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From the Camp to the Road Representing the Evacuations from Auschwitz, January 1945

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“THEY DID NOT TELL US WHERE WE WERE GOING – THEY just said to go – we saw thousands upon thousands of people – there were all these factories that surrounded Auschwitz and all these prisoners joined the march.”¹ This commotion, according to Fela Finkelstein, was made all the more menacing by the guards’ threat that “anyone who does not walk, we will shoot, anyone who is weak, we will shoot.”² From January 17 to 22, 1945, Finkelstein was among an estimated 56,000 Jewish and non-Jewish men, women, and children who were evacuated from forty

camps in the Auschwitz camp complex. The conditions of the evacuation journeys, the health of the former camp prisoners, and guards' abusive treatment of them blatantly contradicted the ostensible intention of their preservation and use as forced labor. Most evacuated prisoners walked between fifty and sixty kilometers to interim locations where they awaited rail transport to take them to concentration camps in the German Reich. The slow pace of the columns, moving at an average of no more than three kilometers per hour, made them more vulnerable to violence and Soviet military attacks. The relocation of Auschwitz prisoners had become urgent because January 12 marked the beginning of the Soviet Army's Vistula-Oder Offensive, eight days ahead of schedule. After the fall of Kielce, Soviet troops entered the abandoned city of Warsaw on January 17. The liberation of Krakow occurred on January 19, following its encirclement by the Fifty-Ninth and Sixtieth Armies under Marshal Konev. Łódź fell on the same day. On January 20, Soviet forces entered Upper Silesia. Auschwitz's evidence of life (the warehouses full of stolen goods, clothes, artifacts, immovable prisoners) and death (the crematoria and gas chambers) had to be erased. Time was running out.

In the haste of leaving, people scraped together whatever they could. Some had access to warehouses of expropriated goods and clothing and even made gloves and socks in advance. The fortunate ones were given bread, tinned meat, butter, and jam for the journey. Others improvised and preserved mementos of camp life. Jewish prisoner Fela Ravett covered herself with a blanket and walked in *trepches* (wooden clogs),³ while Isaiah Kalfus took with him a metal can containing sheet music and lyrics to songs written in Auschwitz by his friend David Wisnia.⁴

The movement of camp prisoners competed for road space with other war traffic in Silesia: crowds of refugees, civilians fleeing for their lives, POWs, and military columns retreating westward.⁵ The evacuations could hardly have been undertaken in worse weather conditions. News reports described an "icy hurricane" sweeping across the Polish plains.⁶ The time table was also unforgiving, as prisoners were expected to complete the long journey in just two or three days.⁷ If they survived the march, prisoners then had to endure transport by rail in open freight cars to concentration camps in Germany, Austria, or Czechoslovakia.

The chaos of evacuations was also felt by those who remained in the camp, those who were too sick to walk, and those refused to leave. When the Soviet Red Army reached Auschwitz on January 27, they liberated approximately 7,650 hidden, sick, and immovable prisoners in camps including Birkenau, Monowitz, and Jaworzno.⁸ Among them was Otto Wolken, a physician who escaped the clutches of SS men who were destroying evidence and crematoria and dragging prisoners into

the evacuation columns in the last days before liberation. He hid in a concrete tank of sewage: “And who was supposed to help me? I remember as if it were today that I saw in front of my eyes, as if it were a quick film, my entire life, and especially those seven years spent in concentration camps and all those terrible, frequently very painful experiences from that period. Why was it that I had to endure all those tortures, torment, and humiliations, in order to die right before the liberation in the excrements?”⁹

Where do the evacuations from the Auschwitz camps system in January 1945 fit into the history of the Holocaust, the Final Solution, and World War II? How were they used as a practice of spatial control of victims? Were they the final stage in a continuum of displacement that began with induced refugee migrations of the 1930s, Wehrmacht and Einsatzgruppen killings in Soviet territories, resettlements to ghettos, and deportations to transit, concentration, and extermination camps? Where do they fit as experiential history, as an example of mobile confinement, analogous to other sites during the Holocaust, such as cattle-car journeys, yet different from them, as surviving prisoners were emerging from the camps in occupied Poland rather than going to them?

This chapter reports on the results of a three-year research project by historians and geographers to analyze the experiences of concentration camp prisoners relocated from Auschwitz between January 17 and 22, 1945.¹⁰ We explore what the evacuations meant to the prisoners who had endured forced labor, punishment, and dehumanization through incarceration in the ghetto and camp system. How did movement from various camps in Auschwitz to the roads of war affect individuals’ prospects for survival and escape? Is it possible to trace the routes the prisoners followed, through the physical landscape and the emotional terrain of traumatic experience? To what extent can these experiences be represented in any summative way, given the fragmentary nature of extant historical evidence and its intensely emotional content? To what extent can geographical approaches to, and visualizations of, evacuations offer alternatives to historians’ written analyses?

Camps on the Eve of Evacuations

The relocation of prisoners from major concentration camps, variously described as evacuations and death marches, occurred in three stages during the last year of the Second World War. In the first stage, from April 1944 to September 1944, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Oswald Pohl ordered the evacuation of Majdanek and concentration camps in the Baltic

countries. Soon after, the dismantling of Auschwitz began.¹¹ Deportees' clothes and personal items that had been amassed in the warehouse "Canada" in Birkenau, most recently from the arrival of Jews from Hungary, were shipped to concentration camps in Germany as well.

The second stage, from January to February 1945, assumed a destructive and chaotic character with orders for the relocation of prisoners from large camps and their satellites in the East such as Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and Stutthof. The evacuations originated from the instruction of December 21, 1944, from the gauleiter and Reich defense commissioner in Upper Silesia, Fritz Bracht. He ordered a "large-scale evacuation," giving priority to Auschwitz prisoners and prisoners of war before convoys of civilians or military personnel, as they were allegedly a dangerous element that could incite riots among the civilian population. Bracht's order stipulated that if the prisoners tried to escape, they should be shot. There were other guidelines that were not always followed: to prevent escapes, prisoners should not be moved at night; those who were evacuated were to be in good-enough physical condition to walk at least twenty kilometers a day and capable of work once they arrived in the Reich; and camp guards were to act as escorts alongside special execution units called "Sentry and Sharp-Shooter Units." The men in these units frequently killed those unable to keep up even if they were in good physical health. Others were shot for "pausing to answer the call of nature, to tie their shoes, or to knock the built-up snow off the soles of their shoes."¹²

Evidence of mass death such as crematoria and warehouses of prisoners' expropriated personal items was also destroyed. On the eve of mass evacuations in mid-January, there were approximately 67,000 camp prisoners in Auschwitz and its subcamps employed in mines, mills, and other plants: 31,894 in the main camp and Birkenau and 35,118 in Buna-Monowitz and outlying camps.¹³ On January 17, the SS began moving concentration camp prisoners in a westerly direction: 56,000 from Auschwitz and 11,000 from Stutthof.¹⁴ There were two main evacuation routes: the first left Auschwitz and went westward, terminating at Wodzisław, a distance of sixty-three kilometers. The Wodzisław evacuations included Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners from Auschwitz I, Birkenau, and several subcamps such as Rajsko. Half of them were female, mainly from Poland, Hungary, and France. From Wodzisław, trains transported prisoners to Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dora-Mittelbau, Mauthausen, Ravensbrück, and Sachsenhausen. The second route left Auschwitz and went northwest, terminating fifty-five kilometers later at Gleiwitz. These prisoners were assembled from Birkenau, Monowitz, and other subcamps. From Gleiwitz they were

transported by rail to camps including Buchenwald, Dora-Mittelbau, Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen. By the late evening of January 19, 1945, the great majority of movable prisoners in the camp (approximately 75 percent) had been evacuated. The third stage, from April to May 1945, targeted concentration camps in Germany and Austria: Buchenwald, Neuengamme, Dora-Mittelbau, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg, Dachau, and Mauthausen.¹⁵

Early postwar attention to evacuations and death marches was testimonial and forensic. Survivors reported their experiences to historical commissions, were interviewed in displaced persons' camps in Europe by psychologists such as David Boder,¹⁶ and gave testimonials to war-crimes investigators. The forensic approach characterized the work of humanitarian organizations as they confronted thousands of bodies strewn and buried across Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Attempts to document the scale of the evacuations and death marches, such as their itineraries, distances, and locations of death en route, and the identification of the dead and missing persons, were first made by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), and later the International Refugee Organization, the International Committee for the Red Cross, the Records Branch of the International Tracing Service,¹⁷ and Allied military and civilian agencies as well as German, Czech, Polish, French, Belgian, and Soviet officials.

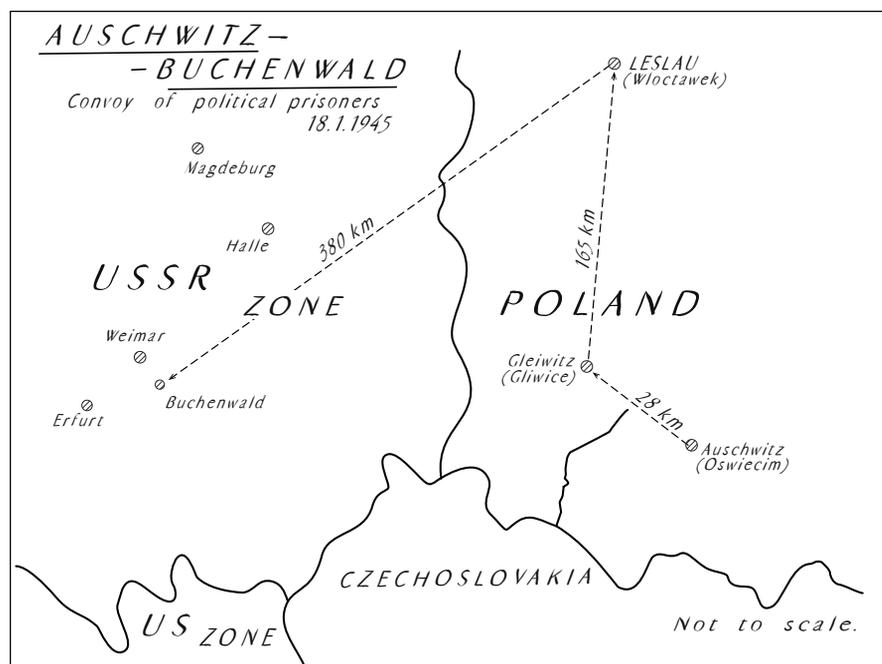
Evacuations and death marches have also been addressed in camp-specific and general histories of the Holocaust in several ways: as conclusions to local histories of concentration camps, as examples of anti-Semitic persecutions, and as events symptomatic of “end-phase” collapse of the Nazi central command.¹⁸ Polish, Czech, and German historians undertook the earliest work on evacuations and death marches. Andrzej Strzelecki's *The Evacuation, Dismantling, and Liberation of KL Auschwitz*, the multiauthored *Auschwitz, 1940–1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp* (volume 5), and Danuta Czech's *The Auschwitz Chronicle* remain benchmarks on the history of Auschwitz, particularly as to its liquidation, prisoner demography, organization, and extermination facilities.¹⁹ Studies by Joachim Neander and Katrin Greiser concentrated on evacuations and death marches from other camps.²⁰ Leni Yahil noted economic links between camp evacuees and their use as forced labor.²¹ Karin Orth, in addition to her study of the concentration camp system, has profiled its personnel. She notes that on January 15, 1945, when the concentration camp population was at its peak of 715,000, 37,674 men and 3,508 women were guarding the camps.²² It is most certain that several thousand of them continued in this capacity as evacuation guards. According to Stanislaus K. Dentzinger, one of the

SS guards assigned to the evacuations from Auschwitz III (Monowitz) to Gleiwitz, guards were placed at sixty-meter intervals along the entire length of the evacuation, which included in total 10,000 prisoners.²³

Daniel Blatman's *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide* is the most authoritative book to emerge on the topic. He studied the death marches from an administrative and organizational perspective and analyzed their connections to the "Final Solution" of the Jewish Question and wider German war aims in the face of imminent defeat. Blatman provides a synthetic history of the marches' administration and examples of "criminal communities," as evident in German civilians' participation in communal massacres at Palmnicken (January 1945) and Gardelegen (April 1945).²⁴ He also argues that the death marches targeted Jews and non-Jews and revealed a wider genocidal displacement that was shaped by war, military fronts, and fear and hostility among local German populations and communities.

The phenomenon of the death marches also has a visual and mapping history parallel to the testimonial, forensic, and historical approaches. The records created by UNRRA include many of the first maps of the evacuation routes (see figure 7.1).²⁵ These maps are typically schematic, their lines connecting points of known places along an unfolding itinerary where an evacuation column paused, passed through, or split into two or more smaller columns. The example in figure 7.1 charts a march from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, including a leg to Gleiwitz.²⁶ Whether drawn as planning documents or after the event, the minimalist itinerary maps do little more than indicate the general northerly or southwesterly direction of movement of prisoners from camps in Poland and elsewhere to camps in the Third Reich. In no way do they capture the disorder of this camp traffic, the organic and evolutionary nature of the route path, or the chaos of command that terrified the prisoners.

Historians' attention to death marches has revealed useful insights, but also ambiguity due to an incomplete empirical record of the identities of victims, their national origins, and the manner of their death and burial locations. These ambiguities have affected the terminology used to describe mass movement from and between concentration camps from January to May 1945. *Death march* has displaced *evacuation* in histories of this movement, while survivors use numerous travel terms that contribute further ambiguity: *hike*, *trek*, *journey*, and *transport*. Our intention is to bring nuance to the terminology of forced movement with the use of the word *evacuations* as an administrative undertaking as distinct from the impact of evacuations as *death marches*.²⁷ We do not privilege either term but rather attempt to preserve the administrative intentions and experiential markers of forced movement. We use the



7.1. UNRRA schematic map. The map provides a general sense of origins and directions of movements from Auschwitz, via Gleiwitz (Gliwice), to Buchenwald in January 1945. Image redrawn from original map; original courtesy of ITS Archives, Bad Arolsen, Germany.

term *death march* as an evolutionary signifier of the physical and emotional assault of the evacuations on the already vulnerable body through direct exposure to military fronts and landscapes of violence.

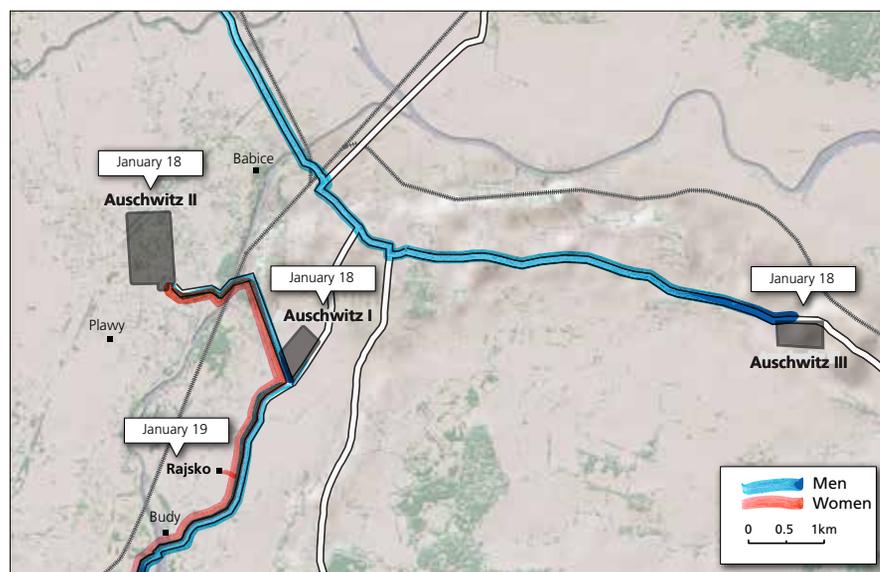
Emotional Community: The Women from Rajsko Subcamp

Throughout the course of our research, we read several hundred testimonies of Jewish and non-Jewish men and women who were evacuated from numerous camps in the Auschwitz system during January 1945. These testimonies were full of references to emotional and physical trajectories of victimization of which their evacuation journey represented yet another, but not yet final, example of European-wide scale of displacement and forced movement. They revealed a diverse range of themes: fear about journeying into the unknown, whether it was wise to choose a future with SS guards or the coming liberators, the choices made in the hours before leaving the camp and en route, and the dependency on others for support. Although these themes were more or less consistent despite prisoner origin, physical health, and involvement in labor detail, there were opportunities to scrutinize some of these themes at a granular level from the perspective of camp location, gender, violence, and the formation and sustainability of emotional bonds or communities between prisoners. We took Barbara Rosenwein's concept

of “emotional communities” and applied it to prisoners’ perceptions of support, landscape, and each other. Emotional communities, she writes, intend to “uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations they make about others’ emotions; the nature of affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.”²⁸

Rather than take a comparative or thematic approach, we decided to focus on the experiences of a small number of Polish Catholic women who exemplified the diverse prisoner demography of Auschwitz on the eve of its liberation. The testimonies of ten Polish Catholic women interned in the Rajsko subcamp as political prisoners were analyzed for expressions of corporeal and spatial themes, and six of these were selected as the basis for close reading and geovisual representation. The women were interviewed in Krakow and Katowice in Poland between 1971 and 1973 for the Regional Commissions for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes.²⁹ The testimonies of the six women reveal the importance of landscape familiarity and how emotional support networks shaped responses to their evacuation. Given that the women knew each other prior to internment and had some knowledge of the landscape and towns on the evacuation route, we were interested to discover whether such spatial knowledge and emotional support advantaged and sustained survival in spite of fatigue and violence and, if so, when and where along the route such knowledge and support intersected or frayed. We analyzed the testimonies for expressions of emotional trauma and tone, descriptions of significant events, and descriptions of key documentary aspects of the evacuation’s geographical and temporal landscapes: duration, distance, stopping points, witnessing to killings, and escapes. To what extent could these moments of physical and emotional significance be geographically visualized to indicate a traumatic cartography of the evacuations, and at what points did evacuations morph into death marches?

The six women worked in a plant-breeding facility in the Rajsko subcamp. They were evacuated together from there to Wodzisław at around eleven on the night of January 18, 1945.³⁰ The women were (in alphabetical order) Ludwina Makuch, Maria Meizner, Zofia Pajerska, Ludmila Rojczor, Stanisława Slowakiewicz, and Genowefa Ułan. Most of them lived in and around Silesia and were interned for reasons such as political resistance and subversion. Their testimony provides useful details about not only their own evacuation experiences but also those of others, such as Jews. They joined an evacuation from the women’s camps in Auschwitz I and Birkenau, which eventually merged into a



7.2. Departures from Auschwitz I, II, III, and Rajsko subcamp, January 18 and 19, 1945. Women from Rajsko subcamp (lower left) joined with the marches of men (blue) and women (pink) overnight after the other camps were nearly emptied. Map compilation by Natalia Figueredo, Dayana Elhazari, and Andrew Fomil.

male-female procession, as seen in the map of connecting evacuation columns (see figure 7.2). The women were one of the last groups to join this evacuation, at the rear of the column. The itinerary for this evacuation on foot was Auschwitz, Rajsko, Pszczyna, Poreba Wielka, Jastrzêbie Górne, and finally terminating at the Wodzisław rail yard. From the rail yard, the prisoners were transported to Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Ravensbrück, and Bergen-Belsen.

Rajsko, located three kilometers south of Auschwitz, housed specialist greenhouses and chemical facilities. Its prisoners were exposed to different cruelties, routines, and labor demands than those interned in Auschwitz I or Birkenau. These women, owing to their backgrounds and work in Rajsko, lived in comparatively comfortable environments. As forced labor, they contributed to the scientific work of the camp. The camp was developed from a small village into an agricultural site in mid-1941 on Heinrich Himmler's instruction, specifically for horticulture and breeding in Auschwitz's "zone of interest."³¹ The female prisoners in the camp, which numbered between two and three hundred, were divided into two detachments, one for gardening and one for plant breeding.³² *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Joachim Caesar, who held a PhD in agriculture and botany and was director of the Auschwitz concentration camp farms, commanded the SS men who supervised their work. His deputy was *SS-Obersturmführer* Dr. Heinz Schattenberg.³³

The mainly Polish and Russian prisoners in the gardening detachment raised vegetables for SS kitchens and army units. Their work in

plant breeding and farming provided access to good sanitary and hygienic conditions and “warm running water.” From June 1943, “the plant breeding research and experimental detachment of inmates . . . worked under the supervision of civilian employees, German and Russian scientists, and agro-engineers, on raising a plant called *kok-sagiz* (Russian dandelion), the roots of which contained a rubber-producing substance.”³⁴

Ludmila Rojczor, a chemist, was assigned to laboratory work in the development of *kok-sagiz*. Although Rojczor claimed to never have witnessed “a killing of a female prisoner by any of the SS guards in Rajsco,” she did witness “heavy beatings” and endured “harsh disciplinary punishments.”³⁵ Maria Meizner also worked in the plant-breeding commando (*Pflanzenzucht Kommando*) and had personal contact with Caesar. She recalled, “I never saw him commit any murders. He treated the women in our Kommando fairly indulgently. He created for us quite decent living conditions, although there were acts of punishment, like the penalty to stand by the camp barbed wire, or—next to the barrack—where whipping was performed.” In contrast to Caesar, she referred to Schattenberg as a rather shady character who spied on the women.³⁶ In addition to Caesar and Schattenberg, the women identified Johanna Bormann, an *Aufseherin* (female overseer or attendant) as a person of fear and authority. She had served at the Auschwitz subcamps of Babitz and Budy until December 1944.³⁷ Although Bormann was reported to have been present in Rajsco at the assembly for evacuations, which began at about five on the afternoon of January 18, it is very likely that she did not make that evacuation journey from the camp that evening but instead returned to the subcamp Hindenburg (Zabrze) to oversee that camp’s evacuation on January 19. Other women reported that Caesar and Schattenberg were physically present during the evacuation journey and that six or seven new SS officers arrived as reinforcements.

From the Camp to the Road

Evacuations had commenced from other subcamps such as Jaworzno, Sosnowiec, and sections of Birkenau for Gleiwitz on the afternoon of January 17 and continued from Rajsco and other subcamps until January 22.³⁸ Having experienced comparatively good accommodation and work conditions in Rajsco, the Polish Catholic women were well stocked with food and warm clothing for the evacuation journey. They reported that failure to obey commands and maintain the estimated walking pace of two to three kilometers per hour, and efforts to escape, were frequently fatal.

The departure from Rajsko was not unexpected by the women or the Polish villagers who lived in the towns on the evacuation itinerary or in their vicinity.³⁹ What was once inside the camp, its traumatized and fatigued human mass, was now relocated to the roads and fields of Silesia. News of the approaching evacuation circulated among Polish villagers as “Auschwitz is coming.” Polish witnesses of the convoys tried to help where they could, but in some cases their efforts were futile, deterred by gunshots and reprisals. Some prisoners who were familiar with the area attempted to escape when guards were not looking, sought temporary refuge and food, and even attempted to blend in with the locals. Some Polish villagers offered overnight accommodations to the escaped, while others turned them in.

Those who attempted escape often met brutal deaths. The deaths of two acquaintances from the Rajsko camp, Władysława Sawicka and Elżbieta Piekosz (hereafter Duszka and Ela, respectively), at a stopover at a barn in Jastrzêbie Górne, was mentioned in all six testimonies as an emotionally transformative event during the evacuation. Reports varied as to how the women met their deaths. Ludmila Rojczor said, “They were killed in the morning when the column was about to get back on the road. I have not seen the actual killing because I was at the front of the column but I have heard from friends that Ela Piekosz and couple others were stabbed in a barn, where they were trying to hide in the hay, and Władysława Duszka-Sawicka was shot. When the column resumed marching I saw Duszka-Sawicka standing next to the rows and being guarded by the SS-men. Other female prisoners called on her to join the column but the SS-men would not allow it.”⁴⁰ Stanisława Slowakiewicz is more explicit. Referring to Duszka, she said, “I saw her one day in Jastrzêbie Górne during the evacuation. Early in the morning, she was standing next to some other women, by the entrance to the barn, beaten and tortured. When I called: ‘Duszka, come with us,’ she didn’t respond. For reasons unknown, one of the SS officers approached her and shot her.” She also mentions that Ela Piekosz was hiding in hay in the barn with some other women and was “found by the SS officers and murdered with the bayonets.”⁴¹

Ludwina Makuch corroborated reports about the brutality of the guards, saying that “during the evacuation, the Rajsko prisoners were escorted by the SS, who were shooting marching prisoners that were weak and unable to walk either because of hunger or fatigue. I learned from the other prisoners that during a break in Jastrzêbie Górne, Ela Piekosz was killed while hiding in the barn.” Ludwina walked with Duszka Sawicka during the evacuation, continuing the bond they forged while working in the same Rajsko unit. She reported that “while we

stopped in Jastrzêbie Górne, she [Duszka] walked away from the Kommando and was accused of attempting to escape, and shot by the SS. I don't know the name of the person who killed her."⁴² The barn, as Maria Meizner recalls, was packed with women.

We stayed the night in barns at Jastrzêbie Górne. There were a whole lot of us—I remember that the entire barn was filled with women. I cannot say when the women from the main Auschwitz camp joined us, but on the road—there were many of us. While walking, I went past the bodies of dead women, lying on the road, I heard shots, but I did not see any of the female prisoners walking next to me get shot. After leaving the barn in Jastrzêbie Górne, in the morning, I joined a group of women in order to continue the journey with them. Then I heard that Duszka Sawicka had been shot by the SS officers. I heard the women say that in the morning they had seen her standing by the barn wall, escorted by an SS officer. . . . Also, back then, in Jastrzêbie Górne, before we set off to continue our journey, I heard from the women that the SS officers had stabbed Ela Piekosz to death in the hay with their bayonets. The women said that Ela Piekosz had hidden, not wanting to continue the journey with us. The SS officers, while looking for female prisoners, thrust their bayonets into the hay and straw, and in this way they stabbed her.⁴³

Zofia Pajerska escaped by hiding in a barn on a stopover one day earlier. She mentioned the killings of Duszka and Ela, even though they occurred after her escape.⁴⁴ It was the news of their killings rather than her escape that assumed significance as an evacuation event:

After the occupation, I got in touch with the former female prisoners of the Rajsko sub-camp. They told me that on the day following my escape, other female prisoners attempted to flee, and it was then that Duszka Sawicka and Ela Piekosz (whom I knew) perished. I was told that Władysława Sawicka (whom we called Duszka) was shot dead having been found outside the group and suspected of planning an escape. Aurelia Piekosz (whom we called Ela) apparently stayed in the barn buried inside the hay, and the SS officers stabbed her to death. Thrusting their bayonets onto the floor, they were checking if the prisoners had hidden themselves somewhere around. As I had escaped earlier, I did not witness those events.⁴⁵

Schattenberg made minor appearances in the women's testimonies. Genowefa Ułan, for example, recalled, "I saw Schattenberg during the march. Usually, he appeared next to us during short stop-overs lasting several minutes," but Schattenberg is initially uninformed about the killers of Duszka and Ela. After spending the night in the barn at Jastrzêbie Górne, Ułan describes how the killings unfolded:

Early in the morning, a fellow prisoner and a friend of mine, Władysława Sawicka escaped from this barn. Another one, a certain Ela Piekosz hid in this barn burying herself in the straw, hoping for an escape from the transport. In the morning, when all the female prisoners came out of the barn in

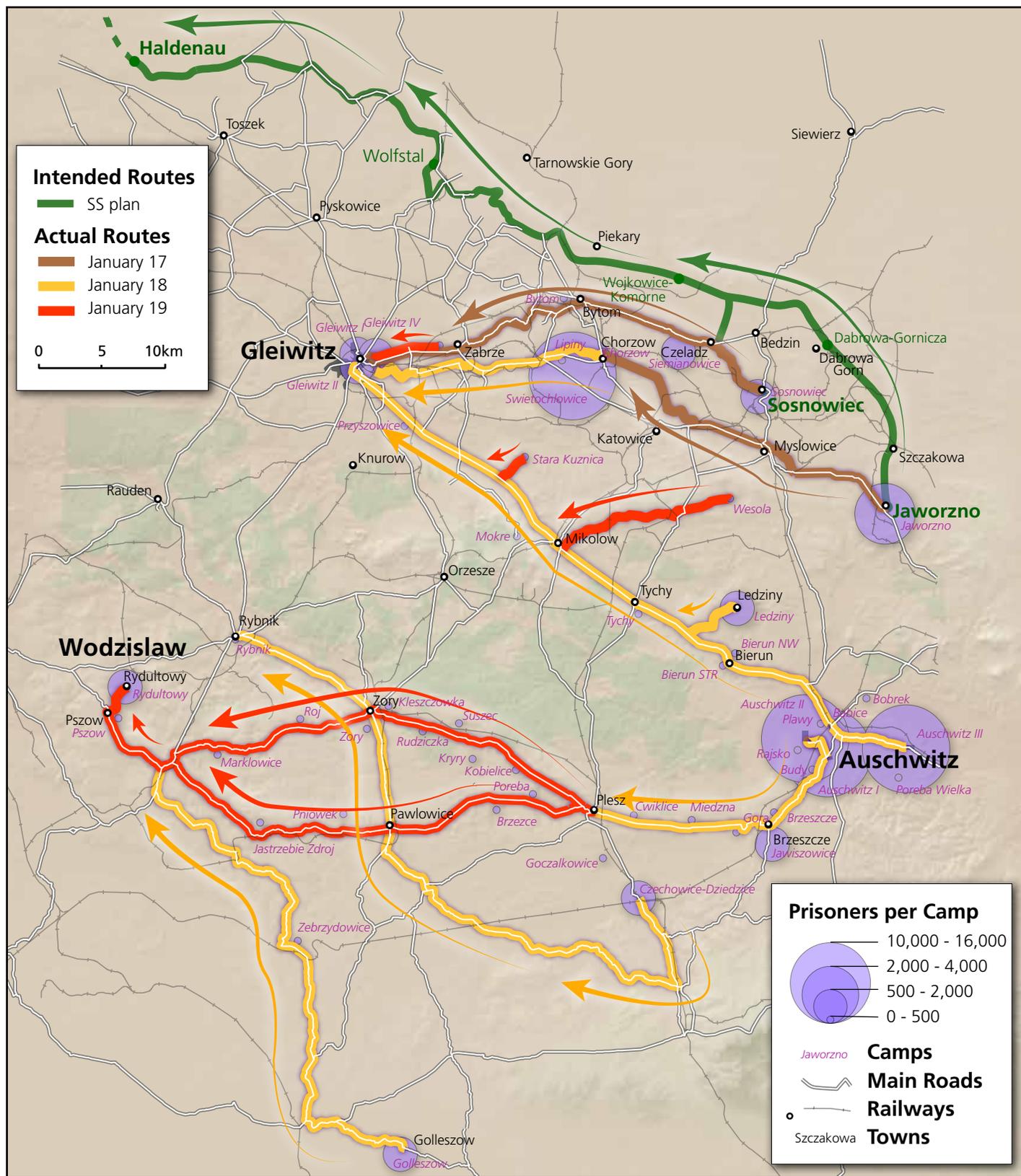
order to prepare themselves for further marching, I remained inside because of problems with putting shoes on my swollen feet. Suddenly, a group of SS officers (whom I had not seen during the previous march) rushed into the barn and started to thrust their bayonets (placed on their guns) randomly into the straw heaps. At one point, I heard Ela Piekosz moan. It was later on, during the march, that I learned that she had been stabbed to death by those SS officers. She was buried in Jastrzêbie Górne. Władysława Sawicka was caught by one of the guards who saw her fleeing from the barn. Before we set off to continue the march, I saw Sawicka standing against the barn wall, bare-footed with her arms held up, with one of the SS officers pointing his gun at her. After a while I heard a gunshot, and that was when Sawicka was killed.⁴⁶

Visualizing the Transformation of Evacuations into Death Marches

How could the geographer in our team offer alternative representational strategies to the historians' narrative overview? The geographical approach emphasized social and emotional networks of survival, the "emotional communities" between the women, and their conditions of development, sustainability, and erosion. Thinking geographically about mobile experiences also emphasized the importance of an individual's physical endurance of place and landscape as causal agents in the production of trauma. This motivated us to accurately map the route paths from Rajsko to Wodzisław (see the spotlight section "Looking Afresh at the Limits of Representation"). A starting point was to create place-marks. Large-scale topographic maps of Lower Silesia from 1933 provided excellent detail of roads, settlements, forests, farms, and changes in elevation.⁴⁷ This information helped us chart the intended and actual routes from Auschwitz along two main route paths with considerable confidence, as shown in figure 7.3. The dark-green line marks the route originally planned by the SS in mid- or late-December 1944, according to Strzelecki.⁴⁸ The actual evacuation routes were quite different; they developed in response to the Soviet offensive, which threatened to cut off the northern route. Military cables document German defensive measures against Soviet attacks in the vicinity of the anticipated evacuation routes in Silesia, though they also suggest that the German command structure was disintegrating into chaos.⁴⁹ The chaos exacerbated the cruelty of the escort guards toward those prisoners who struggled to keep moving in the cold and snow.

Our map of the Gleiwitz and Wodzisław evacuations captures the relatively few temporal and geographical certainties of these events. We knew the evacuations' origin and destination points and that the columns moved through particular towns and villages, as reported in the Polish women's testimonies of stopping points. Other testimonies

7.3. (following page) Intended versus actual evacuation routes from Auschwitz camp system. The map depicts the known inmate population in the camps and the spatio-temporal direction of evacuations from them. Colors indicate each day's journey, while the green line marks the SS planned route. Map compilation by Dayana Elhazari, Natalia Figueredo, and Andrew Fomil.



Spotlight on Methods: Looking Afresh at the Limits of Representation

The mapping of experience is a major methodological challenge in numerous fields, including cartography, cultural geography, literary studies, and spatial history. How can one map experience rigorously, or convey the power of emotion in the contexts of motion and stasis? Is it possible to be both rigorous and evocative? How can one preserve the richness and nuance of an individual's experience while connecting that person meaningfully to the places where events occurred? And how can one draw general insights from intensely personal accounts?

Our team knew from the outset that our primary sources would be oral and written testimonies by former camp inmates who endured evacuation. Our main goal was to contextualize their experiences in the historical and geographical, physical and emotional environments through which their mobile communities passed after leaving Auschwitz. Although we had a number of methodological options, we were uncertain as to which one would best enable us to achieve that goal. Testimonies from those who survived evacuations and death marches are among the most difficult of Holocaust sources to analyze because they are usually fragmentary and because they reach back to memories of profound trauma inflicted on people suffering extraordinary duress. The limits to what survivors could remember and what could be said would necessarily limit any representations we might create of their experience.

Mapping evacuation routes was an important first step toward locating individuals and mobile communities in the terrain through which they passed. GIS was a very useful repository for the details of routes and a valuable tool for estimating evacuees' pace. Mapping the routes clarified the complexity of the many evacuations issuing from Auschwitz in just a few days in mid-January 1945 (figure 7.2). Visualization here hit the limit of scale. A topographic layer in the GIS suggested the undulating terrain from Auschwitz to Wodzisław, for example, but it could not show us the subtle rise and fall of the road, or how close the marchers passed by houses along the route, or which parts of the journey were most closely surrounded by woods. For that level of experiential reconstruction, one of us had to go to Auschwitz and walk the route himself. Marc Masurovsky's fieldwork included retracing the route we had documented from archival sources, in winter; marking sites with a GPS unit for further comparison; and photographing the landscape (see figure 7.4). This second set of methodologies helped us understand the evacuations as embodied and sensory experience.

Walking the route of one evacuation made our understanding of that route far more specific and concrete. It helped us place individual testimony in the landscape more precisely and, just as important, helped us understand where the women were during periods of the march about which they said remarkably little. Close textual analysis of individual testimonies enabled Simone Gigliotti to compare how the murder of two women evacuees registered in the memories of six survivors from the Rajsko subcamp. This narrative comparison revealed important differences in the women's experience of those events, which in turn shed light on their physical locations, their regard for the two women who died, and how the violent deaths affected the survivors' sense of their place in the marching community. It also raised thoughts about the crucial but generally unstable position of any individual in the moving line of an evacuation.

Discussions of the testimonial evidence among the team led to a very different representational method: figurative symbologies. Erik Steiner's silhouette visualizations were based on descriptions of the marching column itself as well as the relationships among evacuees and between evacuees and guards in the hundreds of testimonies that we read (see figure 7.5). The figures and the words that describe them were very different from our first method, the map, yet they were still a mode of geovisualization because they connected evacuees in the temporal moment of particular kinds of experience to the geographical context of the column and the intimate social space of the march. Unintentionally, the figures also provoked strong emotional responses in us and in audiences with whom we have shared our work. Another, more abstract, maplike mode of visualizing emotional relationships helped us think, again more specifically, about the shift from fixed to mobile communities when inmates left Auschwitz or one of its subcamps (see figure 7.6). Graphing these relationships according to *where* they were mentioned in the testimonials became yet another method for visualizing the geography of experience (see figure 7.7). Focusing on keywords in relation to place unexpectedly also revealed the evolving texture of experience, particularly the intense emotions roused by the two murders and the attenuation of community in the aftermath of those traumatic disruptions (see figure 7.8). These alternative representations were as much descriptions of criminal wrongdoing as tools to guide us in new directions, toward new forms of evidence and revelation. They provided concrete images to interpret, question, deconstruct, and debate.

Our study of evacuations has concluded that it is time to revisit debates about the limits of representation and update their relevance to new genres such as cartography and digital media. The challenge of communicating traumatic experience remains as vital as ever, but in

these new modes of representation we see opportunities for also engaging with the representation of affective limits—the limits of what is revealed and of what can be expressed from the otherwise hidden contours of mobile trauma. We found that visually analyzing testimonies using critical cartography opened new possibilities for representing a phase of the Holocaust that scholars have found most difficult to study. Each of the methods we used—constructing topographic and conceptual maps, researching in the field, textual comparison, drawing figurative diagrams, graphing keywords, even the use of color and symbol size—made us think about the evacuations’ embodied experiences from a different angle. Each method revealed the geography of traumatic experience in a slightly different way, stimulating us to explore the multiple understandings of the evacuations and to discover patterns not directly evident in the data. Collectively, the methods revealed the silences as well as the confluences of survivors’ testimony. Ultimately, the most expressive visualization that captured our understanding of the evacuations from Auschwitz was a physical object (a rope) whose meaning Steiner clarified graphically (see figure 7.9). His metaphorical image crosses the boundary that usually separates art from analytical scholarship. For us, it carries the emotional charge of experience in the very form of an evacuation’s mobile community—one more way to express, in part, the inexpressible horror of the Holocaust.

enabled us to estimate the walking pace at between 2.2 and 2.8 kilometers per hour.⁵⁰ This pacing helped us confirm reports of how far the columns traveled each day and make estimations when reports were not available. For example, we discovered that some of the Rajsko women underestimated their evacuation’s duration—they thought they were on the road for three days, when in fact it was four. The elevation contours on the maps gave us a general sense of where the prisoners would have faced the extra difficulty of walking uphill or downhill. The notation of forests, fields, roads, and towns on the topographic maps suggested where they would have been more or less exposed to view by residents along the routes. Pursuing those lines of analysis, however, would have required knowing much more than we did about individuals’ experiences in relation to time and place.

After plotting the main route paths, we then asked if the transformation of evacuations into death marches as reported in women’s testimonies could be geographically landmarked and visualized. To explore this possibility, Marc Masurovsky visited Poland to experience in situ the evacuation routes that we had mapped in figure 7.3. The “rewalking” of segments of the evacuation routes provided a deep sense of the terrain,

a return to what the women had said about the tormenting journeys, and in particular the disjuncture between contemporary rural landscapes and the historical violence of January 1945 that the unmarked landscape conceals. The visit gave Masurovsky a spatial sense of where the columns moved along roads and fields, changes in topography, possible burial sites, and the visibility of the marchers to passersby. It also allowed for the verification or dispute of certain sites or key physical landmarks mentioned in testimonies. Pausing after a fork in the road at Pszczyna on a late-winter afternoon (see figure 7.4), he considered the separation the prisoners had to endure, for at this place the nearly thirty thousand prisoners were separated into two columns and directions, which later reconnected just before reaching Wodzisław. His fieldwork confirmed the sites of massacres, stopping and rest, intervals, attempted escapes, and burial locations of those who died or were killed en route.⁵¹ Deconstructing testimonies into the coordinates of time and place would enable a far more suggestive portrait of evacuations that occurred throughout the SS concentration camp complex. The objective was to offer, in Michel de Certeau's words, a spatial story of the evacuation's route path and placemarks of violence and trauma, the principles of which are explained by Margaret Wickens Pearce in her article "Framing the Days: Place and Narrative in Cartography."⁵² Pearce explores the realm of "critical cartography," asking whether it is possible to map the geographies of human experience and liberate the map from its dependence on fixed scales and quantitative data. Pearce pleads for an "alternative epistemology," one where cartographic language and visual symbology express narrativity and the encoding of emotions in the landscape. The research team was inspired to adapt this theme of place and place making to a conceptual visualization that highlighted the evacuation column as an intended, if not fixed, spatial entity (long columns of people walking in five rows in compliance with orders).

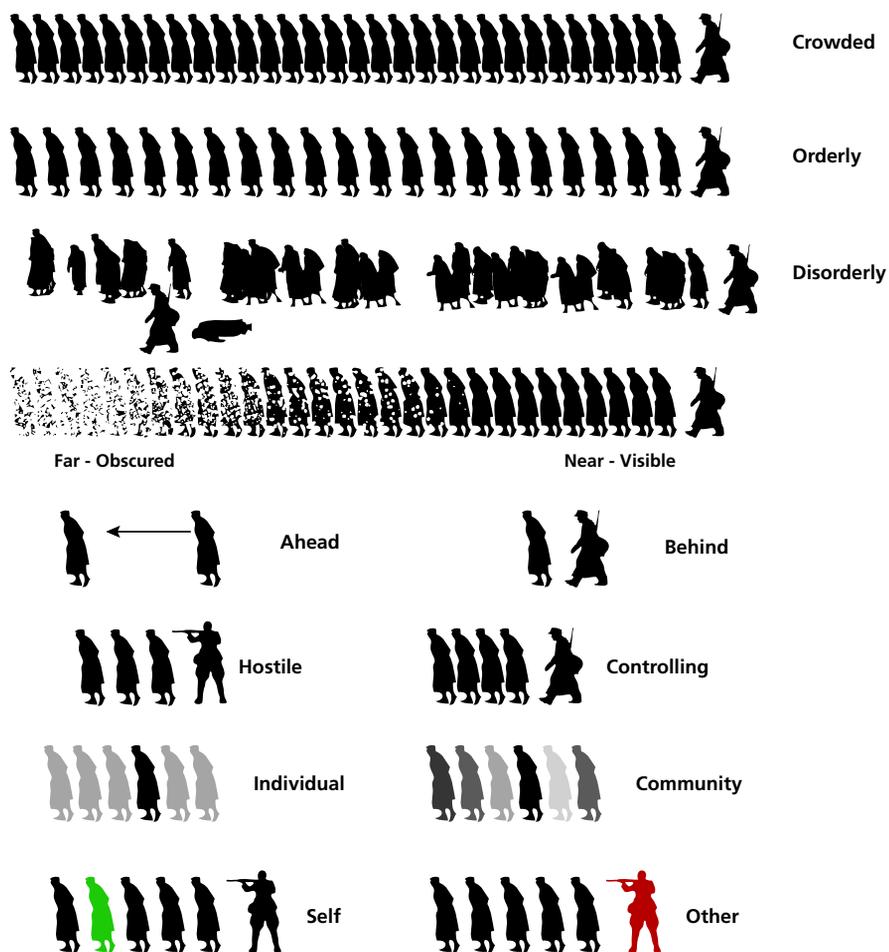
Our goal was to produce conceptual visualizations and topologies of mobility and confinement. Inspired by Pearce, we were looking for an alternative epistemology that could represent the experiences of the evacuated prisoners as a mobile community that constantly changed form. Erik Steiner developed a conceptual symbology to examine the structure, movement, clustering, and control of the columns. He developed several visualizations to represent the evacuation's boundaries of surveillance, places of memory, and prisoner-guard relations. Figure 7.5 takes the symbolic group of camp prisoners and distributes them spatially to reflect the column's compliance and fear. The upper part of the figure represents a visual symbology of the evacuations' shifting form and spatial compliance according to the distance covered: initially



crowded, becoming open and porous, and finally disorder. As the graphics suggest, the evacuations rarely maintained the same fixed composition from their departure point. Prisoners fell back owing to their pace and were quickly rounded up by the liquidation squads awaiting them in the rear of the columns. Eventually, the columns become more fluid as the prisoners and guards covered greater distances. The clustering that occurred during evacuations provided a point of connection and re-familiarization for individuals who had lost contact either during deportations or after entering the camp. The larger structure of the column

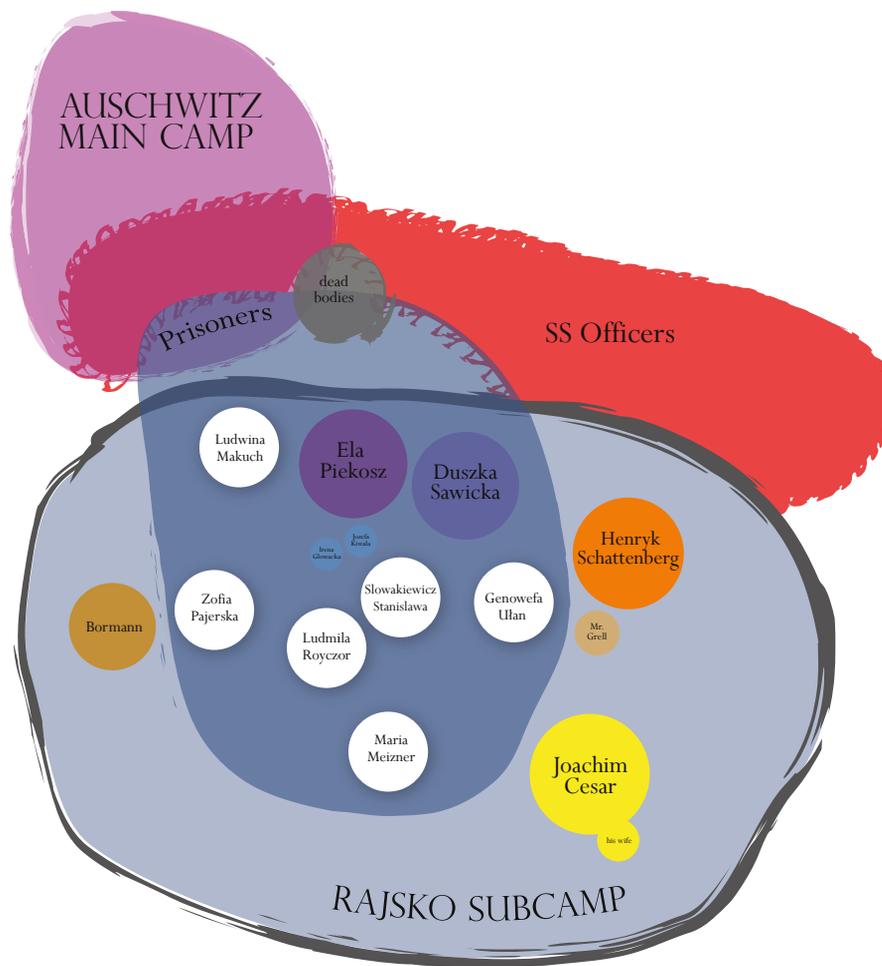
7.4. Pszczyna environs. Photograph by Marc J. Masurovsky.

7.5. Forming and deforming the evacuation columns. This figurative visual symbology depicts the shifting forms and conceptions of the columns over time and space. Some structures from the camp barrack layout were maintained, others fragmented as columns from multiple camps merged. The lower half of the figure suggests how the spatial arrangements between prisoners and guards affected power relations and shaped prisoners' perception of threat, community, and self in relation to the other.



formations at departure replicated the organization of the camp-barrack layout. The progressive fragmentation and attenuation of the column were expressed in gaps in the column as well as in the formation of clusters of people who were camp strangers and those who had some prior history or contact.

The lower part of figure 7.5 depicts various types of guards' controlling and threatening behaviors and how these could be conceptualized in relation to self and survival within the moving column. The depiction of dissolving bodies in "visibility" reflects the guard's limited spatial perspective. It is difficult to say if it was advantageous to be visible or invisible to guards, or to retain the same place at the front, middle, or rear of the column. Most marchers' physical place constantly changed, owing to stamina, climate, fatigue, and an individual's will. The chances of survival were to some extent dependent on proximity to guards, who expected those at the front of columns to lead at a steady walking pace,

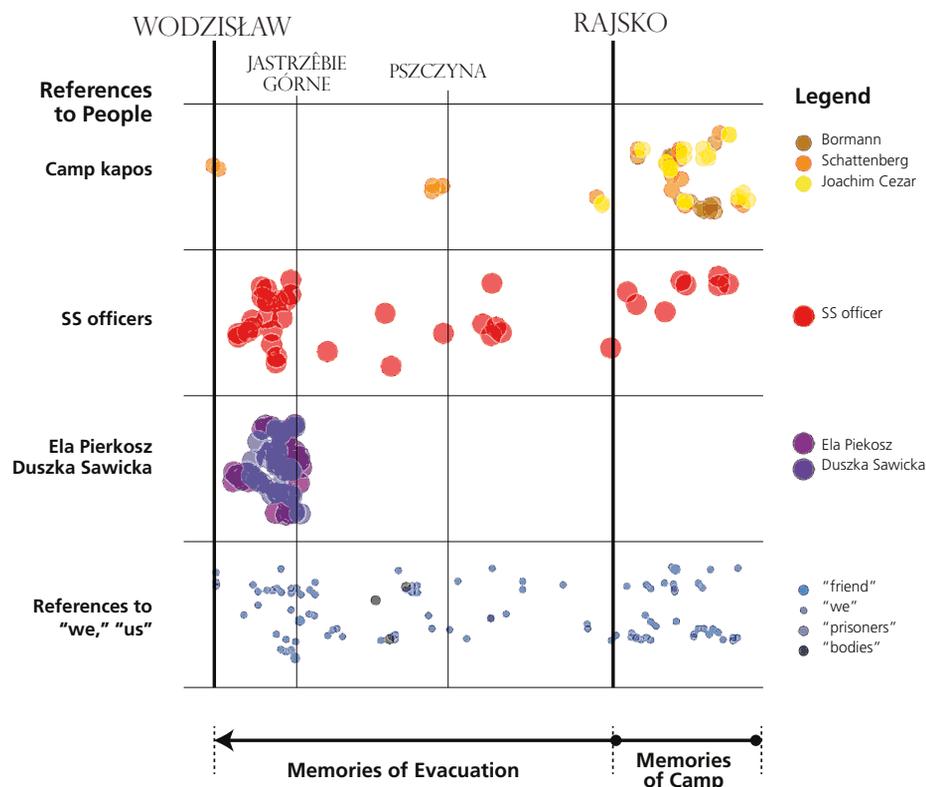


7.6. Topology of communities from the perspective of Rajsko inmates. This Venn diagram visualizes the emotional and spatial relationships between prisoners, authority figures, and the camp's physical boundaries. The six Polish Catholic women represented in white defined themselves in relation to one another (as friends), to the camp, and to the individual camp kapos. Transgressing the camps' physical boundaries meant joining other prisoners, living and dead, in a space bounded not by walls, but by the threats and violence of unfamiliar SS officers from other camps.

while those lagging at the rear would be shot for failing to maintain it. It was also strategically safest for evacuees to be centrally located inside the columns, where one's physical lapses and pauses could be carried and concealed by the weight of others.

The methodological conception of figures 7.6 and 7.7 draws on critical cartography, which encourages the dissolution of the bias of objective, fixed space to allow expressive, experiential spaces to emerge, and to develop, as Pearce encourages us, a visual grammar to evoke a sense of emotional or historical place.⁵³ Figure 7.6 is a Venn diagram reconstruction from testimonies of the systematic and ad hoc communities of the Rajsko prisoners. The colors in figures 7.6 and 7.7 identify the different protagonists and places of belonging and fear during the evacuation. The six Polish Catholic women are shown in white in the center of the blue surroundings. Their physical closeness to the Auschwitz

7.7. Spatialized testimonies of Rajsco prisoners. Each mention of individuals or groups in the testimony was placed (“geocoded”) as a dot in accordance with route path coordinates. As the journey wore on, prisoners’ identities were less associated with their position in the camp hierarchy than by significant flashbulb events that placed the prisoners in conflict with unfamiliar SS guards. Terms signifying togetherness (for example, *friend*, *we*, and *us*) stayed consistent over time, tied to the descriptions of these events and other moments when the perverse relationship to the guards was reinforced (for example, “we were told to rest”).



main camp, Rajsco, and SS officers is based on the verbal emphasis the women placed on different individuals and groups and how they understood their places in the evacuation column in terms of social and spatial relations and the “otherness” of Auschwitz camp guards from departure to arrival. For example, the identity of being a “prisoner” extends beyond the walls of the camp and is nearly always surrounded by the other of the SS officers and guards. The SS officers are occasionally familiar to the women, but mostly they are perceived as outsiders from other camps. This lack of familiarity with the outsiders exacerbates their fear in spatial and social terms.

This image distributes the content of these Polish women’s testimonies into a visual narrative of emotional and spatial relationships between prisoners, authority figures, and the camp’s physical boundaries. The enclosed gray border represents the boundary of the Rajsco camp and the transformation of women prisoners from fixed to mobile confinement during the evacuation. The orange and yellow colors represent the proximity of authority figures to the women. The emotional impact of the deaths of Ela and Duszka in Jastrzēbie Górne is represented by circle size and spatial proximity to the women who were most affected

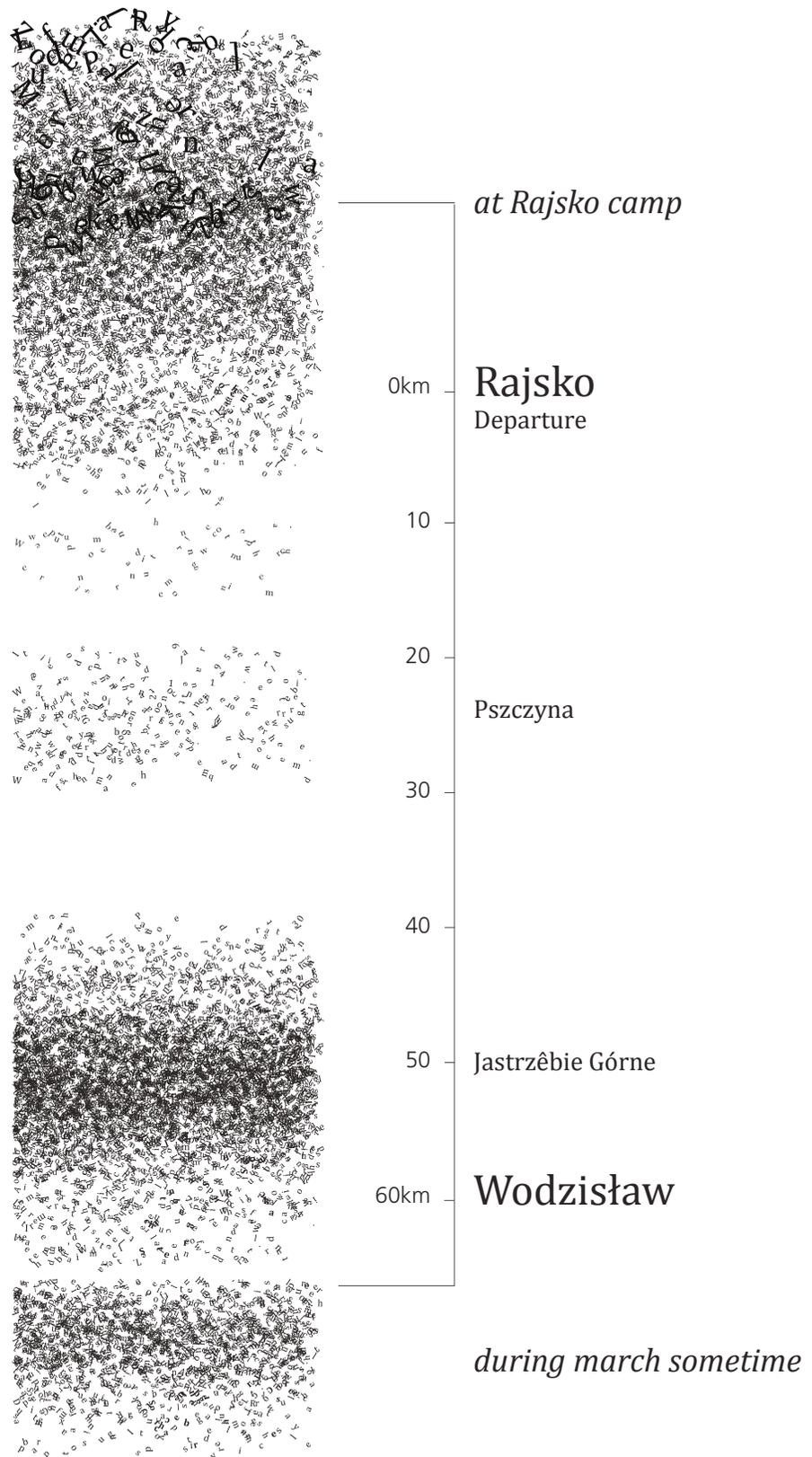
by their deaths: Ludwina Makuch, Stanisława Slowakiewicz, and Genowefa Ułan.

Figure 7.7 depicts with considerable granularity a subjective cartography and symbology of scattered emotions. Based geographically on the actual route path, it depicts a methodological approach to find the moments when evacuations were transformed into death marches, based on proximity, confinement, and exposure to traumatic events. At which places along the route did the Polish women feel most connected with each other, scared, or vulnerable? We were able to show that points of interaction emerged between prisoners and their guards (a transition from camp kapos to SS officers), at “flashbulb” events (the murders of Ela Piekosz and Duszka Sawicka at Jastrzêbie Gôrne), and in the variability in individuals’ conception of their core community. We extracted keywords signifying togetherness (references to “friend,” “we,” and “us”) and placed them in accordance with the route path coordinates. Each dot on the visualization represents one mention in testimonies; its size represents the relative significance to the person describing the event or impact. Camp kapos (yellow dots) are featured heavily at preparation, departure, and stopovers. SS officers (red dots) are an actively feared threat fairly consistently throughout the evacuation, but tend to cluster in authority at stops such as Jastrzêbie Gôrne, when escape attempts increased.

Figure 7.8 is a terrain of encoded memories that distributes the Polish Catholic women’s memories along the route path, revealing the placemarks of aggregated trauma and uncertainty that correspond to departure, stopping points (Pszczyna), and arrival. This graphic depicts freighted memories and congestion around particular places and distances and also an extended visual silence between thirty and forty kilometers. Were there other events of significance that the women omitted? Or did physical pain and persistence become the sole normalized response, unworthy of particular comment?

These visualizations of Polish Catholic women’s testimonies suggest that the emotional geographies of the evacuations were fluid and organic. The team’s geographer created a conversation with the team’s historians about representational possibilities in relation to the experience of displacement and mobile confinement. How can corporeality be visualized in addition to being represented in written and spoken language? Could a visual symbology be historically truthful and geographically anchored to actual physical places? While geographers search for physical landmarks in maps as points of navigation and scale, our study suggests that the bodies of the prisoners, moving together and apart, fraying and fragmenting, became their own transformative placemarks—from the

7.8. Terrain of encoded memories. Aggregating letters from six testimonies and locating traumatic incidents according to route path coordinates reveals the literal verbal density of memories of the experience. The resulting terrain of encoded memories was uneven across the landscape, raising questions about the relationship between space, proximity, and trauma: Why is the geography of memory irregular? How did the landscape shape affective and sensory memory? What memories have been lost in the gaps without testimony? What might those silences signify?



movement of prisoners from the camp complex as an intended survival to immobility through death. This is underscored by the fact that many prisoners had warped perceptual bearings of time, space, and landscape, but not, crucially, each other's fate. The topography of the evacuation was therefore less defined by the physical distances that the prisoners were forced to cover than by the terrain of violence and brutality that determined life and death. What began as an ostensibly complete image of the movement of the organized community of prisoners (as symbolized in figure 7.5) was soon undone through their endurance of deprivations, winter weather, and violence.

The evacuations of January 1945 from the Auschwitz camp complex released into civilian view the ugly horror of the Nazi regime. The prisoners, though no longer physically confined by barbed wire and barracks, continued their camp-socialized behavior of compliance on the road. On the road, there was no protection, no respite, and no retreat. The war environment of hostile lands and peoples reminded prisoners of their dependence on guards and captors and their extreme vulnerability. Camp guards were quite possibly frustrated and annoyed at their last-minute instructions to supervise the prisoners and frequently lashed out at them verbally and physically. Interested in self-preservation, their goal was the swift delivery of prisoners. Though permitted to shoot ailing prisoners, the guards did not have to, but acts of humanity and compassion on their part were rare indeed. If, as many historians have claimed, the main purpose of evacuations was to relocate camp prisoners to Germany and use them as forced labor or hostages in peace negotiations with the Allies, then why did guards undermine that intention with sadistic treatment? The evacuations of camp prisoners from Auschwitz did not mean an end to killing. Rather, the killings became more intimate through relocation to the space of the moving columns. What was once distant in the camps was now so much closer in spatial, visual, and aural terms.

This case study has stimulated us to reflect on the conversation that historians and geographers need to have about places of violence, to ask further questions about using subjective experiences to create quantitative and qualitative maps of the evacuations, and to advocate an agenda for new experimental methodologies in the interpretation of emotion, memories, and place. What does the practice of visualization add to the teaching and research of the Holocaust as a spatial and geographical phenomenon?⁵⁴ What can geographers learn from survivor testimonies of evacuations and their relationship to mobility, immobility, and other experiences of forced movement? In what ways can the mapping of emotional and traumatic experiences contribute to the long-standing debate about the Holocaust and its challenges to representation?

The Rajsco women's testimonies confirm that visual, aural, and spatial proximity to killing was a clear mediator of trauma. Some say they heard it, some say they heard about it, while others saw it. It is possible to plot in literal and figurative space an individual prisoner's proximity to death. In addition to the sensory variations individuals experienced in witnessing death, the unyielding structure of the evacuations was an unspoken actor. It defined the spatial relationships prisoners had with death in sometimes arbitrary ways (one's position in the column did not matter, as the person right next to you could be killed) and sometimes deliberate ways (killing someone who was standing away from the column was more visible to more people; the column as a place formed a natural theater of spectacle and decline). The aural experience of hearing screams or shots was also spatial; one did not have to be near brutality to recognize and experience it.

Conclusion

Although we have suggested that the methods and approaches employed to produce the geovisualizations in this study are exploratory, we believe that they do contribute to a conversation about making place matter in historical analysis. We are encouraged by scholarship that seeks convergence between disciplines in the mapping of place and mobility and measurements of geometric distance as indicative of social relationships.⁵⁵ The research team's visualization of prisoners and their landscapes of experience engages with a form of "mobile methodologies" that concern "not only physical movement, but also potential movement, blocked movement, immobilisation, forms of dwelling and place-making."⁵⁶ We also believe that GIScience can further contribute to the spatial understanding of human rights violations and accountability for them through delineating usable attributes from traumatic qualitative data as characterized by survivor testimonies from the Holocaust and other genocides.⁵⁷ We hope to have replied to Pearce's call to embrace the language of cartography to develop a new epistemology for representing the memory of mobile confinement. We believe the experience of evacuations can be mapped, visualized, and spatially represented in ways that enrich existing accounts of how the Holocaust met the war experience, while providing an evidentiary truth that enriches existing historical approaches.

Several questions remain. Do visualizations such as the examples presented in this chapter belong to a tradition of representing the Holocaust in graphic and spatial terms, or are they too abstract to fit a clear aesthetic genre or visual grammar? In attempting to work through the problems of representing traumatic experience in time and space,

Steiner undertook what can only be described as a handheld sensory investigation into the past (see figure 7.9). He took a piece of rope and massaged it in his hands. What emerged as he worked the rope was a physical representation of the geography of the evacuation's origins, connections, and landmarks of death. The resulting "rope of history" depicts an inherent contradiction of the evacuations: prisoners were part of a mobile confinement, akin to a deconstructed camp barrack, that also retained the perception of togetherness and community in an ostensibly free landscape. The rope thus portrayed two truths: the accurate geographical route of evacuation paths and relative distances between transit points, and the points at which the evacuation's pace and movement were disrupted by fraying and fragmentation from the addition of prisoners, stopping, escape attempts, and guards' violence. The rope's thickness at Auschwitz and Rajsko expresses the evacuation columns' spatial and behavioral cohesion, progressive thinning and fraying at stopovers, and eventual separation at Wodzisław. By not relying on traditional cartographic symbology, the rope emerged as a generalized expression of the prisoners as a geoanchored, bounded community interacting with the landscape and the violence that forced movement produced.

In January 1945, there were almost 715,000 prisoners in the entire Nazi concentration camp complex, after a swell in numbers from the arrival of slave laborers. By war's end, more than 35 percent of them had died in what Daniel Blatman calls Nazism's "last murderous eruption during the death marches."⁵⁸ The victims—adults, teenagers, and children—were constantly exposed to death in all its forms: hypothermia, fatigue from walking exhausting distances, shootings by guards for not maintaining the pace, and, particularly in the final stage, participation of German civilians in massacres. It is our conclusion that evacuations from Auschwitz in January 1945 and those that ensued right up until Germany's capitulation provide crucial missing links between geographies of killing in occupied Poland and transitional wartime and postwar humanitarian networks and historical commissions converging in postwar Germany. The harsh and confined space of Auschwitz and other camps was ultimately fluid and fragmentary, spilling out onto roads, fields, and towns in Silesia. Auschwitz can no longer be seen only as a principal destination of the Holocaust's victims. It is also the starting point for a new mobile phase that relocated the camp's discipline and terror. The disordered process of evacuations carried what was once concealed in the camp into public view. The mobile Auschwitz—the camp it carried on the roads and the immobile camp it left behind—was conclusive evidence of a new truth of war.

WODZISŁAW

JASTRZĘBIE GÓRNE

PAWLOWITZ

I don't know what happened to him after that

We were placed in open train cars to get to Buchenwald. During the journey, one of the women got up next to me and held my hand.

After the occupation, I got in touch with the former female prisoners of the Rajsko subcamp

*53 officers stabbed the Poles to death
in the hay with their bayonets*

When I ran away from the column and the distance was quite long

we walked past the bodies of dead women

*When I called: "Duska, come with us," she didn't respond.
One of the officers approached her and shot her*

7.9. The rope of history. This rope represents a bridging of sculptural, cartographic, and historical inquiries. It is a sensory reflection, grounded in objective geography and direct testimony, on the experience of a community (of both prisoners and guards) being bound, woven, knotted, and frayed over the course of a traumatic foot journey.

I noticed a ham and I hid myself in the straw. I hoped that during a short break we would not be counted.

AUSCHWITZ

POREMBA

PSZCZYNA

RAJSKO

there were also carts loaded with kok-saghyz seeds and laboratory appliances

we were told to rest

I heard shots but did not see

marching columns were escorted by SS-men unknown to me

we walked until the late hours

prisoners from Birkenau were added to the column

some new SS officers, unknown to me, came to this camp

we observed prisoners from other camps being transported

we had access to warm running water and food was the opportunity to pick up vegetables

we grew and did research on the rubber producing "kok-saghyz"

I never saw any crimes there

we had bearable living conditions

we cheer us for the smaller offenses by slipping the female prisoners' faces

Notes

1. Testimony of Fela Finkelstein, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Archives, RG 50 (Oral History): RG 50.120*0039; Acc. 1995.A.1272, translated from the Hebrew by Manny Halberstam.

2. Ibid.

3. Fela Ravett was interviewed by her son, Abraham Ravett, about her death march over the course of thirteen years, from 1984 to 1997. Abraham Ravett, dir., *The March*, 1999, 25 min. We are grateful to the director, Abraham Ravett, for a copy of this film.

4. See “David Wisnia Songs Written in Auschwitz,” USHMM Archives, Acc: 1996.A.033.

5. Daniel Blatman, “The Death Marches, January–May 1945: Who Was Responsible for What?,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 28 (2000): 171.

6. “Russian Armies Sweep Westward,” *Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria), January 22, 1945, 1.

7. See, for example, Jean Oppenheimer, *Journal de Route, 14 mars–9 mai 1945* (Paris: Manuscrit: Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah, 2006); and Ernst Michel, *Promises to Keep: One Man’s Journey against Incredible Odds* (New York: Barricade Books, 1993).

8. Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 57.

9. Otto Wolken, “Liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp,” in *Anthology of the International Auschwitz Committee*, pt. 2, “In Hell They Preserved Human Dignity” (Warsaw: International Auschwitz Committee, 1971), 1:117.

10. The research team comprised Simone Gigliotti, Marc J. Masurovsky (historians); Erik B. Steiner (geographer); Dayana Elhazari, Natalia Figueredo, and Andrew Fomil (GIS interns from the University of Maryland, College Park); and Manny Halberstam and Daniel Nowakowski (foreign language research assistants,

Hebrew and Polish, respectively). We also acknowledge the valued input of Miriam Lomaskin, photo editor at the USHMM, who photographed all of the historical maps at the Library of Congress, and Pavel Ilyn, resident cartographer/geographer at the USHMM. Chester Harvey’s contribution was also greatly valued.

11. Danuta Czech et al., *Auschwitz, 1940–1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 5:23.

12. Ibid., 30.

13. Ibid., 23.

14. Blatman, “Death Marches,” 164.

15. Ibid., 163. These marches have been the principal focus of historical scholarship over the past six decades.

16. See “Voices of the Holocaust” website at the Illinois Institute of Technology: <http://voices.iit.edu/>. The website houses interviews conducted by David P. Boder in displaced persons’ camps in Europe in 1946, biographical information, and explanatory essays. See also Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

17. The ITS documents include information, correspondence, maps, and line drawings about the route itineraries and identities of the victims and perpetrators. Documents included planning notes; methodological descriptions of inventorying of information on deceased prisoners (locality, nationality, and burial sites); forensic data pertaining to them, such as photographs of exhumation of bodies; and records regarding those former concentration camp prisoners whose identities could not be verified. The documents are included in “Evacuation Routes: From Different CC-Camps and Their Commandos Combined [sic] by Mrs. Brumlikowá,” UNRRA Central Tracing Bureau, Documents and Intelligence, “Death Marches: March Routes and Distances,” ITS File Location: Historique Ordner 306 C I 45 b. 1946, vols. 1–3, pp. 1–152.

18. On death marches and the end phase, see Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); and Ian Kershaw, *The End: The Defiance and Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1944–1945* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

19. Andrzej Strzelecki, *The Evacuation, Dismantling, and Liberation of KL Auschwitz*, translated by Witold Zbirohowski-Koscia (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2001); Czech et al., *Auschwitz, 1940–1945*; Danuta Czech, *The Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990). See also Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (New York: Beechurst Press, 1953); and Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1954). On ideological and structural approaches, see Daniel Blatman, “On the Traces of the Death Marches: The Historiographical Challenge,” in *Freilegungen: Auf den Spuren der Todesmärsche*, edited by Jean-Luc Blondel, Susanne Urban, and Sebastian Schönemann (Göttingen, Wallstein; Bad Arolsen: ITS International Tracing Service, 2012), 85–107.

20. Joachim Neander, “Das Konzentrationslager ‘Mittelbau’ in der Endphase der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur: Zur Geschichte des letzten im ‘Dritten Reich’ gegründeten selbständigen Konzentrationslagers unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Auflösungsphase” (PhD diss., Bremen University, 1996); Karin Orth, *Das System der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager eine politische Organisationsgeschichte* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); Katrin Greiser, *Die Todesmärsche von Buchenwald: Räumung, Befreiung und Spuren der Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008).

21. Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

22. Karin Orth, “The Concentration Camp Personnel,” in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*, edited by Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann (London: Routledge, 2010), 45.

23. See USHMM Archives: RG 06.005.05M, United States Army Commands, Concentration Camp Cases Not Tried, 1933–1949 (Reel 9, File Gleiwitz). Dentzinger was part of an SS company of 250 to 280 guards. Once in Gleiwitz, he oversaw one of the Gleiwitz subcamps during the chaotic last days of the German occupation of lower Silesia.

24. See Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide*, translated by Chaya Galai (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2010), for information on Palmnicken (117–25) and an extended study of Gardelegen (chaps. 8–11).

25. Figure 7.1, “UNRRA Schematic map,” is found in “Death Marches: March Routes and Distances,” ITS File Location: Historique Ordner 306 C I 45 b. 1946, vols. 1–3, pp. 1–152.

26. Further examples are found in Czech et al., *Auschwitz, 1940–1945*; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Blatman, *The Death Marches*; and Irena Pajak's memorial guidebook to the Auschwitz-to-Wodzisław evacuations, *Przewodnik wzdłuż trasy ewakuacyjnej więźniów KL Auschwitz-Birkenau z Oświęcimia do Wodzisławia Śląskiego* (Katowice: Tow. Opieki nad Oświęcimiem, 2007).

27. One main distinction between evacuations and death marches could be distance, which was used as a key indicator of corporeal trauma in the reports of UNRRA. Some marches were extraordinarily long: Schweidnitz to Aichach (1,389 km) from January 25 to February 22, 1945, and Dora to Malchow (1,572 km) from April 5 to April 29, 1945. The exceptions were extremely short, such as the 4-km march from Hannover to Bergen-Belsen. Out of 110 recorded marches, 17 were under 100 km, 22 were between 100 km and

200 km, 25 between 200 km and 300 km, 16 between 300 km and 400 km, 6 between 400 km and 500 km, 20 between 500 and 1000 km, and 4 exceeded 1,000 km. The data on march distances were compiled from USHMM Archives, RG 43.017: Selected Records from the French National Archives–Affaires Militaires, Reels 2 and 3.

28. See Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3. (2002): 842. For further reading on the large literature on the emotions in history, see the work of Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Pouvoir et passion: Communautés émotionnelles en France au VII^e siècle,” *Annales HSS* 6 (November–December 2003): 1271–92; and Jan Plamper, “The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns,” *History and Theory* 49 (May 2010): 237–65.

29. All of the Polish Catholic women’s testimonies come from the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ecigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu/IPN–Krakow and Katowice branches), Institute of National Remembrance–Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation.

30. The evacuation included 25,000 prisoners from Auschwitz I, Birkenau, and several subcamps. Half of the prisoners were female and included Jewish prisoners from Hungary and France. It is estimated that 450 prisoners were murdered or died during the march.

31. Irene Strzelecka, “Rajsko,” translated by Gerhard Majak, in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, edited by Geoffrey P. Megargee, pt. A (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1:269. Rajsko was established a subcamp in June 1943 after the town’s villagers, homes, and stables were demolished. It stood in the northwest part of the village of Rajsko, about 200 meters from the main road from Auschwitz (Oświęcim) to Brzeszcze.

32. Ibid.

33. For an excellent overview of these women’s roles as “slave labour for science,” see Susanne Heim, *Plant Breeding and Agrarian Research in Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institutes, 1933–1945* (New York: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2008), 97–155.

34. Strzelecka, “Rajsko,” 269.

35. Testimony of Ludmila Rojczor, IPN Archives-Katowice, 1:39–40. Interviewed by Andrzej Siedlecki, January 11, 1972, translated by Maria Broda.

36. Testimony of Maria Meizner, IPN Archives-Krakow, 47–49. Interviewed by Maria Gackowa, October 10, 1973, Krakow, translated by Ewa Klejnot-Schreiber.

37. Mentions of Johanna Bormann and her various camp work assignments (Babitz, Budy, Hindenburg, Bergen-Belsen) are found in Megargee, *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, pt. A (see 1:226, 234, 252, 253). She was sentenced to death by hanging for her crimes in Bergen-Belsen (at the Belsen Trial of Josef Kramer and forty-four others, September–November 1945).

38. The Rajsko group was added to departures from Birkenau.

39. Testimony of Zofia Pajerska, IPN Archives-Krakow, 50–53. Interviewed by Maria Gacek, October 15, 1973, Nowy Targ, translated by Ewa Klejnot-Schreiber.

40. Testimony of Rojczor.

41. Testimony of Stanisława Słowakiewicz, IPN Archives-Katowice, 1:52–53. Interviewed by Edward Targosz, June 22, 1971, Krakow, translated by Katarzyna Dunscombe.

42. Testimony of Ludwina Makuch, IPN Archives-Katowice, 1:54–55. Interviewed by Edward Targosz, June 22, 1971, Krakow, translated by Katarzyna Dunscombe.

43. Testimony of Meizner.

44. Testimony of Pajerska.

45. Ibid.

46. Testimony of Genowefa Ułan, IPN Archives-Krakow, 121–26. Interviewed by Karol Dziewiński, December 12, 1973, Krakow, translated by Katarzyna Dunscombe.

47. “Map of Lower Silesia,” PAS 48-SLUP 28-OSWIECIM, scale 1:25,000

(Wojskowy Instytut Geograficzny, Warszawa, 1933), Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. We are grateful to John Hébert, chief of the Geography and Maps Division, for facilitating access to and use of the maps. Miriam Lomaskin made digital photographs of the maps.

48. On the chronology of the gradual evacuation of Auschwitz from August 1944 leading up to January 1945, see Strzelecki, *Evacuation, Dismantling, and Liberation of KL Auschwitz*, 59–119.

49. See RG 15.129M: Selected Records of Rejencja Katowicka (Regierung Katowitz), 1939–1945. Polish State Archives, Katowice Branch, Fond 119/o.

50. See, for example, Oppenheimer, *Journal de Route*.

51. The women's description of killings in Jastrzêbie Górne was confirmed by burial locations along the route path to Wodzisław. The corpses of the prisoners shot by the SS officers during the evacuation were buried in more than twenty graves dug in the vicinity of the evacuation routes. The numbers killed were as follows: Brzeszcze (seventeen), Jawiszowice (twelve), Miedzna (forty-two), Pszczyna (ninety-five, in two graves), Poremba (six to seven), Brzeźce (nineteen to twenty-one), Studzionka (eighteen), Bzie (twenty-two), Jastrzêbie Górne (thirty-four to thirty-nine), Mszana (twenty-six), Wilchwy (five), and Wodzisław (forty-three to forty-eight). See Andrzej Strzelecki, "State of Inquiry into the History of the Evacuation of Auschwitz Camp Prisoners," unpublished ms., translated by Ewa Klejnot-Schreiber (Warsaw 1973), 12.

52. Margaret Wickens Pearce, "Framing the Days: Place and Narrative in

Cartography," *Cartography and Geographic Information Science* 35, no. 1 (2008): 17–31.

53. Margaret Wickens Pearce, "Place Codes: Narrative and Dialogical Strategies for Cartography," Proceedings of the 24th International Cartographic Conference, Santiago de Chile, Chile, November 15–21, 2009, 2, http://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2009/html/nonref/22_7.pdf.

54. For this approach to pedagogy, see Rudi Hartmann, "'Places of Horror We Should Never Forget': Approaches to Teaching the Holocaust, Atrocity Sites, and Pariah Landscapes in the Geography Classroom," *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education* 11, no. 4 (2002): 354–58.

55. On Georg Simmel's "the stranger" and its significance to the social sciences, see Philip J. Ethington, "The Intellectual Construction of 'Social Distance': Toward a Recovery of Georg Simmel's Social Geometry," *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography* [Epistémologie, Histoire de la Géographie, Didactique], document 30, September 16, 1997, <http://www.cybergeo.eu/index227.html>.

56. Ben Fincham, Mark McGuinness, and Lesley Murray, eds., *Mobile Methodologies* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), viii. See also Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 207–26.

57. On this approach, see Marguerite Madden and Amy Ross, "Genocide and GIS Science: Integrating Personal Narratives and Geographic Information Science to Study Human Rights," *Professional Geographer* 61, no. 4 (2009): 508–26.

58. Blatman, *Death Marches*, 2.

