

THE 'ANTWERP SPECIFICITY'

Differences in deportation numbers of Jews from Belgium during the Second World War

- Dorien Styven & Veerle Vanden Daelen -

On 4 September 1938 Nojeh Borensztajn, 32 years old, travelled from Germany to Belgium, for a rehabilitative spa treatment. In October he found himself stuck in Antwerp after his passport expired. Nojeh went underground while awaiting papers to emigrate to British Palestine, but obtained a temporary Belgian residence permit in November 1939. By February 1941 the German occupying authorities had expelled Nojeh and over three thousand other foreigners to the province of Limburg. Nojeh was sent from Antwerp to Genk on 4 January 1941 and performed forced labour in the Op den Holven camp in Overpelt as of July 1941. After his release in August 1941 he settled in Schaerbeek. In Spring 1942, when forced labour was imposed on unemployed Jews, Nojeh found a job in Charleroi, but was nevertheless soon claimed by Organisation Todt, and on 31 July 1942 he was sent from Charleroi to the labour camps Dannes and Condette in Northern France. On 31 October 1942 transport XVI took Nojeh and most of his co-workers to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nojeh jumped from the train en route and went into hiding. He survived the war and passed away in 1975. Nojeh, having survived, is not representative of most Jews who were expelled to Limburg or who were claimed for forced labour by Organisation Todt. However, his story does illustrate the elements which comprise the 'Antwerp specificity' within the context of the Holocaust in Belgium and which are explored in this contribution.

I. Introduction

In 2000 Lieven Saerens published his ground-breaking research on the persecution of Jews in Antwerp, which focused on the antisemitic climate in the port city and on the role played in the racial persecution by local authorities such as the mayor, the police force, and Belgian pro-Nazi organisations.¹ Saerens' work led to the coining of the term 'the Antwerp specificity' within the Belgian context of the Holocaust, as he had calculated, using sources from 1942, that 65 to 67 percent of Antwerp's Jewish population was deported, as compared to the average of 45 percent for the overall Jewish population of Belgium.² The Jewish population of Antwerp was thus struck more severely by persecution and deportation than other Jewish communities in Belgium. Since publication of Saerens' book, however, questions have arisen about the use of sources from 1942 to calculate deportation rates: international Holocaust research is more inclined to using numbers from the outbreak of war to calculate deportation rates, since populations changed drastically during the war. This was especially the case for the Antwerp Jewish community. By Summer 1942 thousands had been expelled from the port city or had fled to find a safer environment elsewhere.³ Using sources from 1942 thus overlooks an important segment of the Antwerp Jewish community when determining figures and calculations.

Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Research Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights in Mechelen, Belgium, therefore set out to identify the Antwerp Jewish community in 1940, to re-evaluate the deportation rates for the port city, and to determine the impact of Holocaust-related events specific to the Antwerp case that can help explain the revised numbers. The initial research project – known as 'Left Behind' – focussed on the fate of the relatives of Jewish men from Antwerp claimed for forced labour by Organisation Todt (OT) in Summer 1942 and was inspired by inquiries from family members.⁴ This contribution synthesises earlier publications by the authors on this topic and offers new research results on the fate of the Jews expelled from Antwerp to the province of Limburg between December 1940 and February 1941.⁵ After contextualising the historical events that most historians use to describe the Antwerp specificity, we discuss the deportation rate for Belgium as well as for Antwerp. This chapter includes an analysis of Saerens' calculations based on sources from 1942, the revised calculations based on sources from 1940, and an in-depth study of the sources used. The authors wish to emphasise that all these sources used in the statistical analyses were created during the occupation of Belgium and therefore follow the logic of the Nazi occupier and its regulations to define who was Jewish.⁶ Another important note is that the

1. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking (1880-1944)*, Tielt, 2000. For a general introduction to the Belgian case of the Holocaust, we refer to: DAN MICHMAN (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust. Jews - Belgians - Germans*, Jerusalem, 1998; RUDI VAN DOORSLAER (red.), *Gewillig België. Overheid en jodenvervolgung tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, Amsterdam, 2007; WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz, 1942-1944. The destruction of Jews and gypsies from Belgium*, Brussels, 2009; Kazerne Dossin, *Holocaust & Mensenrechten*, Gent/Mechelen, 2019.

2. Saerens mentions both numbers: LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 648; LIEVEN SAERENS, "Antwerp's attitude towards the Jews from 1918 to 1940 and its implications for the period of the occupation", in DAN MICHMAN (ed.), *Belgium and the Holocaust*, 194.

3. E.g. MAXIME STEINBERG, *L'étoile et le fusil. La question juive 1940-1942*, Bruxelles, 1983, 90-95.

4. The authors wish to thank Howard and Gaby Morris for their continuing support. For the project history see: VEERLE VANDEN DAELN & DORIEN STYVEN, "Left Behind – A Project Opening up Little-Known Holocaust Histories as well as New Tools", EHRI document blog, < <https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2021/09/29/left-behind/> >, consulted on 13 March 2023; DORIEN STYVEN, "Left Behind - Research project", Kazerne Dossin website, < <https://kazernedossin.eu/en/onderzoek/project/left-behind2/> >, consulted on 13 March 2023.

5. VEERLE VANDEN DAELN, LAURENCE SCHRAM & DORIEN STYVEN, "'De Antwerpse specificiteit' - Cijfers van de Jodendeportatie in perspectief", *Geduigen tussen geschiedenis en herinnering*, 131, 2020, 115-127; DORIEN STYVEN & VEERLE VANDEN DAELN, "Left Behind - A project opening up little-known Holocaust histories as well as new tools", *Memoria. Memory - History - Education*, 50, 2021, 6-15; DORIEN STYVEN & VEERLE VANDEN DAELN, "Zurückgelassen: Auswirkungen der Zwangsarbeit bei der Organisation Todt in Nordfrankreich auf die Verfolgung der Jüdinnen und Juden in Antwerpen", in CHRISTINE SCHINDLER & WOLFGANG SCHELLENBACHER (Hg.), *Delogiert und ghettoisiert. Jüdinnen und Juden vor der Deportation (Jahrbuch des DöW)*, Wien, 2022, 205-227.

6. Verordnung über Maßnahmen gegen Juden (Judenverordnung) vom 28. Oktober 1940, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 5 November 1940, 279-284.

mortality rates in this analysis take into account only those who died following their deportation; they do not include wartime deaths of non-deported Jews. A final chapter analyses two subpopulations within the Antwerp Jewish community: the Jews expelled to Limburg, and the Jewish Organisation Todt workers and their relatives. The methods of arrest for both subpopulations and the general Antwerp Jewish population are then compared to explain the impact of the different events that constitute the Antwerp specificity. It is our premise that the expulsion to Limburg and OT forced labour, together with other events specifically tied to Antwerp – such as the local pogrom and multiple raids, all in a setting of cooperation between local authorities and collaborators with the occupier – shed new light on the Antwerp numbers. Additional research can take this analysis to further and more detailed insights.

II. Historical context of the 'Antwerp specificity'

A first measure which, in practice, was specifically directed against the Jewish community of Antwerp was imposed in December 1940.⁷ Until February 1941, over three thousand foreigners would be forced to relocate from Antwerp to Limburg. The official reason for this expulsion remains unknown, but most of those expelled were Jewish.⁸ Maxime Steinberg explains the expulsion as “a measure of military importance due to the

course of the battle of Britain”, a conclusion he bases on the decree of 12 November 1940, which gave *Kommandanturen* in the provinces East Flanders, West Flanders and Antwerp the right to decide on the residence of ‘certain persons’.⁹ The expulsion orders for Limburg indeed refer to this decree when summarising penalties for disobedience.¹⁰ Steinberg also indicates that the decree was not anti-Jewish in nature but that the Antwerp *Kommandantur* interpreted it as such, leading to mostly Jews being marked for expulsion, as well as making the event something other than (as suggested by other authors such as Adeline Waysblatt) a preparatory step of the Final Solution.¹¹ The authors of *Gewillig België - La Belgique docile*, the national study on the responsibility of the Belgian authorities regarding the racial persecution, refer to other theories – such as the expulsion being a forced labour measure, a rehearsal for the deportations to Auschwitz, or a disorientation measure to smooth the path for subsequent deportations – but reject these hypotheses in favour of Steinberg’s interpretation and that of Marc Bertrands, who specifically explains the expulsion as a measure to protect the Antwerp port during preparations for the invasion of England.¹² Further research on this specific topic remains necessary.

The expulsion orders were distributed from 18 December 1940 onwards.¹³ Those summoned had to present themselves at the Antwerp South rail station, accompanied by their children under the age of fifteen.¹⁴ Of the 7 321 adults who

7. On 1 January 1942 the city of Antwerp merged with its surrounding municipalities (Berchem, Borgerhout, Deurne, Merksem, Hoboken, Ekeren, Mortsels and Wilrijk) to form Greater Antwerp. When Antwerp is mentioned here, both before and after 1 January 1942, this contribution is referring to Greater Antwerp. HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, “La convention de La Haye, la collaboration administrative en Belgique et la persécution des Juifs à Anvers, 1940-1942”, *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, 17, 2006, 147; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, 1942. *Het jaar van de stilte*, Kalmthout, 2019, 33.

8. For the calculations of the exact numbers see paragraph III.

9. Verordnung über polizeiliche Maßnahmen in bestimmten Gebieten Belgiens und Nordfrankreichs vom 12. November 1940, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 299-302, paragraphs 1 and 3; MAXIME STEINBERG, *La Question*, 93. Quote translated from French by the authors.

10. *Ausweisungsbefehl* (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 178).

11. MAXIME STEINBERG, *La Question*, 91; ADELINE WAYSBLATT, “Les Juifs en 1940”, in JOSÉ GOTOVITCH & JULES GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *L’an 40. La Belgique occupée*, Bruxelles, 1971, 463-464.

12. RUDI VAN DOORSLAER (red.), *Gewillig België*, 357-358; MARC BERTRANDS, *Kroniek van een klopjacht: de Joden van Beverlo, 1940-1945*, Beverlo, 2000, 138-143.

13. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 562.

14. *Ausweisungsbefehl* (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 178).

received an order, only one-third (34,98 percent) presented themselves.¹⁵ The others left Antwerp on their own account, presented a medical certificate for exemption, refused to sign off on the order, or simply did not show up at the station.¹⁶ Between 21 December 1940 and 12 February 1941 nine trains left Antwerp for Limburg.¹⁷ The escort consisted of members of the Flemish Red Cross and one or two Antwerp policemen, except for the first, which also carried two German officers and ten soldiers.¹⁸ In general, the trains were awaited at the station in Hasselt by representatives of one of the thirty-five municipalities over which smaller groups of passengers were divided. Those municipalities included larger cities such as Genk and small rural towns such as Schulen and Neeroeteren. The Antwerpians were housed in empty buildings such as schools, in army barracks, or with local families.¹⁹ Circumstances varied greatly and could be very poor, as Szyja Rosner recalled: "It was a little cabin that the farmers rented out during summer. The doors and windows were cracked, and there was fungus on the walls."²⁰

The Antwerpians had to present themselves daily to the local authorities to verify their whereabouts and were not allowed to work. Nonetheless, several of those expelled took on jobs clandestinely with local farmers or in the coal mines in Limburg.²¹ In general, however, the local *Commissie van Openbare Onderstand* (social welfare agency) was responsible for the wellbeing of the people.²²

The expulsion to Limburg was gradually lifted from mid-March 1941, when the first women and children were allowed to return to Antwerp.²³ In April, all municipalities were informed that women, children, and men who were incapacitated or who were older than sixty should return to the port city.²⁴ The able-bodied men, however, had to stay. This led to a number of wives and children clandestinely returning to Limburg after their return to Antwerp.²⁵ At the end of April 1941 preparations to concentrate the remaining men in the labour camp 'Op den Holven' in Overpelt began. The first workers arrived at the site on 10 June.²⁶ Over the following months the camp would house a total of

15. Calculation: IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen te Limburg. Het relaas van de uitwijzing van Antwerpse vreemdelingen naar de provincie Limburg. 21 december 1940 - augustus 1941*, licentiaatsverhandeling, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2003, 77.

16. IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse Uitwijkelingen*, 79-81.

17. The other departure dates were 2 January 1941, 4 January 1941, 9 January 1941, 11 January 1941, 18 January 1941, 25 January 1941, and 1 February 1941. The tenth train, scheduled for 25 February 1941, was cancelled.

18. Verslag over de personen vervoerd door den trein van 21 december 1940 uit Antwerpen-Zuid naar St. Truiden opgesteld door agent E. Pauwels (FelixArchives, *Treinen naar Limburg*, Verslagen agenten, BE SA 317302); Lijst van de personeelsleden van het Vlaamse Kruis die het transport van uitgewezen vreemdelingen naar Limburg begeleidden op 25 januari 1941 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 200).

19. Verslagen agenten (FelixArchives, *Treinen naar Limburg*, BE SA 317302); IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, 126-146; MATHIEU RUTTEN, *De joden en zigeuners in Limburg: bronnen en gegevens over hun aanwezigheid in Limburg tijdens de tweede wereldoorlog 1940-1944*, Tongeren, 2007, 70; ROGER RUTTEN, *Van Genk tot Mauthausen. Opmerkelijk verzet en collaboratie in Vlaanderen*, Berchem, 2009, 121-127.

20. Photocopy of a letter from Szyja Rosner to the municipality of Alken, 27 January 1958 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Ephraïm Schmidt*, KD_00338). Translated from French by the authors.

21. GERT LILIENTHAL, *Polizei! Aufmachen! Herinneringen aan de Nazi-terreur en de Duitse bezetting*, Mechelen, 1993, 61; NOAH KLIENER, *La Boxe ou la Vie*, Jérusalem, 2008, 16-17; ISRAËL ROSENGARTEN, *Overleven. Relaas van een zestienjarige Joodse Antwerpenaar*, Antwerpen, 1996, 44.

22. MARC BERTRANDS, *Kroniek*, 33; Circular by governor Gerard Romsée regarding financial support by the COOs, 23 January 1941 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, *Circulars Limburg*, r.497/tr.142.546); Lists of payments by the local COO to Antwerpians expelled to Alken, February 1941 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Ephraïm Schmidt*, KD_00338).

23. MAXIME STEINBERG, *La Question*, 95-96; IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, annexe 15.

24. IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, 156-157.

25. Letter from governor J. Lysens to the Limburg municipalities, 17 June 1941, reproduced in MATHIEU RUTTEN, *De joden en zigeuners*, 113.

26. Lijst der uitwijkelingen in het kamp aanwezig op datum van 7 juli 1941 - inschrijvingslijst van het kamp van Overpelt (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, R. 497/Tr. 150635); MATHIEU RUTTEN, *Oorlog in Limburg. Markante feiten*, Tongeren, 1995, 207.

160 men.²⁷ Herman Rottenberg, the Jewish supervisor, was allowed to bring his wife Marie Kompa and their son.²⁸ The labourers were instructed to drain a swampy area to create agricultural land.²⁹ Op den Holven, however, was never a fully functioning labour camp, as a few weeks after its opening the able-bodied Jewish men in Limburg were no longer sent there but were instructed to relocate to Brussels. On 14 August 1941 the *Feldkommandantur* in Hasselt decreed that all Antwerpians had to leave Limburg before 31 August 1941, including the workers in Op den Holven, who were sent to the capital.³⁰ The relocation to Limburg was thus the first major disruption to the Jewish community in the port city since its occupation.

Within a few months of the expulsion to Limburg, Antwerp had a large-scale outburst of violence, an orchestrated pogrom against its Jewish community, on 14 April 1941. After the second screening of the film *Der Ewige Jude*, organised by the antisemitic organisation *Volkverwering*, in Cinema Rex in Antwerp, 200 to 400 people – including members of *Volkverwering*, *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* and the Flemish SS – headed towards the Jewish neighbourhood.³¹ Eyewitness Michel Goldberg recounts: “[The rioters] were all in civilian clothes, in their Sunday best [...] except for two gendarmes [...] pedalling quietly on their bikes at the front of this [...]

screaming parade of angry people. Swear words were flying, fists were being raised [...] They had a few victims, Jews who didn’t hide in time. They beat them up. [...] then we heard [the mob] had gathered in front of the synagogues [at Van Den Nestlei and Oostenstraat].”³² On their way to the prayer houses the crowd shattered the windows of dozens of Jewish businesses, including at the printing house ‘Culture’ owned by Wigdor Zilberberg, a poultry shop owned by Naftali Willner, ‘Pelsen Max’ owned by the furrier Jozef Reich, the store of fishmonger Nathan Libermann, a salon owned by Israel Seifert, and the sporting goods store ‘Bonbony’ owned by Jacques and Simon Borisewitz.³³ In addition to the destruction of Jewish property, the mob also plundered. Jankel Chauptman reported the theft of forty hats from his store, while Mozes Blajwas claimed compensation for two copper handles torn from the door of his salon.³⁴ Other shops were completely ransacked, illustrating the opportunism of the rioters. Chicken poulterer Sumer Menche, for example, reported the destruction of all of his shop’s windows and doors, as well as of his automated scale, a double gas stove, two wooden chairs, a wooden bench, a chromed mirror, a wooden cupboard, and the bar. He also declared the following items stolen: eight chickens, a money box with contents, twenty kilos of wheat, a carrier bike from 1939, and a small table.³⁵

27. The municipal Jewish register of Overpelt contains a partial list of the men held at Op den Holven. A complete list was compiled by author Mathieu Rutten. However, he counted one man twice and skipped a number when attributing sequential numbers. In addition, the authors established that two of the Jewish men in the labour camp were Antwerpian, but had not arrived on the trains after expulsion: Otto Wolf followed his fiancée, who had been expelled, and Elias Trank moved to Limburg in March 1941 on his own account. MATHIEU RUTTEN, *De joden en zigeuners*, 147-151; Municipal Jewish register of Overpelt (Jewish Museum of Belgium – digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*). If referenced in further notes, the copy of the Jewish registers consulted is the digitised version at Kazerne Dossin.

28. Note on the departure of foreigners Marie Kompa and Heinz Rottenberg, 4 July 1941 (Municipal archive Overpelt – digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Vertrek van Joden*, KD_00182, nr. A011150).

29. IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, 165.

30. Letter from Feldkommandantur 681 to the governor of Limburg regarding the definitive departure of all expelled persons, 14 August 1941 (State Archives of Belgium – Archives Service for War Victims, R. 497 / Tr. 142546); IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, 160-161.

31. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 571-574.

32. Testimony by Michel Goldberg, 15 July 2011, 13:33-15:36 (Kazerne Dossin, *Interviews conducted by Herman Van Goethem for permanent exhibition*). Translated from French by the authors.

33. Compensation claims reviewed by the judicial department of the city of Antwerp following the riots of 14-17 April 1941 (FelixArchives, *Schadeclaims antisemitische rellen*, 2701#150, case file nr. 8 (Zilberberg), nr. 31 (Willner), nr. 33 (Reich), nr. 73 (Borisewitz), nr. 81 (Libermann) and nr. 92 (Seifert)). The authors wish to thank archivist Werner Pottier of the FelixArchives for sharing his expertise on these files.

34. *Idem*, case file nr. 32 (Chauptman) and nr. 7 (Blajwas).

35. *Idem*, case file nr. 29 (Menche).



Jacques and Hilde Borisewitz-Bernhardt in front of their sporting goods store 'Bonbony' at Simonsstraat 42, Antwerp. The store was ransacked during the 14 April 1941 pogrom. Both Jacques and Hilde were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, he from Drancy, she from the Dossin barracks, and murdered. Source: Kazerne Dossin, Borisewitz family Collection, KD_00577 (with thanks to the Klein family).

The violence reached its peak when the mob arrived at the synagogue on the corner of Van den Nestlei and Oostenstraat and at a synagogue a bit further down Oostenstraat. Torah scrolls and other religious objects were thrown into the street, torn up, and burned. The adjacent house of chief rabbi Marcus Rottenberg was completely destroyed. The household contents were smashed and several rooms were set on fire. According to witnesses, firemen were prohibited from intervening.³⁶ Rabbi Rottenberg owned a library containing over 1 200 titles. Most of the precious and rare manuscripts and prints were partially or completely destroyed. In March 1942 the Antwerp city council, which a court had deemed accountable for the damage in response to a lawsuit filed by a non-Jewish claimant, approved the reimbursement of Rottenberg's household contents. However, on 17 March 1942 the occupying authorities forbade the city to pay compensation to any Jewish victims of the 1941 pogrom.³⁷ After Liberation a lawsuit was filed to obtain reimbursement for the household contents, and for Rabbi Rottenberg's library, which was valued at 200 000 Belgian Francs. The written complaint referred to the antisemitic violence as the responsibility of the city of Antwerp, as "the municipal police had not prevented the riots from happening."³⁸ When another victim, photographer Berek Altenberg, visited the municipality in October 1944 he was told by lawyers

of the city to "be patient" regarding the compensation payment.³⁹ It remains unclear if reimbursements were ever made to the Jewish claimants.

The expulsion and the pogrom were the starting point for thousands of Jews to leave Antwerp and move to Brussels, Liège, or Charleroi. Lieven Saerens calculated that, between December 1940 and April 1942, the city's Jewish population fell from 29 435 to 21 277 persons, a decrease of 27,71 percent.⁴⁰ Over the following months the numbers would continue to decline as a third event severely impacted the Jewish community in the port city. Earlier in 1942 Hitler had urgently ordered the Nazi engineering company Organisation Todt (OT) to build a defence line along the European coast: the Atlantic Wall. The OT *Hauptdienststelle* in Paris, responsible for France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, subsequently began searching for additional workers.⁴¹ In Belgium *Gruppe VII* of the military command managed employment matters and now, unofficially, gave orders to the Belgian *Rijksarbeidsambt* (National Work Bureau) to call Jews to register for forced labour.⁴² This was made possible as of 11 March 1942, when the occupying authorities introduced compulsory employment for Jews in Belgium and Northern France (Nord and Pas-de-Calais), which had been joined under the command of the *Militärverwaltung* in Brussels in mid-June 1940.⁴³ A second anti-Jewish

36. ISRAEL ROSENGARTEN, *Overleven*, 45.

37. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 575-576; Letter from the city of Antwerp to Adolf Voigt, *Verwalter* of the property located at Lange Kievitstraat 149, regarding his pending claim, 20 August 1941 (FelixArchives, *Schadeclaims antisemitische rellen*, 2701#150, case file nr. 14 (Watowiez)).

38. *Idem*, case file nr. 35 (Rottenberg). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

39. *Idem*, case file nr. 10 (Altenberg). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

40. LIEVEN SAERENS, "De Jodenvervolging in België in cijfers", *Bijdragen tot de eigentijdse geschiedenis*, 17, 2006, 199-200 and 205.

41. GABRIEL VERBEKE, *Werkkampen in de departementen Nord en Pas-de-Calais*, Kortrijk, 1995, 4-5; ANDRÉ HARVENGT, *L'organisation Todt: la participation des travailleurs belges en Belgique et dans la nord de la France pendant la guerre 1940-1945*, thesis, Ecole royale militaire Bruxelles, 1969, 17; JEAN-GUY DUBERNAT, *L'Organisation Todt. Une organisation allemande au cœur de la collaboration*, Rennes, 2014, 30.

42. Rapport: Déportation des Juifs dans le Nord de la France, 22 November 1951 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, R.497/Tr.85848); Lagebericht Gruppe VII (Arbeitseinsatz und Sozialwesen), 13 August 1942 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, Marburg, film 11, R.184/Tr.35779).

43. MAXIME STEINBERG, *La Question*, 23; JOSÉ GOTOVITCH & JULES GÉRARD-LIBOIS, *L'an 40*, 129-130; PIM GRIFFIOEN & RON ZELLER, *Jodenvervolging in Nederland, Frankrijk en België, 1940-1945. Overeenkomsten, verschillen, oorzaken*, Amsterdam, 2011, 94.

decree, issued 8 May 1942, stipulated the practicalities of this labour.⁴⁴ The local Work Bureau in Antwerp began drafting lists, after which potential candidates were called for medical assessment. Almost none of the summoned Jews were deemed unfit to work. Subsequently, a work order was distributed to those selected for labour.⁴⁵

From 13 June until 12 September 1942, trains carried over 2 250 Jewish men from throughout Belgium to OT camps in Northern France. Single transports left from Brussels, Charleroi, and Liège, and, although the exact number of transports from Antwerp has been debated, recent contributions agree on six departures from the city's central station: on 13 June, 14 July, 18 July, 5 August, 15 August, and 12 September 1942.⁴⁶ Apart from one train to Les Mazures in the French Ardennes, carrying 288 men, the others were sent to Dannes, the main camp in the Northern French coastal area, from where the Jewish men were distributed among surrounding labour camps on the French

coast, such as Dannes, Camiers, Etaples, and Fort-Mahon.⁴⁷ The workers were housed in vacant buildings such as schools, or in tents while they constructed their own barracks.⁴⁸ During ten-to-fourteen-hour workdays they were forced to build bunkers, batteries, and tunnels, and to construct roads. Work at Les Mazures, situated inland, consisted of charcoal production. Malnutrition and abuse from the guards led to quick deterioration of the men's health and to multiple deaths.⁴⁹ As an eyewitness described it: "The Jews at the Dannes camp were abused by their guards like animals."⁵⁰ The treatment and living conditions at the OT camps were a prelude of what awaited the deportees in Auschwitz-Birkenau.⁵¹ The majority of the labourers were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau at the end of October 1942. Most of the remaining workers – Jews with Belgian nationality (a small minority in Belgium) and those married to non-Jewish women – were either deported there via Drancy in Spring 1944 or were liberated in France in August 1944.⁵²

44. SOPHIE VANDEPONTSEELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling van joden in België en Noord-Frankrijk", in RUDI VAN DOORSLAER & JEAN-PHILIPPE SCHREIBER (red.), *De curatoren van het getto. De Vereniging van de joden in België tijdens de nazi-bezetting*, Tiel, 2004, 149; Verordnung über die Beschäftigung von Juden in Belgien vom 11. März 1942, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 18 March 1942, 857; Verordnung zur Durchführung der Verordnung über die Beschäftigung von Juden in Belgien vom 8. Mai 1942, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 15 May 1942, 911-915.

45. Testimony of Robert Van der Heyden, 11 september 1946 (National Archives 2 - Joseph Cuvelier repository, *Proces Arbeidsambt Antwerpen*, 1737-1747); SOPHIE VANDEPONTSEELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 149-154.

46. On the numbers of trains from Antwerp see: MAXIME STEINBERG, *L'étoile et le fusil. 1942. Les cent jours de la déportation des Juifs de Belgique*, Bruxelles, 1984, 145; LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 589; RUDY RIGAUT, "Les particularités de la zone côtière dans la persécution des Juifs dans le Nord et le Pas-de-Calais occupés (1940-1944)", *Tsafon. Revue d'études juives du Nord*, 79, 2020, 65; SOPHIE VANDEPONTSEELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 168; INSA MEINEN, *De Shoah in België*, Antwerpen, 2011, 41; RUDI VAN DOORSLAER (red.), *Gewillig België*, 449; PIM GRIFFIOEN & RON ZELLER, *Jodenvervolging*, 308.

47. DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps des Juifs dans le Nord de la France (1942-1944)", *Memor*, 8, 1987, 50; RUDY RIGAUT, "Les particularités", 66. The identified labour camps can be consulted on this map: Left Behind research project - map 1, project website Kazerne Dossin, < <https://kazernedossin.eu/en/onderzoek/project/left-behind2/> >, consulted on 15 March 2023.

48. Documents concernant le Camp de Dannes (France N.) (State Archives of Belgium - Cegesoma, AA 120/C/82); Camp "Les Mazures". Déclaration de Monsieur Liebermann Vital Bertrand, 17 May 1970 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, R. 497 / Tr. 236051); Eindrapport nr. 4 - Complex Dannes-Camiers, 1950, 10-11 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, nr. 1852); Eindrapport nr. 5 - Kamp te Calais, 1950, 8 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, nr. 1852).

49. SOPHIE VANDEPONTSEELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 149-151; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps", 15; PETER GAIDA, "Les camps de travail de l'Organisation Todt en France 1940-1944", *Les Cahiers de la MSH Ledoux*, 10, 2007, 251-253; EPHRAIM SCHMIDT, *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Antwerpen in woord en beeld*, Antwerpen, 1994, 209-210.

50. Service d'information des crimes de guerre, *Crimes ennemis en France. La persécution raciale*, Paris, 1947, 170. Translated from French by the authors.

51. ANNE GODFROID, "A qui profite l'exploitation des travailleurs forcés juifs de Belgique dans le Nord de la France", *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Geschiedenis*, 10, 2002, 112-113; JEAN-ÉMILE ANDREUX, "Les Mazures, un camp de juifs en Ardennes françaises", *Tsafon. Revue d'études juives du Nord*, 46, 2003-2004, 122-125; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps", 57-61; RUDY RIGAUT, "Les particularités", 68-69.

52. Rabbi S. GERSHON LEVI, "Breaking new ground. The Struggle for a Jewish Chaplaincy in Canada", *Canadian Jewish Archives*, special issue, 1994, 66.

A fourth element that explains the Antwerp specificity and its high deportation numbers is the intensity of the search for Jews in the port city. Whereas Brussels was hit by one large-scale anti-Jewish raid, the Antwerp Jewish community fell victim to four. The first two were carried out under cover of darkness during the nights of 15 August and 28 August 1942. Entire families were dragged from their homes and sent to the Dossin barracks in Mechelen, from where most were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. A third raid took place in broad daylight on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, on 11 and 12 September 1942. A fourth large anti-Jewish action was organised on 22, 23, and 24 September 1942, when Jews who visited the *Stadsfeestzaal* in Antwerp to obtain ration stamps were detained on the spot, after which they were forced to disclose their family's location, which led to their arrest as well. Apart from these four large raids, there were also smaller round-ups in Antwerp, and when, in Autumn 1942, increasing numbers of Jews began to leave their official residence to go into hiding, a group of Flemish SS men organised themselves as 'Jew hunters' and tracked down as many men, women, and children as they could. The arrests of the victims were often brutal and violent, forcing more and more Antwerpian Jews to go into hiding.⁵³

III. The Antwerp deportation numbers in perspective

In order to measure the impact of the events leading to the coining of the term 'Antwerp specificity' it is necessary to first contextualise the Antwerp deportation rate by re-evaluating and recalculat-

ing the number presented by Saerens and by comparing it to the Belgian racial deportation rate.

Estimates on Belgian and Antwerp deportation numbers

Calculating the number of victims under the Nazi regime is a very difficult, almost impossible task. No official and/or complete overview exists. Researchers therefore combine different sources such as population registers, lists and overviews created by the occupying or local authorities, government documents, testimonies, and archaeological findings.⁵⁴ These sources vary greatly between regions and countries in terms of language and the functioning of the various local and occupying authorities. In addition, there are many gaps in the sources: pieces may have been destroyed or cannot be consulted, all of which makes extrapolation necessary. The quality of such derived calculations varies and their results are open to interpretation.

In international and comparative Holocaust research, deportation numbers are preferably calculated based on the number of Jews living at a certain location at the outbreak of the war.⁵⁵ However, national borders repeatedly shifted before, during, and after 1940, for example in Poland. Even in countries where borders did not change, the calculation remains difficult. The Netherlands, for example, applies a victimisation rate of 75 percent: 100 000 to 106 000 Jews murdered of a Jewish population of 140 000 in 1940.⁵⁶ The Dutch Kamp Westerbork Memorial Centre identified 107 000 deported Jews, of whom five thousand survived.⁵⁷

53. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 601-621 and 630-637; WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz*, 222-230; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "La convention", 169-180; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "In de spiegel van politieverlagen. De Antwerpse Jodenrazzia van 15-16 augustus 1942", *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis*, 175, 2009, 509-540; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, 1942, 174-251.

54. Documenting numbers of victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution, website of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), < <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008193> >, consulted on 15 March 2023.

55. E.g. MARNIX CROES & PETER TAMMES, 'Gif laten wij niet voortbestaan'. Een onderzoek naar de overlevingskansen van joden in de Nederlandse gemeenten, 1940-1945, Amsterdam, 2004, 34-43.

56. JENNIFER ROSENBERG, "Jews Killed During the Holocaust by Country", website ThoughtCo, < <https://www.thoughtco.com/number-of-jews-killed-during-holocaust-by-country-4081781> >, consulted on 15 March 2023; MARNIX CROES, "The Holocaust in the Netherlands and the Rate of Jewish Survival", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 20(3), 2006, 474-499.

57. Website of Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, < <https://www.kampwesterbork.nl/> >, consulted on 20 March 2023.

However, this figure of 102 000 Holocaust deaths does not include Dutch Jews who fled abroad and were deported from Belgium or France for example. It also does not include Jews who committed suicide or died of natural causes during the occupation. These two latter groups are, however, commemorated on the online Jewish Monument for the Dutch Holocaust Victims, leading to the total number of 104 000 Dutch victims mentioned on their website.⁵⁸ It is debatable whether those who committed suicide and those who died of natural causes should be included as Holocaust victims and it remains unclear how wartime births are incorporated into the numbers. The different counts create differences in victim numbers and percentages, and thus can lead to confusion.

The Belgian case is also the subject of much debate. Many figures circulate online, although not always based on solid research. The Jewish Virtual Library, for example, using sources from the Anti-Defamation League, reports 40 000 victims out of a population of 65 000, or 61,53 percent.⁵⁹ The number 40 000 is certainly much too high, given that the accurate and historically complete deportation lists drafted at the Dossin barracks, the only SS *Sammellager* in Belgium and Northern France for racial deportation, indicate the names of 25 490 individual Jewish deportees.⁶⁰ Other websites mention 25 000 victims out of 65 000 Jews, or 38,46 percent,⁶¹ which is more in line with the deportation lists.

When calculating the national deportation rate, two numbers are needed: the number of Jews in Belgium at the outbreak of war in May 1940 and

the number of Jews from Belgium deported during the war. Unfortunately, multiple problems occur when trying to obtain either number. Regarding the size of the community two remarks should be made. First, the total number of Jews in Belgium before and at the time of the invasion by Nazi Germany on 10 May 1940 is unknown. Few sources on this subject exist, as freedom of religion was guaranteed by the Belgian constitution and registration of this information was not practised.⁶² With the exception of the census up to 1846, neither religion nor ethnicity was or is officially recorded. In contrast to other European countries, all Belgian figures about the total number of Jews in the country before the Second World War thus remain estimates.⁶³ Second, these estimates are influenced by both (semi-) voluntary and forced Jewish movement around the time of the invasion. For example, there are no sources available that allow for determining how many Jews (semi-) voluntarily fled Belgium during the invasion (10-28 May 1940) or afterwards, and how many of them did not return. A particular group to consider when studying involuntary movement are the thousands of so-called 'suspects' who were arrested by the Belgian authorities in May 1940 as potential spies and deported to the South of France. Among these citizens of enemy nationality were also thousands of recently arrived Jewish refugees from the *Reich*. These men were detained in camps in the South of France until their deportation to concentration camps and extermination centres.⁶⁴

Regarding the deportation numbers, three important remarks must be made. First, not all Jews deported from the Dossin barracks lived in Bel-

58. Website Joods Monument, < <https://www.joodsmonument.nl/> >, consulted on 20 March 2023.

59. "The 'Final Solution': Estimated Number of Jews Killed", *Jewish Virtual Library*, website by American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, < <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/estimated-number-of-jews-killed-in-the-final-solution> >, consulted on 15 March 2023.

60. Transportliste SS-Sammellager Mecheln (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin).

61. JENNIFER ROSENBERG, "Jews Killed During the Holocaust by Country", website ThoughtCo, < <https://www.thoughtco.com/number-of-jews-killed-during-holocaust-by-country-4081781> >, consulted on 15 March 2023

62. Belgian constitution, article 19.

63. VEERLE VANDEN DAELEN, "Van migrantengroep tot religieuze minderheid: Joden in Antwerpen in de twintigste eeuw", *Noordbrabants Historisch Jaarboek*, 26, 2009, 212 and 234.

64. MARCEL BERVOETS, *La liste de Saint-Cyprien*, Braine-l'Alleud, 2006; FRANK SEBERECHTS, *De weggevoerden van mei 1940*, Antwerpen, 2014; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM (red.), *Drancy-Auschwitz. Joden uit België, gedeporteerd via Frankrijk*, Brussel, 2015.

gium before the occupation. The deportation lists include quite a few Dutch refugees who were caught when clandestinely crossing into Belgium or while living there.⁶⁵ In addition, 513 Jews were arrested during the single large raid in Northern France, which, during the Second World War, fell under the jurisdiction of the German authorities in Brussels.⁶⁶ Both groups together alter the image of how many Jews from Belgium were actually deported, and although the number of people arrested in Northern France is known, the number of Dutch Jews must still be researched further. Second, nearly six thousand Jews from Belgium were deported from France. This group was long overlooked, but when calculating the deportation rate based on the pre-war Jewish community these people should be included as having been deported.⁶⁷ Third, Jews were also deported from other prisons and camps in Belgium, although not for racial reasons but mainly for being resistance fighters. These locations included, among others, the Breendonk camp, the Saint-Gilles prison in Brussels, and the Begijnenstraat prison in Antwerp.⁶⁸ These groups are also yet to be researched, and their size remains unknown.

Which national number should one use for Belgium then? The observations above explain the sometimes large differences in the calculations of national numbers for Belgium, and illustrate the importance of explicit explanation of which sources are used in the calculations and how. Kazerne Dossin applies the deportation number of 45 percent, as calculated by Maxime Steinberg and by Lieven Saerens.⁶⁹ This figure is based on the number of Jews registered on index cards by the German *Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst* (Sipo-SD) in Belgium as of Summer 1941 (55 670) and on the number of Jews deported from the Dossin bar-

racks in Mechelen, mainly to Auschwitz-Birkenau (25 490). These numbers are only approximately correct, as an unknown number of Jews had fled Belgium by Summer 1941 and were able to reach safe territories such as Switzerland, the Iberian Peninsula, or countries overseas. Also, the Sipo-SD registration does not include the Jews from Northern France who are included in the number of deportees, nor does the number of deportees include those deported from France who had been in Belgium in Summer 1941 or afterwards, or Jews deported from other prisons or camps in Belgium. It may be the case that the number of Jewish refugees that were able to resettle in an unoccupied region equals the number of deportees missing from the calculations, but this remains uncertain because of a shortage of sources.

Due to the lack of pre-war data, wartime sources must be used to research and interpret the local differences in deportation figures. The Sipo-SD index cards are less useful for this type of research, as they were only created from the Summer of 1941 onwards, when much movement within Belgium had already taken place. There is also the question of searchability. The original index cards are stored at the National Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims (ASWV).⁷⁰ Access to the index cards is restricted, but scans can be consulted at the Arolsen Archives and at their partner institutes.⁷¹ A database with data from the Sipo-SD index cards is not (yet) freely available and it is uncertain if a final version will contain the address details needed for inter-municipal comparisons. Entering the addresses, if lacking, would still require much work. Although the Arolsen Archives envisage a crowdsourcing project, with volunteers to do the necessary transcription work, this would still be a long-term project. Additionally, in order

65. See for example the story of the Dutch family Katznelson-Slager from Steenwijk, the Netherlands: JAN VAN ROSSUM, *51 Portretten. De vermoorde joden van Steenwijk uit de schaduw*, Steenwijk, 2005.

66. WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz*, 226-227.

67. HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, *Drancy-Auschwitz*.

68. MARK VAN DEN WIJNGAERT, DIMITRI RODEN & TINE JORISSEN, *Auffanglager Breendonk 1940-1944. De Gevangenen van Breendonk. Gedenkboek - Les Prisonniers de Breendonk. Livre-Mémorial*, Willebroek, 2012.

69. MAXIME STEINBERG, *La question*, 22; LIEVEN SAERENS, "De Jodenvervolgung", 221.

70. "De steekkaarten 'Vervolging en deportatie van Joden en zigeuners in België'", *Archidoc*, 13, 2016, 4-6.

71. Arolsen Archives, <<https://arolsen-archives.org/en/>>, consulted on 15 March 2023.

to perform statistical research on differences in deportation rates between municipalities, an extra preparatory step would be required: the data of each person in the Sipo-SD index card database would need to be linked to that person's data in other sources. This involves a whole series of challenges: variations in the spelling of first names and surnames, different dates and places of birth, etc. Creating such links between databases and filtering out duplicates would be a significant undertaking and would require much precision. Nonetheless, for now, the number of 45 percent, as calculated via the index cards of the Sipo-SD, is generally used as the racial deportation rate for Belgium.

To calculate his 65 to 67 percent deportation number for Antwerp, Saerens used another war-time source: the membership forms of the Association of Jews in Belgium (AJB, also called the Jewish Council) drafted as of March 1942.⁷² The creation of the AJB had been decreed on 25 November 1941. Officially, its goals were to promote Jewish emigration and to organise Jewish schools and Jewish welfare. All Jews were obliged to become members.⁷³ After a board of directors was established, AJB branches were created in Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, and Charleroi, while local bureaus were set up in Ghent, Ostend, and Arlon. In February and March 1942 the AJB called upon the heads of each Jewish household to register at the nearest office.⁷⁴ Each registration form would contain the data of all family members living under the same roof. The practicalities, such as the required data to be given, were imposed on chief rabbi Salomon Ullmann,

president of the AJB, during a consultation with Kurt Asche, *Judenreferent* for the Sipo-SD in Brussels.⁷⁵ Each AJB form was created threefold: one copy for the local committee, one for the central AJB bureau, and one for the Sipo-SD. It took the AJB two to three months to register around 45 000 members.⁷⁶ The forms are arranged per city, alphabetically by street, and numerically by house number. Saerens observed that multiple streets from Antwerp and Brussels were missing. For Antwerp, fifteen binders survived, but Saerens suspected that there were eighteen in total, as the forms for streets with initials M, P, and W-Z were (and remain) missing. By multiplying the estimated number of folders (18) with the average number of people per surviving folder (about 900), he estimated a total of about 16 300 AJB members lived in Antwerp in March-April 1942.⁷⁷ Saerens then cross-referenced the names on the separate forms from Antwerp with deportation data from the Dossin barracks. This led him to conclude that, of the 13 779 Jews registered on the surviving AJB forms, 9 009 were deported, leading to a deportation number of 65,38 percent for Greater Antwerp.⁷⁸

Revising the Antwerp number using sources from 1940

Using the AJB forms from 1942 or the Sipo-SD index cards from 1941, however, surpasses the preferred research strategy of defining a population at the beginning of the war and mapping the fate of its members in order to calculate the exact deportation numbers.⁷⁹ A source from 1940 is in

72. Copy of the membership forms of the Association of Jews in Belgium held by the Anti-Joodse Centrale [Anti-Jewish Central Office], 1942 (State Archives of Belgium - Cegesoma, *Pièces de conviction auditorat-général près du tribunal de guerre*, AA1314, nr. 374-409).

73. Verordnung über die Errichtung einer Vereinigung der Juden in Belgien vom 25. November 1941, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 2 December 1941, 798-800.

74. INSA MEINEN, "De Duitse bezettingsautoriteiten en de VJB", in RUDI VAN DOORSLAER & JEAN-PHILIPPE SCHREIBER (red.), *De curatoren van het getto. De Vereniging van de joden in België tijdens de nazi-bezetting*, Tielt, 2004, 51.

75. "La question juive en Belgique - Position du problème au 31/12/1942", report by Maurice Benedictus on the situation of the Jewish population in Belgium, 18 February 1943, 5-6 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Association des Juifs en Belgique - Institut Martin Buber* (further abbreviated as AJB-IMB), A006682).

76. "Historique du Problème Juif en Belgique depuis le 10 mai 1940 jusqu'au 21 décembre 1942", report by Maurice Benedictus on the situation of the Jewish population in Belgium, 18 February 1943, 8-9 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A006683).

77. LIEVEN SAERENS, "De Jodenvervolgung", 208-209.

78. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 648.

79. E.g. MARNIX CROES & PETER TAMMES, 'Gif laten wij niet voortbestaan', 34-37 and 43.

fact available, which was also used for the Sipo-SD index cards. Ernst Ehlers, *Beauftragte des Chefs der Sipo-SD* in Brussels, reported in January 1942: "The Anti-Jewish Central Office is concerned with the card indexing of all Jewry in Belgium. The entire register of Jews was made available to it as a tool for this purpose."⁸⁰ This 'register of Jews' are bundles of forms that were created per the decree of 28 October 1940, which ordered all Jews from the age of fifteen to be incorporated into a municipal register. The registration was done by Belgian clergymen in December 1940.⁸¹ The Sipo-SD received lists with names, dates and places of birth, professions, and addresses of registered Jews, as ordered by Secretary-General of Internal Affairs Gerard Romsée on 29 July 1941.⁸² Any changes made to the municipal registers, especially changes in address, were to be communicated to the Sipo-SD.⁸³ After the initial registration, the Jewish registers continued to grow and change: a new form was created upon a child's fifteenth birthday and, when a person moved, their form was also transferred to the new location.⁸⁴ The municipalities were very active in their fol-

low-up. Pre-printed forms were used to request the registration form from the previous place of residence and, likewise, the new municipality confirmed the arrival and registration of newly arrived Jews with their previous municipality.⁸⁵

Created as of December 1940, the Jewish registers are the source closest to the beginning of the war and should therefore be the basis for research on municipal deportation rates. As the Belgian Ministry of Internal Affairs requested, in November 1944, that all municipalities submit their registers, this source is more easily accessible.⁸⁶ Most municipalities obeyed and the combined registers were then donated by the Ministry to the *Aide aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre* (AIVG) [Aid to Jewish War Victims], which used the registers to answer search requests from relatives abroad.⁸⁷ The Jewish Social Services, successor of the AIVG, eventually donated the registers to the Jewish Museum of Belgium, where they still reside.⁸⁸ The forms remain organised per municipality, and in the case of Greater Antwerp, per district. However, the divi-

80. "Sonderbericht: Das Judentum in Belgien", report by Ernst Ehlers, 31 January 1942, 53 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Maxime Steinberg*, A000738). Translated from German by the authors. The Sipo-SD outsourced the drafting of the index cards to the antisemitic Belgian Anti-Joodse Centrale [Anti-Jewish Central Office], which would play an important role in the identification process and the deportation of Jews. For more information: INSA MEINEN, *De Shoah*, 26-27; LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 533-536.

81. THIERRY DELPLANCQ, "Des paroles et des actes. L'administration bruxelloise et le registre des Juifs, 1940-1941", *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 12, 2003, 167; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "La convention", 158-159.

82. Circular from secretary general Gerard Romsée to the municipal commissioners, mayors, and aldermen, as well as the governors on keeping the Jewish Register, 29 July 1941 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Heemkundige Kring Mortsel*, A009426). This hypothesis is supported by the presence of such lists in the municipal registers, often with reference to the circular. For example, Jewish register of municipality Angleur (Jewish Museum of Belgium - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*).

83. Letter from secretary general Gerard Romsée to the municipal commissioners, mayors, and aldermen, as well as the governors regarding changes of address for Jewish persons, 23 September 1941 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Musée national de la Résistance*, A004697); Questionnaire concerning Register of Jews answered by Mortsel district, 24 February 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Heemkundige Kring Mortsel*, A009434.01).

84. Verordnung über Massnahmen gegen Juden (Judenverordnung) vom 28. Oktober 1940, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 5 November 1940, 279-284.

85. For example: Form request regarding the Szwergold-Domb family sent by the Jette municipality to the Saint-Gilles municipality, 27 January 1943 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds municipal archives Jette*, KD_00031_0006_000003); Confirmation of arrival of Anna Hirsch by the Sint-Jans-Molenbeek municipality to the Jette municipality, 25 November 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds municipal archives Jette*, KD_00031_0006_000050); Questionnaire concerning the register of Jews filled out by district Mortsel, 24 February 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Heemkundige Kring Mortsel*, A009434.01); Jewish register of the Diest municipality (Jewish Museum of Belgium - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*).

86. For example: Letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Belgian mayors and aldermen, 9 November 1944 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Heemkundige Kring Mortsel*, A009461); Jewish register of the Ans municipality Ans, the Ath municipality, the Boussu municipality, the Ecaussinnes d'Enghien municipality, the Edegem municipality, etc. (Jewish Museum of Belgium - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*).

87. Photocopy of a letter from the AIVG to the mayor of Alken, 12 December 1946 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Ephraïm Schmidt*, KD_00338).

88. For the history of the Jewish social services see: CATHERINE MASSANGE, *Bâtir le lendemain: l'Aide aux Israélites Victimes de la Guerre et le Service Social Juif de 1944 à nos jours*, Bruxelles, 2002.

sion is not strictly guarded. Antwerp town centre, for example, did not follow the regulations: instead of sending the original form to the new municipality when a person moved, they sent a copy of the form and kept the original in a separate folder.⁸⁹ Some of the other municipalities, such as Mortsel, kept a copy of the form.⁹⁰ Most of the municipalities, however, followed regulations and transferred the original form to the new municipality, where, in some cases, the old form remained in use, and, in other cases, the information was copied to a standardised form of the new municipality. This tangle of customs leads to registration forms of Jews from Antwerp being found not only in the folders of the Antwerp districts, but also, for example, in the registers of Schaerbeek, Saint-Gilles, and Anderlecht.

The mentioning of former addresses on all forms is of crucial importance in identifying the members of the Antwerp Jewish community at the end of 1940, when they were first registered. However, using the municipal registers has other benefits, as well. First, the forms' contents are the same in each municipality, as the data model created by the Brussels municipalities was chosen as the standard, making it easy to collect information such as surname and first name, date and place of birth, profession and nationality, and subsequent addresses.⁹¹ Second, although only persons aged fifteen or older had to register, children were in practice registered on the forms of one of their parents (in most cases the father). The number of 42 500 registered Jews over

the age of fifteen, as mentioned by the *Militärverwaltung* in its report of 2 February 1941, thus does not reflect the real number of Jews mentioned on the forms. Third, the municipalities were instructed that the forms of Jews who died in Belgium during the war were not to be removed from the register but that a note should be added regarding the date and location of their death.⁹² People from Antwerp who died after their registration are therefore still represented, giving a good idea of the size of the community at the end of 1940.

Using the municipal registers held at the Jewish Museum, however, has its research limitations, as well. First, the series is not complete: some municipalities, such as Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, did not submit their registers.⁹³ The forms of Jews from Antwerp who moved to such locations are therefore lacking from the series at the Jewish Museum. Second, some municipal registers, such as those of Liège, Charleroi, and Mons, are missing from both the series at the Jewish Museum and at the respective municipal archives.⁹⁴ Many forms from Antwerp Jews who moved to these locations are therefore lost.⁹⁵ Third, an unknown number of forms drafted during the war are missing from the registers transferred to the Ministry. When performing research on families, it may occur that a spouse's form refers to the form of their registered partner, which is missing.⁹⁶ The reason for this is unclear. Fourth, youngsters received their own form upon turning fifteen.⁹⁷ Municipalities

89. Jewish Museum of Belgium - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*.

90. Questionnaire concerning Register of Jews answered by Mortsel district, 24 February 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Heemkundige Kring Mortsel*, A009434.01).

91. Circular from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Health, 6 December 1940 (Stadsarchief Gent, *Joden IX - Aangehechte districten*); Inscription des habitants de religion israélite. Liquidation d'une facture, 27 December 1940 (Municipal archive Schaerbeek, *Extracts from the files submitted to the deliberations of the College of Burgomasters and Echevins*).

92. Réponses aux questions relatives aux juifs posées par M. Le bourgmestre FF. dans sa lettre du 9 septembre 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds municipal archives Jette*, KD_00031_0002_000022).

93. Jewish register of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds municipal archives Molenbeek-Saint-Jean*, KD_00015).

94. Letter from the chief of police in the Ans municipality to the Minister of Internal Affairs regarding the transfer of the municipal Jewish register, 5 December 1944 (Jewish Museum of Belgium - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Registre des Juifs en Belgique*).

95. VINCENT VAGMAN, *Histoire et mémoire. Présence juive à Charleroi*, Jambes, 2015, 168-169; THIERRY ROZENBLUM, *Une cité si ardente... Les Juifs de Liège sous l'Occupation (1940-1944)*, Waterloo, 2010, 86.

96. For example: Ruchla Scheck was registered in the municipal register of Borgerhout. Although marks on her form suggest that her husband Rubin Scheck was also registered, his form is missing.

97. Verordnung über Massnahmen gegen Juden (Judenverordnung) vom 28. Oktober 1940, *Verordnungsblatt des Militärbefehlshabers in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 5 November 1940, 279-284.

	Persons	Percentage
Antwerpians in the Jewish Register database	24 342	
Deported from Mechelen	12 883	52,92 %
Deported from France	756	3,11 %
Total deported	13 639	56,03 %

Table 1 : Deportation number for Antwerpian Jews included in the database of the municipal Jewish registers.

actively traced such teenagers and urged them to visit the municipality to be registered.⁹⁸ However, the first address on their own form would be the address at the time of their fifteenth birthday. If their family had moved from Antwerp between the end of 1940 and the youngster's fifteenth birthday, then the first known address of the youngster would not be in Antwerp, and they would thus not be regarded as Antwerpian.

In 2003 the municipal registers at the Jewish Museum of Belgium were digitised and a database was created with the names of all adults whose form was part of the fonds, which, as indicated, is incomplete. This index contains around 38 000 persons over the age of fifteen, in comparison to the 42 500 mentioned in the 1941 report from the *Militärbefehlshaber*, evidencing that indeed not all municipalities submitted their registers.⁹⁹ Since 2011 Kazerne Dossin has attempted to also add the underaged children, mentioned on the forms of their parents, to the index. This work is still ongoing, but, in 2019, thanks to an intense partnership with the FelixArchives in Antwerp, Kazerne Dossin was able to check all registers from Greater Antwerp for children and to add them to the database of the municipal registers.¹⁰⁰ Thanks to this collaboration and previous initiatives, over 6 100 children have been identified as living in Antwerp at the end of 1940. The name indexes of adults and children combined led to the identification of 24 342 Jews who were registered in Antwerp at the

end of 1940. All further calculations in this contribution are based on this list.

In a next research step, the list of 24 342 Antwerpians was compared to the deportation lists of the Dossin Barracks in Mechelen and the internment camps in France. Thus, the following deportation figure for Greater Antwerp could be calculated:

Based on these calculations, it is clear that the Antwerp deportation number is indeed higher than the overall Belgian number of 45 percent. As the latter took into account those deported from Mechelen but not those deported from France, the Antwerp number of 52,92 percent for persons deported from Mechelen should be the reference in this comparison, illustrating that the Antwerp number is almost 8 percentage points higher than the Belgian number. As Saerens, too, did not take into account the people deported from France, his number of 65 to 67 percent, calculated via address information from Spring 1942, clearly shows the risks of remaining in Antwerp, as the risk of deportation rose for those who stayed in the port city.

It is important to note that further work on the database used to deduce the number 24 342 is necessary. To gain insights into the number of Antwerpian Jews missing from those 24 342 identified, the Limburg group – which contains both people who stayed in Antwerp and who left – was chosen as a case study. The last known official

98. For example: Note regarding the upcoming registration of Beate Stern in the Jewish register, 1941 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds municipal archives Jette*, KD_00031_0002_000084); Form from the municipality of Deurne stating that Rosa Seewald has reached the age of fifteen and therefore should now be added to the Jewish Register, 20 February 1942 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 114).

99. Database 'Jodenregister van België', created by the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance, predecessor of Kazerne Dossin; *Tätigkeitsbericht*, 2 February 1941 (State Archives of Belgium - Cegesoma, *Tätigkeitsberichte und Abschlussbericht der Militärverwaltung*, BE-A0547).

100. Kazerne Dossin would like to thank the city of Antwerp and the FelixArchives for this fruitful collaboration.

	Adults		Children	
Last official address in Antwerp				
not in Jewish registers database	0,82 %	8	2,64 %	6
in Jewish registers database	99,18 %	965	97,36 %	221
first address in database in Antwerp	98,13 %	947	97,74 %	216
first address in database elsewhere	1,87 %	18	2,26 %	5
Last official address outside of Antwerp				
not in Jewish registers database	1,95 %	31	24,74 %	96
in Jewish registers database	98,05 %	1558	75,26 %	292
first address in database in Antwerp	97,74 %	1401	84,59 %	247
first address in database elsewhere	2,26 %	157	15,41 %	45

Table 2 : Percentages of Antwerpian Jews who stayed and who left, their presence in the Jewish registers database, and the mentioning of an address in Antwerp, based on the sample of Jews sent to Limburg.

addresses for 2 562 of the expelled adults and 615 of the expelled children were checked, in order to calculate to what extent the list of 24 342 Antwerpian actually covers the Antwerpian registered in the municipal Jewish registers.

This table illustrates that, based on the Limburg sample, three groups are covered fairly well in the list of 24 342 Antwerpian Jews subtracted from the database of the municipal Jewish registers: adults and children who stayed in Antwerp after the 1940 registration as well as adults who left Antwerp afterwards. All three groups have a number of people not in the list of the 24 342. First, there are those not represented in the municipal Jewish registers database. These people either never registered or their forms were lost. Second, some people are in the database but without an address or with an address outside Antwerp. This may have been caused by human error, but in the case of persons who left Antwerp, the first registration could also have taken place outside Antwerp or their form could have been transferred to their new municipality, where a new form was drafted without mention of the former address in Antwerp. The largest group lacking from the list of 24 342 Antwerpian Jews are the children who left Antwerp and who are not represented in the database of the municipal registers. As indicated, the collaboration with FelixArchives entailed only the forms

in the binders of the municipalities of Greater Antwerp, and an unknown number of forms were sent to the new municipality without leaving a copy in Antwerp. In the case of children who left Antwerp and who, in the database of the Jewish registers, are represented with an address outside Antwerp, this was mainly caused by children turning fifteen after leaving Antwerp: they would have their own form, created by their new municipality of residence, when they registered upon turning fifteen.

In order to determine how complete the list of 24 342 Antwerpian Jews is, we then divided this list – which contains the persons from the municipal Jewish registers database with a 1940 address in Antwerp – into adults born before 1 January 1926 (18 955 persons) and children born later (5 387 persons). We then further divided both of these into those who stayed and those who left, using Saerens' calculation that 27,72 percent of the Antwerp Jewish population left the port city between the end of 1940 and April 1942.¹⁰¹ Via extrapolation it was established that 745 Antwerpian adults and children are represented in the municipal Jewish registers database but without an address or with an address outside of Antwerp, while 911 – of whom 580 children who left – are not represented in the database. This would suggest that the list of 24 342 Antwerpian Jews represents 93,63 percent of all Jewish Antwerpian in the municipal Jewish

101. LIEVEN SAERENS, "De Jodenvervolgung", 201-205. Of the 29 435 Jews living in Antwerp at the end of 1940, 21 277 remained in April 1942. Saerens based his calculations on extrapolated numbers from German reports and on the 1942 membership forms of the Association of Jews in Belgium.

	Adults		Children	
Last official address in Antwerp				
not in Jewish registers database	0,82%	115	2,64%	108
in Jewish registers database	99,18%	13962	97,36%	3984
first address in database in Antwerp	98,13%	13701	97,74%	3894
first address in database elsewhere	1,87%	261	2,26%	90
Last official address outside of Antwerp				
not in Jewish registers database	1,95%	107	24,74%	580
in Jewish registers database	98,05%	5375	75,26%	1765
first address in database in Antwerp	97,74%	5254	84,59%	1493
first address in database elsewhere	2,26%	121	15,41%	272

Table 3: Extrapolation to calculate the number of Antwerpian Jews - either wrongly or not represented in the database of the municipal Jewish registers - in the list with 24 342 names.

registers as stored at the Jewish Museum of Belgium today. Further work on databases of the municipal Jewish registers is necessary to correct this data and to add the missing names.

IV. Analysis of subpopulations within the Antwerp community: Limburg and OT

The impact on the Jewish community of Antwerp of the expulsion of foreigners (mainly Jews) to Limburg in December 1940–February 1941 and conscription for forced labour under Organisation Todt imposed as of June 1942 can be measured via statistical analyses. This chapter addresses both the calculation method and the obtained results.

Forced relocation of Antwerpian families to Limburg

In mid-December 1940 a list was delivered to the local police containing the names of 7 328 inhabitants of Antwerp who should be relocated.¹⁰² It is unclear who established this final list:

the *Feldkommandantur* or the governor of Antwerp.¹⁰³ Although the majority of those listed were Jewish, the list itself was not based on the municipal Jewish registers, as registration in the latter occurred in Antwerp only between 11 and 20 December 1940.¹⁰⁴ The source for this expulsion list was, by contrast, foreigner lists requested from the governor of the province of Antwerp by *Feldkommandantur* 675 during a meeting on 20 November 1940. Six such documents had to be created by the Antwerp municipalities, and each was to be dedicated to another specific group, such as persons who arrived from Germany in or after 1933 or from Czechoslovakia in or after 1938. The seventh requested list, with Jewish foreigners, was to be delivered after finalising the municipal registration of Jews.¹⁰⁵ However, in an additional circular the governor requested the municipalities to indicate who on the initial six lists was Jewish.¹⁰⁶ The foreigners police in Antwerp, for this purpose, checked several other types of documents from the immigration files they compiled: Polish birth certificates mentioned a person's religion, the identification documents of German Jews carried the letter J, and Jews from

102. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 562.

103. IGNACE DEGENS, *Joodse uitwijkelingen*, 64-65.

104. *Idem*, 52; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "La convention", 158.

105. Letter from *Kriegsverwaltungsrat* (*Feldkommandantur* 675) to the Governor of the province of Antwerp regarding the registration of foreigners, 20 November 1940 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 297); LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 560-562.

106. Letter from the Governor of the province of Antwerp to the municipalities regarding the practicalities on the list of Jews to be provided, 21 November 1940 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 298).

the *Reich* had been forced to take on Israel (for men) or Sara (for women) as their second name.¹⁰⁷ Antwerp was thus able to deliver the requested lists – including indication of one's Jewish background – via the governor's office to the *Feldkommandantur* as of 28 November 1940.¹⁰⁸

On 18 December 1940 the first expulsion orders, each with a unique number, were distributed by the local police.¹⁰⁹ The numbers were kept in a register along with the name of the addressed person.¹¹⁰ That person had to bring their order when presenting themselves at the Antwerp South railway station, from where the trains left for Limburg. When a train halted at a station in a Limburg municipality where people were to be housed, the accompanying police officer from Antwerp organised a roll call. With the help of local clerks the expulsion order of each person leaving the train was verified and a list was drafted per municipality, containing the numbers of the expulsion orders of people attributed to that municipality.¹¹¹ The number of people who had arrived was then compared to the number of people that had boarded the train in Antwerp. Only afterwards were lists with names of the expelled persons created, of which one copy remained at the municipality in Limburg, and another – signed by the mayor of the municipality – was returned to Antwerp.¹¹² Some of these lists with names have survived only partially or not at all, leaving only the register and the lists with expulsion order numbers to be checked to gain a full overview of who was sent to which municipality in Limburg.¹¹³

A first step in calculating the deportation number for the Limburg group consisted of identifying all adults who had obeyed the order. The central register with the numbers of the expulsion orders was indexed by volunteers of the FelixArchives.¹¹⁴ However, the register and thus the index contains the information on all orders handed out, whereas thousands did not obey the order or did not receive it, having already moved from Antwerp. It was therefore necessary to cross-reference the index with the name lists and the lists with expulsion order numbers drafted per municipality. This allowed us to identify 2 672 people who arrived in Limburg with an order. However, many of them were accompanied by children who did not receive an order themselves and who were therefore not represented in the register. A second research step consisted of identifying these children. The lists with expulsion order numbers did indicate if persons without an order were accompanying a person with an order, and the name lists often (but not always) mentioned all such names. If the names of the children were not mentioned there, they were identified via sources such as the municipal Jewish registers and the AJB membership forms. Of the 631 fellow travellers, 621 could be identified. A database was created containing the personal data on the 2 672 persons with an order and the 621 persons without an order (3 293 individuals in total). In order to compare the deportation rate of this particular group with the 56,03 percent deportation rate calculated for the 24 342 Antwerpian Jews from the database of the municipal register, a third research step was

107. MAXIME STEINBERG, *La question*, 90-91.

108. For example: List drafted by the Antwerp police at the request of the Provincial Administration of Antwerp of stateless persons of Polish origin, older than 15 years, coming from Germany and living in Antwerp since 1 January 1937, 28 November 1940 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Provincie Antwerpen*, PAA981, nr. 328).

109. In practice, when identifying the orders by looking up their numbers in the central register, it became clear that some numbers were attributed twice or even three times.

110. Register of Antwerpians who received an expulsion order (FelixArchives, *Treinen naar Limburg*, Algemene lijst der uitgewezenen, BE SA 317292).

111. Lists of expelled people per train and per municipality (FelixArchives, *Treinen naar Limburg*, Afzonderlijke lijsten per trein, BE SA 317293).

112. Verslag over de personen vervoerd door den trein van 21 december 1940 uit Antwerpen-Zuid naar St. Truiden opgesteld door agent E. Pauwels (FelixArchives, *Treinen naar Limburg*, Verslagen agenten, BE SA 317302).

113. For example, at least one page of the name lists of the transport of 4 January 1941 to Genk is missing.

114. Kazerne Dossin would like to thank the FelixArchives for making this database available for further research.

	Persons	Percentage
Sent to Limburg	3293	96,87%
<i>of whom Jewish</i>	3190	3,13%
<i>of whom non-Jewish</i>	103	
Jews recorded in database of municipal registers	3038	95,24%
<i>Recorded with address in Greater Antwerp</i>	2811	92,53%
<i>Recorded with address elsewhere</i>	227	7,47%
Recorded Antwerpian Jews deported	1848	65,74%

Table 4: Calculation of deportation number for Jews sent to Limburg and recorded in the municipal registers databases.

to determine which of the people sent to Limburg were Jewish, if they were represented in the database of the municipal register, and if so, in which city. A fourth and last step was to verify which of the expelled people had been deported.

Of the 3 293 persons expelled to Limburg, 3 190 were Jewish. The non-Jewish persons were, in many cases, spouses of Jews, or children from mixed marriages. Teenagers Ilse and Julius Klanner, for example, were the children of Roman Catholic Jules Klanner. The siblings were transported to Limburg together with their Jewish mother, Amalia Schön, on the eighth transport, from Antwerp to Heffen, on 1 February 1941. In some cases, however, there was no source material to verify if someone was Jewish. These people were then attributed to the non-Jewish group (103 persons). Of the 3 190 identified Jews, 3 038 (94,24 percent) appeared in the database of the municipal Jewish registers, of whom 2 811 (92,53 percent) had an address in Greater Antwerp at the end of 1940.

The group of people registered in Greater Antwerp then served as the population by which to determine the deportation rate for Jews from Antwerp expelled to Limburg. 1 848 of the 2 811 people were deported from either the Dossin barracks or French camps during the war, placing the deportation rate for the Limburg group at 65,74 percent. This number is 9,71 percentage points higher than

the Antwerp number (56,03 percent), and 20,74 percentage points higher than the Belgian number (45 percent), indicating that expulsion to Limburg did indeed lower one's chances for survival.

Forced labour in northern France supervised by Organisation Todt

In Summer 1942 nine trains carried Jewish workers from Belgium to the OT labour camps in Northern France. A first step in calculating the deportation rate for the Antwerpian men consisted of identifying them. Initially, a database with 2 252 workers' names was semi-automatically compared with the 1940 municipal Jewish registers.¹¹⁵ 1 553 Antwerpian Jewish forced labourers were thus identified. However, when comparing the Antwerpian workers list to additional sources such as OT payroll lists, correspondence from the Association of Jews in Belgium, the list of men at the Les Mazures camp constructed by researcher Jean-Emile Andreux, and personal testimonies it became clear that the initial list of 2 252 workers had been incomplete to begin with. Based on the additional sources, another 72 Antwerpian men were identified, bringing the total to 1 625 workers. 1 601 of these 1 625 men were represented in the database of the municipal registers with a registration address in Antwerp at the end of 1940. Sixteen of them were not represented in the

115. The database was created by the State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims and is based on the list of forced labourers published by the Belgian Ministry of Public Health in 1978: Service des Victimes de la Guerre. *Liste des israélites domiciliés en Belgique en mai 1940, internés dans des camps de travail forcé du Nord de la France, employés par des firmes effectuant des travaux pour l'Organisation Todt*. Brussels, 1978.

	Persons	Percentage
Antwerpians sent to OT labour camps	1625	
Recorded in database municipal registers with		
<i>address in Greater Antwerp</i>	1601	98,53%
<i>address outside Greater Antwerp</i>	8	0,49%
Not recorded in database municipal registers	16	0,98%
Recorded Antwerpian Jews deported	1358	84,82%

Table 5: Calculation of deportation number for Jewish OT labourers recorded in the municipal registers database.

	Persons	Percentage
Research sample OT labourers	628	
Identified relatives	1501	
Extrapolated number of relatives	4206	
<i>of whom Jewish</i>	4117	97,88%
<i>of whom deported</i>	3027	73,52%

Table 6: Calculation of deportation number for relatives of Jewish OT labourers recorded in the municipal registers database.

database of the municipal registers; eight of them were but without an address or with an address outside of Greater Antwerp.¹¹⁶

A second research step consisted of determining the Antwerpian labourers final fate, using the deportation lists of the Dossin barracks and the French internment camps as well as the Sipo-SD index cards, files stored at the State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, and personal testimonies. The largest subpopulation identified (1 098 men) was deported from the labour camps via the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau on transports XV, XVI, and XVII on 24 and 31 October 1942. Medium-sized subpopulations included men who successfully escaped the labour camps (114 men) and men who escaped or were released from the labour camps but were subsequently deported from the Dossin barracks (181 men). One of them was eighteen-year-old Jacques Flaster, whose non-Jewish foster-father tes-

tified after the war: "I went and got him out of the concentration camp [sic] near Calais on 5 October 1942 with a certificate for sick leave [...] Jacques then lived in hiding with me at Rolwagenstraat 32 [in Antwerp] until he was denounced on 26 January 1944. Three men then came to my house to take the boy."¹¹⁷ Apart from the one large and two medium-sized subpopulations fifteen smaller ones were defined, including men deported from the labour camps via Drancy to Auschwitz-Birkenau (28 men), men who died in the OT labour camps (17 men), and men who were liberated in France in August 1944 (30 men).¹¹⁸

The combined subpopulations of men deported directly from the labour camps, from the Dossin barracks, or from the Drancy internment camp comprise 1 358 of the 1 601 men registered as Antwerpians in the database of the municipal registers. This deportation rate of 84,82 percent for the OT workers is forty percentage points higher than

116. For an elaborate analyses please see: VEERLE VANDEN DAELEN & DORIEN STYVEN, "Left Behind – A Project Opening up Little-Known Holocaust Histories as well as New Tools", EHRI document blog, < <https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2021/09/29/left-behind/> >, consulted on 15 March 2023.

117. Letter from Frans Van Reusel to the attorney general regarding his ward Jacques Flaster, 16 November 1944 (State Archives of Belgium, *Fonds Auditoraat-Generaal*, File Alfons de Rechter). Jacques Flaster did not survive deportation from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau via transport XXIV. The authors wish to thank the researchers who brought this case to their attention. Translation from Dutch by the authors.

118. For a complete analysis see: DORIEN STYVEN & VEERLE VANDEN DAELEN, "Zurückgelassen", 205-227.

	Sent to Limburg	OT worker or relative	# people	% of Antwerp community
	X		2 627	10,79%
		X	5 534	22,73%
	X	X	184	0,76%
Other Antwerpian Jews			15 997	65,72%
Antwerp total			24 342	100,00%

Table 7: The number of Antwerpians in the database of the 1940 municipal registers in reference to their membership of the subpopulations. The group of 184 people sent to Limburg and affected by OT labour consists of 79 men, registered in Antwerp at the end of 1940 and sent to Northern France as a forced labourer for Organisation Todt in 1942, as well as 105 of their relatives registered in Antwerp at the end of 1940.

the national number and 28,79 percentage points higher than the Antwerp number. However, the high deportation number for the workers should not be surprising, as these men were already being held in labour camps and were thus completely at the mercy of decisions by Nazi authorities.

As the impact of forced labour on the survival chances of the families of the OT workers remained unexamined in literature so far, a next step consisted in identifying the relatives.¹¹⁹ A research sample of 628 of the Antwerpian OT workers (38,65 percent) was established.¹²⁰ Subsequently, for these 628 men a total of 1 501 relatives were identified and their fates researched.¹²¹ 'Relative' was defined as a next of kin living with the OT labourer at the same address when he was taken. Weighting factors were then applied to the sample of 628 men and their 1 501 identified relatives to represent the total population. Of the extrapolated 4 206 relatives, 89 (also an extrapolated number), or 2,12 percent – mostly wives and children –

were non-Jewish. In a final research step the fates of the 1 501 identified relatives were researched by looking up their names on the deportation list of the Dossin barracks and those of the French internment camps. Of the 4 117 Jewish relatives (extrapolated number) 3 027 (extrapolated number), or 73,52 percent, were deported. This number is 28,52 percentage points higher than the Belgian number and 17,49 percentage points higher than the Antwerp deportation number.

V. A comparison of the methods of arrest

The deportation rates for Jews expelled to Limburg and for OT forced labourers and their families is much higher than the municipal and national deportation numbers. As both Antwerp subpopulations are substantial in size - 10,79 percent were sent to Limburg, 22,73 percent were affected by OT forced labour, and 0,76 percent by both, thus all together representing one-third of the

119. JEAN-ÉMILE ANDREUX, "Les Mazures", 117-147; JEAN-ÉMILE ANDREUX, "Mémorial des déportés du Judenlager des Mazures", *Tsafon. Revue d'études juives du Nord*, 3 (hors-série), 2007, 35-121; *De bezittingen van de slachtoffers van de jodenvervolgving in België. Spoliatie - Rechtsherstel. Bevindingen van de Studiecommissie. Eindverslag van de Studiecommissie betreffende het lot van de bezittingen van de leden van de joodse gemeenschap van België, geplunderd of achtergelaten tijdens de oorlog 1940-1945*, Brussel, 2001; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps", 47-65; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Table ronde. Les 'camps de juifs' dans le Boulonnais (1942-1944). Actes de la table ronde de Boulogne-sur-Mer, 24 septembre 1988", *Memor. Bulletin d'information*, 10(1), 1989, 9-31; RÉMY DESQUESNES, "L'Organisation Todt en France (1940-1944)", *Histoire, économie et société*, 11 (3), 1992, 535-550; PETER GAIDA, "Les camps de travail", 235-256; ANNE GODFROID, "A qui profite", 107-127; RUDY RIGAUT, "Les particularités", 39-74; LAURENCE SCHRAM, *Dossin: Wachtkamer van Auschwitz*, Tiel, 2018; MAXIME STEINBERG, *La question*; MAXIME STEINBERG, *Les cent jours*; SOPHIE VANDEPONTSEELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 149-181; RUDI VAN DOORSLAER (red.), *Gewillig België*.

120. The sample includes all men attributed to the seventeen smaller subpopulations, one-fifth of all men deported directly from the labour camps to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and one-third of all men who were released from or who escaped the labour camps after which they were again arrested and deported from the Dossin barracks. In the case of the two largest categories for which only a sample of the men was examined, weighing factors were applied to calculate the numbers via extrapolation.

121. For a more detailed outline see: DORIEN STYVEN & VEERLE VANDEN DAELLEN, "Zurückgelassen", 205-227.

		Arbeitseinsatz (work order)	Raid	Individual arrest	Labour camp	Total
Sent to Limburg	#	445	284	966	0	1695
	%	26,25%	16,76%	56,99%	0,00%	100,00%
OT workers	#	4	32	170	1080	1286
	%	0,31%	2,49%	13,22%	83,98%	100,00%
OT relatives	#	630	1079	1228	0	2937
	%	21,45%	36,74%	41,81%	0,00%	100,00%
Limburg and OT	#	16	33	41	63	153
	%	10,46%	21,57%	26,80%	41,18%	100,00%
Other	#	986	2289	4293	0	7568
	%	13,03%	30,25%	56,73%	0,00%	100,00%
Antwerp total	#	2081	3717	6698	1143	13639
	%	15,26%	27,25%	49,11%	8,38%	100,00%

Table 8: The division in methods of arrest per subpopulation of the Antwerp Jewish community.¹²² Remarks: (1) The group 'labour camp' contains the men who were sent to OT labour camps from where they were deported directly to Auschwitz-Birkenau. (2) The group of people affected by Limburg and OT labour (153 persons) combines 72 deported men registered in the database of the 1940 municipal Jewish register who were sent to Limburg and were taken as OT forced labourers, as well as 81 of their relatives who suffered the same fate.

Antwerp population - their deportation numbers do cause a substantial increase in the municipal deportation number. When taking into account only Antwerpian Jews not affected by expulsion to Limburg or by forced labour (15 997 persons) and the number of deportees within this subpopulation (7 559 persons) we arrive at the much lower deportation number of 47,25 percent, which indicates the devastating effect of the expulsions and forced labour on the Antwerp Jewish community.

One of the initial hypotheses when researching OT labour stated that the relatives of the workers – mainly elderly parents, wives, and (young) children – were more likely to remain at their legal address in the absence of the men, which would reflect in the method of arrest of the relatives. Three different types of arrest were taken into account. First, from July to September 1942 *Arbeitseinsatzbefehle* (work orders) were distributed to lure Jews to the Dossin barracks, from where they were deported,

mainly to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Second, Antwerp was hit by four large raids in August and September 1942, during which thousands of men, women, and children were forcibly removed from their homes to be transferred to the Dossin barracks and deported. A fifth raid directed against Jews of Belgian nationality was organised in September 1943. Third, as of September 1942 the Nazi authorities depended mostly on individual arrests to fill the deportation trains: people discovered in hiding, identified at street checkpoints, or seized from their own home after denunciation.¹²³

Based on the research hypothesis, relatives of OT workers who were arrested during large raids should have been deported more often than those arrested after obeying an *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl* for the Dossin barracks or after individual arrests. However, because of the experiences that this group had already had with work orders, many may have been inclined to obey the *Arbeitsein-*

¹²². The total numbers per subgroup differ slightly in comparison to the previously mentioned numbers as, for this topic, the subgroup 'affected by expulsion to Limburg and by OT labour' was created in order not to double count these arrested persons in both the Limburg and the OT subpopulation when verifying the methods of arrest.

¹²³. WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz*, 82-11; LAURENCE SCHRAM, *Dossin*, 31.

satzbefehle for the Dossin barracks. And the latter could also have been true for deported Jews who were sent to Limburg. Statistical analysis shows that the methods of arrest for the Antwerp subpopulations are as follows:

One of every four members of the Limburg subpopulation who were deported presented themselves with an *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl*, including Alfred Rosendahl, who was expelled to Beverlo on 1 February 1941 and who, in July 1942, was the first Jew to be listed for deportation at the Dossin barracks.¹²⁴ In contrast, 'only' one in eight deported Antwerpians not sent to Limburg and not directly affected by OT presented themselves with a work order. It therefore appears that the people expelled to Limburg were indeed more inclined to obey the orders. This may have been the result of a false impression these people had about what it meant to receive an order. In Limburg they had experienced a certain degree of freedom and lived a rather normal life. In Beverloo, for example, the expelled Jews established a synagogue, while in other municipalities younger children attended the local school.¹²⁵ In some cases, friendships formed between those expelled and their hosts. A message from Regina Degen and Benedikt Felsen reads: "To the Paulissen family, forever devoted in gratitude. We will never forget you."¹²⁶ Benedikt and Regina were deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau via transport III on 15 August 1942. Both were murdered.¹²⁷

Some Jewish families also recalled the peaceful circumstances of life in Limburg.¹²⁸ For others, such as Max Schindler, the experience was less positive: "We were in the schoolyard and the kids found out I was Jewish. I was surrounded by them. They looked at me to make sure I didn't have horns."¹²⁹ The expulsion did allow some to gain access to a new food supply chain. In November 1941 the governor of Limburg alerted the mayors that Jews "return to Limburg for visits and use the opportunity to smuggle goods. It has been established that these persons buy vegetables, butter, etc. on the black market and trade old items (fabrics, etc.) for ration stamps."¹³⁰

Even for the men sent to the Op den Holven labour camp in Overpelt the expulsion to Limburg appears to have clouded their view about what it meant to perform forced labour for the Nazis, as 68,14 percent of the Op den Holven men would be deported, and 39,13 percent of those deported had obeyed an *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl*.¹³¹ Although the drainage work at Op den Holven was hard and physically destructive – the men worked without proper footwear and constantly had wet feet, and lacked food – living conditions were relatively bearable, as the camp was initially guarded by Belgian policemen and was not surrounded by barbed wire when it opened.¹³² Facilities such as a barber shop and an infirmary were installed, and a local doctor was called to evaluate the ill. A laundry woman and a clothes and shoe repair service

124. List of Transport I, 1 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Transportliste SS-Sammellager Mecheln*).

125. MARC BERTRANDS, *Kroniek*, 103-105; FRANS KEERSMAEKERS, *Joden te Kwaadmechelen. Inleiding tot de Holocaust, 1941*, Ham, 1992, 44.

126. Photo given to the Paulissen family in As, Limburg, by the expelled Antwerpians Benedikt Felsen and Regina Degen, 6 April 1941 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Benedikt Felsen and Regina Degen*, KD_00096_000002). For other examples see: FRANS KEERSMAEKERS, *Joden te Kwaadmechelen*, 82-83. Translated from German by the authors.

127. List of Transport III, 49 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Transportliste SS-Sammellager Mecheln*).

128. GERT LILIENTHAL, *Polizei!*, 55 and 61.

129. Interview by Max Schindler on his expulsion to Alken, Limburg, 4:33-5:24 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Max Schindler*, KD_00944).

130. Letter from Governor J. Lysens to the Limburg municipalities, 16 November 1941, reproduced in MATHIEU RUTTEN, *De joden en zigeuners*, 43. Translated from Dutch by the authors.

131. Of the 141 Op den Holven workers who were registered as Antwerpian in the database of the municipal Jewish registers and who were not affected by Organisation Todt 92 were deported. 36 of those deported obeyed an *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl*, 4 were arrested during large raids and 56 were caught individually.

132. It is unclear if a fence was actually ever put up. On 14 June 1941 the *Feldkommandantur* in Hasselt ordered that the wire should be delivered and that the workers had to build the fence, but there is no reference to the actual delivery or placement of it.



Regina Degen, second from left, and Benedikt Felsen, on the right, with the Paulissen family at the Paulissen farm in As, after Regina and Benedikt's obligatory relocation from Antwerp to Limburg in 1941. Regina and Benedikt were both deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Neither survived. Source: Kazerne Dossin, Fonds Benedikt Felsen and Regina Degen, KD_00096.

were obtained from the local Overpelt population. The Jewish workers were allowed to send and receive mail. The camp rulebook also referred to daily payment of wages, so long as the expenses for the upkeep of the worker did not exceed these payments.¹³³ But foremost, their time at the labour camp in Op den Holven had been limited, due to which a false sense of security may have risen among the camp's former workers.

The same apparent attitude towards the *Arbeits-einsatzbefehle* can be observed among the relatives of Organisation Todt workers: one in five of the deported relatives presented themselves in Mechelen with a work order. For them, too, their previous experience may have affected their judgement. Although the destination of the OT trains was unknown upon departure – this information was not marked on the work order – many of the men threw letters and postcards from the transports, indicating their route.¹³⁴ After the men's arrival at the labour camps in France, parcels, postcards, and letters could be exchanged with their families in Antwerp. Even though the flow via official channels was inconstant at best and official mail items were subject to censorship, news did come through which gave relatives back home an inaccurate idea about the destination of people summoned for labour.¹³⁵ The first messages arriving in Antwerp, for example, apparently also spoke about the work conditions as being bearable.¹³⁶ In addition to the ties between the OT workers and their relatives, in July and August 1942 the distribution of the OT work

orders coincided with the Dossin barracks work orders for the East, and the difference between the two destinations became unclear. This created confusion among both the workers and their relatives about where the work order would lead them.¹³⁷ It is therefore possible that some of the people who presented themselves at the Dossin barracks wrongly believed that they would be sent to Northern France.

A break-up in numbers of deportees arrested during the large raids leads to a completely different image. Those sent to Limburg were affected much less, as 'only' 16,76 percent of those deported were arrested during a raid. In comparison, the number of relatives of OT labourers deported after arrest during a raid is 36,74 percent, with the number for the other Antwerpians being only slightly lower (30,25 percent). The small number for the Limburg subpopulation may simply be the result of 62,23 percent of these people moving to Brussels, Liège, Charleroi, or elsewhere.¹³⁸ In Brussels there was only one large raid, while in Liège and Charleroi there were only targeted searches.¹³⁹ In other words, a large number of people sent to Limburg had no longer been in Antwerp in August and September 1942, when the four large raids took place in the port city. Calculations by Lieven Saerens, based on the 1942 membership forms of the AJB, show that the deportation rate for those who stayed in Antwerp after Spring 1942 was 65,38 percent, or 9,35 percentage points higher than the deportation rate for the registered Antwerp Jewish population of 1940. This illustrates

133. Arbeidskamp – Overpelt (Provinciaal Archief Limburg, *Archieven van Wereldoorlog I en II*, series 289, nr. 376-389).

134. Testimony written by Dydja Krzetowski in hospital after Liberation, 1-6 (Private collection L. Shentow - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, Canada); RUDI VAN DOORSLAER, *Gewillig België*, 448; SOPHIE VANDEPONTSELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 173-174; Diary of Mozes Sand, 5 August 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098).

135. Correspondence regarding mail and parcels for Jewish workers in Northern France, 9 March 1943 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A008606); Diary of Mozes Sand, 6 August and 12 September 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098); Joseph Peretz, *The endless wait. A memoir*, Toronto, 1996, 54.

136. JOSEF STERNIGOLD, *Geleefd en Beleefd*, Antwerpen, 1997, 23.

137. Dannes-Camiers (juin à septembre 1942), testimony by Joseph Berman, 1990 (State Archives of Belgium - Cegesoma, AB 1351); ANNE GODFROID, "A qui profite", 113; Journal of Salomon Van den Berg, 39-41 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A006685); SOPHIE VANDEPONTSELE, "De verplichte tewerkstelling", 168.

138. This number was calculated by identifying the last official address of the Jews expelled to Limburg. Such an address was found for 3 177 expelled adults and children, of whom 1 977 had a last official address outside of Antwerp.

139. In Liège Jewish family homes were raided one by one or in small clusters. In Charleroi a large-scale raid was prevented by the Jewish Defence Committee, which falsified the address lists of the local branch of the Association of Jews in Belgium. THIERRY ROZENBLUM, *Une cité si ardente*, 117; VINCENT VAGMAN, *Présence juive à Charleroi*, 239-244.

that moving from the city was in fact an effective survival strategy. The closeness of the numbers for the OT relatives and the other Antwerpian Jews also illustrates the devastating consequences of the four raids on the entire Jewish community, whether affected by OT labour or not, and thus also the responsibility of the municipal authorities such as the mayor and the police force as concerns their involvement in the organisation of these raids.¹⁴⁰

The small difference in numbers between deported OT relatives arrested during the raids and the other Antwerpian Jews could also reflect that relatives of OT workers were slightly more likely to remain at their legal address. Three elements could explain this decision.

First, a small wage was paid to the families. By 1942 several decrees had stripped Jews of most of their income. Payments from Organisation Todt could therefore relieve the families of some of their financial problems.¹⁴¹ Promises by the occupying authorities regarding payment to the workers' families were made to the Association of Jews in Belgium.¹⁴² However, within a few weeks of the departure of the first OT transport to France complaints regarding late or non-payment began arriving at the AJB offices and at the local Antwerp office of the National Work Bureau, which organised the selection of the workers.¹⁴³ Organisation

Todt did not officially set the wages for Jewish workers until August 1942, by which time many of the men had been at the labour camps for several weeks or months; in many cases the payments stopped after a few weeks.¹⁴⁴ In addition to these problems, another issue arose, when each worker had to appoint a beneficiary to whom the money would be transferred.¹⁴⁵ Many beneficiaries were deported in August and September 1942, however, and terrible scenes occurred when the few remaining relatives visited the offices of the AJB, despite the danger of their being arrested and deported, only to learn that they could not receive any money since they had not been officially named the beneficiary of the OT worker in question.¹⁴⁶ The filing of official complaints regarding payment of OT wages as late as October 1942 – when deportations from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau were fully underway – shows how much the families of these workers needed this money.

Second, contact was established between the families in Antwerp and their husbands, fathers, and sons in Northern France. Postcards which have survived mention the sending and receiving of letters which, for those involved, represented a priceless sign of life. As one worker wrote to his wife: "I am so happy to have received your precious card from September 9th. I was so worried for you and would like to get news again to give me peace."¹⁴⁷ Several accounts written during or after the war mention

140. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 601-621 and 630-637; WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz*, 222-230;

HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "La convention", 169-180; HERMAN VAN GOETHEM, "In de spiegel van politieverlagen. De Antwerpse Jodenrazzia van 15-16 augustus 1942", *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis*, 175, 2009, 509-540; Herman Van Goethem, 1942, 174-251.

141. Letter regarding forced labour in France, 13 August 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A008541).

142. Report of the meeting of 24 June 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Association des Juifs en Belgique - Musée national de la Résistance (AJB-MNR)*, A005148).

143. Letter from Jozef Duysan to Organisation Todt regarding correspondence on Jews, 19 September 1942 (State Archives - Antwerp department, *Archive Arbeidsambt Antwerpen*, BE-A0511.751, file 168, nr. 1).

144. Report on the meeting of K.V. Baron, M. Benedictus and M. Heiber, 13 July 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A008458); THIERRY ROZENBLUM, *Une cité*, 97; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps", 58; ANNE GODFROID, "A qui profite", 113; ROSETTE GROSS-BECKER, *Tu n'as pas souffert*, unpublished testimony, 22; For the complaints see: File 4 - Complaints (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-MNR*, A003652-A003692).

145. JEAN-PIERRE GROMBEER & ROBERT NEYS, *Faits divers. Les évadés du convoi 16*, documentary supported by RTBF, 1999, 3:18-3:35; Diary of Mozes Sand, 10 August 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098); ANNE GODFROID, "A qui profite", 114-116; *De bezittingen van de slachtoffers van de jodenvervolging in België*, 272-288.

146. Todt salaries, 2 December 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-MNR*, A003677).

147. Postcard from Julius Mehrer at OT camp to his wife Stella Bellak in Brussels, 5 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Julius Mehrer*, KD_00950). Translated from German by the authors.

the different ways of exchanging news.¹⁴⁸ The official channel consisted of the AJB parcel and mail service.¹⁴⁹ In addition, there were also unofficial ways to send and receive letters or even photos from loved ones.¹⁵⁰ Non-Jewish workers or locals living near the work camps would, for example, sometimes mail uncensored messages to the Jewish labourers' families.¹⁵¹ In other cases, newly arrived Jewish workers from Antwerp informed other labourers about the raids in the port city and the arrests of their loved ones.¹⁵² On some occasions both Jewish and non-Jewish wives or fiancées and non-Jewish friends of the men even made the trip to the OT camps to illegally meet.¹⁵³ Mathilde Kornitzer, for example, sent V., an unidentified acquaintance, to Les Mazures to inform her husband, Jacob Klapholz, about the death of his mother.¹⁵⁴ This type of visit was slightly easier to organise for relatives of the men in Les Mazures, situated inland, than for the loved ones of workers in the camps near the coast, as the latter camps were located in a so-called red zone, due to the region's military significance and proximity to England. Movement within this zone was restricted and monitored much more closely. Moreover, no other Jews remained in this area. Apart from the forced labourers, Jews had been officially banned from Boulogne-sur-Mer as of 17 December 1940;

unofficially, they had been forced to leave as of July 1940.¹⁵⁵ It was therefore almost impossible for relatives to visit the camps here, although some succeeded in doing so.¹⁵⁶

Third, the families were told they would not be harmed if their men obeyed the work orders. As Jewish Antwerpian OT labourer Adolf Winter wrote after Liberation: "On 12 August 1942 I received the order to be at the train station Friday the 14th at 6AM with two blankets and some food. If presenting voluntarily, the family left behind would be spared."¹⁵⁷ The few exchanged letters that remain illustrate the decision-making process of the men and/or their families when it became clear that this promise was a lie. Hersch Anielewicz, for example, married Roza Bronsztajn one day before his departure to the Condette labour camp, where he received several letters from her. On 30 August 1942, Roza wrote: "My dearest Harry, if you ever receive this letter, I will already be gone, not knowing where to."¹⁵⁸ Roza was deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau via Transport VIII on 8 September 1942.¹⁵⁹ She did not survive. Her message may have been the incentive for Hersch to escape from Condette: he was on the OT payroll until the end of September 1942, but it took some time for letters to arrive in Northern France.¹⁶⁰ Similarly,

148. Camp "Les Mazures". Déclaration de Monsieur Liebermann Vital Bertrand, 17 May 1970 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims, R. 497/Tr. 236051).

149. Report on the activities of the AJB social aid committee requested by the Antwerp branch, 22 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-MNR*, A005062); Regarding mail and parcels for Jewish workers in Northern France, 9 March 1943 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A008606); LAURENCE SCHRAM, *Dossin*, 136-142; MICHEL LAFFITTE, "L'Association des Juifs en Belgique (AJB). Des 'notables postiers de la solution finale'", *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah*, 185, 2006, 104.

150. For an example: Photo of Vital Liebermann and lieutenant Döhring sent to Liebermann's cousins Anna and Rosa Erlich in Antwerp, Les Mazures, July 1943 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Erlich-Liebermann*, KD_00365).

151. Diary of Mozes Sand, 20 August, 29 August, and 24 September 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098); JEAN-ÉMILE ANDREUX, "Les Mazures", 134-136.

152. Diary of Mozes Sand, 5 September, 29 September, and 13 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098).

153. *Idem*, entry of 15 September 1942.

154. Letters from Jacob Klapholz to Mathilde Kornitzer, 12 September and 5 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Blanche Kornitzer*, A008934).

155. DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Table ronde", 13; RUDY RIGAUT, "Les particularités", 42-43 and 49; DANIELLE DELMAIRE, "Les camps", 50-51.

156. Diary of Mozes Sand, 15 September 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Mozes Sand*, KD_00098).

157. Testimony written by Adolf Winter, 21 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Grace Winter*, KD_671_000030). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

158. Letter from Roza Bronsztajn to Hersch Anielewicz, 30 August 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Anielewicz family*, KD_00519). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

159. List of Transport VIII, 37 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Transportliste SS-Sammellager Mecheln*).

160. Index card for Hersch Anielewicz (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Index cards on Jews from Belgium interned in or deported from France (Fichier Drancy)*, nr. 178).



Camp Les Mazures
 prise le 12 juillet 1943
 par le chef de poste Lankhoff
 et mes chères cousines Rosa et Anna
 Vital Liebermann
 Le lieutenant Döhning m'a écrit
 au sujet des décorations que j'ai à faire
 Clox
 Velo

Photo of Bertrand (Vital) Liebermann and lieutenant Döhning sent by Bertrand to his cousins Anna and Rosa Erlich in Antwerp while he was held in Les Mazures as a Jewish forced labourer by Organisation Todt, Les Mazures, July 1943. Vital survived his deportation from Drancy to Auschwitz-Birkenau. His cousin Rosa was deported from the Dossin barracks to Auschwitz-Birkenau and was murdered. Anna survived in a Jewish children's home run by the Association of Jews in Belgium (AJB). Bertrand and Anna married after the war. Source : Kazerne Dossin, Fonds Erlich-Liebermann, KD_00365.

a sudden cessation of news from the camp workers could be an incentive for the OT families to take precautions, as was the case for the already mentioned Mathilde Kornitzer. She and her husband, Jacob Klapholz, exchanged postcards and letters via their official address, on Neptunusstraat, in Antwerp. Mathilde wrote on 18 October 1942, with deportations from Belgium at full speed: "Dear Jacques, I am writing to tell you that I am healthy and still at home."¹⁶¹ As of mid-October 1942 Mathilde's postcards were returned to her with the written note: "Departed without leaving an address. Destination unknown."¹⁶² In fact, Jacob had been transferred from Les Mazures to the Dossin barracks in Mechelen, from where he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau via Transport XV on 24 October 1942.¹⁶³ Mathilde correctly interpreted the signs: she went into hiding and survived the war. Her deported husband Jacob did not.¹⁶⁴

The numbers of deportees who were arrested individually are also revealing. For both those previously sent to Limburg and those not affected by Limburg or OT labour 56 percent of the deportees were individually arrested. However, for the relatives of OT workers this was only 41,81 percent, indicating this subpopulation more often fell victim to the *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl* and raids. This suggests again that the OT relatives were more compliant to the orders and less mobile than the other two groups, which may be attributable to their composition – mothers with (young) children or older parents of OT workers – as well as to the ties with their men in Northern France that they

could not or did not want to sever. There is also a specific subgroup that needs further research. At least 24 relatives from Antwerp were deported from the Dossin barracks via transports XVI and XVII on 31 October 1942, as were most of the Jewish workers themselves. The lists for these convoys were drafted by secretaries of the Dossin barracks forced to travel to the OT camps to register the Jewish men, after which the lists were completed at the Dossin barracks with the names of detainees held there.¹⁶⁵ The AJB received word on 30 October 1942 that the OT camps were being cleared and that the workers' families should be urged to join their men at the Dossin barracks.¹⁶⁶ 160 relatives in total – from Antwerp, Brussels, Liège, and Charleroi – fell into this trap.¹⁶⁷ OT labourer Dydja Krzetowski, who boarded the train in France, described a horrible scene when reaching Mechelen: "Women, children, and old people were pushed onto the train, while being beaten. The women were screaming heartbreakingly and the children cried, too. Old people on crutches were thrown onto the train without mercy. The wailing was insufferable. And to our great horror and shock their wagons were then connected to our train. Yes, now we understood everything. We knew this would not end well."¹⁶⁸

Further research is needed, first to explore the survival strategies, whether applied successfully or not, of Jews from Antwerp, and second to analyse differences in strategies between those sent to Limburg, those affected by OT, and those of the Jewish community who remained in the port city. This is only

¹⁶¹. Postcard from Mathilde Kornitzer to Jacob Klapholz, 18 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Blanche Kornitzer*, A008933.02). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

¹⁶². Postcard from Mathilde Kornitzer to Jacob Klapholz, 23 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Blanche Kornitzer*, A008933.01). Translated from French by the authors.

¹⁶³. List of Transport XV, 11 (State Archives of Belgium - Archives Service for War Victims - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, *Transportliste SS-Sammellager Mecheln*).

¹⁶⁴. Declaration by Blanche Kornitzer (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Blanche Kornitzer*, catalogue description).

¹⁶⁵. PIETER SERRIEN, *Eva Fastag. De laatste getuige*, Antwerpen, 2019, 113-117.

¹⁶⁶. Letter regarding the transfer of six French labour camps to Mechelen, 30 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-MNR*, A004413); Report on the meeting with the Sicherheitsdienst, 30 October 1942 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds AJB-IMB*, A007426).

¹⁶⁷. WARD ADRIAENS (ed.), *Mecheln-Auschwitz*, 260-262.

¹⁶⁸. Testimony written by Dydja Krzetowski in hospital after Liberation, 31-32 (Private collection L. Shentow - digitised by Kazerne Dossin, Canada). Translated from Dutch by the authors.

possible via micro history,¹⁶⁹ the in-depth analysis of personal documents, photographs, and previous research, for example by relatives of the victims or by local historical societies.¹⁷⁰ Several interesting strategies become clear from the case studies of the Limburg group, and OT workers and their relatives. The first and most commonly known strategy consisted of going into hiding. Such was the case for Manfred Bild, who was sent to Limburg with his family at the age of six, and who survived the war hidden as Pierre Van Dorpe, on the Robberechts family farm in Lubbeek.¹⁷¹ A second strategy entailed fleeing abroad. For example, chemist Walter Messerschmidt together with his wife and daughter were sent to Limburg and made their way to Switzerland in September 1942.¹⁷² A third strategy consisted of joining the resistance, in Belgium or abroad. OT worker Salomon Fischman, for example, who had escaped from a labour camp in Calais, obtained the false identity of Michel Vervaecke and joined the maquis in Alès, France.¹⁷³ Rosa and Franczeska Safar-Ova, two sisters who had been sent to Limburg on 12 February 1941, joined the armed partisans in Antwerp. Their commandant, Simon Helfgott, was the brother of an OT worker and was killed in action on 27 April 1943.¹⁷⁴ In addition, OT workers Abraham Manaster and Joseph Sterngold would lay the foundation of the Antwerp branch of the Jewish Defence Committee, the largest hiding network in Belgium.¹⁷⁵ A fourth strategy was escaping captivity when arrested. OT worker Herman Bronkhorst,

for example, fled from a hospital in France, where he was treated after being abused in the OT camp. He then went into hiding on a farm near Antwerp, but was caught and sent to the Dossin barracks. His Catholic mother-in-law was able to obtain Herman's release by producing false documents regarding his falsified non-Jewish parentage.¹⁷⁶ A final group consisted of those who survived the war in captivity in France or Belgium, mostly by luck. These cases include the Jewish staff members at the Dossin barracks. For example, Egon Anger, who had been sent to Limburg in 1941, became a dentist at the camp after his arrest on 1 August 1941, and Lotte Katscher, who had also been relocated, was held as a nurse at the barracks in Mechelen.¹⁷⁷

VI. Conclusions: The impact of Antwerp's specificity

Antwerp is a specific and unique case within the context of the Holocaust in Belgium. The Jewish community in the city was initially the country's largest: 52,94% of all Jews registered in Belgium at the end of 1940 lived there.¹⁷⁸ During the occupation, the Antwerp Jewish community suffered from forced resettlements to the province of Limburg between December 1940 and February 1941, from an antisemitic climate that led to a pogrom in April 1941, from four large raids in the summer of 1942 (in contrast to one in Brus-

169. CLARIE ZALC & TAL BRUTTMANN, "Toward a Microhistory of the Holocaust", in CLARIE ZALC & TAL BRUTTMANN (ed.), *Microhistories of the Holocaust*, New York, 2017, 1-13; GERALDIEN VON FRIJTAG DRABBE KÜNZEL, "Microcosms of the Holocaust: Exploring New Venues into Small-Scale Research of the Holocaust", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21/3, 2019, 335-341; SIGUROUR GYLFI MAGNUSSON, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*, London, 2013, 147-158.

170. For example: NOAM CORB, *Vogelvlucht: Geschiedenis van de Familie Borensztajn*, s.l., 2016; CYRIEL RUBENS, *Een briefkaart redde mijn leven. Een Joods meisje overleeft WOII*, Leuven, 2017.

171. ADRIENNE CLARKSON, *Room for All of Us: Surprising Stories Of Loss And Transformation*, London, 2011, 57-77.

172. THIERRY ROZENBLUM, *Une cité*, 156.

173. Declaration by Arthur Gaethofs, 21 October 1947 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Fischman-Weiser*, KD_00964, nr. 73).

174. MAXIME STEINBERG, *L'étoile et le fusil. La Traque des Juifs*, vol. 2, Bruxelles, 1986, 31.

175. DORIEN STYVEN, "Populaire mythevorming rond het Joods Verdedigingscomité", *Bijdragen tot de Eigentijdse Herinnering*, 11, 2014, 157-201; EPHRAIM SCHMIDT, *Geschiedenis*, 249; LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 708-709.

176. Testimony Anna Teitelbaum, 18:58-30:41 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Anna Teitelbaum*, KD_00949).

177. LAURENCE SCHRAM, *La caserne Dossin à Malines, 1942-1944. Histoire d'un lieu*, doctoral thesis, Université libre de Bruxelles, 2014-2015, 267-269; Baby journal kept by Renate Reinicke at Dossin barracks, 1944 (Private archive Rolf Peter Anger); Photo of Lotte Katscher and Sara Eckmann taken at the Dossin barracks, 1943 (Kazerne Dossin, *Fonds Lotte Katscher*); Statement by Lotte Katscher, 8 July 1948 (State Archives of Belgium, *Files created by Auditorat-General*, Trial against Max Boden, folder 3, section 2, nr. 82).

178. VEERLE VANDEN DAELEN, LAURENCE SCHRAM & DORIEN STYVEN, "De Antwerpse specificiteit", 127.

sels), and from the highest number of men being claimed by Organisation Todt in all of Belgium in the Summer of 1942.¹⁷⁹

In his ground-breaking study on the Jewish community of Antwerp Lieven Saerens calculated, using sources from Spring 1942, that the 'Antwerp specificity' led to a municipal deportation number of 65 to 67 percent for the port city. However, he also calculated that one-fourth of the community left Antwerp by Spring 1942, thereby overlooking the fate of thousands of Antwerpian Jews when calculating his deportation number for the city. As current Holocaust research prefers sources closer to the outbreak of war to calculate deportation numbers, an alternative calculation was offered by the authors, using the municipal Jewish registers, created at the end of 1940. The available database of the latter source contains 24 342 Jews with a registration address in Antwerp at the end of 1940. Although the database is a work in progress and although no source can present a complete picture, those 24 342 identified as Antwerpian represent the large majority of the Jewish community in the port city. A comparison of their names with the Dossin barracks lists and the French deportation lists led to identification of 13 639 deportees, or a deportation number of 56,03 percent for Antwerp. This number is nearly nine percentage points below Saerens' calculations, thus proving that leaving Antwerp during the war was an effective survival strategy for the Jewish community.

However, the new Antwerp deportation number of 56,03 percent is still 11,03 percentage points above the overall Belgian number of 45 percent. Two specific subpopulations of the Antwerp Jewish community were analysed to determine their respective deportation numbers and their impact on the municipal number: the Jews sent to Limburg in 1940-1941 and the Jewish workers and their families affected by Organisation Todt forced labour in Summer 1942. Calculations showed that 65,74 of all Jews sent to Limburg were sub-

sequently deported, as were 84,82 percent of the OT workers and 73,52 percent of their relatives. As the Limburg subpopulation was 10,79 percent of the Antwerp Jewish population and the OT workers and their relatives 22,73 percent (together one-third of the population), their deportation numbers do indeed influence the municipal number for Antwerp. When taking into account only Jews from Antwerp not affected by expulsion to Limburg or by OT forced labour the deportation number drops to 47,25 percent.

The authors formulated a research hypothesis regarding the augmented deportation numbers for those sent to Limburg and those affected by OT forced labour. As both subpopulations were familiar with orders – be they for expulsion or for work – and as both had learned that they would not be sent far away, they may have been more inclined to obey the work orders (*Arbeitseinsatzbefehle*) for the Dossin barracks in Mechelen than were the rest of the Antwerp Jewish community. In addition, as the relatives of OT forced labour had seen their head of household depart, they may have been more reluctant to leave their official address, in particular as they were still able to communicate with the men in France, received a small wage, and were promised that the relatives in Antwerp would not be harmed. An analysis of the different methods of arrest for the three subpopulations indeed illustrates that deportees previously sent to Limburg (26,25 percent) or related to an OT labourer (21,45 percent) were more likely to report themselves with an *Arbeitseinsatzbefehl* than were other Jews from Antwerp (13,03 percent). However, the number of deportees related to an OT labourer (36,74 percent) and the number of deportees not affected by expulsion to Limburg or OT labour (30,25 percent) were comparable when it came to persons who were caught during the large raids in the city, in contrast to the number of deportees expelled to Limburg and arrested during a raid (16,76 percent). This suggests that staying in Antwerp in general – 62,23 percent of those who

179. LIEVEN SAERENS, *Vreemdelingen*, 557-576 and 586-621.

were sent to Limburg left the port city afterwards in comparison to 27,72 percent of the overall Jewish community of Antwerp – was a better indicator for arrest during raids. The weight of responsibility of the local governments – such as the mayor and the local police force – for the victims arrested during these raids thus remains clear. As for individual arrests, numbers of such deportees are comparable for the people sent to Limburg (56,99 percent) and

for the other Antwerpian Jews (56,73 percent). Only the number of individually arrested deportees who were OT relatives is much lower (41,81 percent), again indicating that they were more exposed to the other two types of arrest. Continued research remains in order to further enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Antwerp specificity and of the Holocaust in Belgium as a whole.

Dorien Styven, archivist, Kazerne Dossin (dorien.styven@kazernedossin.eu). Dorien studied history at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and archival sciences at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She started working at the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance in 2010. Since 2019 she is responsible for all aspects of archival curation at Kazerne Dossin. Dorien also manages the Give Them a Face memorial project and represents Kazerne Dossin within the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), the Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH) and the Vlaamse Vereniging voor Bibliotheek, Archief en Documentatie (VVBAD). Her research focuses on hiding and rescue in Belgium.

Veerle Vanden Daelen, deputy general director and director collections & research, Kazerne Dossin (veerle.vandendaelen@kazernedossin.eu). Veerle holds a PhD from the University of Antwerp. She is a work package coordinator for the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) and a member of the Belgian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Veerle is affiliated with the University of Antwerp, where, together with Karin Hofmeester, she organises the annual "Contact Day Jewish Studies on the Low Countries" at the Institute of Jewish Studies. Her research focuses on the return of Jews and the reconstruction of life in Antwerp after the Second World War.