Aftermath: Viennese and Salonikan Jews interviewed by David Boder in 1946[1]

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Introduction

David P. Boder, an American Latvian-born psychologist, came to Europe in 1946 to interview Holocaust survivors in Displaced persons' camps and shelter houses in order to study how the impact of the catastrophe had affected them and to let American people grasp the dramatic situation of displaced persons in Europe. He aimed at identifying the traumatic experiences of the survivors by examining what they told through their linguistic choices of words and expressions. Among the survivors he interviewed, there were Jews from Salonika and Vienna, whose interviews were recorded with a wire recorder, later transcribed and translated into English.

These interviews were collected at an early stage, when the survivors were in a limbo, between the liberation and the beginning of a new life, and represent an effective means for a deeper understanding of both the survivors' situation after the liberation and the way they dealt with their own past and future, also in relation with the cities they were from and as a consequence of their origin.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how individual testimonies of Holocaust survivors can be interpreted as a historical source, analysing not only what they remembered, but also the reasons they focused on some events and not others, and how they recollected and told their experiences. Personal testimonies let us grasp the complexity of the Holocaust, an event which was globally planned but whose features and outcomes depended on place, time, people involved. Thus micro-history becomes a key for understanding bigger events and their impact on individuals.

My research has been focused on six interviews with Salonikan Jews and three with survivors from Vienna. The analysis of the interviews has been carried out studying how and why the interviewees recollected topical events or relevant experiences, and identifying the traumatic events which affected them with the support of Boder's Traumatic Inventory.[2] Some experiences and traumas were common to both groups, others were specific and depended on their context, their language and socio-cultural background.

Vienna and Salonika

There were many differences between Salonika's and Vienna's Jewish communities but, in their history, there were similarities as well. They hosted the majority of the Jewish population of Greece and Austria and their features were deeply influenced by the Jewish presence.[3]

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1 All the quotes from David Boder's interviews have been taken from the website https://iit.aviaryplatform.com/collection-resources.

[2] Boder, D.P.The Impact of Catastrophe: I. Assessment and Evaluation, The Journal of Psychology, XXXVIII, 1, 1954, pp. 3-50.

[3] Salonika's Sephardi community shaped the city's features for four centuries because, until the end of the Twenties, the Jews constituted the majority of the population. The community in Vienna was mainly Ashkenazi and was a minority which, nonetheless, influenced the cultural and economical life of the city.

Both in Salonika and in Vienna, multicultural cities, the Jewish population included people of different nationalities,[4] a fact which affected their fate during the Nazi persecution and the Holocaust.[5] Among the six interviewees from Salonika four with Spanish or Portuguese citizenship escaped to Athens and were deported from there in April 1944, two were Greek nationals and were deported with the first transport to Auschwitz Birkenau on March, 15, 1943. Regarding Vienna, among the three interviewees Nelly Bondy was born in Vienna but lived in France, Friedrich Schlaefrig, born in Austria, and Malka Johles, Polish, resided in Vienna.

In Vienna, where the persecution began in 1938 and the Nazis aimed at getting rid of the Jewish population from the very beginning, emigration became a matter of life or death: to hold a citizenship of a specific country made a difference in getting a visa to emigrate or to be included in other countries' immigration quota. In both cities, members of the same family might have held different citizenships, therefore they endured also the tragedy of a permanent separation.[6]

In Salonika, where the speed of the ghettoizzation and deportation didn't allow a mass emigration, the separation of families was a consequence of the German invasion in 1941 and of the implementation of the persecution. It was mainly due to escapes to Athens in 1943 and to the deportation itself.[7]

Despite the differences in the phases and procedures of implementation, the outcome of Nazi's anti Jewish policy was the same in both cities: two ancient Jewish communities, with distinct and peculiar features, were almost totally annihilated. The survivors interviewed by David Boder were among the few remnants of a vanished world, where they couldn't and didn't want to go back.

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[4] 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. 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 recognisable accent, which prevented them to hide among the Greek speaking population. 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.

[5] In Salonika people owning a Spanish, Italian and Portuguese citizenship were initially excluded from the anti-Jewish policy, which actually started in summer 1942 against the Greek nationals, but eventually, in 1943/4 many of them were deported both from Athens and Salonika: the Spanish and the Portuguese nationals to Bergen Belsen, the Italians to Auschwitz. Also in Vienna the Jews held different citizenships a consequence of the immigration waves from Poland and Russia, and because of the effects of the geopolitical changes in national borders after World War I. Austrian citizenship was granted only to residents within the new Austrian borders from 1914, the others acquired the citizenship of the countries where they were born and were once part of the Austro Hungarian Empire. This resulted in serious consequences for the fate of Jews and Jewish families after the Anschluss.

[6] From 1938 to 1941 the emigration rate was extremely high, approximately 136,000 Jews out of 200,000 were forced to leave Austria: especially younger people and men moved to other countries, often they had to leave part of their family behind. Other 50,000, 33% of the total pre-Anschluss population, were deported between 1941 and 1945. At the end of the war 5,512 Jews, mostly Mischling or protected by mixed marriages, were in Vienna, only 2,142 of those who had been deported went back to the city. For the numbers and percentages see: Offenberger, I.F. (2017). The Jews of Nazi Vienna, 1938-1945: Rescue and Destruction, London: Palgrave Studies.

[7] Out of 56,000 Salonikan Jews, who lived in the city before 1943, approximately 45,000 were deported; after the war about 1,950 Jews resided in the city. About the numbers of prewar Jewish population and the number of deportees and survivors see also Antoniou, G., Moses, A.D. (2018), (Edited by), The Holocaust in Greece. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bowman, S. (2009), The Agony of Greek Jews, 1940-45, Stanford: Stanford University Press. Mazower, M. (1993). Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44. New Haven: Yale University Press; Michael Molho and Joseph Nehama (1948) In memoriam: Hommage aux victimes juives des Nazis en Grèce, Nicolaidis Thessaloniki.

Boder's interviews show, from an internal perspective, the topical events and the kind of trauma the survivors endured, how they were affected by the Nazi policies and perceived their harsh situation. As will be seen, both groups underwent isolation and persecution, uprooting, deprivation, separation, deception, uncertainty and ignorance about their present and future.

The global implementation of the anti Jewish policy followed generally the same pattern in whole Nazi occupied Europe: identification, isolation, expropriation, ghettoization, deportation and murder. Nonetheless, the ways and features in which the Nazis implemented their policy depended on time and on the local social and historical conditions. By analysing the interviews, topical relevant events can be identified which had a major or lower impact on the interviewees according to their origin. The traumatic experiences[8] resulting from them were basically the same and should be seen in relation to what Boder calls *deculturation*[9], an antonym of Dollard's concept of *acculturation*.[10] At the same time, it is possible to identify the specific traumatic and deculturating events of each group.

Isolation and persecution

The first relevant events which affected and changed Mrs. Johles and Mr. Schlaefrig's lives were the Anschluss and the Kristallnacht, turning points for all Viennese Jews. They understood that the civil and social rules they were accustomed to had been then overturned. The *pogrom* which followed the annexation led to the closure of Mrs. Johles's business[11] and to the arrest and detention of Mr. Schlaefrig, both for being high profile in the Jewish Community and for his political attitudes.[12] Mrs. Johles 's immediate emigration attempts failed[13] and after the Kristallnacht the Nazis entered their house, stole their valuables and arrested her husband.

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[8] About the traumas which affected survivors and their definition see Boder, D.P., The Impact of Catastrophe: I. Assessment and Evaluation, cit

[9] The term "deculturation" must be understood as referring to two different concepts: (a) the deculturated or deculturating environment (the verbs are used both in their transitive and passive connotations) and (b) deculturated personality. A deculturated environment such as a concentration camp, slums, lock-ups of police stations, bombed-out cities or any makeshift installation in substitution of standard conditions and attributes of existence is bound to evoke manifestations of subcultural behaviour in its victims. On the other hand deculturation of personality manifests itself not in the physical submission but in the intellectual and affective acceptance of the materially and ethically deculturated mode of existence. (Boder, The Impact of Catastrophe, cit., p. 35)

[10] Dollard, John (1935), Criteria for the Life History, Published for the Institute of Human Relations by Yale University Press, New Haven.

[11] She ran a delikatessen shop with her husband, a Polish citizen. On March 14, 1938, when the Anschluss pogrom was happening, they had to close down their activity. When they opened it again, after one week, no customer dared to enter: an SA was standing outside the shop preventing people to get inside. So they made the decision to emigrate and went from one consulate to the other in order to get the papers, unfortunately with no result.

[12] Austrian citizen, born in 1875, architect and former counsellor in the Austrian Railroad Ministry. At the time of Anschluss he was president for the second time of B'nai B'rith Lodge, which had supported the plebiscite planned by Chancellor Schuschnigg to preserve the independency of Austria. «When S. was planning in Austria a plebiscite on the question of the Anschluss, … this plebiscite was supported also with the resources of the B'Nai B'rith and other Jewish resources… I personally participated in these things and I did not know that, on the evening of Hitler's invasion, my name … together with other names, as one of the, let's say, prominent Jews, was given as one who supported the government of S…I was already politically delivered.»

[13] Mrs. Johles 's husband was caught in the Polen Aktion and sent to Zbaszyn, on the Polish border, on October 27. One week later he managed to go back to Vienna.

In the wave of arrests following March, 11, Mr. Schlaefrig and a large number of members of B'Nai B'rith were kept in prison for three weeks. He was beaten and interrogated every night.[14] The Nazis could not produce any kind of accusation but, after he was released, every night there were searches in his apartment. He was arrested three times until he was deported from Vienna in September 1942, in the meanwhile he couldn't keep his apartment, had to sell all of his properties to people certificated from the party, getting a fourth part of their value, and moved five times.

Mr. Schlaefrig focused in particular on the effects of the Anschluss, did not talk about the Kristallnacht. This is quite understandable: the major shocking and traumatic turning point for many Viennese Jews was the annexation and the following 'pogrom'. The Kristallnacht brought about consequences they had already experienced: arrests, pillaging, the indifference of the police and of their neighbours.

In this phase both the interviewees experienced what Boder, in his Traumatic Inventory, listed under the denomination *socio-economical and geographical* traumas.[15] Friedrich, said «This was a frightful time because one never knew when one would be arrested.» The *cultural affective* area was affected as well, especially for the *depersonalisation* they were subjected to.[16]

About the trauma deriving from *direct body violence*, Mr. Schlaefrig remembered he was kept in an overcrowded cell (*constriction of physical space necessary for actual body movements, as a consequence of crowding*), interrogated at night (*active interference with sleep and rest*) and beaten (*punishment administered by "authority").*[17]

Uprooting

The Jews in Vienna were helpless, this condition of persecution, uncertainty and deprivation compelled them to find a way to emigrate.[18] Mrs. Johles and her family fled illegally to Belgium in December 1938 leaving behind all their belongings. It was the beginning of an odyssey which led them from Brussels to Southern France and caused the temporary separation of the family.[19]

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[14] The Nazis accused them of connection with communist parties, Moscow, and, paradoxically, with the Elders of Zion.

[15] «Brutal and abrupt removal of a person from most environmental stimuli which have formed the conditioning framework of his everyday life; introduction of new stimuli especially in the form of human beings unpredictable in behaviour and not restricted in their behaviour by law, tradition or threat of complaint, lack of recourse to law; lack of information as to rules which were to govern the individual's present or future conduct and mode of living.» (Boder, The Impact, cit. pp. 41-2)

[16] «States of constraint such as (a) arrest, (b) imprisonment, and depersonalisation for an ignominious treatment of the individual with the utmost disregard for his rights, standards, and values» Boder, The Impact, cit. pp. 42)
He told Boder they were «thrown into those closed box-carriages, like cattle».

[17] Ibidem

[18] The emigration of the Jews was the original purpose of the Nazis, Eichmann was sent to Vienna to organise it. He profited from the situation and forced the IKG to collaborate with him. Between May 1938 and December 1939, exactly 117,409 Jews fled from Vienna. «As people scattered around the globe, their culture and society vanished with them, never to be resurrected. And irreparable family divisions began to occur with the move to mass exodus in 1938.» (Offenberger, the Jews of Nazi Vienna, p.158); «... approximately 15,000 Jews who emigrated between March 1938 and October 1941 were caught in another Nazi-occupied territory and would not survive the Holocaust.» (ibidem, p.174)

[19] Accommodated in villages close to Toulouse. Her husband went to Saint Cyprien on May 17, she stayed at the village supported by the villagers. She managed to get her husband out from Cyprien on July 18 because he was a polish citizen. They stayed at the village until September. Then they went to a family camp Brens in Tarn and stayed there until February 1941. They went to Lyon on February 6 because they knew 'they would have been sent away.

Mr. Schlaefrig dealt with the same issues: his son had been living in South Africa from 1936, his daughter emigrated to England. He tried to emigrate with his wife, but had bureaucratic problems about papers, quotas and visas and could not leave.[20] His experience is quite paradigmatic of what happened to Jews in Vienna at that time.

This urge or need to escape to a safer place or to emigrate was an experience almost all the interviewees[21] had sooner or later.

Nelly Bondy[22] had already been living in France from some years and, at the time of German invasion, she fled with her children from Paris to Southern France to join her husband. About one year after they went back to Paris, she risked being arrested, on July, 16/17, 1942, during *la rafle du Velodrome d'Hiver*.[23] A topical event for Jews living in France. At that time she was alone with her children, her husband had been already arrested.[24] She escaped to the free zone in the south, where she managed to stay in hiding concealing her identity until she went back to Paris and was arrested at the Gare de Lyon. She was taken to Drancy, while her children were in the south.

Mrs. Bondy too experienced the separation from her family, the persecution and the uprooting, in a different time and space. Also the interviewees from Salonica with Spanish or Portuguese citizenship, although exempted from the anti-Jewish measures, endured the same fate. The topical events which forced them to escape to Athens[25] were the German invasion in April 1941 for Nino Barzilai and Manis Mizrachi and the beginning of the deportations for Eda Button and Jacob Button. The later they got there, the harder and more complex their trip and settlement were.[26]

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[20] They were ready for emigration to South Africa, then Australia and Cuba but could not obtain a permit. Despite the help from American Lodges, the affidavit from the USA took too long to be got, in addition, in 1941, new policies for immigration were established.

[21] The Salonikan Jews deported to Auschwitz in spring 1943 didn't have the opportunity to escape.

[22] Nelly Bondy moved to Paris where she married Harry Bondy, a Czech citizen, in 1936. They ran a jewellery store. When the Germans invaded France and were close to Paris, she joined her husband in the South. He was in a Czech regiment. After they went back to Paris in September 1940, her husband was arrested in 1941.

[23] She was among the few foreign Jews living in Paris who were not taken on that July 16,1942 and later deported. «One morning – it was half past four in the morning – they came up to fetch me. Well, I didn't open my door; and I left Paris the very night with the children…».

[24] Arrested by the French police in May 1941, he was interned for thirteen months in the Loiret, in the Beaune-la-Rolande camp. He was deported by convoy no. 5, which left directly from Beaune-la-Rolande on June 28, 1942. He was assassinated on September 7, 1942 in Auschwitz.

[25] Athens, which was under Italian rule until September 8, 1943. The Italians did not applied the same anti-Jewish measures as the Germans did in their zone, so the Spanish Salonikan Jews thought that they would have been even safer there in the future.

[26] This can be noticed from the syntactic order of the sentences in particular in the interviews of Mrs. Button and Jacob Button.

Mr. Barzilai[27] settled in Athens and kept running his business. In his interview he did not talk much of his transfer to Athens, like Mr. Mizrachi,[28] who moved there at about the same time. Both of them stayed in Athens until spring 1944, when they were arrested and deported.

The trip to Athens was much more traumatic for Jacob Button and Eda Button.[29] Jacob at was eventually summoned by the Germans together with other Spanish subjects,[30] so he made the decision to leave. He experienced betrayal, hiding, the separation from his family, and arrest.[31] After being in prison for three months, finally he was freed for the efforts of the Spanish Embassy. When he arrived in Athens, the Germans had already begun to register the Jews: they were supposed to report weekly at the synagogue.

Eda Button got back her Spanish citizenship, which she had lost because married to a Greek Jew, by divorcing him on paper. After he fled to the mountains, she left her daughter in a convent and reached her relatives in Athens. Like Mrs. Bondy and Mrs. Johles , she endured a long and labyrinthine trip. Like Mr. Schlaefrig, she had to move several times when in Athens, especially after September 8, 1943, when the Germans took over.[32]

All these interviewees underwent uprooting, separation from their families and uncertainty. According to Boder's Traumatic Inventory, their traumatic experiences were both *cultural-affective,*[33] and *socio- economical and geographical.*[34]

Ghettoization

Before divorcing, Eda Button was considered a Greek Jew because of her marriage, as such she was initially subjected to the anti-Jewish policy implemented by the Germans in Salonika from February 1943. That was the third topical event for Salonikan Jews, According to the the

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[27] Born in Salonika in 1892, Portuguese citizen, he lived in Spain for 20 years, he moved back to Greece when the Spanish civil war was declared. The outbreak of the Greek Italian war prevented them from going bak to Spain. Portuguese citizenship had been granted by Portugal in 1913 to the Jews who could demonstrate their Portuguese origin and it was renewed every other year.

[28] Born in Salonika in 1922, his father Oscar Mizrachi held Spanish citizenship, was an importer of clothing and paper, his mother was a Turkish national. Since Oscar was a freemason, they were scared about the Germans, so they went to Athens. The Spanish consul granted them they would have not been taken, so they did not hide.

[29] They were not relatives.

[30] «I was of spaniard citizenship, and because of this we were the last Jews of Saloniki to be driven away.» Most probably he refers to July 29, 1943, when «Jewish holders of Spanish citizenship … were summoned to Beth Shaul synagogue by Wisliceny, the S.D. officer for an urgent announcement. Most of them showed up. They were notified that they were allowed to leave for Spain on their own and that they could take along whatever they owned… In reality the Spanish Jews had fallen into a trap… they were loaded forcibly onto trucks and taken over to Baron Hirsch camp…» (Bowman, S. (edited by), (2002). The Holocaust in Salonika – Eyewitness Account. New York: Sephardic House and Bloch Publishing Co, p. 161) They were deported with members of the Jewish Council to Bergen Belsen on August 2, 1943.

[31] He tried to leave with his family by boat but was cheated and robbed by the captain, so he had to get back to Salonika. He was helped by Greek friends to stay in hiding for some days then tried again to leave by train. He was recognised as a Jew and was arrested, his family got to Athens.

[32] «And the Germans were in Athens and the head of the Gestapo was in Athens again and he did the same things that were done in Thessaloniki, they began to do that in Athens again.»

[33] Ignorance of relatives' fate, a state of (b) flight, (c) hiding and (d) illegal existence (false papers or assumed status as aryan, etc.) or travel, perfidy and betrayal. (Boder, The Impact, cit., p.44)

[34] Flight in the path of war and the break-up of the family group. (Ibidem. p.43)

testimonies of Jews with Greek citizenship, the experiences which affected them at that time were the registration, the introduction of the yellow star, the expropriation and the ghettoization.[35]

The second relevant event for the Salonikan Jews, after the German occupation had been the Black Saturday, on July 11, 1942. It was a turning point for many Salonikan Jews and their families.[36] The Germans gathered all Jewish men between 17 and 45 years in Plateia Elephteria in order to register them as forced labourers. Mr. Sochami was one of them and was sent to work outside Salonika.[37] When he went back, he was sent to the ghetto. Eda Button remembers February 1942 as a time of uprooting, deprivation, impoverishment, overcrowding and fear for the deportation. Jews had to wear the star of David, leave their house and their belonging, and go to a ghetto.[38]

Mrs. Bondy had been interned for three months in Drancy, a transit camp, where she suffered the same traumas.[39] Also Mr. Mizrachi, Mr. Barzilai and Jacob Button with their families were interned in Haidari, a transit camp in Athens, before their deportation.

The same events affected Mr. Schlaefrig in Vienna, before his deportation to Theresienstadt on September 8, 1942. Even though a ghetto was never established there, the living conditions of the Jews in 1942 were ghetto-like.[40] They were concentrated in collective apartments in specific district of the city, had to wear the Star of David which marked also their houses.[41]

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[35] Eichmann sent Dieter Wisliceny and Alois Brunner to Salonika in order to carry out the deportation of the Salonikan Jews, which began on February 6th 1943. Alois Brunner had been the head of the Jewish department in Vienna where he organised the deportations from 1939 to October 1941. 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 neighbourhood, 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.

[36] Families were supported usually by men, once they were gone they suffered a serious impoverishment and were helped by the Jewish Community.

[37] During a hot summer day, 9,000 men were kept under the sun, mistreated, forced to do gymnastics being severely threatened and beaten by the Nazis.The forced labourers' living and working conditions were so hard that the Jewish community payed a ransom, comprised the area of the ancient Jewish cemetery, to the Germans to free them in autumn 1942.

[38] «They ordered that we leave our houses, leave all our furniture and that we have to go in a ghetto. They marked several streets, with stars… and we couldn't go out of these streets… We also have to wear the stars…. My husband had to leave his office… we lived on what we had … we had to stay at home all the time… in one room with other four people, men and women together.»

[39] «There was nothing to do… I was sweeping the floor… There was quite a big dormitory… There must have been eighty (people) or so. »

[40] « Jews remaining in Vienna through the great deportations in April 1942 lived under ghetto-like conditions. Although barbed wire did not physically confine them, and they lived in districts throughout the entire city, they did not move freely, nor were they able to evade German orders.» (Offenberger, *The Jews,* cit., p. 261)

[41] « Thus, without actually building a ghetto, the Germans had managed to create a ghetto-like atmosphere which helped them to achieve the same end: deportation.» (Ibidem).

In this phase of the prelude of ghettoization and its implementation under different forms, the traumatic experiences of the interviewees were *socio-economic and geographical*[42] and *cultural-affective.*[43] In the case of Viennese Jews and Jewish Greek men rounded up on July 11 like Mr. Sochami, and Mr. Barzilai in Haidari, there was also *requiring forced or "slave" labor,* often as a means to humiliate an torture the prisoners.[44]

Deportations

The concentration of Jews and the ghettoization aimed at making the deportation easier. All the interviewees were deported to a camp, or more than one, from different places: it was a topical moment in their interviews. Their destination depended on their citizenship, background, place and time of arrest. Eventually, they all suffered from the traumatic effects of deportation and deculturation, even though on a varied scale, depending on their destination and on factors like language, gender, skills, which could partially affect their fate.

For instance, the three Salonikan Jews deported from Athens in April 1944 were sent to Bergen Belsen as exchange Jews.[45] Miss Benmayor. and Mr. Sochami, both Greek, were deported with the first transports to Auschwitz Birkenau. Also Nelly Bondy had been sent there from Drancy. Mr. Schlaefrig was deported to Theresienstadt on September 8, 1942. They were all transported by train, in overcrowded wagons,[46] with no privacy, toilet facilities, food or water. The longer the journey, the more traumatic this experience was.

Almost all of them had no idea of what their destination could be, they were also victim of deception by the Germans: Eda Button thought, like many people in the transport of April 2, 1944, she was going to be sent to Spain. In Vienna and in Salonika, the Germans forced the Jewish institution, respectively the IKG and the Jewish Council, to collaborate with them not in preparing the lists of the deportees, but for the communications and the organisation of the transports. In August 1942, Mr. Schlaefrig was informed about his imminent deportation by the Kultusgemeinde, of which he had been a member. He asked to be exempted to wait for the deportation in one of the Sammellager,[47] where the living conditions were terrible, and went directly to the station.[48]

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[42] Compulsory transfer of domicile, transfer to significantly substandard housing or improvised inadequate shelters, confiscation of personal property and money , exclusion from the original social group, being forced into the position of out-group. (Boder, cit., p. 42)

[43] States of constraint, state of anxiety and fear, a status of threatening danger such as being assigned for deportation. (Ibidem)

[44] N.Barzilai told Boder: « They invented this labor for us… we just carried stones.»

[45] Bergen Belsen was originally established as a camp for Jews holding neutral countries' citizenship. As the interviewees declared, they were not forced to work and families could meet. During evacuations of the camps in Poland, Bergen Belsen became the destinations for thousands of prisoners.

[46] Mr. Schlaefrig and his wife travelled in a third-class wagon.

[47] The Sammellager was the place to which people designated for deportation were to report prior to the departure of the train transport. (Offenberger, I.F. (2017). The Jews of Nazi Vienna, 1938-1945: Rescue and Destruction, London: Palgrave Studies, p.255).

[48] In his interview he claimed that the IKG was in charge of selecting people for the transports and mentioned the director Joseph Loewenherz and Benjamin Murmelstein as privileged and protected people until winter 1942-43. The same opinion about the Jewish Council's privileged situation circulated in Salonika. «It was thought that if the Jews did it themselves, it will proceed in a more humane form… otherwise the Gestapo themselves would do that» he stated. As a matter of fact, the lists were compiled by the Zentralstelle, handed over to the Gestapo, them to the IKG, that was in charge of carrying out the deportation.

The camps

Even though the interviewees were deported to different camps, they suffered a *deculturation* process and specific traumas which can be easily identified in their testimonies. Their common feeling was the uncertainty about the future, the ignorance of what was happening.[49] Mrs. Johles, who managed to avoid the deportations from Southern France, told Boder she heard rumours: «They didn't want the people there, they wanted us to go to Kiev. And they were suppose to die, in Kiev.» About the transports to Auschwitz, which were sent weekly from Theresienstadt, Mr. Schlaefrig stated: «nobody ever knew where these transports went».

The transports were the beginning of a series of traumas, related to different spheres, which affected the interviewees until their liberation.[50] They were forced, both during the deportation and the evacuations, to *travel for days in overcrowded boxcars without facilities or room to sit down, wash, or lie down.* They had *no toilet facilities in locked cars were women, men and children were locked together.* This meant *the abolition of traditions of decency and dignity by suspending the separation between the sexes and privacy for bodily care and processes of bowel movements* which continued inside the camps.[51] They found themselves in an overthrown world, to describe which metaphors and a new language were needed,[52] it was, as Mr. Schlaefrig said, « a special existence… people got accustomed to a great deal under these conditions.» A right definition for deculturation.[53]

From the analysis of the interviews it is clear that women were particularly traumatised not only by the lack of privacy and hygiene,[54] but also by the shaving, tattooing and clothing process. All of them were deprived of their belongings, in Auschwitz also of their name, hair, physical features.[55]

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[49] « They brought us to Auschwitz. We did not know what was done.» said Rita Bemayor.

[50] Confiscation of personal property, money; Death of relatives or ignorance of their fate; Creation of prolonged (protracted) states of terror; Abolition of religious worship; Abolition of funeral rites or any vestige of dignity in disposal of the dead, desecration of cemeteries and utilitarian processing of human bodies; Complete blocking of habits of writing and reading. Requiring forced or "slave" labor. Chronic overtaxing of physical resources by overwork, bad working conditions.

[51] Nelly Bondy told Boder about her trip to Auschwitz: «After two days and three nights: no toilet facilities … no nothing… we just wrapped a cover around us». Also about the transports to Bergen Belsen, Mr. Mizrachi. said that they were loaded onto "train of beasts". 64 people were inside a wagon. There was nothing to eat, no facilities and a small quantity of water so they couldn't wash themselves.« It took 14 days, but after 10 days we were like beasts.»

[52] About the first selection, Mrs. Bondy used the expression "we were chosen out", when Boder told her that the word was "selected", she replied: « But we didn't know then, you see.»

[53] Although in Theresienstadt there was 'no shortage in cultural life', starvation, diseases and fear brought about deculturated behaviours, like stealing.

[54] F.S stated: «Washing belonged almost to the things impossible.»

[55] «They took everything from us…We were quite shaved… everything. The whole body. I thought first it was because of the vermin or so… But later on I changed my mind. I think it was the sheer malice or so…Women did it but men passed through the room all the time. You see, it was the most horrible experience... And then we got old Russian uniforms… and a foulard… they left me my own shoes.» (N.Bondy).

These experiences were listed by Boder under the *Appearance, cleanliness, dress* theme, which were basic needs the prisoners were completely deprived of inside the camp.[56]
The deprivation of basic needs and values,[57] hunger,[58] exhaustion, labor exploitation were part of the demolition of socio-cultural habits which produced the deculturation process.[59]

Also diseases played a significant role, especially typhus which was a direct consequence of the harsh living conditions of the prisoners, all the interviewees talked about typhus epidemics which maybe considered a topical experience as well as death. In Auschwitz it was the first shocking trauma, for the selections and separation of families, later there and in the other camps it was an obsessive ubiquitous presence and threat.[60]

Liberation and loneliness

Liberation happened at different times and in different ways according to the place were the interviewees were located.[61] Once again the text of interviews provide information about the traumatic experiences of the death marches: they were 'taken to', 'marched to', 'loaded onto open freight cars'.

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[56]Listed by Boder as: Brutal shaving, bathing, and delousing processes. Tattooing of prisoners. Insufficient clothing, clothing that did not fit. Failure to provide facilities for keeping clean, lack of soap and water. Maintenance of conditions which made it impossible for prisoners to free themselves from lice and vermin. (Boder, The Impact, p.45) When Nelly Bondy, who could speak many languages, was sent from Birkenau to Auschwitz to work in the administration, she stressed the change in her condition saying «I was safe, I got better clothing, I got these striped clothes… I was allowed to grow my hair a bit…There was hot water to wash oneself with…whereas in Birkenau there was no water at all»

[57] Boder lists «Heterogeneous masses of people, strange to each other, differing in age, sex, nationality, country of origin, language, social status, even if all are protagonists of the same misfortune. (b) Lack of recourse to law.-Follow other seven expansion items. Break-up of the family group.»

[58] Listed by Boder as 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.

[59] Both Mr. Mizrachi and Mr. Schlaefrig realised this reversal of rules of civil life when old people were forced to walk and run from the stations to their destinations, Bergen Belsen and Theresienstadt. Hunger caused changes in normal eating habits and stealing.
«I ate the dirt; we stole each other the bread, we did that» said R.B. in relation to Birkenau, and, about Retzow, «there was nothing to eat.» In Bergen Belsen, despite their 'privileged condition', the Spanish Jews from Salonika had the same trauma: «we starved and everything we saw on the earth we took it out from there and started to eat it without caring if it was dirty or clean. … without cooking, like beasts. We had no rights to go out… we were not supposed to work.»

[60] «Death was a 'light' matter under these conditions.» (Friedrich Schlaefrig).

[61] Those who were in Auschwitz Birkenau were evacuated from the complex in January 1945 and experienced the death marches. The women were sent to Ravensbrück and its sub camps, H.S. ended up in Buchenwald. This trauma was listed by Boder as «Long marches on foot after weeks and months of starvation.»

When they were liberated, or rescued in N. Bondy's case,[62] in spring 1945: they were sick, undernourished, completely overwhelmed.[63]

To the survivors the liberation represented the moment when they realised their losses. They had lost not only their families, their houses and their belongings, but also their bond to the place where they were from. This is the reason why their words and expressions about liberation belong to the semantic area of loneliness and isolation .[64] The Holocaust marked a caesura in history and in their personal lives. No one among the interviewees wanted to go back to their country or city.

Their words stressed the feeling of loss, uncertainty and belong to the semantic area of waiting. Rita Benmayor said: «I did not want to go to Greece, why, I had no family. If I went to Greece, see my house without my mother, without father, I cannot see that.»[65]
Also Mr. Sochami felt he couldn't go back to Greece and stayed in Paris, like Manis Mizrachi.[66] Three Salonikans from Bergen Belsen didn't lose their family but didn't want to go back to Greece. Jacob Button wanted to go to Palestine,[67] Mr. Barzilai settled in France[68] The situation of Eda Button was a bit different, her husband had already illegally left for Palestine and was waiting for her in Tel Aviv. She had managed to get her child back from the nuns in Salonika but she was having troubles with her.[69] Also Mrs. Bondy got in touch with her children when she went back to Paris, but was waiting to settle properly before taking them back. She was alone.[70] Mrs. Johles managed to escape to Switzerland from France on December 27, 1942 and was interviewed by Boder in Geneva, she was ready to go to the US with her husband and other daughter.[71]

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[62] She managed to escape during a march in Leipzig: « I couldn't walk so I escaped.» She hid in a church for three days. She didn't tell she was Jewish but she told that she was born in Vienna «which accounted for her good german».

[63] The Salonikans in Bergen Belsen were liberated by the Americans close to Farsleben. The train they had been loaded onto had left the camp and was directed to Theresienstadt when it was bombed. The Ninth Army found it in the countryside and rescued the passengers, most of them were affected by typhus. F was liberated by the Russians in Theresienstadt, unlike the other interviewees, he knew that the liberation was near, since he could get information spying the Czech guard who could listen to the radio.

[64] R.B. said: « They took the whole family…My whole family is in the crematorium… I am left alone from the whole family…»; H. S. I am the only one left in my whole family; out of 27 I am alone in the world.»; M.M. told Boder: «When the freedom came, I was quite alone, I remained quite alone…».

[65] When she was interviewed, she said she wanted to go to America, but she was waiting to leave. Her uncle in the US sent her an affidavit, but the quota for the Greeks was closed. At the moment she was working in Paris.

[66] After his recover in the hospital in Hillersleben, he decided to go to France where he had some relatives. Unfortunately they didn't survive the deportation and he didn't find them. When he was interviewed he didn't know where to go, maybe the USA, but «Unfortunately I have no one.»

[67] «I have applied to Palestine; I want to go to Palestine. I am waiting for a whole year here and I have not received the permission to go to Palestine. I had to try to find something to work here.»

[68] He was very grateful to the French: ««None of us will ever forget what France did for us… I will soon start to work. We believe we can stay here in France, in this area.»

[69] «From the moment she came to me she suffered – she believes that I made her bad (sick) – And especially if she, the little one, maybe she was told that her mother was bad.» The child didn't want to stay with her, basically she didn't know her mother and she wanted to go back to the convent in Salonika where she had been very well cared of. Eda, troubled and sad, said: «I don't want to drive to Greece. I cannot see this country anymore. And I want to drive to Palestine to be free.»

[70] She knew that her husband had died when she was working in the administration office in Auschwitz.

[71] Her older son had already left for Palestine with the first legal transport of youngsters on May 28, 1945.

F.S., who was 71, at the time of the interview, was waiting to join his son in South Africa.[72]

Conclusions

From the analysis of Viennese and Salonikan Jews' interviews with David Boder it appears that, despite the differences in geographical and historical coordinates, the Holocaust affected them with the same traumatic events despite the differences in context and background.
Boder grasped the importance of examining the survivors' perspective to fully understand their situation and indicated a path which is worth following and investigating further.

From this point of view, as we could see, the key concepts in their experiences were uprooting, isolation, separation, uncertainty and deprivation. Their trauma derived from the prolonged exposition to extremely stressful events: invasion and occupation of their residing place, implementation of anti-Jewish measures, persecution and deportation, psychological and social consequences after the war. The impact of their trauma was cumulative, additive, and summative wherever they came from. As Malka Johles told Boder: « One can't possibly… much to tell, my good man. There is so much to tell. Should they experience what it is like to sit on, on boxes.»

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[72] His daughter was in Canada at that time.

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