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"Ghetto": The History of a Term and its Relevance for a Proper Understanding of the Holocaust

When, almost two decades ago, the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem embarked on the project of compiling an encyclopedia of all Nazi-era ghettos, the planning demanded clear knowledge of the foreseen extent of the project. Within a short time, it became clear that there was a series of fundamental problems and challenges:

1. How many ghettos existed during "the Holocaust"? No number was known, and the estimates ran between hundreds and thousands.

2. What was the Nazi "definition"/concept of "the ghetto" (and consequently – its "purpose")? No comprehensive definition could be found.

3. When exactly did the idea of establishing ghettos for Jews take shape? Only a general assumption existed: that this occurred after the invasion of Poland in 1939 – but there was no clear-cut knowledge.

4. What is the "foundational" order for the establishment of ghettos (is there one at all)? Most studies referred to Reinhard Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* ("urgent letter") to the commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Poland of 21 September 1939 as being that order – but a close reading of the document revealed that this interpretation is wrong (the term "ghetto" appears once, in a sub-paragraph, but there is no section dedicated to ghettos while there is one on Jewish Councils.

5. Who initiated the idea and supported it, and who opposed it (if at all)? This was not clear.

6. What purpose were the ghettos meant to serve, and what purpose did they actually serve? Was the ghetto phenomenon (inherently) linked to the development of the idea of the Final Solution? This was a common assumption, but there was no clear proof for it.

7. Was the ghetto phenomenon (intrinsically) linked to the *Judenrat* phenomenon?

8. And probably most interestingly: why did the term "ghetto" – and not some other term – take root?

Until then – in 2003 - these basic questions had not been adequately addressed, if at all, mainly because it had become axiomatic to presume that the authorities of Nazi Germany regarded ghettos as an integral part of their anti-Jewish policies. Three quotes can present the essentials of this view well. Raul Hilberg in his seminal and influential study *The Destruction of the European Jews*, first published in 1961, stated that

"The preliminary steps of the ghettoization process consisted of marking, movement restrictions, and the creation of Jewish control organs. [...] The three preliminary steps – marking, movement restrictions, and the establishment of a Jewish control machinery – were taken in the very first months of civil rule [in Poland]. [...] In this book we shall be interested in the ghetto only as a control mechanism [for movement restrictions] in the hands of the German bureaucracy. To the Jews the ghetto was a way of life; to the Germans it was an administrative measure."[1]

In his study on the Wartheland (the western part of Poland annexed to Greater Germany), Michael Alberti unequivocally assured that

"The establishment of the ghettos provided one of the most effective means to subordinate the Jewish population to a total control and exploitation. With the beginning of the mass murder, they turned into giant prisons, from where the Nazis could deport their inmates to the extermination camps. The ghettos were a milestone on the way to genocide."[2]

And Boaz Neumann, when dealing with the spatial aspect of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, explained that

"The removal of the Jew from the urban space was part of a larger process of removal from the German political sphere and living space. The final aim was to turn them into judenrein. While the space of the new city was reserved for the Aryan German, the ghetto was the urban space allotted to the Jew."[3]

As can be seen – these are assumptions: the body of research literature generated up till fifteen years ago did not provide systematic, comprehensive, and historically convincing answers to the above-mentioned questions. Indeed, a first crack in the entrenched view of the Nazi ghettos was provided by Christopher Browning already in the mid-1980s:

"Ghettoization was not a conscious preparatory step planned by the central authorities to facilitate the mass murder nor did it have the 'set task' of decimating the Jewish population. Ghettoization was in fact carried out at different times in different ways for different reasons on the initiative of local authorities. [...] The concentration of Jews in Polish cities as a preliminary to their expulsion was part of a policy ordered by the central authorities in September 1939 [= in the Schnellbrief of 21 September], but the subsequent creation of sealed ghettos was not. On the contrary, the sealed ghetto resulted from the failure of Berlin's expulsion policy. Local authorities were left to improvise and found their way to the sealed ghetto. They did so at different times and for different immediate reasons but always within the common ideological parameters set by the failed expulsion policy – namely that ultimately Jews and 'Aryans' did not live together."[4]

Yet, this was far from sufficing. This situation triggered me to clarify this issue; the following description is a summary of that research.[5]

Jewish neighborhoods - usually voluntary but sometimes compulsory - existed as from the high Middle Ages. The word "ghetto" as a term used for a designated Jewish neighborhood in a city originated in the early modern period in Venice, more precisely: in 1516, when Jews were allowed to settle in the Ghetto Nuovo island of this city. From here the term spread to other places, such as to Ragusa (nowadays: Dubrovnik) on the Croation seashore. The term was adopted three decades later in the papal state in Rome, this time for the compulsory Jewish neighborhood installed by the Vatican.

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1   Hilberg 1961, 147, 148, 152–153.

2   Alberti 2004, 111-126, quote from 118.
3   Neuman 2002, 145.
4   Browning 1992, 30, 52 (the quote is from the chapter in the 1992 book, which consists of articles published by Browning in the decade before); and similarly, in Browning 2003, ch. 4.
5   For expanded versions of my analysis see Michman 2009; Michman 2011a; Michman 2011b.

Real ghettos were gradually abolished in European countries as part of the emancipation process since the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the ghetto in Rome being the last one to exist, officially until 1848, actually until 1870. But while the real phenomenon disappeared, the term ghetto spread in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentiet century. It was used in a critical, negative meaning by Zionists, antisemites and in scholarly literature; and in a nostalgic meaning by those Jews who lamented the broadening assimilation process. The ghetto discourse consisted of two versions: one, in which the term was used as a metaphor, noting a virtual segregation from the non-Jews; the other, particularly in use in interwar Poland, in which the term related to a physical phenomenon of large, densely populated and poor Jewish neighborhoods in the cities.

After the ascendance of Hitler and the Nazi party to power in Germany in 1933, it was the German Jews who used the term metaphorically in their discourse during the first years of the Nazi regime while relating to their deteriorating social and legal position. From there, the term penetrated into the language of German policy-makers, both metaphorically and (in the summer of 1938) as relating to a possible result of general antisemitic policies and in particular of the housing policies towards Jews which caused internal emigration from the many little communities to some larger ones, and inside cities from various neighborhoods to a limited number. The main concern of the Nazi authorities was the growing concentration of Jews in the capital Berlin.

However, in the fall of 1938 the semantics of the term suddenly changed in a most dramatic way, through the impact of Peter-Heinz Seraphim's book *Die Juden im osteuropäischen Raum* (The Jews in the Eastern European Space).[6] This product of Nazi *Juden-* and *Ostforschung*[7] pointed to the existence of physical Jewish ghettos in Eastern Europe. These were, as said, the large Jewish concentrations in special densely populated and poor neighborhoods in the Eastern European big cities. In Seraphim's eyes, these were the power centers of "Jewry", as well as sources of maladies and epidemics. His description was based on the internal Jewish critical discourse regarding the life-style and situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe in the interwar period, but in his interpretation its meaning was turned upside down and channeled into the frameworks of Nazi antisemitic thought and imagery. As a result of the migration process of Jews in Eastern Europe to mid-sized towns and large cities, immense closed concentrations of Jews had been created precisely there. He added:

"One must not forget that these Jews live in the mid-sized towns and large cities in a closed Jewish society, that is, they create a city within a city, the Jewish ghetto. Within this Jewish residential district, the national and religious sense of community can express itself in a fashion that is utterly different and much stronger than it would be where the Jews living scattered among the non-Jewish population of the big city. The ghetto – of course in the sense of a totally voluntary Jewish residential community – is the Jews' unconscious means of defense against the danger of the dissolution of the Jewish religion, the Yiddish language, the Jewish national sense. [...] But the ghetto is at the same time the basis from which the Jewish expansion stems. [...] This is where the merchants live, from the peddlers and rag-sellers through the middle-sized and large merchants and the exporters; this is where the Jewish artisan who has been proletarianized finds his way to the factory; this is where the Jews' religious and political leaders are raised; this is where the Jewish essence is molded in its specific form, as it is found in Eastern Europe, in order to exert from here, from the business centers, an influence on the surrounding, on the nations among whom the Jews live."[8]

By means of maps of the "Jewish ghettos" in Warsaw, Kraków, Lemberg (Lwów), Vilna, Łódź,

Kovno, and Riga, Seraphim illustrated how all those cities had a solid Jewish core from which the Jews expanded and took over the rest of the city. He added that the medieval ghetto had an external appearance that differentiated the district from the rest of the city. But he emphasized that the modern ghetto was different: the Jews took over existing buildings from non-Jewish citizens and merchants, and consequently no difference could be perceived from the outside. What created a sharp distinction was the lifestyle within, with its "strong oriental stamp" (*stark orientalische Note*).[9]

This understanding caused the SS and Police, which followed research on Nazi enemies, to oppose any ghettoization in Germany,[10] a view firmly expressed by the head of the Security Police and SD Reinhard Heydrich on the highest level of policy-making in the (in)famous meeting in the office of Herman Goering (the second-ranking personage in the country at the time) on 12 November 1938, two days after *Reichskristallnacht*. Toward the end of the session, Goering responded to remarks by Heydrich on the need to intensify the pressure on the Jews to push them to emigrate: "You will not be able to avoid arriving at ghettos in the cities on a very large scale. Their creation is inevitable." In other words, Goering believed that the process of internal migration within Germany, caused by the despoliation of the Jews, would cause them to concentrate in certain districts in the large cities that would transform into dense pockets of poverty – "ghettos." Heydrich immediately stated his opposition to such a development, maintaining:

"I do not believe that the ghetto, in the form of totally separate sections of a city containing only Jews, is practicable from a police perspective. The ghetto, in which the Jew congregates with the whole of his Jewish tribe, cannot be kept under police surveillance" [emphasis added]."[11]

The invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, marked, however, a turning point. Now Nazi antisemites physically encountered *Das Ostjudentum*, including the already existing ghettos (i.e. densely populated, poor neighborhoods), and had to cope with it. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels sent teams to film the ghettos, Heinrich Himmler, Commander of the SS and Head of the German Police, spoke about *"das Gesindel"* (scum)*,* commanders, soldiers and others expressed their disgust when seeing the Jewish Communities and Jewish individuals.[12]

Seen in this context, and through reading without preset assumptions, it becomes entirely clear that (as opposed to Hilberg's view and hinted at above) Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* to the commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen* of 21 September 1939 (and the protocol of the meeting on that same day) never spoke about an establishment of ghettos as a new systematic and well-planned bureaucratic measure, but about the concentration of city Jews in (the already existing) ghettos:

"II. Councils of Jewish Elders [...]

5) The Councils of Elders in the concentration centers are to be made responsible for the appropriate housing of the Jews arriving from the countryside.

6   Seraphim 1938. On Seraphim see Petersen 2007; Steinweis 2006, 142–151; Aly 1993, 96–101; Koonz 2003, 199.

7   Burleigh 1988; Schulze – Oexle e.a. (eds.) 1999; Volkmer 1989; Koonz 2003, 193–220; Schwerpunkt 2006.

8   Seraphim 1938, 355–356 (all emphases in the original).

9   Seraphim 1938, 371.

10 "SD II 112 an den SD-Führer des SS-O.A. Ost, II 112, Berlin, Betr.: Ghettoisierung der Juden", 1.11.1938, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, Sonderarchiv Moskau 500-1-343, 243.

11 *"Das Ghetto in Form vollkommen abgesonderter Stadtteile, wo nur Juden sind, halte ich polizeilich nicht für durchführbar. Das Ghetto, wo der Jude sich mit dem gesamten Judenvolk versammelt, ist in polizeilicher Hinsicht unüberwachbar. Es bleibt der ewige Schlupfwinkel für Verbrechen und vor allen Dingen von Seuchen und ähnlichen Dingen. Heute ist es so, dass die deutsche Bevölkerung - wir wollen die Juden auch nicht in demselben Haus lassen - in den Straßenzügen oder in den Häusern den Juden zwingen, sich zusammenzunehmen. Die Kontrolle des Juden durch das wachsame Auge der gesamten Bevölkerung ist besser, als wenn Sie den Juden zu Tausenden und aber Tausenden in einem Stadtteil haben, wo ich durch uniformierte Beamte eine Überwachung des täglichen Lebenslaufes nicht herbeiführen kann.*
Göring: Wir brauchten nur das Telefonieren nach auswärts unterbinden.
Heydrich: Ich könnte den Verkehr des Judentums aus diesem Stadtteil heraus doch nicht ganz unterbinden."
Stenographische Niederschrift der Sitzung im Reichsluftfahrtministerium am 12. Nov. 1938, in: *International Military Tribunal* (IMT), Bd. XXVIII, (Dok. 1816-PS), 510, 533–536.

12 Böhler 2006, 46–48, and notes 178, 181, 182, 194; for more verbal expressions see Roth 2009.

For reasons of general police security, the concentration of the Jews in the cities will probably call for regulations in these cities which will forbid their entry to certain quarters completely and that – but with due regard for economic requirements – they may, for instance, not leave the ghetto, nor leave their homes after a certain hour in the evening, etc."[13]

It can be clearly understood as a reaction trying to cope with the "danger" of the Polish Jews which was now encountered. Sometime later, Hans Frank, the General Governor of the General-Government in Poland, proposed to do the opposite in the case of Krakow, the capital of that General-Government: to drive the Jews out of the city and scatter them all over the area, thus dissolving the ghetto, and allowing for the citizens of the capital of the General Government "to breathe clean German air".[14]

However, even Heydrich's recommendation was not carried out within the 3-4 weeks he had suggested in the *Schnellbrief*. There was also no pressure from above to apply the establishment of ghettos. It thus became a local decision whether to do so or not, being hesitantly applied in several places, and – even then – usually spanning over a (sometimes very) long time (in Warsaw it lasted from October 1939 to October 1940, and encountered much opposition from other German and local authorities). The functional success – from an organizational point of view – of the Łódz ghetto, which was established in April 1940, turned this ghetto into an example copied later on in many places throughout occupied Poland; it became even a pilgrimage site to learn from. These ghettos of the years 1940-1941 are usually viewed in Holocaust research as the typical "classic" Nazi ghettos; however, their number was limited, and from a mere bureaucratic point of view caused more problems than solving them: city transportation had to be altered, people had to be moved all around, administrative and security forces were needed, etc. They also were clearly not a response to obstacles in the immigration programs (as suggested by Götz Aly),[15] or a bureaucratic interim solution for the clash between the drive for expulsion and its shattering after the first phases of occupation in Poland (as suggested by Christopher Browning).[16]

The "classic" ghetto being a response to the danger of *Das Ostjudentum* well explains why the establishment of ghettos did not occur in Western, Northern, Central and Southern Europe or North Africa under German control. Seraphim, who became an adviser to the General-Government and from spring 1941 also headed the *Institut zur Forschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Research of the Jewish Question) in Frankfurt, stated explicitly, that the ghetto idea was not applicable in Central and Western Europe.[17]

A new phase of the establishment of ghettos started with the invasion of the Soviet Union. An assumed number of 500 ghettos were established throughout the areas occupied by Nazi Germany. Now even official military and civil orders of the highest level were decreed, but once again a quite unsystematic process of establishment developed. Moreover, these ghettos emerged in the midst of the escalating murder campaign. On 13 July 1941, General Max

von Schenkendorff, the rear echelon commander of Army Group Center, ordered that "The Jews are to be concentrated [zusammenzufassen] in a closed community in buildings occupied exclusively by Jews."[18] General Karl von Roques, Commander of the Rear Army Area North, ordered on 28 August 1941, that "Ghettos should be installed in places where the Jews are a large portion of the population, especially in the cities, when their establishment is needed or at least when it serves the goals".[19] But several days later, on 3 September, he added in another order, that "In no situation is the establishment of ghettos to be seen as urgent".[20]

The fact that the establishment of ghettos was a matter of local decision even at this point in time is demonstrated well by the statement of Dr. Karl Lasch, Lemberg (Lvov) District Commissar in a meeting of the *Generalgouvernement* on 21 October 1941:

"[It is unthinkable that in Lemberg] the Jews should be treated differently than in Krakow and Warsaw. Therefore, in the forthcoming days the Jews will be contained together in Jewish quarters and removed from the street scene in Lemberg too, similarly to the [situation in the] other cities in District Galicia."[21]

The ghettos were clearly not needed as a stage *leading* to the murder campaign (which was implemented anyhow and already before and alongside the ghettoization), and in many cases served another goal: keeping needed Jewish labor force for a shorter or longer while. But in other cases, ghettos were apparently established just as a result of the inertia of the idea – which had rooted in the preceding 1-2 years – that anti-Jewish policies *should* inherently include the erection of a ghetto. As to the essence of these ghettos – they were now closer to being concentration or labor camps in cities than to the kind of "containing neighborhoods" which the ghettos had been before. In many cases, the time-span of their existence was very short, but there were exceptional cases (such as Kovno/Kaunas which existed for more than two years).

With the change in the substantial meaning of the ghettos for German policy-makers, some ghettos also emerged as transit-stations for further deportation. This was the meaning attributed by Heydrich in the so-called Wannsee conference (20 January 1942) to Theresienstadt.[22] It would later be applied also to the short concentration (*Ghettisierung*, as it was called in one document)[23] of the Salonikan Jews in three neighborhoods, as the preparatory step for their deportation (February 1943), a concentration which entirely paralleled the function of the *Judendurchgangslager* (Jewish transit camps) Westerbork, Mechelen and Drancy in Western Europe.

In Romania, on its own initiative, Marshal Ion Antonescu, in reference to Bucharest Jews, stated on 7 February 1941, that:

"Were times normal … I would deport them all en masse from the country, beyond its borders. I cannot do that today, however. … Where would I send them? I cannot leave them to perish of hunger and die. I see this problem as unique in the current international situation. We must deal with it and solve it, for the Jews of Bucharest and the country. I would like to establish a special Jewish neighborhood in the capital [Bucharest], along Văcăreşti and

13   *"Die Ältestenräte in den Konzentrierungsstädten sind verantwortlich zu machen für die geeignete Unterbringung der aus dem Lande zuziehenden Juden. Die Konzentrierung der Juden in den Städten wird wahrscheinlich aus allgemein sicherheitspolizeilichen Gründen Anordnungen in diesen Städten bedingen, daß den Juden bestimmte Stadtviertel überhaupt verboten werden, daß sie stets jedoch unter Berücksichtigung der wirtschaftlichen Notwendigkeiten – z.B. das Ghetto nicht verlassen, zu einer bestimmten Abendstunde nicht mehr ausgehen dürfen usw."* Documents of the International Tribunal at Nuremberg, PS-3363, In: Arad – Gutman – Margaliot 1981, 175.

14   *"Er [Frank] beabsichtige deshalb, die Stadt Krakau bis zum 1. November 1940, soweit irgend möglich, judenfrei zu machen und eine große Aussiedlungsaktion der Juden in ngriff zi nehmen, und zwar mit der Begründung, daß es absolut unerträglich sei, wenn in einer Stadt, der der Führer die hohe Ehre zuteil werden lasse, der Sitz einer hohen Reichsbehörde zu sein, Tausende und Abertausende von Juden herumschlichen und Wohnungen inne hätte [...] Das Ghetto werde dann gesäubert werden, und es werde möglich sein, saubere deutsche Wohnsiedlunegn zu errichten, in denen man eine deutsche Luft atmen könne."* Präg – Jacobmeyer 1975, 165 (12.4.1940).

15   Aly 1995, 131.

16   Browning 2003, 111–168.

17   Seraphim 1941, 43–44; quoted by Friedman 1980, 64.

18   "Der Befehlshaber des rueckw. Heeres-Gebietes Mitte, H.-Qu., den 13. Juli 1941, *Verwaltungs-Anordnungen Nr. 2",* Yad Vashem Archives, DN-7–2. Also cited in Benz – Kwiet – Matthäus (eds.) 1998, 120–121.

19   „Anordnung des Befehlshabers des rückwärtigen Heeresgebiets Nord, 28. August 1941, betr. Die Einrichtung von Ghettos", Bundesarchiv-Marburg, RH 22/6, quoted by Benz – Kwiet – Matthäus (eds.) 1998, 123 (Doc. 85).

20   Anordnung des Befehlshabers des rückwärtigen Heeresgebiets Nord, 3. September 1941, betr. Die Einrichtung von Ghettos im Befehlsbereich, Bundesarchiv-Marburg, RH 26–285/45, quoted by Benz – Kwiet – Matthäus (eds.) 1998, 123 (Doc. 86); also in Müller 1982, 71.

21   "*[Es sei nicht einzusehen, daß in Lemberg] die Juden anders behandelt werden sollen, als in Krakau und Warschau. Die Juden sollen deshalb in den nächsten Tagen auch in Lemberg, wie in den übrigen Städten des Distrikts Galizien, in jüdischen Wohnvierteln zusammengefaßt werden und aus dem Straßenbild der Stadt verschwinden"* - quoted in Sandkühler 1996, 155.

22   Poliakov – Wulf 1955, 123.

23   "Massnahmen gegen die hiesigen Juden" (Memo of the German Consul Schönberg to Berlin,) Salonik [sic!], 26. Februar 1943, Yad Vashem Archives TR.3 1003.

Dudeşti streets, its boundaries to be demarcated, and require all the Jews of the city to move into it, into this Jewish bastion, within two years, while all the Romanian inhabitants left it. After that the kikes could live among themselves, with their own commerce and their own synagogues, until more settled times arrive and we can deport them beyond our borders, to territories to be set aside for them. This is a problem that the Romanian people cannot solve alone, because it is an international question pertaining to the entire European continent.[24]

A first decree, in the beginning of April 1941, ordered the concentration of all Bucharest Jews in a special neighborhood. However, this idea was not implemented, but from the summer of 1941 it emerged regarding other places, and was implemented in a most horrific way, in Transnistria. In the local vocabulary "ghettos, "camps" and "colonies" became interchangeable terms – a fact which leads in the historiography to differing counts of the number of ghettos in Transnistria (between 50 and 150). In any case, the Transnistrian ghettos were often more chaotic than the German ones, but after Ion Antonescu's decision in 1942 to change his policies of annihilation, these ghettos turned into places where the Jews who had survived until then, could live on until the end of the war.[25]

The Hungarian regime would adopt it too for the concentration of Jews in city neighborhoods throughout the country, often at the outskirts of cities, within the overall deportation scheme of Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz which was coordinated with Adolf Eichmann's *Sondereinsatzkommando* (April–July 1944). Thus, these ghettos represent the last stage of the semantic evolution of the term. Starting in mid-April, approximately 180 physical detention facilities were established, all of them intended to serve as collection camps for Jews in advance of their deportation by rail to Auschwitz. These places went by various names. The Interior Ministry order of April 7 uses the terms "collection camp" (*gyűjtőtábor*), "Jewish building" (*zsidóépület* and *zsidóház*: parallel terms that may imitate the *Judenhäuser* established in Germany at the start of the war), and "ghetto" (*gettó*). A later order, dated 28 April 1944, referred to the transfer of Jews to a "new domicile" (*lakóhely*), without using the word "ghetto."[26] In the field, the most common term applied to the urban concentration and detention sites was "ghetto," but sometimes also "Jewish ghetto" (*zsidógettó*). Other terms were used in rural areas, such as "collection place" (*gyűjtőhely*) and "settlement" (*lakótelep*). Some of the ghettos, by whichever name, were not under Jewish administration. Many were established in brick factories on the locality's outskirts. Their physical layout, too, was quite distinct from that of the ghettos in Poland in 1940–1941, although they resembled some of the later ghettos in the Soviet Union. In other words, both the purpose and meaning of the concept changed and became less precise when it was adopted in Hungary.[27]

Miklós Horthy, the regent of Hungary, suspended the deportation of the Jews on 7 July 1944. By that time, however, only one large concentration of Jews remained in Hungary – in Budapest. In the capital, since 24 June, Jews had been housed in approximately 2,100 buildings scattered all over the city, marked with a yellow star ("star houses" [*csillagos* házak]); this was understood as "ghettoization" and referred to as such by the Jews. Fundamentally, however, these buildings were more like the *Judenhäuser* in Germany. The authorities began planning the concentration of the Jews of Budapest in May and had initially spoken about resettling them in seven districts. But as in Warsaw and Amsterdam some years earlier, the plans changed after they were presented to the municipal authorities, over arguments that a closed ghetto would interfere with the functioning of the city. "Jewish houses" offered an easy way to bypass such problems.[28] On 20 November 1944, after the October coup that brought the Arrow Cross Party of Ferenc Szála-

si to power, the "little ghetto" (*kisgettó*), as it was popularly known, was established, as was the "protected ghetto" (*vedett gettó*) or "international ghetto" (*nemzetközi gettó*) for Jews with documents issued by neutral diplomatic missions. On 10 December, 1944, the ghetto in Pest (*Pesti gettó*), also known as the "large ghetto" (*nagygettó*), was sealed off, and became the new living quarters of all the Jews of Budapest who had been living in the *csillagos házak*.

The Budapest ghetto existed for only a few months, until the liberation of the city by the Red Army. It was established after the end of the major wave of deportations, but not on the assumption that the treatment of the "Jewish problem" was complete. In a sense, the Budapest ghetto was a reprise of those in Poland in 1940 and 1941: a concentration of Jews in anticipation of a new decision about what to do with them. But the conditions in Hungary in late 1944 and early 1945 were different: these were the twilight months of the World War II, and the short-lived Arrow Cross regime in Hungary along with German involvement fueled uncertainty and brutal scenes of murder.[29]

CONCLUSION

Having examined the entire ghetto phenomenon during the Shoah we can conclude the following:

1) that the "classic" Nazi ghetto was a reaction to the perceived danger of the *Ostjuden* with the intention to "contain" these dangerous bearers of evil, and thus a result of the internalization of antisemitic images shaped some time before – not of well-calculated, bureaucratic "rational" decisions intended to segregate all Jews;

2) that the emergence of the "classic" ghetto phenomenon at the turn of 1939–1940 expressed a radicalization of Nazi thought, within the contours of historical antisemitism; it nevertheless remained a reaction crystallized and carried out by lower echelons of the Nazi regime;

3) that the term ghetto changed its semantics several times throughout its history in general and during the Shoah in particular, and that – consequently – one cannot speak of a "typical" ghetto; thus, one should refer to the phenomenon by using the plural form "ghettos", not the singular form "ghetto";

4) that "ghettoization" and "concentration" were two *separate* developments, and not Siamese twins, as assumed by Raul Hilberg and ensuing historiography;[30]

5) that the emergence of the ghetto idea and of the *Judenrat* concept derived from entirely different sources and emerged at different times, that they were only partially overlapping, and that they were not inherently linked to each other;[31]

6) that the emergence of ghettos was neither ideologically nor factually a step leading to the Final Solution:[32] the decision on the Final Solution to the Jewish Question in the summer of 1941 was a strategic leap, decided upon at the highest level – by Hitler himself. However, in many places they were used also for the implementation of the Final Solution.

24   Benjamin 1993, 292. English translation in Michman 2011b, 129.
25   For the general situation in Romania see: Ancel 2011; Ioanid 2000; Deletant 2006; *Final Report* 2004.
26   Benoschfsky – Karsai (szerk.) 1958, 124–127, 244–250.
27   I wish to thank Dr. Kinga Frojimovics for providing me with this information. For a recent in-depth study of the countryside ghettos and Jewish Councils in Hungary see Bernat 2023.
28   Cole – Smith 1995.

29   Baruch 1997; Frojimovics – Komoróczy – Pusztai – Strbik1999, 382–423.
30   Michman 2017a.
31   On the history of the Jewish Council concept see: Michman 2003, 159–175 (Hungarian edition: 131–168); Michman 2004; Michman 2006; Michman 2017b.
32   Michman 2010.

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