gehabt.*

DAVID BODER: Ja.

RITA BENMAYOR: *. . . wer ist mager, wer schlecht ausgab, ganz in Krematorium, der hat . . .*

DAVID BODER: *. . . das war in Auschwitz?*

RITA BENMAYOR: Ja.

DAVID BODER: *Ja, und, eh, wie so haben Sie sich gesund erhalten?*

RITA BENMAYOR: *Nun ich hab alle Schmutz gegessen, wir habt geklaut eine mit andere die Brot, wir habt das gemacht.*

DAVID BODER: *Was heißt, wir haben Schmutz ge-, Schmutz gegessen?*

RITA BENMAYOR: *Die Schmutz von die Kartoffel . . .*

DAVID BODER: *Die Schmutz von die Kartoffel haben Sie gegessen?*

RITA BENMAYOR: . . . *die Kartoffel—ich hat gegessen.*
DAVID BODER: . . . *und das hat Sie erhalten ein bisschen stärker?*
RITA BENMAYOR: *Ja.*¹¹

The interviewee's answers pointed out the constant feeling of precariousness for the selections and the prisoners' need to adapt themselves to the camp rules in order to survive: Rita admitted she had to steal food and ate the potatoes' skin.

Even though during the first three months she was assigned to the hardest work in the camp, on the road and moving stones, she managed to survive because she was later selected to repair shoes in the Schuhkommando. She worked there for about one year and being indoor saved her life.

RITA BENMAYOR: *Ich war eine Jahre im Schuhkommando.*¹²

She was later sent to Ravensbrück:

RITA BENMAYOR: *Und dann, wann wir—wann die Russe gekommen Auschwitz, wir habt transportiert nach andere Lager . . . in andere Lager, wir war in Ravensbrück.*¹³

Perhaps she was sent to Ravensbrück, earlier than in January 1945, with one of the transports which began in July 1944, when the Russians were approaching Lublin and Warsaw. This would confirm the chronology of her stay in Auschwitz and would explain also the reason why she didn't mention the presence of snow and cold weather during the transport, which is a regular issue in the testimonies about later death marches. She also remembered that, once she arrived at Ravensbrück, she worked on the road:

«*Wir habt dort, eh, wieder die Straße lang gearbeitet.*»

It is interesting to note that Boder seems to ignore everything about Ravensbrück, which he calls *Ravensblick*. He ignored also that Miss Benmayer had arrived in Ravensbrück when massive transports of thousands of Jewish women were sent from Auschwitz to Germany to work. Many of them stayed only a few weeks or months in the main camp and were later sent to sub-camps as forced laborers. This was also Rita Benmayer's fate, since after being in Ravensbrück for four months, she was sent to Retzow,¹⁴ probably in November 1944, together with many other prisoners,

¹¹ RITA BENMAYOR: Why, we got the number, but we were gaunt, all month, like—every month there was a selection.

DAVID BODER: Yes.

RITA BENMAYOR: . . . who was gaunt, who was in bad condition, all went to the crematorium, that had . . .

DAVID BODER: . . . that was in Auschwitz?

RITA BENMAYOR: Yes.

DAVID BODER: Yes, and, eh, why did you keep yourself healthy?

RITA BENMAYOR: Well, I ate all dirt, we stole each other the bread, we did that.⁹

DAVID BODER: What does that mean we have eaten dirt, we ate dirt?

RITA BENMAYOR: The dirt of the potato [means the peel] . . .

DAVID BODER: The dirt from the potato you ate?

RITA BENMAYOR: . . . the potato—I ate.

DAVID BODER: . . . and that kept you a little stronger?

RITA BENMAYOR: Yes.

DAVID BODER: And, eh, you say, further you say you took the bread away from each other?

RITA BENMAYOR: Yes, eh . . .

DAVID BODER: Keep on talking [please] . . . Yes.

RITA BENMAYOR: Yes.

¹² I was in the shoes commando for one year.

¹³ And then, when we, when the Russians came [to] Auschwitz, we were transported to another camp to another camp, we were in Ravensbrück.

¹⁴ Retzow was originally established as a camp for soldiers from the Luftwaffe. In 1944 the Allies bombed the air base in Reichlin, in the vicinity of the camp. The damages were so huge that Retzow became a sub-camp of

to clean out the area, which had been bombed. Rita Benmayor provided one of the very few accounts on the harsh conditions in Retzow where the prisoners died from starvation, were forced to work outdoor and were severely beaten by the SS. Since

Boder had understood also from the previous interviews that a peculiar language was spoken inside the camps and aimed at informing the American public opinion about that, he asked information about the meaning of the word *Muselman*, which he had already heard and was part of the language of the camps.

After three months, Rita Benmayor was transferred in Mecleburg to Malchow, the first sub-camp of Ravensbrück, established in winter 1943. This camp became the destination of the last evacuation from Ravensbrück, also some guards and the camp commandant, Fritz Suhren, joined it, on 27 And 28 April.

Most likely Rita left at that time since she said that she stayed in Malchow only a couple of days before being liberated by the Red Army on 30 April 1945. This testimony is particularly significant since there are very few accounts about what happened in the sub-camps during the liberation. The interviewee remembered that the SS and the residents of the village had escaped for the arrival of the Red Army. The prisoners were left alone for two days and went around in small groups searching for food and clothes. Telling about the liberation the interviewee didn't mention her feelings but talked about the Russian soldiers who took her and her mates to *the other camp*, perhaps Ravensbrück, where they were given food and soap. Unlike other witnesses, Rita Benmayor did not mention the rapes which took place in that situation, she said: «Die war gut», they were good. Nonetheless, together with 25 former inmates, she went on foot to the American zone, where they arrived after three weeks.

The situation of Rita Benmayor after the liberation was similar to that of many other survivors: she had lost all her relatives, except for her brother, so she had no reason to go back to Greece. She could speak French, as many other Salonikans did, so she stayed in France. At the time of the interview, Rita had been living in France from one year, and was waiting to emigrate to the USA, where she had managed to contact her uncle with the help of an american soldier. The immigration quotas to the USA for people coming from Eastern or Southern Europe had been limited in 1924 on behalf of immigrants from North-western Europe. Despite of the current emergency, this measure was still effective in 1946. The interviewee was sharing a room with another Salonikan woman, Eva Botton, whom Boder interviewed as well.

Only at the end of the interview, which was conducted in German, Boder asked Rita if she could speak Spanish. Although he knew that Salonikan Jews could speak Spanish since he had already interviewed some of them, Boder usually conducted his interviewes in the language chosen by the interviewee even though the choice of a foreign language could alterate analysis of the accounts. Very often though, for the interviewees to speak in a different language was the effect of the deculturation and represented also a way to keep their distance from the traumatic experiences they had endured both individually and collectively. In this, and other cases, German was probably chosen as it was the language of the camps, and could be the only language able to represent that world.

Nino Barzilai: Nobody did anything for us

Nino Barzilai was born in Salonika in 1892 but, like some Salonikan Jews, had Portuguese citizenship. On August 4, 1946, he was interviewed by David Boder in the house for refugees in Rue Patin, where he was staying with his wife and his son. The interview was conducted in Spanish, the interviewee had lived there for 20 years, until the Civil War broke out in 1936. The Barzilai family then moved back to Greece from where they couldn't get back to Spain for the attack of the Italians.

Ravensbrück, where approximately 2,000 women were transferred to remove the ruins and clean the area. They were also forced to dig trenches in order to strengthen the defence of the airbase. Those who could not work anymore were sent back to Ravensbrück To be killed. Retzow was liberated on May, 2 1945, by the Red Army.

When the Germans occupied Salonika, the Barzilai moved to Athens where they ran a store and which was controlled by the Italians at that time.

After September 8, 1943, when the Italians signed the armistice with the Allies, the Germans took over Athens and on October 3 ordered all the Greek Jews to register themselves, on October 18 the decree became compulsory also for the Jews with a foreign citizenship.

David Boder asked Mr. Barzilai to explain why a Greek Jew from Salonika had a Portuguese citizenship. It had been granted by Portugal in 1913 to the Jews who could demonstrate their Portuguese origin and it was renewed every other year.

When Mr. Barzilai reported to the Germans, he was arrested because he was considered Elias Barzilai's son, the chief Rabbi of Athens, who was a distant relative of his and had the same name of his father. Rabbi Barzilai, at the end of September, had refused to hand over the lists of Jews residing in Athens to Dieter Wisliceny, than had escaped. Many Jews, following the example of the Rabbi, hid themselves or escaped. Mr. Barzilai, trusting the protection deriving from his citizenship, did not, so he was taken to the Haidari Camp, where he stayed for more than five months. Haidari, originally a military base, had become a prison and a transit camp in September 1943. The living conditions were extremely harsh and the prisoners were exploited as forced laborers, often for useless tasks.

DAVID BODER: *¿Qué clase de trabajo hacían allá en el campo de concentración?*

NINO BARZILAI: *Nos daban a transportar piedras todo el día, y arena, de un sitio a otro, un trabajo bastante duro donde nos castigaban mucho y nos pegaban.*

DAVID BODER: *¿Y qué hacían con la arena?*

NINO BARZILAI: *Era un trabajo que ellos habían hecho inventar para poder trabajar, para poder cansarnos, porque transportábamos las piedras de un sitio a otro y al otro día nos hacían volver las mismas piedras al mismo sitio. No había ni trabajos de fortificación ni trabajos de nada, solamente este transporte que nos hacían trabajar todos los días [ininteligible].¹⁵*

After March 25, 1944, Mr. Barzilai told that many Jews arrived at the camp, about 2,000,¹⁶ and that after eight days they were deported, some to Auschwitz, some, among them the Barzilai, to Bergen Belsen.¹⁷

NINO BARZILAI: *Y déjeme decirle en todo caso, que nosotros con el convoi que se formó para marchar en Polonia, sacaron a los súbditos extranjeros y nos han puesto en un convoi separado. Quiere decir los súbditos argentinos quedaron en el mismo campo de Haidari, los súbditos españoles y portugueses nos han puesto en un tren separado, diciendo que íbamos a marchar para España y Portugal en un intervalo de 12 días. Después de viajar 8 días con el treno hasta llegar en Alemania, vinimos al campo de Bergen-*

¹⁵ DAVID BODER: What kind of labor did you do at the concentration camp?

NINO BARZILAI: We had to move stones and sand during the whole day, from one place to another. It was hard and we were hit and punished a lot.

DAVID BODER: What did you do with the sand?

NINO BARZILAI: They "invented" this labor for us to work, to make us feel tired, because we transported stones from one place to another, and the following day, we would move the same stones back to their original place. We were not working on the fortification nor doing any other tasks, we just carried stones and they made us work every day [unintelligible].

¹⁶ They had been deceived by the Germans who had told they would have been given matzoth for Pesach on March 23 and 24, instead they were closed inside the Synagogue and taken to Haidari.

¹⁷ <http://db.yadvashem.org>: Upon arrival in Vienna, 5-6 cars were detached from the train, and driven north to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. These cars carried 155 Spanish Jews and 19 Portuguese Jewish nationals who had been living in Greece. They were detained in Bergen-Belsen in barracks designated for the neutral detainees until the liberation. Flora Benveniste was in this group of cars and testified: "We travelled for two-three weeks, 60 people one on top of the other [...] with only some bread and fruit inside". These deportees arrived in Bergen-Belsen on April 14.

*Belsen y allá nos detuvieron hasta 14 meses. ... Y de allá . . . cuando los ingleses, que estaban cerca de Berlín, vea Ud., nos han puesto en un treno y nos han dirigido a Börgermoor. Allá quedamos con el treno una noche.*¹⁸

Actually the Barzilai spent twelve months in Bergen Belsen: as it often happened in the survivors' testimonies, the perception of time was deeply influenced by their traumatic experiences.

When Mr. Barzilai talks about his evacuation from Bergen Belsen, the transcription of the interview shows a misunderstanding by David Boder and the transcriber about the place where the train stopped: in the audio recording the name Magdeburg can be heard, not Borgemoor.¹⁹ As a matter of fact, the train actually was stopped near Farsleben, in the vicinity of Magdeburg.

The train, loaded with prisoners with Spanish and Portuguese citizenship, left Bergen Belsen on April 10, its destination was Theresienstadt, where Himmler had planned to gather the exchange Jews hoping to find an agreement with the Allies. It was bombed and damaged while travelling, the Americans accidentally run into it on April 13. Nino Barzilai's account is extremely informative on this event:

«Allá estuvimos como le he dicho 14 meses. Cuando nos han puesto en el treno para marchar, que nos han dicho que íbamos a España, vinimos hasta Börgermoor. Allá hubo un par de bombardeos de la parte de los americanos, duró bastante fuerte toda la noche, por la mañana despertamos, vimos que los alemanes habían abandonado el treno; y quedamos solos allá en un campo . . . abandonados completamente. Marchamos unos cuantos para salir cerca . . . de unas casas alemanas para ver lo que se pasaba. Entonces fuimos a buscar un poco de comida porque nosotros no cocinábamos nada, lo poco que nos dieron para el viaje se había acabado. Y encontramos unas cuantas patatas que nos han dado desde allá, hemos vuelto al treno e hicimos bouillir esas patatas para poder comer alguna cosa. Mientras tanto, voces corrieron que los americanos habían llegado. Y poco tiempo después, fue con tanto júbilo y tanta alegría que recibimos a los americanos que vinieron a [ininteligible]. Su primera preocupación fue darnos algo caliente de comer, nos han traído una sopa que nos han servido en el treno mismo y, después de un día, nos han dicho que nos iban a trasladar. Nos avisaron que nos debíamos de reunir todos en la plaza del pueblo para poder marchar todos juntos en unas casas que nos habían preparado para estar, hasta que marcháramos todos.. ». [Ininteligible].²⁰

The names of Nino Barzilai, his wife and son can be found in the list of the prisoners liberated in Farsleben on April 13, written by the Americans.

After the liberation the Barzilai family went to France where they wanted to settle.

At the end of the interview Mr. Barzilai read an extremely interesting document to David Boder: a list of the Greek towns and villages and the number of deported, dead and survivors.

¹⁸ NINO BARZILAI: Allow me to tell you that in the convoy that was sent to Poland all foreign subjects were included and we were sent in a separate convoy. This means the Argentine subjects stayed in the Haidari camp while the Spanish and Portuguese subjects were placed on a separate train, telling us we would be sent to Spain and Portugal in a period of 12 days. After having traveled for 8 days by train, we arrived in Germany, we were taken to Bergen-Belsen camp where we were held for 14 months. ... And from there . . . when the English were near Berlin, we were taken on another train to *Börgermoor*. We stayed there, on a train, for one night.

¹⁹ Borgemoor was the first among the EmslandLager. It was established in 1933 and functioned as a penal camp for soldiers and partisans from several European countries.

²⁰ As I told you, we were there for 14 months and we were placed on a train and we were told we were to be taken to Spain, but we came to *Börgermoor*. There, there were a number of bombings by Americans, that lasted for a whole night. In the morning, when we woke up, we noticed the Germans had left the train and we had been left on our own in the camp . . . completely abandoned. A number of us marched to some nearby German houses to see what was going on. We were looking for some food, because we did not cook, and we had eaten all the food we had been given for the journey. We found some potatoes and we came back to the train where we boiled them to eat something. Meanwhile, there was a rumor that the Americans had arrived. And some time later, we happily received the Americans who had come to [uninteligible]. Their first concern was to give us something hot to eat, and we were served a soup right there on the train. After a day, we were told we were going to be transported to another place. We were told to gather in the park of the town to march together to some houses they had prepared for us to stay in. So we all marched . . . [uninteligible]

The interview with Nino Barzilai is informative and clear since the interviewee provided a very accurate and detailed account, quite different from those told by the Auschwitz survivors who had experienced more traumatic events and were transferred to two or three Camps. The living conditions in Bergen Belsen were harsh but not as much as those in Auschwitz. Mr. Barzilai stated that, being foreign citizens, they were not forced to work and relatives could meet even though there were separated barracks for men and women.

The experience of the deportation to Bergen Belsen, where the living conditions gradually worsened and became unbearable from December 1944, was for the foreign Jews shorter and less traumatic: many survived, Nino Barzilai's family among them. This may be the reason why the syntax and the vocabulary in the interviewee's replies are clear and he follows a logical order.

Jacob Button: I am sorry to speak in German

Jacob Button was interviewed on August 5, 1946, in the house for refugees in Rue Guy Patin, where he was living with his wife and two children. Before beginning the interview, Mr. Button apologized for not being able to follow a chronological order. The interview was conducted in German:

*«Ich nenne mich Jacob Button, bin in Saloniki—, Salonika geboren, und bin heute 41 Jahre alt. Es tut mir leid, dass ich auf deutscher Sprache spreche—und möchte mich besser französisch oder griechisch oder hebräisch ausdrücken . . . aus Notwendigkeit macht es auf Deutsch».*²¹

David Boder didn't explain why they kept talking in German and not in French, Greek or Hebrew as the interviewee, who had a strong aversion for the Germans, had suggested.

*«Zum Anfang des Krieges war ich in Saloniki, und hatte ein Geschäft. Und von [pharmazeutische?] Produkte—und wollte niemals—ob ich Deutsch sprachen, Deutsch kenne, niemals mit Deutschen zu tun haben. Und dass ich mich von den Deutschen fern [gestepp?]. Ich wurde als Spanier zu den letzten Juden in Saloniki festgehalten».*²²

Jacob Button, being a Spanish citizen, was among the last Jews left in Salonika after the massive deportations of spring 1943. The members of the Jewish council and the Spanish citizens had been actually deported with the penultimate transport to Bergen Belsen, on August 2, 1943.

When the Germans gathered those people to communicate their impending deportation, Jacob Button, who had witnessed the former deportations from Baron Hirsch and was aware of their outcomes, made the decision to escape to Athens, which was still under the Italian rule at that time:

*«Ich möchte, ich möchte nach, eh, Piräus fahren, wo in einem Teil von Griechenland, wo die italienischen, unter italienischen Herrschaft war . . . Und dort kei —, noch keine Maßnahmen ge —, Maßnahmen gegen die Juden getroffen wurden».*²³

To escape was not an easy task though. The Buttons' experience is quite paradigmatic from this point of view: the first time they attempted, they were betrayed and robbed by the captain of a ship who had promised to take them to Athens. They had to go back to Salonika and left again by train, during the trip Jacob Button was recognized and arrested, his family reached Athens.

²¹ JACOB BUTTON: I call myself Jacob Button, was born in Saloniki—, Salonika, and I am 41 years old today. I am sorry to speak in German—I would rather express myself in French or Greek or Hebrew—but out of necessity I will do it in German.

²² At the beginning of the war I was in Saloniki, and had a business of pharmaceutical [?] products. And [I] never wanted to speak German, know Germans, never wanted to have to do [anything] with Germans. And wanted to stay away from the Germans. As a Spaniard, I was held as [one of] the last Jews of Saloniki.

²³ I want[ed], I want[ed] to go to Piraeus, where in a part of Greece, where the Italian, that was under Italian rule . . .

«Ich wurde verhaftet und man hat mich von diesem, und äh, Ge—, mi—, mit, äh, mit großer Strenge behandelt, wir waren acht Tagen in einem Gefängnis einem Pro—, an einem Stadt von der Provinz Mazedonien, der, und nachher, nachher wurden wir von der deutschen Geheimpolizei in Saloniki gegangen, und dort wurden wir in einem Gefängnis ge—, weiter geleitet, wo wir vier Monaten geblieben sind».²⁴

After four months Mr. Button was released with the help of the Spanish Embassy and managed to reach Athens. Even though he didn't mention any date, the chronology of the events can be understood. He was probably arrested in August 1943, so his arrival in Athens may have happened in December or January. He stated, in fact, that he was in Athens when the Jews were ordered to report weekly at the Synagogue.

He was then arrested with his family on March 24 and sent to Haidari where the Spanish citizens were visited by the Spanish Consul and were told they would be sent to Spain. The agreement between Franco and the Germans was not very clear: Spain would have accepted only a small number of refugees with Spanish citizenship and only in transit. Other refugees would have been allowed to enter Spain only once the others had left. At that time the 367 Salonikan Jews with Spanish citizenship who had been deported in August to Bergen Belsen were in Spain, after being liberated in February. Most likely the Spanish consul hoped that the Germans would let this group do the same.

The Button family left on April 2, with the same transport of the Barzilai family and of Manis Mizrachi.

Unlike the other interviewees, Jacob Button talked about the trip by train, providing details on the stops which now can be verified with the available datas. He stated that the trip lasted one week and that on the second day the deportees were allowed to clean the wagon, maybe in Northern Greece or Serbia. About the following days he told:

«Und wir fahrten nach... durch, äh, Serbien, Österreich nach Deutschland... und Ungarn, und Ungarn, fuhr — fahrten wir nach Deutschland. In Ungarn habe ich, äh, hatten wir gesehen, bei, im April 44, die ersten Ungarn, die den Stern . . . Und haben die Möglichkeit gehabt, mit ein zu sprechen und man hat uns gesagt, dass uns in den letzten Tagen—wie wie, was für Gesetze und die Maßnahmen gegen den Juden in, äh...».²⁵

Mr. Button was very accurate in his account: the train travelled through the countries he mentioned and stopped at the Central station in Budapest, where the deportees could see the first stars worn by Hungarian Jews, which had become compulsory on April 5, 1944. He also remembered that the train was divided in two different convoys in Wien: one went to Auschwitz, the other to Bergen Belsen.

Like other witnesses, Jacob Button said that the deportees had to walk from the station, in Celle, to the camp. When they arrived

«Es dann wieder, wir sind in dem Lager eingetroffen und wir fanden dort auch einige griechische Juden aus Saloniki. Man sagte uns, dass es in einem sehr strengen Lager angekommen sind, und, äh, sagte uns auch, dass es früher auch andere Juden aus Saloniki von spanischer Staatsangehörigkeit dort gewesen sind, aber diese Leute, sie waren vor drei Monaten von dem Lager weg ge—, weg gegangen. Wussten nicht genau, nach welcher Richtung und wo».²⁶

²⁴ I was arrested, and was going, ah, was treated very harshly, for eight days we in a prison in, ah, pro—, in a city in the province of Macedonia,⁷ and from there afterwards we were taken by the German secret police to Saloniki—and there we were, were routed to a prison where we stayed for four months.

²⁵ And we went to . . . through, ah, Serbia, Austria, and Germany.

DAVID BODER: Yes.

JACOB BUTTON: . . . and Hungary, and Hungary, we drove, drove to Germany. In Hungary I have—we saw the, in April of '44 the first Hungarians with the star . . .

²⁶ JACOB BUTTON: Again, we arrived at the camp, and we also found some Greek Jews from Saloniki there. We were told that we arrived in a very harsh camp, and, ah, were also told that other Jews from Saloniki of Spanish citizenship had been there, but that these people were . . . were gone from the camp three months earlier, and [nobody] knew exactly in what direction and where.

The Spanish Jews had left, but the other Greek Jews, about 70, who were linked to the Jewish Council and had been deported in August 1943, were still in Bergen Belsen. Mr. Button spent exactly one year in the camp, whose living conditions he complained about and insisted on: the scarcity of food, the mistreatments and the beatings which the other prisoners were subjected to, both from the guards and the Kapos, the long lasting roll calls.

The interviewee didn't talk about the liberation but his name and also those of his wife and children are in the list of people liberated in Farsleben on April 13, 1945.

Eda Button: I am Spanish from Greece

Eda Button was interviewed in Rue Guy Patin, where she was living with her daughter, who had been in hiding in the Convent of S. Vincent de Paul in Salonika for three years. One of the nuns had brought the child to Paris only some weeks before the interview took place. She had been seriously ill and had been operated recently. Mrs. Button's husband was in Tel Aviv where he went illegally through Turkey, when his wife was deported in April 1944. When she was interviewed, Mrs. Button was waiting for a visa to join him. The different fates of the spouses depended on their citizenship: Eda Button was a Spanish citizen, her husband was a Greek Jew and had been subject to the anti-Jewish policy carried out in Salonika from February 1943.

The whole family had to move to one of the Jewish areas established by the Germans, Mrs. Button's husband, who was a lawyer, lost his work, and they managed to survive selling their properties. Being married to a Greek Jew, the interviewee had lost the privileges granted by her Spanish citizenship, which would have exempted her from living in a ghetto, wearing the star and respecting the curfew. This was the reason why the couple later divorced, Mrs. Button's husband escaped to the mountains and, not being able to pay for the escape of the whole family, she gave her daughter to an Italian woman who left the child at the convent. An agreement had been previously made with the mother superior and the child wore a part of a locket, her mother had kept the other in order to be able to recognize her.

Like Jacob Button, Eda managed to escape to Athens and stayed at her sister's where the rest of her family and her husband joined her. After September 8, 1943, the Germans arrived and

wurde beseitigt. Und die Deutschen waren wieder in Athen und, äh, von Gestapo der, äh, Chef war wieder in Athen und er hat dasselbe Sachen, das man in Saloniki gemacht hat, hat man wieder in Athen angefangen.

DAVID BODER: Ja.

EDA BUTTON: *Und wir müssen wieder meine, äh, das Haus meiner Schwester lassen und wieder haben wir uns versteckt von hier und von dort.*²⁷

The situation was so hopeless that the anguish of those moments can be perceived from the confused way Eda Button talked about it. She and her relatives had seen the deportations from Salonika and knew that they were at risk of being deported, also because, as she said, they were being blackmailed by a Jew who collaborated with the Gestapo. The only way to avoid that seemed to get married with Christians, which her husband did but she didn't. She made then the decision to ask for help to the Spanish Consulate since she had heard from the Salonikan Jews who had been liberated from Bergen Belsen and were then in Barcellona.

*«Am Montag war ich im spanischen Konsulat und, zum Fragen, was der spanische, was muss ich machen. Weil alle Spanier waren schon deklariert, und alle waren schon im jüdische Gemeinde. Und dann hat er gesagt, am Sonntag müssen sie um 9 Uhr, müssen sie alle nach Spanien fahren».*²⁸

²⁷ And the Germans were in Athens again and, eh, the, eh, head of the Gestapo was in Athens again and he did the same things that were done in Saloniki, they began to do in Athens again.

DAVID BODER: Yes.

EDA BUTTON: And we have to leave my, eh, my sister's house and again we went into hiding here and there.

She said she went to the station where her brother and mother were leaving on the train directed to Bergen Belsen on April 2 1943. She realized that it was a cattle train but her brother convinced her that they were going to Spain.

EDA BUTTON: *Warum, mein Bruder hat mir gesagt, "warum bleibst Du da? Der Padre hat mir gesagt, dass Du hier bist und Du bist bis hier gekommen, und Du sollst mit uns nach Spanien fahren. Und wenn Du wieder nach Athen fahren, äh . . . "*

DAVID BODER: *Zurückkehren?*

EDA BUTTON: *. . . äh, willst, man wird Dich wieder, also . . .*

DAVID BODER: *Verraten?*

EDA BUTTON: *Wieder verraten und damals wirst Du gerade in Auschwitz . . .*

DAVID BODER: *Gehen.*

EDA BUTTON: *. . . gehen". Und er sagte, "Musst Du mit uns kommen, wir fahren nach Spanien. Wir haben viel Brot im Zug.*

DAVID BODER: *Im Zug, ja.*

EDA BUTTON: *Und man hat alle Ernährung von, von alle Juden haben Geld gegeben und man hat uns, man hat viele Ernährung gekauft. Und wir werden ganz eine gute Reise machen. Und du sollst nicht, äh...*

DAVID BODER: *Angst haben?*

EDA BUTTON: *Angst haben, Du sollst mitkommen". Er hat meine Valise genommen und wir sind gekommen. [Unverständlich, bin ich zu] der Zug gekommen, den ich gesehen habe, der Wagon von meiner Mutter, alte Mutter, und...²⁹*

Eda Button arrived at Bergen Belsen together with the other Spaniards, stayed in the camp for one year and was liberated in Farsleben: her name is in the list of those liberated on April 13.

During the interview the experience in the camp was treated quite briefly, David Boder was more interested in the events happened before the deportation and in knowing how Eda could have got her daughter back. This approach depended on the fact that one of the purposes of David Boder's project was to let the American public opinion understand the conditions of the refugees: under this perspective, Boder didn't focus on the description of the camp but on the traumatic impact caused by the eradication and the break-up of the families.

The events related to Eda Button's daughter also underlined a crucial issue for parents who had to leave their children and lost any contact with them for years. In most cases the children, especially if they were very young, had forgotten their past and had grown up as Christians, losing their identity. In this case Mrs. Button told David Boder that she was very worried since her daughter had been educated as a Christian for three years and couldn't remember her mother.

For many survivors this problem was added to the difficulties of rebuilding their lives and of facing the precariousness of their situation.

²⁸ On Monday I was at the Spanish Consulate, and, to ask what the Spanish, what I must do. Because all Spaniards had been already classified, and all were already in the Jewish Community. And I was told on Sunday at nine o'clock you have, all must drive to Spain.

²⁹ EDA BUTTON: Why, my brother said to me, "Why do you stay here? The Padre told me that you were here and you came here, and you should drive to Spain with us. And when you want to go again to Athens . . ."

DAVID BODER: Return?

EDA BUTTON: ". . . want to return, eh, you will again be, eh . . ."

DAVID BODER: Betrayed?

EDA BUTTON: ". . . betrayed again, and then you will directly to Auschwitz . . ."

DAVID BODER: Go?

EDA BUTTON: ". . . go." And he said, "You have to come with us, we drive to Spain. We have a lot of bread in the train . . ."

DAVID BODER: Yes.

EDA BUTTON: ". . . and one has all the food of, of all the Jews have given money and they, they bought a lot of food. And we will make a very good journey. And you should not, eh . . ."

DAVID BODER: Be afraid?

EDA BUTTON: ". . . be afraid. You should join us." He took my valise and we came. [unintelligible] I came to the train that I had seen, into the car with my mother, my old mother, and . . .

Eda Button didn't want to go back to Greece, she was going to Palestine to marry her husband again.

Among the interviews with the Salonikans, this is the only one where Boder's ethnographic interest is evident: he asked Eda Button and her daughter to sing some songs. The recording of songs was meant as a means to save a culture which Boder considered at risk of disappearing.

Manis/Nissim Mizrachi: I have no one

Manis Mizrachi was interviewed at the office of the Joint Distribution Committee, where He was working in the Accounting Department, on August 12, 1946. The interview was conducted in English, which the interviewee could speak quite well. He was born in Salonika on 17 January, 1922, his parents, Oskar, with Spanish citizenship, and Sara, a Turkish citizen, had died from typhus after the liberation respectively in Farsleben and Hillersleben.

Mr. Mizrachi lived the same experience as Nino Barzilai and Jacob Button, from Haidari to Bergen Belsen. Even though the Mizrachi were protected by their citizenship, they moved to Athens after the German had occupied Salonika, since Oskar was a freemason.

They were arrested in Athens and deported on April 2, 1944. Manis Mizrachi gave a detailed account of the trip and was particularly affected by what happened at their arrival in Celle:

«And so, until we arrived at six in the morning—six o'clock in the morning and the town of Celle which is some kilometers far from the camp, real camp of Bergen-Belsen. And so we went there, we were obliged to go—to step seven or eight kilometers... To walk there with our grandfathers, with our fathers, sisters, sick women, with our children and however it was very difficult for us and this one who couldn't walk he was beaten by the Germans, soldiers, by the capos . . . were the leaders».

Manis was the only support for his parents, who clearly were in difficulty, and at risk of being beaten by the Germans and the Kapos, about whom Boder asked information, aiming at providing details on the life in the Camps to his audience:

DAVID BODER: What is capos?

DAVID BODER: Were they prisoners?

MANIS MIZRACHI: They were prisoners but who . . . somewhere . . . collaborated with the Germans together. And they beat us awfully we were not accustomed to this kind of manner and they were laughing at us when we made strange figures.

The interviewee talked about the Kapos also dealing with the relations among the prisoners inside the camp: he distinguished the inmates between those, like him, who didn't work and were not privileged, and the Kapos, who could get more food and privacy.

Of course, firstly we couldn't eat what they gave us. It were carrots in boiled water. This was our eating. And we gave it to other brothers of us—other Jews—of Greece. And Polish people too who were with us in the camp. And we were obliged after one week to eat because we starved. And so we carried everything—everything green that we saw on the earth we took it out from there and we started to eat it without caring if it was dirty or clean...Because Spanish citizenship. we were not supposed to work but this was bad because the others who were out they were working at the transport of food, of legumes . . . And they could have some profit in taking some of them. But for us it was impossible. And so we were obliged to live on only those things that we received from Germans.

DAVID BODER: Did the Red Cross help in any way.

MANIS MIZRACHI: We had no help of the Red Cross. Never we got help from the Red Cross. Only our capos they had . . . many profits who unfortunately they put only for themselves and they never helped the others. DAVID BODER: Were the capos Jews?

MANIS MIZRACHI: They were the Jews with us from Greece they came with us. And they started making friendship with the Polish capos, the old ones who were there and so they had a lot of . . . they had everything for their own families. They had special room to live and they ate separately. We were not to see what they were eating, we smelled only the meat and everything else that they got . . . from the Germans.

Two main elements need to be underscored in this account: firstly it provides information on the status of the prisoners with foreign citizenship in Bergen Belsen, secondly it clarifies some internal dynamics, which sounded strange and unacceptable to the interviewee.

As Rachel Deblinger rightly pointed out

«Yet, Boder's collection includes many stories of violence between Jews and for reasons other than Nazi orders» (Deblinger, 2012)

Manis Mizrachi's testimony, given at a time when a narrative about the Camps didn't exist, anticipated what was going to become a major issue in the survivors' account, which unconsciously Boder managed to focus. The Greek Jews in Bergen Belsen were housed in two of the several camp's compounds, those with foreign citizenship were in the *NeutralLager*, those, member of the Jewish Council deported in August, in the *Sternlager*: some of them, as the interviewee stated, became actually Kapos and were in charge of managing the arrival of the Dutch Jews in 1944.

«The Star camp was also known as Albala camp, after the Greek Jewish elder Jacques Albala. He headed the Jewish Council which was formed in April 1944 and was invested with the right by the Camp authorities to impose punishments on his fellow prisoners. The other Council members were drawn from the Greek and Dutch communities. There was also a Jewish court. ... During the first half of 1944 life was bearable but very basic. ... Hunger was always a problem» (Reilly, 1998)

As other survivors, Manis Mizrachi was confused about the time he had spent in the camp, he said he had been there for 18 months but probably he considered also the time he had spent at the hospital after the liberation. His name and those of his parents are in the list of the prisoners liberated in Farsleben, his father died on the same day, his mother then days later.

The interviewee provided interesting details on the events following the liberation, in particular he told he was hosted by German families, who had been forced by the Americans to provide the former prisoners with food and a shelter. He talked to Boder about their reactions to what had happened inside the camps:

«The Germans said that they never knew every . . . something that happened to Jews and out of Germany and that they behaved something so ill with the Jews in the concentration camps that they let them starve and that they killed them. They didn't know anything about those things. And whenever they knew, of course, they wouldn't leave it . . . let the Germans».

As his parents before him, Manis had fallen ill with typhus and had been hospitalized in Hillersleben: when he recovered he weighed 42 kg. Since he had relatives in France, he moved there, but could not find them since they had been deported. He was going to settle in Paris or in the US.

Conclusions

The testimonies given by the seven Salonikan survivors represent a meaningful step in the Holocaust studies since they provide detailed information on the events which the Salonikan Jews had to face before, during and after the deportation. All the interviewees were affected in different ways by the implementation of the Final Solution in Salonika and in Greece. Their accounts represent the complexity of the Salonikan Jewish community, where different socio-political status coexisted as a consequence of the history of the city. Jews with Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Italian citizenship endured, in most cases, a fate different from that of the Greek Jews.

Three interviewees, Greek nationals, were deported from Salonika, the others found refugee in Athens, thanks to their foreign citizenship, and were sent to Bergen Belsen in the second wave Of deportations from Greece. Only one of them, Nino Barzilai, Portuguese national, had actually lived in Spain for twenty years.

David Lea and Henry Sochami had fought in the war against Italy and were prisoners of war. The occupation of the city was a turning point, even though no anti-Jewish policy was immediately carried out: the Barzilai and the Mizrachi family escaped, the others stayed in Salonika. The Black Sabbath, which can be considered the beginning of the persecution, was experienced directly by Henry Sochami who was exploited as a forced laborer.

The ghettoization in February 1943 affected all those who had stayed in the city, except Jacob Button; also Eda Button, although Spanish national, was sealed in the ghetto because of his marriage with a Greek Jew. The beginning of the deportations, which involved directly Rita Benmayor, Henry Sochami and later David Lea, pressured Eda Button and Jacob Button to escape to Athens. Both their experiences represent what happened to many others: the separation of the families (Eda Button), sometimes only temporary (Jacob Button), the urge to save the children hiding their Jewish identity (Eda Button), the need to sell their properties to pay for false papers and the opportunity to escape (both), the betrayal (both), the arrest by the Gestapo, the arrival in Athens, for what Michael Matzas calls *illusion of safety*.

Regarding the deportation of the foreign Jews from Athens, Nino Barzilai, Eda Button, Jacob Button and Manis Mizrachi had all contacts with the consulates which were useless and could provide only a limited help. All of them, except Eda Button, were sent to Haidari and deported from there.

The different destination of the deportation of course had more or less serious traumatic consequences on the interviewees. Those deported to Auschwitz had lost all the members of their families, experienced starvation, transports to other Camps, forced labor.

The situation of those deported to Bergen Belsen was different at least until December 1944: their imprisonment was shorter, they could see their relatives who, except for Manis Mizrachi's parents, survived. Despite starvation and epidemics, they were not forced to work and were transferred in April 1945, but were liberated before arriving at their destination.

Even though both the groups suffered tragic experiences, those deported to Auschwitz show serious difficulties due to their trauma, or deculturation, as Boder would have said. The lack of a logical/chronological order, the time shifts, the memory of brutalities, the feeling of loss and isolation are constant in their testimonies. The interviewees with the deportees to Bergen Belsen are clearer, except for Eda Button's account which was clearly affected by her family problems.

In these interviews all the features and events, which later became usual in the survivors's accounts, are present: the persecution, the deportation, the selection, the harsh living conditions inside the camp. Here they were immediate not filtered by the following global memory in the Holocaust narratives. At the same time these accounts anticipated the future themes and confirmed the wide range of tragic experiences endured by the Jews during the Holocaust. As Rachel Deiblinger wrote:

«By recording eyewitness testimony before a canonical narrative of the Holocaust was determined, these interviews serve both to anticipate later themes and to complicate the historical narrative by recalling themes that have since been filtered out» (Deiblinger, 2012).

References

- Allport G. (1942). *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science*. New York: Social Science Research Council.
- Benbassa E. (sous la direction de). (2014) *Salonique, ville juive, ville ottomane, ville grecque*. Paris: CNRS edition.
- Blatman D. (2011) *The Death Marches – The Final Phase of the Nazi Genocide*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Boder D. (1949). *I Did Not Interview The Dead*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Boder D. (1950-7). *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced Persons Chicago and Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: Author.
- Boder D. (1954). The Impact of Catastrophe: I. Assessment and Evaluation. *The Journal of Psychology*, 38, : 3-50.
- Bowman S. (2009). *The Agony of Greek Jews, 1940-45*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bowman S. (edited by). (2002) *The Holocaust in Salonika – Eyewitness Accounts*. New York: Sephardic House and Bloch Publishing Co.
- Bowman S. (2014) *Greek Responses to the Nazis in the Mountains and in the Camps* in Patrick Henry (Ed.), *Jewish Resistance against the Nazis*. Baltimore: Cua Press.

- Cesarani D., Sundquist E. (Edited by), (2012) *After the Holocaust- Challenging the Myth of Silence*. New York: Routledge.
- Czech Danuta, Calendarium,
- Coppola S., Peri M. (2007). *Sugli ebrei di Salonicco*. Studi Storici: 48, 4: 1155-1164
- Dawidowicz L. S. (1975). *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Deblinger R. (2012). *P. Boder – Holocaust Memory in Displaced Persons Camps*, pp.191-208). David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (Edited by), *After the Holocaust- Challenging the Myth of Silence*, Routledge,
- Franco M. (2004). Diversão balcânica: os israelitas portugueses de Salónica. *Análise Social*, XXXIX (170): 119-147.
- Franco M. (2006). O Estado Novo e os Judeus. Os Portugueses de Salónica. *Estudos Judaicos, Revista da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Judaicos*, 9: 14-22.
- Gilbert M. (2014). *The Holocaust – The Human Tragedy*. London: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Greif G. (2005). *We wept without tears – Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.
- Greif G. *Between Sanity And Insanity. Spheres of Everyday Life in the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz-Birkenau*, www.yadvashem.org
- Handeli Y. (1993). *A Greek Jew from Salonica Remembers*. New York: Herzl.
- Hillberg R. (1985). *La distruzione degli Ebrei d'Europa*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Jacobs B. (1995). *The Dentist of Auschwitz*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Kossoy E. (2004). The Gesiówka Story – A little known page of Jewish History Fighting. *Yad Vashem Studies*, 32: 323-350.
- Krakowski S. *The death marches in the period of the evacuation of the camps*, in M.R. Marrus. (1989). *The Nazi Holocaust – Part 9: The end of the Holocaust*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Levi P. (1958). *Se questo è un uomo*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Levi P. (1986). *I sommersi e i salvati*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Lewkowicz B. (2006). *The Jewish community of Salonika – History, Memory, Identity*. London/ Portland: Valentine Mitchell.
- Stanislaw L. (2001). *By Devil's Luck: A Tale of Resistance in Wartime Warsaw*. Edimburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company.
- Michael M. (1997). *The Illusion of Safety: The Story of the Greek Jews During World War II*. New York: Pella Publishing Company.
- Mazower M. (1995). *Inside Hitler's Greece – The Experience of Occupation 1941-44*. New Heaven And London: Yale University Press.
- Mazower M. (2004). *Salonicco, città di fantasmi*, Milano: Garzanti. (traduzione di Roberto Merlini)
- Molho M. (1973). *In Memoriam*. Thessalonique: Communauté Israélite de Thessalonique. (seconde édition)
- Müller B. (2014). Translating Trauma: David Boder's 1946 Interviews with Holocaust Survivors. *Translation and Literature*, 23: 257-257. www.eupublishing.com/tal
- Niewyk D. (1998)., *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Reese L. (2006). *Auschwitz – I Nazisti e la soluzione finale*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore. (traduzione di Elisa Banfi)
- Reilly J. (1998). *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp*. London: Routledge Twentieth Century European History Series.
- Reilly J., Cesarani D., Kushner T., Richmond C. (edited by). (1997). *Belsen in History and Memory*. London: Frank Cass.
- Rosen A. (2010). *The Wonder of Their Voices - The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen A. (2005). *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 21-33.
- Rozen M. (2005). Jews and the Greeks Remember Their Past: The Political Career of Tzevi Koretz (1933-1943). *Jewish Social Studies*, 12, 1: 111-166.
- Sarfatti M. (2012). L'evacuazione nel 1943 da Salonicco degli ultimi ebrei italiani e degli ebrei italiani 'provvisori': contesto, questioni e numeri. P. I. Zorattini, M. Luzzati, M. Sarfatti (a cura di), *Studi sul mondo sefardita in memoria di Aron Leoni*. Firenze: Olschki, pp. 251-276
- Stone D. (2015). *The liberation of the camps: The End of the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*. London: Yale University Press.
- Tomai P., (Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs). (2009). *Greeks in Auschwitz-Birkenau*, (translation by Alexandra Apostolides). Athens: Papazisis Publishers S.A.
- Van Pelt R. J. e Dwork D. (1996). *Auschwitz 1270 To the Present*. London: Yale University Press.
- Wachsman N. (2015). *KL A history of The Nazi Concentration Camps*. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

Web sites: <http://HolocaustResearchProject.org>
<http://collections.ushmm.org>
<http://30thinfantry.org>
<http://buchenwald.de>
<http://voices.itt.edu>