

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation for the study

History, and in particular that of World War II, has long been a subject of intense interest to the writer, and a field in which he has read extensively.

While reading and doing research on the music of World War II, he became aware of the lack of information in this particular field, especially with regard to the role of music in the German-controlled concentration camps and ghettos of this period.

When doing his Honours Paper, which dealt with the role of music during World War II, the writer attempted to create a basis for further study, since two chapters of the above Paper dealt particularly with the music life and activities in the concentration camps and ghettos. Those chapters will serve as a basis for this indepth research.

1.2 Object of the study

The aim of this dissertation is as follows:

- To do research pertaining to the origin and development of musical activities in the concentration camps and ghettos.
- To give an outline of the compilation of programs and the repertoires of soloists, ensembles and orchestras.
- Cultural activities are all interconnected. Music therefore can not be discussed completely on its own. Mention was made of other cultural happenings in the concentration camps and ghettos.

1.3 Methods of research

The primary sources used were books and periodicals. Institutions like the Zionist Federation in Johannesburg gave many hints on finding sources. These leads were followed and led to many sources the writer never knew about. The Israeli embassy also provided a few pamphlets.

Furthermore the writer received a video on the Terezin ghetto and obtained a compact disc with recordings of some of the works composed in Terezin.

Unfortunately letters sent to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem were not answered. This left a gap in the research which might have helped the writer acquire more of the sources.

1.4 Problems pertaining to the study

Several problems presented themselves while the writer was doing research on the subject, one of these being the lack of objectivity. The other problems concern the sources, their availability and reliability, as well as the lack of real knowledge on the part of the general public.

The lack of objectivity on the subject probably arose of its being such an emotional one to both Jews and Germans. Keeping this in mind, it was difficult to decide what to include and what to omit. For this reason opposing opinions were shown.

Because this thesis is concerned with music in the concentration camps and ghettos, it was decided not to discuss atrocities committed here, as it would be a needless repetition of most of the sources available, seeing that no-one can deny the existence of such inhumanities.

It frequently happened that sources contained very little

information that could be used in this study. An example of this is the book by Germaine Tillion (1975) of which only sentence was used. The amount of information available in the sources determined the lengths of the different chapters. The chapters on the Lodz and Terezin ghettos both exceed 20 pages while the information available on a number of concentration camps and ghettos were only able to fill half a page.

Subjectivity is also evident from the complete one-sidedness of the books available in most book-stores. For a long time a comprehensive and objective study of the war as a whole has been sadly neglected.

The lack of knowledge on the subject of the concentration camps and ghettos is a real problem with the public at large. The writer found many people claiming to know everything after having read only a few books on the subject. Any person seriously interested in a subject should read widely and try to keep updated. Some individuals known to the writer thought that a prisoner-of-war camp was identical to a concentration camp.

This point was further emphasised to the writer when interested parties asked whether Oliver Messiaen's *Quartet for the end of time* in this thesis had been included. If that had been the case, the subject would also have included music in the prisoner of war camps, as Messiaen's work had been composed in the P.O.W. camp at Görlitz in Silesia. Works by the composer Rudolf Karel would also have been included. He composed a *Nonet* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, violin, viola, cello and double bass, and an opera called *Three Hairs of Old Wise Man* during his internment in a prison in Prague and in the Terezin small fortress, which was a jail. (Walsh 1993:72.)

The greatest problem to arise probably was the availability and especially the reliability of sources. The distance from South Africa to Europe was the main problem in the availability of sources, as the writer could not use all the sources that are

available in Europe.

Much can be said about the reliability of sources. The first problem the writer came across was that certain books were outdated, but still being kept in libraries and, of course read and believed. This ties in with the public's lack of knowledge, as they would have no idea of which facts had been changed or updated.

An example of this is the Black Book (1946:396) which states that:

Four million Jews - about two-thirds of the six million who perished in Europe at the hands of the Nazis - were murdered at Oswiecim and its subsidiary camps.

However, Mr Shmuel Krakowski, the head of the archives at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, welcomed findings by the Auschwitz State Museum that only about 960 000 Jews had died at Auschwitz, the better known name of Oswiecim. (Lower death toll welcomed, *Pretoria News* 19 July 1990:6). Yet many people still believe books like the Black Book.

A large percentage of the public read and believe books without really concentrating on the correctness of information given. For example, there are numerous testimonies of the gassing of inmates at concentration camps not in Poland, like Mauthausen, Stutthof, Bergen-Belsen, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Flossenburg and Dachau (Matussek 1975:19), which is in direct contrast to Feig (1979:26) and Suzman (1978:74) who categorise only the camps in Poland as the "extermination camps".

Another instance of improbable sounding statements is found in Laska (1983:171) where mention is made of the crematoria going at full blast 24 hours a day. The inside walls were covered with inches of human fat. Although this sounds terrible, it would be impossible for crematorium, especially those built of bricks, to

continue operating 24 hours per day without cracking or otherwise breaking. It is also highly improbable that human fat would cover the walls since they worked for so many hours a day. Intense heat must also have been the order of the day as Nyiszli (1960:55) claims having seen bodies cremated in 20 minutes, with only ashes remaining. This also borders on impossibility in light of the fuel used, which was coal, most likely low grade coal. The Black Book (1946:255-256) even claims that 400 bodies were cremated in 10 hours in 6 coal burning furnaces. The crematoria of those days could maybe burn one corpse per crematorium per hour, which would give a total of 60 corpses.

The writer dealt with this problem in the following way: Books containing inconsistencies were not used as primary sources but only as a way of confirming facts in credible sources.

The prime example of an unreliable source is the book by Shelley (1986) which could not be used as a source because of its unreliability. Page xv notes the registering of all new arrivals, where even normal deaths were recorded. But on pages 2 and 284 it mentions that quite a number of inmates were not registered at all.

The writer's opinion is that authors should look at what their books say, as it is a bad reflection on this aspect of history. It also makes it difficult to decide which books are authoritative sources.

Fortunately it was much easier to discern between "truth and fiction" as regards musical activities, as some books are in agreement as to some of the facts.

The difficulty is mainly in deciding which books should be the main references, and which could only be used to confirm information from more reliable sources.

1.5 Division of chapters

The thesis starts with a brief overview of the role of music in general which includes the effect that music has on emotions, morale and religion as well as the uses of music for propaganda, protest, documentation, entertainment and therapy. A chapter explaining the term "concentration camp", and the way in which these camps functioned, follows. The musical activities in the following concentration camps are then discussed in a number of chapters:

Auschwitz (Chapter 4)
Belzec (Chapter 5)
Bergen-Belsen (Chapter 10)
Börgermoor (Chapter 10)
Buchenwald (Chapter 6)
Budzyn (Chapter 10)
Cieszanów (Chapter 10)
Dachau (Chapter 7)
Dinaverk (Chapter 10)
Dora (Chapter 10)
Flossenburg (Chapter 10)
Fürstengrubbe (Chapter 10)
Ganov (Chapter 10)
Gleiwitz (Chapter 10)
Gross-Rosen (Chapter 10)
Kaiserwald (Chapter 10)
Lipa (Chapter 10)
Majdanek (Chapter 10)
Mauthausen (Chapter 10)
Mechelen (Chapter 10)
Plaszow (Chapter 10)
Ravensbrück (Chapter 10)
Sachsenhausen (Chapter 10)
Sobibor (Chapter 8)
Treblinka (Chapter 9)
Westerbork (Chapter 10)

Wülzburg (Chapter 10)

The second section of the thesis commences with a concise overview of the term "ghetto", as well as the way they functioned. The next few chapters concentrate on the musical activities in the following ghettos:

Bedzin (Chapter 19)
Bialystok (Chapter 19)
Chelm (Chapter 19)
Cracow (Chapter 12)
Czestochowa (Chapter 19)
Kovno (Chapter 13)
Libau (Chapter 19)
Lodz (Chapter 14)
Lublin (Chapter 19)
Lvov (Chapter 15)
Radom (Chapter 19)
Sosnowiec (Chapter 19)
Terezin (Chapter 16)
Vilna (Chapter 17)
Warsaw (Chapter 18)

The last chapter contains the conclusions arrived at in this study. The thesis concludes with a Glossary of terms used and two Appendices, one containing the names of musicians in the concentration camps and ghettos, and the other the titles of works composed in the concentration camps and ghettos.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF MUSIC

The influence and role of music in the life of man have been recognised and applied from the earliest periods of recorded history. The evidence of prehistoric archeology, in the form of primitive musical instruments found in mounds, burrows and caverns, points to a still earlier recognition of the power of music (Diserens 1922:1).

Aristotle also wrote about the role of music and the influence it exerts on man's emotions. He sums it up very effectively in the following quotation (Scott 1958:39):

Emotions of any kind are produced by melody and rhythm, therefore by music man becomes accustomed to feeling the right emotions; music has thus the power to form character, and the various kinds of music based on the various modes, may be distinguished by their effects on character: one, for example, working in the direction of melancholy, another of effeminacy, one encouraging abandonment, another self-control, another enthusiasm, and so on through the series.

In this chapter the role of music will be discussed, exploring the different influences of music on man as mentioned above. The themes that will be investigated are the influence of music on the emotions, morale, religion, propaganda and protest, documentation, entertainment and music as therapy.

2.1 The influence of music on emotions

Almost every piece of music that has ever been composed, whether instrumental or vocal, was composed with a specific purpose and

message in mind. The composer expresses his emotions by creating music that possesses the quality of his emotions. With his composition he hopes to transmit or communicate the same emotions to the audience.

Evidence of the influence of music on the emotions of people has been found in studies done by Schoen and Gatewood which have shown that in general a musical composition not only produces a change in the affective state of the listener, but that its effect upon the large majority of the members of an audience is uniform in a striking degree (Schoen 1927:131).

Vocal music definitely has a greater effect on the arousal of specific emotions. This must unquestionably be attributed to the words used in the composition, as words have such great power to transmit the message of the composer, his feelings and emotions. Good examples of this are the popular love songs which convey emotions of happiness, sadness or melancholy.

It is not only vocal music that can change the emotions of listeners. A good example of the influence of instrumental music on emotions can be found in the effects produced by marches, which are especially popular during war time. Emotions like patriotism and preparedness are usually induced by this kind of music.

Liszt is known to have said that music "does not lie to the feelings" (Watson 1991:38). Tolstoy stated the following about art and emotions (Budd 1985:121):

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them.

2.2 The influence of music on morale

During times of difficulty and uncertainty poets and songwriters can have a major effect on the morale of the people with the works they produce.

Through music the composer and songwriter can inspire people to have hope for the future, to keep up their spirits and remind them that they are not alone in their struggle. Music and poetry can serve as a vehicle of morale and cultural sustenance.

Music builds morale and encourages people to help each other fight back - to stand up to their problems.

Frieda Aaron (1985:95-96) in her dissertation on poetry in the holocaust writes:

The very exhortation to "sing" became itself a moral mandate in much of the Holocaust world, for singing and writing were verbal citadels that often protected, even if temporarily, against moral and physical disintegration.

In this and similar situations it is clear that music can have a positive influence on the morale of people.

Here follows the text of a song written in the Warsaw ghetto by H. Broyda to encourage and inspire (Aaron 1985:15-16):

*Moshah, keep going, Moshah, keep going!
Don't fall apart.
Moshah, keep going even stronger.
Moshah, don't give up,
Remember... we must survive.*

2.3 The influence of music on religion

In most religions music and religious activity are inseparable. Music is used in this setting for worship, to create the appropriate emotions conducive to receiving the message that the preacher wants to put across, and sometimes as a prayer.

Even in the Islamic religion, where by definition "music" is forbidden in the mosque, passages of the Koran are vocalised in a manner similar to Hebrew and Gregorian chant. Thus the periodic call to prayer by the muezzin (official of a Muslim mosque) is a definable melody (Perris 1985:124).

Music in worship is expected to heighten the desired emotional effect in the churchgoer. To articulate the text, emphasis is placed on some significant words and attention is focused on the religious activity.

At the simplest level, the music created for public worship is a word for word intoning of adoration and prayer. This is the ancient method employed in the non-literate traditions of tribal religions, as well as in the written texts of high cultures such as the Jewish, early Christian, Hindu and Buddhist (Perris 1985:124).

Specific religious works can be a spiritual experience for the listener, such as Händel's *Messiah*, or a conscious act of devotion. Religious music may also have missionary value in that it may attract new adherents.

For whatever purpose music is used in religious activity, it is clear that music plays a very important part in man's interaction with God.

2.4 Music used as propaganda and protest

Music is a very effective tool for propaganda purposes, because it has such an impact on the emotions. Propagandising is an ancient use for music, not to deceive but to persuade (Perris 1985:1).

Singing of commercials on radio and television can be seen as attempts to persuade. All the same, songs of protest, satire, praise and scorn from all times fall into the category of music as propaganda.

Throughout the ages, especially during times of rebellion and war, music was written to express the feelings of the people involved and to inspire others to join forces against the perceived culprit or oppressor. Some examples of this are the following: During the German Peasant wars of the 16th century a song *Die Gedanken sind frei* (Thoughts are free) was written and very popular amongst the peasants (Perris 1985:5). More recent examples are the numerous protest songs against the Vietnam War by singers like John Lennon and Bruce Springsteen.

Another example of music as propaganda during wartime is the broadcast of music over a loudspeaker on a war front to encourage soldiers of the other side to defect. This happened on many of the war-fronts during the Second World War.

In the light of the viewpoint that propaganda intends to persuade, even the music which is used to enhance a religious service can also be seen as propaganda (Perris 1985:5).

Music as propaganda can thus be used in two ways, firstly to persuade people to join forces for a specific purpose. Secondly it can be used to protest against certain institutions, legislation or practices such as abortion.

2.5 Music used for documentation

At different times in history music has been used to document specific events. Special songs are written for certain important occasions in order to commemorate these.

Frieda Aaron (1985:19) wrote the following about music and poetry in the Holocaust:

There was a spontaneous exploitation of folk poets and street singers, who were moved by a compulsion to bear witness, and hence their endeavors, however unsophisticated or lachrymose, reflect a simple veracity.

Documentary poetry and songs often attempted to identify or name facts in order to understand what was actually happening. In primitive, illiterate societies making up songs and stories about their history was the only way to record and preserve it for posterity. This is evident from many folk songs and folk tales.

Music is thus also used to convey facts about important times in human life.

2.6 The role of music as entertainment

Probably the most important role of music is to entertain. Since ancient times and in just about every society music and dancing formed an integral part of entertainment and leisure.

People from diverse cultural and social backgrounds are entertained by different kinds of music. Operas and other classical works were composed explicitly for the entertainment of the elite and royalty in many of the past centuries, while the people from the lower classes enjoyed their own kind of music like those created by the minnesingers and jongleurs.

One of the functions of music as entertainment is to transfer the listener to another world. It is a temporary means of escape from an unpleasant situation. At the same time it serves as an aid to relaxation.

As mentioned earlier, people from different social and cultural backgrounds will be entertained by different types of music. Not everybody enjoys classical music or ballet. The younger generation, in particular, may prefer jazz, popular or rock music.

Whatever a person's preference in music, its entertainment value can be clearly seen from music sales and the popularity of classical works, musicals and ballets, and from box-office successes.

2.7 The role of music as therapy

A quite recent development in music, is its application in a therapeutic context. Music therapy is a broad field which includes therapy for the cure of disease, disorders and disabilities. It is moreover used to improve motor skills, communication skills, cognitive, social and emotional skills.

It is not clear exactly what propensities music possesses that makes it so effective in therapy. Perhaps it is enough to say that music plays a role as mirror of life and is thus useful as a therapeutic medium.

Michel, in a paper delivered at the Eleventh National Conference of the Australian Music Therapy Association (Allison 1985:4), suggested seven specific ways music functions as a therapeutic tool:

- 1. Music can structure learning within (and perhaps outside of) a time-frame (Ex. television and radio music jingles).*

2. *Music may provide a form of reward to reinforce learning.*
3. *Music may stimulate a physical activity which can facilitate motor learning.*
4. *Music may provide a means for accomplishment by individuals, which may enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence.*
5. *Music may provide a form of stimulus which either increases or decreases human activity and tension.*
6. *Music can provide an activity which may be structured to enhance social skills through group interaction.*
7. *Music may provide a means for individuals to relate to the longer parameters of life (sometimes called spiritual experiences), through its special evocation of the aesthetic response.*

The following examples of music therapy are from papers delivered at the Eleventh National Conference of the Australian Music Therapy Association in 1985 and are representative of the divergent fields that can benefit from music therapy.

Branch (Allison 1985:33) found that music in palliative care settings is useful in assisting the dying; to use effective communication to restore, regain and maintain a quality of life. Music therapy with Alzheimer patients was found to be especially effective in that old songs provided an excellent vehicle for reducing confusion (Allison 1985:40). Macmahan, in his paper on "Music in a multi-disciplinary approach to school-based programming for the visually handicapped", quoted Ginglend and Stiles in saying (Allison 1985:50):

The variety of activities that are possible with music makes this medium ideal for supplementing and reinforcing much of the desired learning of all children.

Music therapy is also useful in helping Parkinsons patients coping better with their particular symptoms. In a project by

Cosgriff, Swollow and Steward in 1984, it was observed that music provides motivation and rhythmic stimulus to initiate movement, increase mobility and assist in the control of voluntary movements. Music can also be used to induce a state of relaxation which reduces involuntary movements and permits control of voluntary movement. (Allison 1985:53-54.)

Other areas where music therapy is applied successfully are with multi-handicapped, visually impaired children, self-injury behaviour in profoundly retarded children, and reducing cancer pains. These are by no means the only uses for music therapy.

From the above it is clear that the role of music as therapy is very widely and significantly used. It should however not be seen as therapeutic only for sick people, as even healthy individuals can benefit from the relaxing qualities of music.

2.8 Conclusion

Music plays a very important role in human and animal life and definitely affects it in diverse ways. It influences the way man feels and communicates; it affects even his health and the way he copes with the different situations and stresses he faces.

Since ancient times humans had the inherent need for music and thus created it to satisfy this need. To separate man from music would certainly have a negative effect on his quality of life.

Scott (1985:43) summarises the influence of music as follows:

Music affects the minds and emotions of mankind.

It affects them either consciously or subconsciously, or both.

It affects them through the medium of suggestion and reiteration.

It affects them either directly, indirectly, or both.

CHAPTER 3

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

3.1 Genesis

The concentration camps were usually built close to towns by the inmates themselves. These camps were originally intended for holding areas or prisons for criminals, political prisoners or Jews.

Before World War II these camps were situated in Germany. As German-occupied territories expanded during the war, so the locations of the camps were also distributed throughout the occupied areas. As the war progressed, greater emphasis was placed on receiving Jews as inmates.

During the war Jews were deported from newly occupied areas but also from ghettos. Most of these concentration camps provided slave labour to the surrounding industries. In this way the German government received extra revenue, as the industries had to pay the concentration camp authorities for the use of these labourers.

The concentration camps discussed in this thesis are not the only concentration camps to have existed in German-occupied Europe. many more concentration camps existed, but were not found to have any form of musical or cultural activities. A few examples of these are Ebensee, Günskirchen, Gusen, Jasenovac, Sachsenburg and Stutthof.

The map in Figure 1 shows the locations of the concentration camps discussed in Chapters 12 to 18.



Figure 1 : Map of Europe showing locations of concentration camps

3.2 Organisation of life in the concentration camps

The camp guards, usually SS men, were in direct control of the camps. They had the final say in all important decisions.

In contrast with the ghettos, which had a Council of Elders as self-governing body, the concentration camps had an authoritative hierarchy, consisting of inmates, based on a system of elders and capos. A Camp Elder was elected to be a contact between the inmates and authorities. The Camp Elder was the head of the prisoners' hierarchy with Block Elders who were subject to his decisions. The Block Elders were each placed in control of one or more blocks or buildings.

As the concentration camps were actually used as labour camps, the labour groups or units had to be organised. These units were then supervised by one prisoner called a "capo", also spelled "kapo", or foreman. In the case of large labour units, one capo was placed in control of a number of capos. The capos were still under direct control of an SS man. (Dachau Review: 106.)

In most of the concentration camps some form of musical activities took place. These varied from orchestral performances to private song evenings. Other cultural activities, such as theatrical performances and the reading of literature, played a role in the camps as well. These cultural expressions were usually allowed by the camp authorities to a lesser or greater degree.

CHAPTER 4

AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMPS

4.1 Geographical location and genesis

The composite Auschwitz concentration camp is probably the best-known of its kind. It was situated near Cracow in Poland, and was also known as Oswiecim. This camp actually consisted of two main camps, known as Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II (Birkenau).

Auschwitz I was opened in May 1940 as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners (Laska 1983:15). Most of these were men. The first inmates only arrived during June/July 1940 (Gutman 1984:49). 39 camps surrounded the main camp, with 31 of these providing labour for factories and industrial plants in the area (Garlinski 1975:84). A women's section was opened in March 1942, but these women were soon sent to Birkenau (Laska 1983:173).

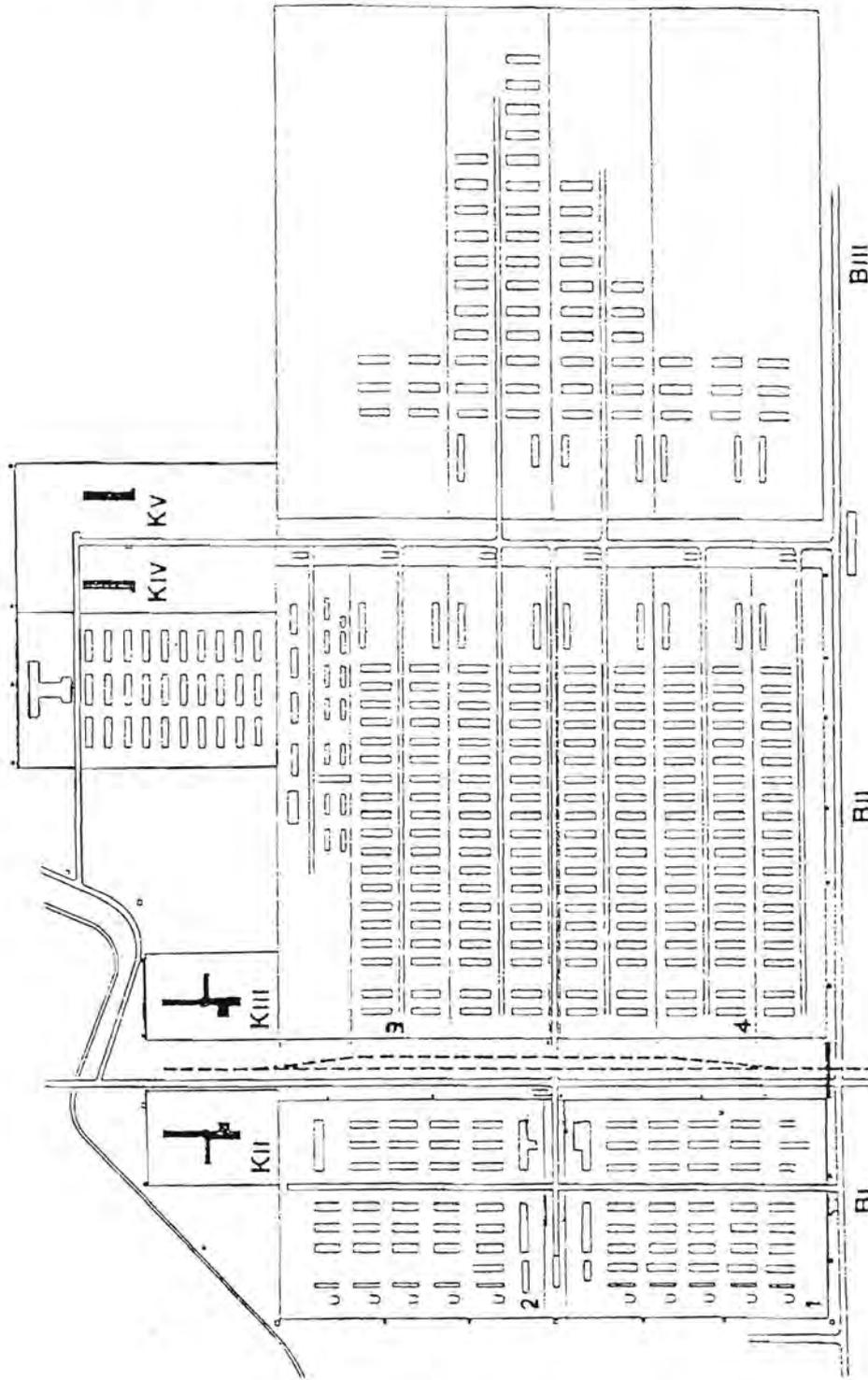
A certain Vera B. was assigned to take care of a group of children. She took them to the edge of the camp to play games with them, sing songs and help them to while away the time (Langer 1991:149).

In spite of all that is known about Auschwitz, Matussek (1975:18) claims that Auschwitz was a paradise compared to the Lodz ghetto. This seems to be unlikely. It is however known that inmates with money could buy food at canteens provided at the camp (Kielar 1981:21). A bordello of 40 rooms with girls working in two hour shifts, three times a week, was provided for the inmates (Laska 1983:181).

One of the most amazing facts about Auschwitz, is that no comradeship existed between the inmates. In many cases the fellow inmates, including the prisoner hierarchy (elders and kapos), were just as bad or even worse than the Nazi guards (Matussek

1975:13). One would expect the inmates to have cared more about each other. Unfortunately this very rarely was the case in any of the concentration camps and ghettos.

Figure 2: Map of Auschwitz II (Birkenau) (Pawelczynska 1979:27)



- 1 and 2: The women's camp.
- 3: Family camp for Gypsies.
- 4: Family camp for Czech Jews.

Where Auschwitz I was better known as a labour camp, Auschwitz II, or Birkenau, was known as an extermination centre. This camp was situated about 3 kilometres from Auschwitz I, and the building of the camp started in March 1942 (Shelley 1986:1). During August 1942, the women's camp of Auschwitz I was transferred to Birkenau (Garlinski 1975:108). This camp was officially opened in October 1941 (Laska 1983:15). Its first commandant was Josef Kramer.

The Terezin Family Camp was in section BIIb, housing up to 4 000 ex-inmates of the Terezin ghetto at any particular time (Garlinski 1975:228). This section of the camp was opened in September 1943 (Karas 1985:157).

4.2 Musical activities in Auschwitz I

In this camp music was played over loudspeakers, for instance when inmates entered the camp, Lohengrin was heard (Lagnado 1991:34). Some of the kapos and SS camp officers also forced the prisoners to sing (Kielar 1981:12).

Many solo artists performed in the camp, or else played or sang for their own pleasure. Some of these were a French violinist (Micheels 1989:79) and Nora Micheels, who played flute in her barracks (Micheels 1989:77). Nora also performed with a small group of musicians during her stay in Auschwitz (Micheels 1989:117).

A trumpet player, called Lex van Weren, performed at a Christmas tree in the camp during December 1943 (Ouwehand 1992:52).

The two Rosner brothers, who were deported from Plaszow concentration camp, probably also performed during their stay here (Keneally 1982:336). Another chamber music group performed regularly on Sunday mornings to an audience consisting of, or including, SS officers, among them the commandant of Auschwitz,

Rudolf Höss (Micheels 1989:126).

Two orchestras existed in Auschwitz. The first was a non-Jewish orchestra, whose members were deported to Dora and other concentration camps during the fall of 1944. A Jewish orchestra then came into existence. (Ouwehand 1992:52.) More information is available on the first of these, as the second orchestra only existed for about 4 to 5 months.

At the beginning of January 1941, the commandant decided that a prisoner's orchestra should be formed and rehearse as soon as possible. The musicians of this orchestra were very competent and the orchestra was frequently used to impress visitors to the camp, or to serve as proof of the exceptionally good treatment the prisoners were receiving (Garlinski 1975:65).

The orchestra was also used for other purposes, like the accompanying of work parties on their way to and from work (Micheels 1989:92).

This orchestra was highly thought of throughout the concentration camp system (Fénelon 1977:viii) and was a full symphony orchestra with excellent players, as well as a number of soloists (Fénelon 1977:209). This was because they had some of the best musicians in Europe. The members of this orchestra were more fortunate than many of the other inmates as they were exempted from heavy labour, and they received better food (Mirchuk 1976:34).

It was also claimed that music was played while prisoners were hung from the gallows for offences they committed (Dachau Review S.a.:81-82). The orchestra performed waltzes and marches, as well as works like *The Merry Widow* and the *Barcarolle* from *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Arad et al. 1981:366).

The Jewish orchestra performed every morning for the labour parties, and gave concerts on Sundays (Ouwehand 1992:52). Variety shows were also held on Sundays (Micheels 1989:83).

Max Garcia, a Dutch Jew, and other Dutch prisoners formed a unique camp group, who performed cabarets to entertain the inmates with music and jokes. This cabaret group was very popular with the prisoners and the SS and performed regularly on Sundays (Feig 1979:349). After these performances the members of the group received an extra soup ration (Dachau Review S.a.:85).

Many of the inmates sang Jewish folk songs and sentimental Russian ballads in their free time (Donat 1978:268). Another form of entertainment that was introduced shortly before the evacuation of Auschwitz was film shows (Kielar 1981:259).

In Auschwitz, as in many of the other concentration camps and ghettos, most inmates were only concerned with their own survival, and especially their "standard of living". This fact is very well noted by Pawelczynska (1979:81-82):

...each of the notables worked at making his or her dream of luxury come true.... A notable might employ not only a domestic (to cook, wash, clean), but also tailors or seamstresses, shoeshiners, hairdressers, and masseurs.... Social life among the elite required added attractions and thus arose a unique patronage of the arts. Famous singers, actors, dancers, and musicians were summoned to an organized party, and for a bowl of soup or a piece of bread enlivened the emptiness of these select receptions. Fortune-tellers, circus people and erotic partners were also kept around by the elite.

4.3 Musical activities in Auschwitz II (Birkenau)

Many solo artists performed in Birkenau, most of them as vocalists. A young girl, Liza, was asked to sing to the SS men (Nomberg-Przytyk 1985:15). A certain Lily, sang excerpts from *La Traviata* (Perl 1948:102), and Betty sang works by Schubert, Grieg, Bach and Mozart (Perl 1948:136). In one of the buildings

of the camp, Block 17, the *Blockälteste* ordered a Greek professional singer to perform for her (Laska 1983:242).

Max Garcia and the rest of the Dutch cabaret group already mentioned in Auschwitz I, were also required to perform in Birkenau (Feig 1979:349).

The only women's orchestra to exist in any of the concentration camps was in Birkenau (Fénelon 1977:viii). Before this orchestra came into existence the mens' orchestra from Auschwitz I performed here. The first conductor of the womens' orchestra was a certain Tchaikowska (Fénelon 1977:36). The orchestra was formed by commandant Höss to provide music for the prisoners to march to work.

A woman called Alma took over direction of the orchestra on her arrival at Birkenau, and became the Kapo for Music (Dribben 1969:192). Under her direction the orchestra started growing in numbers until the total membership reached 47 (Fénelon 1977:34). They worked up to 17 hours per day (Fénelon 1977:55). Members wore identical outfits, and the soloists even wore evening gowns (Nomberg-Przytyk 1985:67).

The orchestra was used for a wide variety of music events. Their most important function was at roll-calls. During the winter months they were exempted from these because of the possibility of violin strings snapping (Fénelon 1977:84). Feig (1979:359) mentions that "attractive women" played gay tunes from operas and light marches when new inmates debarked from the trains. (The choice of the word "attractive" seems strange, as their hair had been close-cropped.)

While the inmates marched in and out of the camp to go to work, the orchestra played cheerful marches and sentimental folk songs (Müller 1979:2, 58).

Concerts were held, both for the inmates and the camp authori-

ties. During the latter half of 1944, two to three concerts were held on Sundays (Fénelon 1977:124). One of the regular Sunday concerts was that given in a wash-room. Prisoners not working could attend these concerts (Dribben 1969:217).

They also gave concerts, often together with singers, near the edge of the camp (Nomberg-Przytyk 1985:67). In the mornings and evenings performances were given on a band platform at the intersection of the A and B camps (Fénelon 1977:46). Other appearances were at the block for the insane and the hospital (Fénelon 1977:125, 127), and also at one Christmas Eve concert (Feig 1979:186). Mengele (the notorious doctor of Auschwitz) is known to have attended at least one concert, accompanied by several twins (Lagnado 1991:67). The orchestra also played for the camp guards throughout New Year's Eve on 31 December 1944 (Lagnado 1991:88).

Some of the works in the repertoire of this orchestra were Suppé's *Lustspiel*, arias from *Madame Butterfly*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Brahms' *Hungarian Dances*, selections from *Tosca* and *Whitehorse*, *Song of the Volga* (Fénelon 1977), *Serenade* by Schubert (Müller 1979:11) and a song called *In my homeland the roses are blooming* (Laska 1983:242).

As hardly any music scores could be brought into the camp, Fania Fénelon and three helpers had to transcribe many works for the orchestra (Fénelon 1977:53). Some of these were *Madame Butterfly*, Peter Kreuder's *Twelve minutes* (Fénelon 1977:89-90) and Suppé's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Fénelon 1977:102).

Transcribing music was also necessitated by the types of instruments available in the orchestra. Some of the instruments used were 10 violins, 3 guitars, 5 mandolins, 2 accordions, one each of flute, reed pipes, drums, cymbals (Feig 1979:186) and an unspecified number of violas and cellos (Dribben 1969:217).

After Alma's death, a certain Sonia took over the leadership of

the orchestra (Dribben 1969:218). The first music they performed under her baton was *The Laughing Polka* (Fénelon 1977:215).

In Birkenau a school opened under the direction of Fredy Hirsch. Consideration was given to musical education, especially singing. A library was also provided for reading and schooling. In addition several choirs existed and the inmates could attend recitals of chamber music. A children's opera called *Schneewittchen* was even produced, with a mouth harmonica as accompaniment (Karas 1985:158).

In the Gypsy Camp the inmates sang and danced. They also formed an orchestra which played waltzes, mazurkas, ballads and operettas (Lagnado 1991:82-83).

The Terezin Family Camp also had an excellent orchestra. On occasions they performed before the SS (Müller 1979:97).

A song, known to have come into existence in Birkenau, tells of loss and sorrow (Rubin 1963:437):

*Lokomotiv, du shvartser, bizt zich geforn,
Host kayn birkenau mich bald avekgefirt.
Lokomotiv, du shvartser, nem mich shoyn tsurik.
Ich vil zen vider mayn meydele.*

*Oych vifil mol bin ich azoy geforn,
Fil mol bin ich shvach un krank gevorn,
Vey iz mir, ... ch'bin in daytshland doch noch a
shklaf,
Un ich benk aheym, tsu mayn fayn meydele.*

English translation:

*Black locomotive, you rode and rode,
Till you brought me to Birkenau.
Black locomotive, oh, take me back.*

I want to see my little girl again.

So many times have I traveled this way,
So many times have I become weak and sick,
Woe is me, ... I'm but a slave in Germany.
And I long for home and my lovely little girl.

4.4 Conclusion

The role of music in Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II (Birkenau) could be interpreted in many ways. It could first of all be seen as a pacifier, or a way in which the inmates could be led to believe that the situation was normal.

Music could also be seen as a morale-booster, but at the same time as a way to confuse. Laska (1983:178) notes that some of the music played by the orchestras was familiar and filled the inmates with a mixture of joy and painful nostalgia.

For the members of the orchestras it was a form of escape from the tedium of day-to-day activities, as they were not forced to work and were better provided for as regards food and clothing. The songs the inmates sang could be seen as a means of expressing how they experienced life in the concentration camps.

CHAPTER 5

BELZEC CONCENTRATION CAMP

5.1 Geographical location and genesis

The concentration camp Belzec was situated near the city of Belzec in the Lublin district of Poland. It was decided to open a labour camp for Jews in this area in the early months of 1940, but by autumn 1940 the labour camp was closed down.

The Lublin district became the centre of a large Jewish population in the General Government area (see Glossary) after the annexation of the eastern half of Poland by Germany in August 1941. Construction of the Belzec concentration camp began in November 1941 (Arad 1987:23). The camp was officially opened on 17 March 1942 (Bridgman 1990:21), but construction of the camp was only completed by the end of 1942. During the construction of Belzec most of the work, such as carpentry, was done by the prisoners themselves. Belzec was one of the so-called "extermination centres" (Feig 1979:26).

After completion of the camp, labour units were sent from the camp to work where they were needed. They were, for example, used for working on the defence lines along the German-Russian border (Gilbert 1988:46).

5.2 Musical activities in Belzec

Musical activities in Belzec included singing as well as performances by ensembles which they called small orchestras (Arad 1987:227). There is reference to one ensemble or orchestra, consisting of six players, that was used to play for the entertainment of the SS camp guards, as well as during the alleged extermination of Jews arriving in transports (Arad

1987:227). Rudolf Reder tells about another ensemble consisting of a violinist, flautist and accordionist, who were ordered to play "Es geht alles vorüber, es geht alles vorbei" and also "Drie Lilien, kommt ein Reiter, bringt die Lilien" (Arad 1987:227).

One of the above-mentioned ensembles was also responsible for accompanying the inmates who were forced to sing before they could receive their afternoon and evening meals. Besides this they also had to perform for the SS camp guards quite close to the SS living quarters (Arad 1987:228).

Inmates were also entertained on arriving at Belzec by music and singing of a ten-man orchestra (Hilberg 1985:969). There is moreover mention of an Austrian inmate playing the violin while corpses were being handled (Rashke 1984:51).

Mordechai Gebirtig was one of the inmates of Belzec who had been deported from Cracow. He composed a large variety of songs, especially in Yiddish. Many of his songs were favourites and were sung throughout Poland (See Chapter 12: Cracow ghetto).

Belzec was one of the Operation Reinhard camps, together with Sobibor and Treblinka. Therefore it pursued the general policy that was followed in those camps, namely the encouragement of musical and other entertainment activities, as well as love affairs between inmates. (Arad 1987:226.)

5.3 Conclusion

Little information is readily available about the musical activities in Belzec, but what could be learned from available sources, seems to indicate that music and other forms of entertainment were encouraged by the camp authorities, and that at least one ten-man orchestra and two ensembles existed in the camp, one a trio and the other a sextet. Their role was firstly to entertain the camp guards and other camp authorities.

They also entertained the inmates as well as serving as accompaniment for the inmates while they sang before meals and at other times, such as during the killing of Jews arriving in transports.

CHAPTER 6

BUCHENWALD CONCENTRATION CAMP

6.1 Geographical location and genesis

The Buchenwald concentration camp was situated in Germany, close to Weimar. The camp was completed by 1937, two years before the start of World War II.

This camp was originally meant for detaining professional criminals, but was later used to house Jewish prisoners, especially those of Dutch descent. The commandant of the Buchenwald camp was a certain Rödl. During the eight years of the existence of this concentration camp about 238 000 inmates passed through its doors. Some of them died here while others were transferred to factories, labour camps and other concentration camps.

Buchenwald concentration camp was liberated on 10 April 1945, about a month before the end of the war.

6.2 Musical activities in Buchenwald

The first echoes of musical activities in the Buchenwald camp could be detected in 1939 and were actually sparked off by SS officers feeling a need for a brass band consisting of musicians from the ranks of the Jewish inmates. The purpose of this brass band was to entertain visitors to the camp. In 1941 these musicians were equipped with distinctive uniforms similar to those of the Royal Yugoslav Guard. (Feig 1979:96.)

During the early years of their stay in Buchenwald the inmates had to sing a special song, called the "Jew Song", after roll-call. Initially music for these roll-calls was provided by

Gypsies playing guitars and harmonicas.

At a later stage another prisoners' orchestra was formed. The inmates themselves made many of the instruments used in this orchestra (Feig 1979:96), as musical instruments were in very short supply. The prisoners' orchestra was primarily used to provide background music and marches when the inmates left the camp for work, or when they arrived back at the camp after a day's work (Poller 1961:161). Another important function performed by this orchestra was "serenading" the camp authorities. Two of the best-known songs they played while doing such "serenading" were *Castle in the Wood* and *Buchenwald Song* (Poller 1961:161-162).

When the orchestra was required to play for the working parties leaving the camp in the morning, they had to line up at the gate beside a microphone. Various marches were played on these occasions. Poller (1961:54) noted that these marches sounded like a cacophony of noise that was "meant to keep a horde of savages in step by an ecstatic delirium, with a hypnotic rhythm".

While attending the frequent roll-calls, the orchestra played the melody of *Castle in the Wood* while the inmates had to join in as a mass choir.

Besides the above-mentioned duties the musicians were also required to play on Sundays when they mostly performed in concerts. The inmates of Buchenwald were allowed to listen to radio broadcasts of concerts by German symphony orchestras. In Block 66 of Buchenwald, the Block elder founded a boys' choir which turned out to be very successful (Feig 1979:96).

According to reports, the orchestra was asked to play while inmates were being whipped. At times a solo violin player took over that duty from the orchestra. (Poller 1961:132.)

In addition to the above, Buchenwald had two string quartets, one

of them led by the French violinist Maurice Hewitt, and the other having Karel Fröhlich and Jaroslav Pekelsky as the two violinists (Karas 1985:190). Karel Fröhlich was also an inmate of the Terezin ghetto, but it is uncertain if his stay in Buchenwald was before Terezin opened its gates in 1941 or after the fall of 1944 when inmates of Terezin were deported.

Other cultural and recreational activities were also allowed. One of these was motion pictures which were shown frequently. The inmates had the use of a library in the concentration camp. Buchenwald also had facilities for falconry, and even sported a zoo. The zoo had quite a selection of animals ranging from common ones such as monkeys, to rarer species such as rhinos and bears. (Laska 1983:18.)

6.3 Conclusion

In Buchenwald musical activities were at first initiated by the camp authorities. This soon developed a desire in the hearts of the Jews to take part in musical activities. These included an orchestra that performed marches while the labour parties marched off to work and returned from their labours. It also entailed serenading for the camp authorities. Not everybody enjoyed these activities.

Sunday concerts by the Buchenwald orchestra and radio music broadcasts were great favourites. Successful choral performances also became a prominent feature among the musical activities of this notorious camp.

As was the case in many of the other concentration camps, Buchenwald had a library and motion pictures were shown. The camp had a falconry court and a zoo that made it unique among the concentration camps.

CHAPTER 7

DACHAU CONCENTRATION CAMP

7.1 Geographical location and genesis

The concentration camp of Dachau, about 15 kilometres north-west of Munich in Germany, was the first of its kind to be built. It was officially opened on 21 March 1933 (Berben 1975:2).

The first inmates of Dachau were political prisoners. During 1937 and 1938 Dachau was upgraded and enlarged. Part of these improvements was the upgrading of the kitchen facilities to the level of one of the best kitchens in the concentration camp system. During the war years the number of Jews deported to Dachau increased quite dramatically, so that by 1945 a considerable percentage of the prisoners was Jewish.

The Black Book (1946:259-260) mentions American soldiers and newspaper representatives being told of gas chambers in Dachau, while it is now a recognised fact that there were no operative gas chambers there (Feig 1979:26).

One of the last transports of Jewish prisoners to Dachau from Eastern Europe was one from Vilna or Lublin in July 1944 (Gilbert 1982:200). More than 200 000 political prisoners and Jews passed through Dachau and its surrounding camps and factories during the twelve years of its existence (Berben 1975:10).

7.2 Musical activities in Dachau

An International Committee came into existence in Dachau. This committee consisted of inmates of the camp who originated from different occupied areas of Europe. At first their activities were organised in secret. These activities were aimed at the

morale of the prisoners. They were responsible for the organisation of cultural and sporting activities, concerts, theatrical performances and parties. (Berben 1975:175.)

The SS camp authorities organised theatrical entertainment, concerts and films as well as lectures and revues for the prisoners. Many talented people were inmates of Dachau, including famous and competent amateur musicians and theatre and music-hall artists (Berben 1975:72).

Sundays were set aside by the camp authorities as a rest day, or a day for amusement and entertainment, probably with the aim of raising the morale of the Jews and other political prisoners, and in that way to increase the amount of work completed in the camps and factories during the week.

Music and singing also had another purpose: that of contributing towards the revival of hope and courage among the prisoners. Many music groups and choirs were formed with this in mind. A song called "Dachau-Lied" was one of the well-known songs performed by these groups (Berben 1975:175).

A school for Russian children was opened in Dachau. The camp also had the luxury of a canteen for the use of prisoners (Berben 1975:5). They had access to a library, which had a total stock of about 15 000 books. During the the last few months of the war the camp authorities organised film shows (Berben 1975:72) for entertainment so as to keep the inmates ignorant as to developments on the battle-front.

In the mid-war years (about 1943) the authorities opened a brothel, primarily for the convenience of privileged prisoners (Laska 1983:16). For this purpose a few dozen women were brought in from the concentration camp at Ravensbrück. By December 1944 there were still thirteen of these prostitutes left in the camp.

7.3 Conclusion

Dachau as concentration camp had a very active cultural life. At first the International Committee was responsible for the organisation of all types of entertainment, even though it had to be done in secret. These included cultural activities, sport, concerts, theatrical performances and parties.

Very soon the camp authorities gave permission for the upgrading of entertainment. In addition to the previously named activities, many other types of entertainment and services were allowed. These included more concerts, especially on Sundays, the organising of choirs, the opening of a school and a library, as well as film shows for the prisoners. The camp "elite", like the camp elder, block elders and other Jewish administrators involved in the camp "government" were privileged in having a well-stocked brothel at their disposal.

It is quite clear that the inmates of Dachau were well catered for as regards entertainment and other leisure activities.

CHAPTER 8

SOBIBOR

8.1 Geographical location and genesis

The concentration camp at Sobibor was one of the so-called "extermination camps", and was situated close to Chelm. That was near Wlodawa just inside the eastern border of the General Government area (see Glossary) of occupied Poland. Sobibor was one of the Operation Reinhard Camps (see Glossary).

Construction of the concentration camp was begun in March 1942 with Jews from the Lublin district. The camp was originally built for Soviet prisoners of war, as well as for Jews from Holland, Belgium, France, Denmark and Poland. As to the official opening of the camp, there is a difference of opinion about the exact date. Bridgman (1990:21) claims it took place on 8 May 1942, while the Black Book (1946:374) claims 15 May 1942 as the opening date. Sobibor was divided into three sections. The first contained workshops, the second warehouses and shops and the third had buildings without windows (Black Book 1946:374).

8.2 Musical activities in Sobibor

Sobibor had an orchestra from the very outset. The camp authorities even forced the prisoners to take part in entertainments (Arad 1987:228). Dov Freiberg, one of the survivors of this camp, mentioned hearing an orchestra upon arriving there (Arad 1987:75).

In the first section in the camp, the Jews had to sing and dance. At least one violin, a bugle and an accordion were used to accompany the singing and dancing (Rashke 1984:121).

An ensemble was also formed in Sobibor. Kszepicki mentions a trio of Jewish musicians playing in the camp (Arad 1987:86). The instruments that were used for this ensemble, were probably a bugle, an accordion and a violin.

Choirs were quite a popular form of entertainment in the concentration camps, as the Jewish people enjoyed singing. But when the camp authorities at Sobibor decided to organise a choir and only one volunteered to be a part of it, a group of men and women were forced to sing in the choir. The conductor of the choir was Moniek, who was the only volunteer for the choir. It was probably because of his volunteering that he was made conductor, and was promoted to the rank of kapo (Arad 1987:228).

A female vocal trio existed for a time, but for some unknown reason they were executed (Arad 1987:115).

Tovia Blatt, one of the survivors of this camp, frequently heard music coming from the tailor's shop. She also remembers having to sing while marching to work. While marching they sang German, Polish, Russian and Ukranian military marches (Arad 1987:229).

A song the inmates particularly liked to sing while marching to work, was one with the following words (Rashke 1984:198):

*Es war ein Edelweiss
Ein kleines Edelweiss
Hol-la-hi-di, Hu-la-la,
Hol-la-hi-di-ho.*

A mandolin player, Kalimali, also known as Shabayev, sang Polish army songs, like *Tachanka*, and folk songs, like *Chastuski* (Rashke 1984:179).

On many occasions Soviet Jews were placed in front of a column of prisoners and ordered to sing. One of the songs they sang was a very well-known song in the Soviet Union entitled *Yesli zavtra*

voina, composed by Dunayevskiy and commencing with the following words (Ainsztein 1974:755-756):

*If war comes tomorrow,
If tomorrow we have to fight,
If a threatening power should arise,
Then like one man
The entire Soviet people will arise
To defend their free homeland.*

One of the survivors and also one of the leaders of the revolt in Sobibor, Leon Feldhendler, said the following: "The music, the dancing, and the women all had one purpose - to kill any thought of liberation that the prisoners might have" (Arad 1987:226). It would seem that apart from music and dancing, brothels were also provided for the inmates of this camp.

Activities such as the orchestra and other types of entertainment, as well as love affairs between prisoners were encouraged. This was the general policy decided upon by the rulers of the General Government. These forms of entertainment were introduced in all the Operation Reinhard camps, and were not just due to local initiative in certain camps (Arad 1987:226). This, of course, also made life more pleasant for the SS camp guards, as it allowed them more leisure hours and opportunities for listening to the orchestra.

Musical activities at Sobibor started declining in 1943 when the number of revolts increased dramatically, resulting in the death of many inmates. An example of this from the pamphlet, *Holocaust and Resistance*, is the killing of 300 inmates during a break-out led by Alexander Pechersky.

8.3 Conclusion

In Sobibor, as in many of the other concentration camps, musical and other entertainment activities were allowed and even

encouraged. However, the difference is that the inmates here actually had to be forced to participate in cultural activities such as, for instance, the choir.

This factor is quite difficult to explain, as in many other concentration camps and ghettos the inmates were seemingly optimistic and eager about the idea of having the chance to sing or to perform in cultural activities. On the other hand, it is quite understandable that they hated the idea of singing under duress, such as at roll-calls.

CHAPTER 9

TREBLINKA CONCENTRATION CAMP

9.1 Geographical location and genesis

The concentration camp at Treblinka was situated in pre-war Poland. After the German occupation the area fell within the north-eastern section under the jurisdiction of the General Government.

This concentration camp consisted of two separate camps and was built about 60 kilometres from Warsaw, with a railroad station as its centre (Black Book 1946:20). Treblinka was also in the vicinity of Siedlce and Malkina. Initially Treblinka was merely a penal camp, but by the end of 1942 the concentration camp was completed. Treblinka was known as one of the so-called "extermination centres" (Feig 1979:26).

This camp at first housed only Polish offenders, but was soon opened to other inmates. The gates of Treblinka finally closed on 23 July 1944 (Black Book 1946:201).

9.2 Musical activities in Treblinka

Initially the musical activities were of a low standard. A band existed from the start, but little is known about this band (Donat 1979:45).

After completion of the concentration camp itself during 1942, however, transports of new prisoners from Warsaw started arriving. This was fortunate for the extension of cultural activities, as professional musicians formed part of these transports. Many of them brought their own instruments with them (Donat 1979:45). The musicians among the new arrivals were

assigned to start a small orchestra (Arad 1987:231).

One of these was Artur Gold, who had been the conductor of one of the best orchestras in Warsaw before the war. He naturally became one of the most prominent musicians and organisers of cultural activities in Treblinka.

One of the camp officers, Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Stand, did much to promote the success of the orchestra and even brought back musical instruments from vacation (Arad 1987:232). A large number of instruments were also brought to Treblinka by some of the inmates. Other instruments that were needed, like drums, were manufactured by the inmates themselves.

In Treblinka Artur Gold was appointed to organise the orchestra which comprised ten musicians. Rehearsals were held at specified times, and the musicians were excused from labour groups when rehearsals were held. Artur Gold even composed a few pieces for the orchestra (Arad 1987:232).

The orchestra in Treblinka boasted an own uniform consisting of white suits with blue collars and decoratively sewn lapels. The conductor had his own distinctive uniform, and appeared in a white frock-coat with the same decorations, patent leather shoes, pressed pants and white shirt. (Arad 1987:232.)

At times Artur Gold received special food rations from the camp authorities, which he then sometimes passed on to members of the orchestra.

There is also mention of an intimate orchestra that performed and sang a song composed by some Jewish composer. The words to this song were written by Untersturmführer Franz. (Hilberg 1985:898.)

Ensembles existed in both sections of the camp. The band in camp I consisted of four players, while camp II had a trio that performed regularly. The Ukranian guards were probably their most

loyal supporters, as this trio performed well-known Russian songs. After these performances the guards supplied the inmates with food and cigarettes. (Ainsztein 1974:727-728.)

A mixed choir of male and female voices was formed by Artur Gold, who also composed music for the choir to the texts of a Jew from Czechoslovakia whose name is unfortunately not known. The choir, and occasionally a soloist, at times performed with the orchestra.

The favourite location for concerts was a tailor shop which was the largest and "nicest" hall in Treblinka (Arad 1987:232). During the hot days in summertime an outside venue was preferred.

One of the main functions of the orchestra was to perform at major occasions for the SS, and at galas. The orchestra also played at roll-calls in the camp (Feig 1979:306). At times a group of musicians would stand on one side and play the Polish Army March, called *My Pierwsza Brygada*. At other times they accompanied the prisoners who sang. The most popular and most frequently sung song was *Tambalalaika*, of which one prisoner would sing a verse and the rest would join in with the chorus (Arad 1987:234).

By 1943 the inmates refrained from singing this song, and rather concentrated on including more "cultured" songs in the repertoire (Arad 1987:234). One of the songs that became popular was a Yiddish song to the tune of a foxtrot, called *The Girl from the Puszca* (Arad 1987:235).

During roll-call all the prisoners had to sing the *Treblinka Anthem* which was composed by Artur Gold (Arad 1987:233). The prisoners were forced to memorise this "anthem" (Arad 1987:202-203) and sing it on their way to and from work. It is claimed that inmates burdened with the task of cremating the corpses were also forced to sing this song (Black Book 1946:411).

The text was as follows (Arad 1987:233):

*We look straight out at the world,
The columns are marching off to work
All we have left is Treblinka,
It is our destiny.*

*We heed the commandant's voice,
Obeying his every nod and sign
We march along together
To do what duty demands.*

*Work, obedience, and duty
Must be our whole existence
Until we, too, will watch a glimpse at last
Of a modest bit of luck.*

After roll-calls, the inmates were forced to listen to Gold's orchestra performing. These programmes frequently contained serious music and marches (Donat 1979:199-200).

It was further reported that the orchestra and choir had to perform after the whipping of an inmate. The orchestra usually played marches on these occasions (Arad 1987:202). Other functions at which the orchestra performed, were such as weddings between inmates (Arad 1987:236).

Another orchestra that performed was a group of 6 or 7 musicians, who played the latest popular hits for the German and Ukranian guards. The instruments they used included a flute or fife, a mandolin and a violin. On one of the anniversaries of the war the SS arranged musical entertainment for the Jews, where one of the orchestras had to play Jewish tunes and several young Jews had to dance. (Donat 1979:106.)

Sport was another activity allowed by the camp authorities in Treblinka. Boxing-matches were one of the favourite sport

gatherings and the orchestra usually opened these events with renderings from operas and operettas sung by soloists and the choir (Arad 1987:233). Sports events would usually be concluded with another performance by the orchestra.

In another section of Treblinka there was a separate orchestra of about eight or nine musicians. This orchestra included a certain violinist, Jerzy Rajgrodzki, and a clarinet player, called Fuchs. These two musicians joined a Warsaw pianist-composer to form a trio (Arad 1987:234).

Treblinka was also the home of another trio who performed extensively. They played during meals, in the evenings and during other free times, at parties and for guests. These three were amateur musicians from a small town, Stock, where they used to perform at weddings. One example of a performance by the amateur trio from Stock, was when they played on the third anniversary of the war on 1 September 1942, when the inmates were included in the festivities. The Jews stood at attention while the trio played Jewish songs and melodies. (Arad 1987:231.)

In Treblinka a variety of songs were written to serve a revolutionary purpose and to encourage the inmates to continue their struggle for survival. A song, *Lager zwei ist unzer leben, ay, ay, ay* (Camp Two is our life, ay, ay, ay), was composed to signify that they, the inmates, were alive and well. The chorus of this song was sung by Spiegel, a professional singer who had appeared in Prague before the war. (Arad 1987:235.)

Concerts had to be held for the Ukrainian guards who worked with the camp authorities, and during June and July of 1943 the camp authorities decided to keep the inmates of Treblinka busy by asking them to prepare a play. The orchestra also had to perform in these preparations. (Arad 1987:235.)

In addition to these activities, the camp authorities organised compulsory theatrical performances, concerts and dance rituals.

The performers were chosen from those inmates who had been exempted from work. Many of these appearances were on Sundays. (Donat 1979:178-179.)

9.3 Conclusion

At first, musical activities were not of a high standard at Treblinka. As new inmates arrived with transports from Warsaw and other locations, the quality of music started improving. Full credit should be given to Artur Gold for the part he played in organising the music life in Treblinka and for his role in the general upliftment of the inmates and their attitude towards life in the camp.

In Treblinka, as with the other Operation Reinhard Camps (at Sobibor and Belzec), the policy was to encourage activities such as orchestras, entertainments and love affairs between prisoners (Arad 1987:226). Music was used to make the lives of the SS guards in Treblinka more pleasant, but also to build the spirit of the inmates, and to make them feel more reconciled to their fate.

On the other hand it was also claimed that the music played by many of the bands actually inspired many inmates to revolt (Ainsztein 1974:728).

CHAPTER 10

OTHER CONCENTRATION CAMPS

In the case of many of the smaller concentration camps very little information is available. It is nevertheless interesting to compare the cultural activities of these camps with each other, and with the larger concentration camps.

10.1 Bergen-Belsen

The Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was situated near Bergen, a town about 50 kilometres north of Hannover in Germany. When opened in 1941, it was a Russian POW camp. Feig (1979:26) classifies this camp as a Reception and Holding Centre. During 1943 it was upgraded to a detention camp. Finally in 1944 it became a concentration camp (Lévy-Hass 1982:vii), while still under the misnomer of a Reception and Holding Centre. Bergen-Belsen, famous for having Anne Frank as inmate, was liberated by the Allied armies on 15 April 1945.

Many of the inmates were prepared to compromise with the hope of saving their own lives, which led to a lot of disunity among themselves. This behaviour was common in many of the concentration camps and ghettos. In exchange for quality clothes and huge quantities of food, some inmates betrayed their own people by leaking certain information to the Jewish authorities in the camp (elders and kapos) and thus also to the camp commanders. These betrayers did not care what happened to the other inmates (Lévy-Hass 1982:22-23). Musicians also worried only about their own lives and did everything possible in exchange for food, clothes and exemption from hard labour.

Many women became prostitutes so as to provide for themselves (Lévy-Hass 1982:50).

Cultural activities in Bergen-Belsen ranged from the scholarly and theatrical to a variety of musical entertainments. A school was opened in this camp against the orders of the camp commanders (Lévy-Hass 1982:7-8). This school managed to survive underground until December 1944.

Some of the inmates, including the camp elite, were fortunate in having their own huts, which were relatively clean and comfortable. Sounds of laughter, merriment and singing could be heard from many of them. The people in these quarters even managed to organise concerts, binges and drinking-parties as well as other social gatherings (Lévy-Hass 1982:24).

Irene Butter-Hasenberg remembers hearing people singing in Bergen-Belsen. Many of the young people came together on Friday evenings to sing Hebrew songs. This time was also used for lectures (Dwork 1991:131).

The Jewish Elders, or governing body, decided to set Saturdays aside for special children's festivals, mostly of a religious nature. These included recitations, chants, choruses and short plays (Lévy-Hass 1982:42). The children also formed small choirs. During 1944 the Dutch Jews decided to play and perform for their Queen Wilhelmina's birthday. This performance was given for the benefit of the children (Lévy-Hass 1982:15).

Somewhere between the end of 1944 and early 1945 the women's orchestra from Birkenau (Auschwitz II) arrived as inmates of Bergen-Belsen (Lévy-Hass 1982:15). Unfortunately it cannot be confirmed whether they were given the opportunity to contribute to the cultural activities of this camp.

The role of music in Bergen-Belsen has to be divided into two areas: For the elite members music probably was a form of escape from the humdrum life of everyday activities and problems. For the ordinary inmates, including the children, it could have served as a form of encouragement, to boost their morale and to

give them a sense of identity.

10.2 Börgermoor

This concentration camp, reserved primarily for political offenders, is one of which very little is known. It was situated in north-western Germany in the vicinity of Hannover.

We do know that weekly cultural evenings were initiated, while inmates were also involved in the writing of poetry and songs. As in many of the other concentration camps, the inmates sang marching songs to and from work. It is also said that the first song to be written in a concentration camp was composed here. This song was entitled *Moorsoldaten* (Peat Bog Soldiers). The text was written by Esser and Wolfgang Langhoff and the music by Rudi Goguel, who also transcribed it for a four-part chorus (Kalisch 1985:92-93).

It was first performed at a cultural event in the camp, which was called *Zirkus Konzentration* and was shortly afterwards declared the official camp song. It then became known as the *Börgermoorlied* (Kalisch 1985:93).

These are the words and the music to this frequently sung song (Kalisch 1985:94-96):

*Wohin auch das Auge blicket
Moor und Heide nur ringsum.
Vogelsang uns nicht erquicket,
Eichen stehen kahl und krumm.*

*Refrain:
Wir sind die Moorsoldaten.
Und ziehen mit dem Spaten
Ins Moor.*



*Auf und nieder gehn die Posten -
Keiner, keiner kann hindurch.
Flucht wird nur das Leben kosten -
Vielfach ist umzaunt die Burg.*

Refrain:

*Doch für uns gibt es kein Klagen,
Ewig kann's nicht Winter sein.
Einmal werden froh wir sagen:
Heimat, du bist wieder mein!*

Refrain:

*Dann zieh'n die Moorsoldaten
Nicht mehr mit dem Spaten
Ins Moor!*

English translation:

*Far and wide as the eye can wander
Heath and bog are everywhere,
Not a bird sings out to cheer us,
Oaks are standing gaunt and bare.*

Refrain:

*We are the peat bog soldiers.
We're marching with our spades
To the bog.*

*Up and down the guards are pacing -
No one, no one can get through.
Flight would mean a sure death facing -
Guns and barbed wire greet our view.*

Refrain:

But for us there's no complaining,

Winter will in time be past.
One day we shall cry, rejoicing:
Homeland dear, you're mine at last!

Refrain:
Then will the peat bog soldiers
March no more with their spades
To the bog.

Music example 1: Moorsoldaten

Slow ($\text{♩} = 72$)



Wo - hin auch das Au - ge blick - et,
Moor und Hei - de nur rings - um. Vo - gel - sang uns nicht er - quick - et,
Refrain
Ei - chen ste - hen kahl und krumm. Wir sind die Moor - sol - da - ten. Und
i. etc.
zie - hen mit den Spa - ten ins Moor.
Fine
Moor. Dann zieh'n die Moor - sol - da - ten Nicht mehr mit dem
Spa - ten ins Moor!

10.3 Cieszanów

This camp, more often referred to as a labour camp, was situated in Poland, about 260 kilometres south-east of Warsaw. The following song was the official camp song (Dawidowicz 1975:203):

*Work, brothers, work fast,
If you don't, they'll lash your hide.
Not many of us will manage to last -
Before long we'll all have died.*

10.4 Dinaverk

It is uncertain where Dinaverk concentration camp was located. Two of the songs sung in this camp are known. The first of these calls for revenge (Rubin 1963:446):

*In blut fargosene
Fun lebn yungfarloshene,
Zey rufn fun der erd.
O, bruder, heyb di shverd
Un nem nekome far yederns neshome
Vos hot zayn lebn dem soyne opgegebn.*

English translation:

*Covered with blood,
Young lives snuffed out
Cry out from the earth.
O, brother, raise your sword
And take revenge for each soul
That gave its life to the enemy.*

The following is an example of a marching song that mentions hatred, the will to live and the desire for revenge in one of its stanzas (Rubin 1963:448):

*Nor eyn gedank - er tsit mich shtark tsum lebn,
Er tret nisht op fun mir oyf eyn minut:
Ch'volt veln a nekome chotsh derlebn
Un zen vi blut vert opgetsolt tsurik mit blut.*

English translation:

Only one thought - I want so much to live,
It doesn't leave me for a moment:
I want to live to take revenge
And see blood paying back for every life that bled.

10.5 Dora

Dora concentration camp was situated near Nordhausen in Central Germany, about 200 kilometres west-south-west of Berlin. It was previously a branch and labour camp of Buchenwald. It was officially opened as a concentration camp on 1 November 1944 (Gutman 1984:16).

Music at Dora was at first practised on a very informal basis with some of the musicians playing the accordion. Music was also played over loudspeakers.

Before Dora was officially opened as a concentration camp, members of an orchestra from Auschwitz started arriving in September 1944. Some of these inmates were gypsies. Many of the musicians managed to bring their instruments along. These musicians had to perform for the entertainment of the camp commandant and his guests. One of these concerts was reported to have lasted for a few hours (Michel 1979:150-151). These musicians probably also performed for the inmates.

During November 1944 one of the barracks was converted so as to house a cinema and a brothel for the inmates (Michel 1979:156).

Although this concentration camp did not exist for very long, musical activities did exist. Before the arrival of musicians from Auschwitz the inmates probably performed music to lift their spirits. This was even more so when more professional musicians arrived and the opportunity arose to listen to music of a higher artistic value.

10.6 Flossenburg

Flossenburg concentration camp, called Flossenbürg by Gilbert (1988:182), was one of those to be opened in Germany about a year before the war started in September 1939. It was situated just to the west of the pre-war Czechoslovak border and about 100 kilometres north-east of Dachau.

This concentration camp was privileged in having a concert orchestra. Despite this, very little information is at hand concerning the music life there, possibly because Flossenburg was not one of the larger and more well-known camps.

Some of the members of the orchestra were professional musicians, and they were housed in a separate dormitory (Heger 1980:58). They had to provide their own instruments, even by purchasing them from the camp authorities.

On Sundays the orchestra assembled on the parade ground and performed marches and operetta tunes. They also had to provide entertainment for visits by the Red Cross (Heger 1980:59).

Concerts by the previously named orchestra mostly took place on Sundays, and served to "divert" the inmates (Heger 1980:57). These concerts were held in the bathhouse where admission was free, but the audience had to provide their own seats. Before a work could be performed, it first had to be approved by the camp authorities. The orchestra was also fortunate enough to have a Viennese conductor. Some of the works they performed were a

Hungarian *chardash*, the *Gladiator's March* and the overture to *Maritana* by Vincent Wallace (Topas 1990:234). Other works performed, were compositions by Franz Lehár, and operetta numbers by a singer from Prague, like the *Student Beggar* by Millöcker (Heger 1980:58-59).

The Czech violinist, Zdeňek Kolársky, and the pianist, Josef Kyselka, performed sonatas for piano and violin by Beethoven (Karas 1985:190).

The musical activities in Flossenburg served as a morale booster, as well as being a form of entertainment the inmates could look forward to in their otherwise humdrum existence.

10.7 Gleiwitz

The Gleiwitz concentration camp was situated on the pre-war boundary of Germany and Poland. This camp was divided into two sub-camps: Camp I was only for male inmates, and Camp II for females. Camp I alone was fortunate in having an orchestra, even though it was only a small one. Their repertoire consisted mostly of semi-classical music. This all-male orchestra also performed at Camp II. After these concerts the inmates could usually visit each other (Karas 1985:190).

It is difficult to comment on the role music played in Gleiwitz. All that can be said is that the inmates certainly found the music and visits with people of the other sex to be a great inspiration and something to look forward to.

10.8 Kaiserwald

Kaiserwald concentration camp was situated about 20 kilometres south-east of Riga in pre-war Latvia, one of the Baltic States. Not much has been written about Kaiserwald. However, one of the

songs sung there is known to have been composed by a young boy in marching rhythm and was very popular (Rubin 1963:440):

*Mir zingen a lidl fun hayntiger tsayt
Fun yidishe tsores, fun yidishe layd,
Un chotsh mir zenen yinglech kleyn
Mir veysn dem hunger, mir konen dem payn.*

*In a finstere, tunkele, harbstige nacht,
Hot men undz fun libau kayn rige gebracht.
Yom-kiper baynacht, ven men zogt dem al chet,
Hot men undz fun libau gebracht in katset.*

*Men hot undz tsheshplitert, men hot undz tseribn,
Mir zenen fun libau gants veynig geblibn.
Oyf arbet farshikt undz, in derfer, in shtet,
Azoy iz dos lidl fun undzer katset.*

English translation:

We sing a song of modern times
Of Jewish troubles and Jewish suffering,
And although we are still very young lads
We know of hunger, we know of pain.

In a dark, horrible, autumn night,
We were brought from Libau to Riga.
Yom-Kippur night, when the prayers of forgiveness are
said,
We were brought from Libau to the concentration camp.

We were splintered and pulverized,
Few of us survived.
We were sent to labor in villages, in cities,
And that is the song of our concentration camp.

10.9 Mechelen

Mechelen was a concentration camp situated in Belgium and was mainly used as a staging point en route to other concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

Musical activities in Mechelen were quite popular among the inmates. Activities were organised by Nora Micheels who was also a flautist (Micheels 1989:55). Some of the inmates formed a little orchestra, as well as another that was probably a jazz band. They were fortunate in that the camp staff managed to bring in sheet music and instruments for the musicians. L Micheels, Nora's husband, was a cellist, but as there were no music scores for cello, he preferred not to perform, but rather to lend the cello to the jazz band (Micheels 1989:58-59).

In one of the dormitories an 18-year old boy played the guitar. Apparently he was a very competent player who specialised in works by Bach (Micheels 1989:56).

In Mechelen the inmates were quite fortunate in having such a variety of music performed, from solo guitar and flute to listening to a small orchestra or a jazz band. Although life in Mechelen was everything but easy, it would appear from the book by Micheels that the musical life in the camp had a positive and encouraging effect on the morale of the inmates.

10.10 Plaszow

In this camp loudspeakers were provided by the camp authorities for the broadcasting of music as well as for announcements (Topas 1990:18). Plaszow was originally a labour camp of the Cracow ghetto, but later became a concentration camp when the ghetto was liquidated. It was only two kilometres away from the Cracow ghetto in southern Poland.

The two Rosner brothers, Herman and Leon, originally from the Cracow ghetto, were largely responsible for many of the musical activities. They were known to have given impromptu outdoor concerts at least once. One of the brothers played the violin and the other accompanied him on the accordion, because the camp had no piano. The two brothers also had to perform for the camp guards. One of the works they performed was Anton Rubinstein's *Melody in F* (Topas 1990:192); others being music by Suppé and Lehár (Keneally 1982:259).

They also sang Russian songs, like *Volga, Volga*, *Kalinka Maya*, and performed a Hungarian love ballad, *Gloomy Sunday*, for visitors to the camp (Keneally 1982:233, 258). The two brothers were later deported to Auschwitz. Their fate remains uncertain.

Another artist in Plaszow was Tosia Lieberman who sang Brahms' *Lullaby* every night in the women's section of the camp (Keneally 1982:237). A band was organised as well, but it is unsure when they performed.

10.11 Sachsenhausen

The Sachsenhausen concentration camp, also known as **Oranienburg**, was situated 20 kilometres north-west of Berlin and was opened as early as 1933.

Alex Kulisiewicz, one of the inmates, was a guitar player and composer of songs, of which he wrote at least 54 (Wortsman 1978:14-15). He also helped to organise numerous illegal poetry readings and song evenings in which he himself participated. A choir also existed in Sachsenhausen. It was organised by the German-Jewish composer Rosebury d'Arguto, also known under the name Martin Rosenberg. The choir had 25 members, all of them Jewish prisoners. They performed secretly in the less closely guarded barracks of the political prisoners (Kalisch 1985:49). D'Arguto's *Jewish Deathsong* was performed in this concentration

camp, but it is not known whether it was actually composed there (Wortsman 1978:15).

Another song he composed was *Tsen Brider* (Ten Brothers), apparently shortly before being deported to Auschwitz. This song is based on the well-known song "Ten little Indians" (Kalisch 1985:49).

Here follows the Yiddish text together with the English translation (Kalisch 1985:57):

*Tsen brider zenen mir geven;
Hobn mir gehandelt mit vayn.
Eyner iz geshtorben-
Zenen mir geblibn nayn.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.*

Refrain:

*Yidl mitn fidl,
Moyshe mitn bas,
Shpil-zhe mir a lidl,
Men firt undz in dem gas.*

*Eyn bruder nor bin ikh geblibn,
Mit vem zol ikh veynen?
Di andere hot men derharget-
Tsi gedenkt ir zeyer neymen.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.*

Refrain:

*Yidl mitn fidl,
Moyshe mitn bas,
Hert mayn letst lidl
Men firt mikh oykh tsum gas.*

*Tsen brider zenen mir geven-
Mir hobn keynem nit vey geton.*

English translation:

Ten happy brothers were we together,
We lived by dealing in wine.
One of us died early -
And so we remained nine.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain:
Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Play for us a little,
The gas chamber we face.

One brother only I remain.
With whom shall I sigh?
All the others coldly killed -
Remember them and cry.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain:
Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Let me sing my last song,
The gas chamber I face.

Ten brothers were we together -
We hurt no one and did no wrong.

Judging by available sources, it appears that the only other musical activities were cabarets in which the inmates themselves sang and played the instruments (Feig 1979:78).

10.12 Westerbork

Westerbork concentration camp was situated in the Netherlands,

about 100 kilometres north-east of Amsterdam. At Westerbork the commandant was very much involved in promoting the musical activities there. Two of the musicians cleverly used this fact to survive. These two became favourites with the camp commander. One of them used to sing songs to the commander, while the other was a pianist of whom it was said that he could play Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* as a jazz number (Hillesum 1983:215).

Cabarets were also performed in Westerbork. The commandant was in the audience during many of the cabaret shows. Under his auspices a male choir was also started. This, too, was one of his pet projects. The camp commander's favourite song was *Bei mir bist du schön* and the male choir probably had to perform it quite regularly (Hillesum 1983:217).

Musical activities were encouraged, thus making many of the inmates far more willing to participate in these. Two soloists were even given to believe that this was the reason they survived.

10.13 Additional concentration camps

In many of the other concentration camps there were likewise musical activities of some sort. Unfortunately only passing comments could be found on what such musical activities actually entailed.

In connection with **Budzyn** camp the only available information on music is that which refers to the singing of Polish army songs by Polish POW's as they marched to work (Topas 1990:127). This Polish concentration camp was situated about 300 kilometres west-south-west of Lodz. It can also be assumed that in their living quarters they sang folk songs and others of a patriotic nature for encouragement.

The only mention of music in the concentration camp at **Ganov** is

of mass shootings of prisoners to the accompaniment of music by an orchestra consisting of inmates (Nuremberg Trials 1947:Vol II:61). Unfortunately no reference could be found as to the exact location of this camp.

In **Gross-Rosen** the members of labour parties sang and listened to poetry while in their barracks (Laska 1983:181). This concentration camp was situated about 80 kilometres to the west of Breslau.

The first concentration camp in Czechoslovakia was at **Lipa**. This camp opened in mid 1940, but there are no clear indications as to its site. Among the inmates were Karel Berman and Karel Fröhlich who later were considered two of the top musicians at Terezin. In Lipa they organised musical activities during their own leisure time after working-hours. What these musical activities actually entailed is uncertain (Karas 1985:7-8).

The **Majdanek** concentration camp was built just outside the Lublin ghetto, and was constructed in 1941. At first only Russian soldiers were interned, but later inmates from the ghetto were deported to the camp (Gruber 1978:38). Music broadcasts were frequently heard over loudspeakers as in many of the other concentration camps (Black Book 1946:386).

It is quite amazing that there is so little information available about a camp as well-known as **Mauthausen**. This camp was in Austria, lying 150 kilometres to the west of Vienna. All that is known is that the SS had a camp band (Horwitz 1990:44). Consequently it is impossible to ascertain whether the band consisted of SS members, or only of inmates of this camp.

There were no real musical activities at **Ravensbrück** apart perhaps from singing in the barracks at night for inspiration. No orchestral or smaller instrumental group was allowed at this camp, which had only female inmates. This is quite amazing for a camp situated only 60 kilometres north-west of Berlin. During

1944 one of the inmates, Germaine Tillion, reportedly wrote an operetta called *Verfügbar in the Underworld* (Tillion 1975:xxi).

The locations of the following two camps could not be ascertained. The only information available on music in the **Wülzburg** camp, is that a composer, Ervin Schullhof, was one of the inmates in this camp (Walsh 1993:71-72). Gideon Klein, a composer mentioned in Chapter 16, on the Terezin ghetto, was deported to the concentration camp, **Fürstengrube** (Walsh 1993:71-72).

10.14 Conclusion

The role of music in all the above-mentioned camps was basically the same: it served as a source of encouragement, and in a way was a form of escape from the misery of incarceration and the uncertainty of what tomorrow might bring. The songs, too, helped to bring relief to the various stresses of camp-life, and frequently called for revenge against those responsible for their fate.

CHAPTER 11

GHETTOS

11.1 Genesis

The ghettos, in contrast with the concentration camps, were cities or certain sections of cities that were cordoned off, or walled in, to keep the Jews within certain restricted areas and to separate them from non-Jews living outside the ghettos. Most of the ghettos came into being in Eastern Europe and in parts of Russia from 1939 onwards. The best-known of these ghettos were the ones at Warsaw, Lodz, Kovno, Lvov and Vilna. Hundreds more were opened throughout the war, some, however, containing as few as 1 000 inmates. The ghettos are frequently seen as a staging point for Jews before they were deported to concentration camps.

Vast numbers of Jews were deported from surrounding towns and cities and were then placed in these ghettos. The ghettos were to a large extent self-sufficient with, for example, their own factories, tailors and, to a lesser extent, farmers. Most of the food, however, had to be brought into the ghettos from outside. In addition to the factories, many labour camps, factories and industries also surrounded the ghettos, where many of the inmates worked.

In this chapter one of the two sources, the book by Trunk, may be regarded as the most authoritative work on the subject of the organisation of life in the ghettos.

The map in Figure 1 is a map of Europe showing the locations of the ghettos that are discussed in Chapters 12 to 19.



Figure 3 : Map of Europe showing the locations of ghettos

11.2 Organisation of life in the ghettos

The German authorities decided to give the Jews some form of self-government in the ghettos. This was realised through the Jewish Councils or "Judenräte". Even though the inmates of the ghettos lived under a form of self-rule, they were still under the supervision of the military governors of the different areas, but with more freedom than allowed in the concentration camps.

The Jewish Councils were permitted to take care of the distribution of supplies, of maintaining a certain standard of sanitation, and of preserving peace and order within the ghettos. Other activities, such as social welfare, economic and cultural work relating to the internal requirements of the Jewish population, were accorded with "a certain degree of tolerance, and even of encouragement" (Trunk 1977:44).

The German authorities intended the autonomy of the ghettos to be absolute in every respect. They had to be self-reliant, organised social units. The reason for this is that they did not want the ghettos to be a burden on the wartime economy of Germany.

The main function of the Judenräte was welfare and medical aid, but also included the maintenance of hospitals, clinics, first-aid stations, dental clinics, pharmacies, inoculation centres, public baths, barber shops and disinfection stations. In addition they were responsible for providing schooling and trained teachers. (Dawidowicz 1975:229, 253.)

Vocational training for locksmiths, mechanics and many other trades was also provided (Dawidowicz 1975:254).

At the schools in the ghettos, children learned to play, sing, dance and act. In this way the schools became the "bracing cultural centres for the whole ghetto" (Dawidowicz 1975:254-255).

In many of the ghettos, particularly the larger ones, an intensive urge "for cultural and aesthetic impressions" is found, as well as a renewed interest in the cultural past of the Jewish people. On the other hand, one also finds a strengthening of assimilationist tendencies (Trunk 1977:217).

On the whole a yearning for books in Hebrew or Yiddish and for Jewish music and theatre was prevalent in all the ghettos (Trunk 1977:217).

Dawidowicz (1975:256) writes the following about the role of entertainment in the ghettos:

However poor the talent and trashy the context, this improvised entertainment heightened ghetto morale simply by releasing the audiences for a brief span from their day-to-day anxieties and transporting them into a more cheerful existence of pre-war normality...

CHAPTER 12

CRACOW GHETTO

12.1 Geographical location and genesis

Cracow is situated in Poland, about 240 kilometres south-south-west of Warsaw. The pre-war Jewish population (1939) was just over 56 000 or 26% of the total population of the city. The ghetto was opened in March 1941. Twelve labour camps were situated around the ghetto. The president of the Judenrat (Council of Elders) was Marek Biberstein. Some of the departments in this Judenrat were responsible for culture and education, even though schooling was forbidden (Keneally 1982:88).

12.2 Musical activities in Cracow ghetto

In this ghetto, as in many of the others, cultural life was allowed to develop. Some examples of this were the Jewish schools, synagogues and Houses of Study. Concerts and lectures were also held regularly. Theatrical and sports organisations came into being, and a periodical, called *Gazeta Zydowska*, was even produced (Friedman 1954:288-9).

Furthermore, Cracow also had cafés, night clubs and restaurants, which people from outside the ghetto visited for entertainment. Some of these visitors who made a profit out of these entertainments available in the ghetto, regularly noted that "One amuses oneself in the ghetto" (Friedman 1954:138). One of these restaurants was called *Foerster's Restaurant* (Keneally 1982:126). Visitors from outside even went so far as to refer to this ghetto as *Fun City*.

Two of the inmates of the Cracow ghetto were the Rosner brothers, who frequently performed in cafés and restaurants, *Foerster's*

amongst others.

Mention is also made of a loudspeaker-system, over which music was played at different times, such as when inmates were deported elsewhere (Topas 1990:5).

Mordechai Gebirtig, a Yiddish poet and composer, was one of the inmates in this ghetto. Many of his songs were known throughout a large number of the ghettos and concentration camps, mainly as a result of the deportation from one ghetto or concentration camp to another. One of the songs he wrote while an inmate in Cracow was *Es Brent* (Zylberberg 1969:36). He also wrote the words to this song (Kalisch 1985:17):

*S'brent, briderlekh, s'brent!
Oy, undzer orem shtetl nebekh brent!
Beyse vintn mit yirgozn
Raysn, brekhn un tseblozn,
Shtarker nokh di vilde flamen -
Alts arum shoyn brent.*

Refrain:

*Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh
Mit farleygte hent.
Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh
Undzer shtetl brent!*

*S'brent, briderlekh, s'brent!
Oy, undzer orem shtetl nebekh brent
S'hobn shoyn di fayertsungen
Dos gantse shtetl ayngeschlungen -
Un di beyze vintn huzhen,
Undzer shtetl brent!*

Refrain:



*S'brent, briderlekh, s'brent!
Oy, es ken kholile kumen der moment:
Undzer shtot mit undz tsuzamen
Zol oyf ash avek in flamen,
Blayben zol - vi nokh a shlakht,
Nor puste, shvartse vent!*

Refrain:

*S'brent, briderlekh, s'brent!
Di hilf iz nor in aykh aleyn gevendt.
Oyb dos shtetl iz aykh tayer,
Nemt di keylim, lesht dos fayer,
Lesht mit ayer eygn blut,
Bavayzt, az ir dos kent.*

Refrain:

*Shteyt nit, brider, ot azoy zikh
Mit farleygte hent.
Shteyt nit brider, lesht dos fayer
Undzer shtetl brent!*

English translation:

*It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our poor little shtetl is on fire!
Furiously angry winds storm,
Madly around the whipped flames swarm,
Ever wilder grows the fierce blaze -
Everything's on fire!*

Refrain:

*And you stand around and stare
While the flames grow higher.
And you stand around and stare
While our shtetl burns.*

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our poor little shtetl is on fire.
Tongues of fire have swallowed down
Houses, streets, our whole little town,
And the angry winds are howling -
Our shtetl is on fire.

Refrain:

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our little shtetl will soon be on fire.
This our village in which we dwell
Will be a fiery hell,
Blackened as after a battle,
Walls like a burning pyre.

Refrain:

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
If we don't help ourselves, our fate is dire.
If you love your poor little town,
Please don't let them burn it all down.
Put out the flames with your own blood -
Only you can squelch the fire.

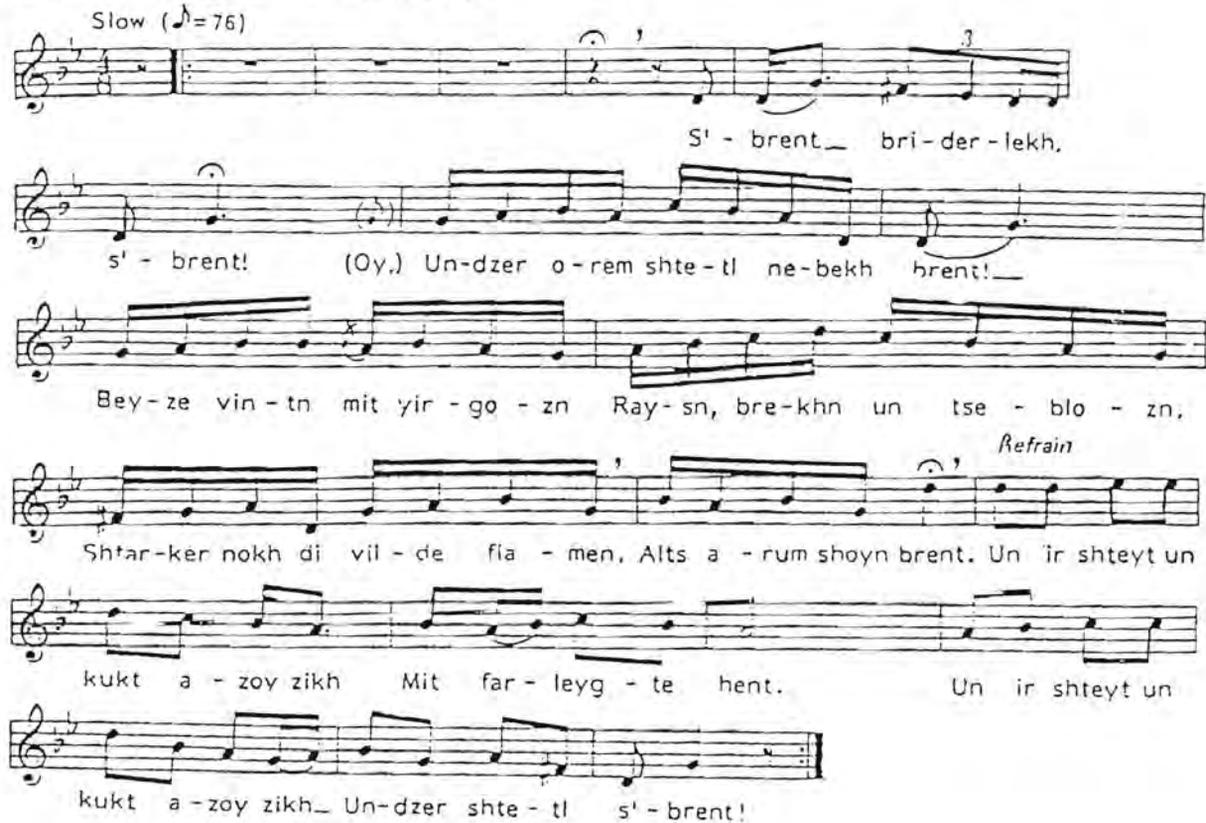
Refrain:

Brothers, don't just stand and stare
While the flames grow higher.
Brothers, don't just stand and stare
While our shtetl burns.

The following is the music to the above-mentioned song (Kalisch 1985:15-16):

Music example 2: Es Brent

Slow (♩=76)



S' - brent - bri - der - lekhn,
s' - brent! (Oy,) Un-dzer o - rem shte - tl ne-bekh brent! -
Bey - ze vin - tn mit yir - go - zn Ray - sn, bre - khn un tse - blo - zn,
Refrain
Shtar - ker nokh di vil - de fia - men, Alts a - rum shoyn brent. Un ir shteyt un
kukt a - zoy zikh Mit far - leyg - te hent. Un ir shteyt un
kukt a - zoy zikh - Un-dzer shte - tl s' - brent!

Another song composed by Mordechai Gebirtig was *Minutn fun Bitokhn* (Moments of confidence). The text was written by Julius Hofman, another inmate in the ghetto (Kalisch 1985:18).

The melody of this song is as follows (Kalisch 1985:20-22):

Music example 3: Minutn fun Bitokhn



Yi - dn, zol zayn frey - lekhn! - Shoyn nit lang, - ikh - haf.
S'ekht bald di mil - kho - me, Es kumt bald zey - er sof.
Frey - lekhn, nor nit zor - gn, Un nit a - rum - geyn trib.



Hot ge - duld, bi - to - khn Un nemt alts on far lib. Un

nemt aits on far lib. Av - day, Hot bi - to - khn,

Nemt alts on far lib. Ay - day, Hot bi - to - khn,

Nemt alts on far lib. ho - bn zey in d'rerd! Fine

The text is divided into four verses (Kalisch 1985:22):

*Yidn, zol zayn freylekh!
Shoyn nit lang, ikh hof:
S'ekht bald di milkhome,
Es kumt bald zeyer sof.
Freylekh, nor nit zorgn,
Un mit arumgeyn trib.
Hot geduld, bitokhn -
Un nemt alts on far lib.*

*Nor geduld, bitokhn,
Nit lozt aroys fun hant.
Undzer alt kley-zayin,
Vos halt undz gor banand.
Hulyet, tantsttalyonim.
Shoyn nit lang, ikh hof -
Geven amol a Homen,
Es vart oyf im zayn sof.*

*Hulyet, tanst talyonim.
Layd ken a yid.
S'vet di shverste arbet,
Undz keynmol makhn mid.
Kern? Zol zayn kern!
Kol-zman ir vet zeyn*

*Iz umzist dos kern,
S'vet do nit vern reyn.*

*Vashn? Zol zayn vashn!
Kayins royter flek,
Hevls blut fun hartsn -
Dos vasht zikh nit avek.
Traybt undz fun di dires,
Shnaydt undz op di berd.
Yidn, zol zayn freylekh!
Mir hobn zey in d'rerd!*

English translation:

*Jews, be merry, be strong!
Don't give up, but hope:
The war will soon be over
And they will soon be gone.
Be merry, and no grieving,
Don't give in to despair.
There's comfort in believing -
Have patience to forbear.*

*Have patience, have confidence,
Hold them close at hand.
Our spirit is our weapon
To keep us a tight-knit band.
Dance, ye wicked henchmen.
Before long, you'll see -
Like Haman long before you,
Dire your end will be.*

*Dance, ye wicked henchmen.
We Jews have known travail.
Despite the cruelest labor,
Our strength will yet prevail.
We must sweep? Then we'll sweep!*

As long as need be.
But no amount of sweeping
Will clean your infamy.

Blood that flowed from Abel
Makes a dark-red stain -
No amount of scrubbing
Can cleanse the hands of Cain.
You can drive us from our houses,
Cut our beards, our joys dispel.
Jews, be gay, be merry!
Henchmen, go to hell!

The first of these songs, entitled *Es Brent*, is a song telling of the pain and suffering the inmates of the ghettos had to endure. The other, entitled *Minutn fun Bitokhn*, is a song calling for hope and perseverance, and telling the people that their suffering would be remembered.

After the liquidation of this ghetto, many inmates were deported to Plaszow concentration camp which was only two kilometres away from the Cracow ghetto (Topas 1990:4).

12.3 Conclusion

In the Cracow ghetto the songs composed by Mordechai Gebirtig tell of sorrow and loss, but also of hope and the will to live, despite every hardship. The role of music could on the one hand be seen as a way of relieving their anguish, and on the other as a morale-booster, to make the people believe in their future.

Other musical activities served more as a form of escape from all that was happening around them.

CHAPTER 13

KOVNO GHETTO

13.1 Geographical location and genesis

Kovno is situated in Lithuania, about 300 kilometers north-north-east of Warsaw. The Kovno ghetto was founded in July 1941, and a total of 300 000 inmates were interned in the ghetto in July to August 1941.

As in the case of the other ghettos a Jewish Council was elected who laid down regulations for activities from their headquarters in the ghetto police station. These entailed organisational and artistic activities. The police station regulations were designed to give official status to the orchestra. (Tory 1990:65.) Dr Chaim Nachman Shapiro was elected head of the Jewish Council's education and culture departments.

13.2 Musical activities in Kovno ghetto

The Kovno ghetto had many outstanding musicians as inmates, including some former members of the Lithuanian State Opera.

A cover had to be provided for rehearsals of the ghetto orchestra; members were employed in a labour unit or as part of the Jewish Council. The members of the police orchestra were enlisted as ghetto police. The orchestra functioned within the framework of the ghetto police from that time on. A "policemen's club" was established, where the orchestra appeared twice weekly on a regular basis (Tory 1990:65). Their membership totalled 35. They were forbidden to play music by German composers, excepting those of Jewish-German origin. Their repertoire consisted of works by Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Halévy, Offenbach, and a wide range of Yiddish and Hebrew art songs and folk songs (Dawidowicz

1975:257).

The first concert took place in August 1942. During this concert Kol Nidrei (The day of Atonement's opening prayer) was performed. According to Tory (1990:136) this was a very emotional evening with tears flowing.

A second "special" orchestra also came into existence to play for the children of German Jews. This orchestra of well-known Kovno musicians performed in the yeshiva (see Glossary) on Yeshiva Street to an audience of school children.

Another orchestra to come into existence was a mandolin orchestra (Dawidowicz 1975:257). Unfortunately no more information is available about them.

By 25 November 1942 the ghetto police finished their job of renovating the building of the Slobodka yeshiva, as well as adapting it to serve as concert hall for the police orchestra. At first there was strong opposition to the use of this venue, as many claimed that such concerts desecrated the memory of murdered Jews (Tory 1990:136). Some Jews had apparently been killed in the same building.

Many of the concerts were attended by policemen and members of the Jewish Council, and at times also by the German Commandant of the ghetto. At the end of 1942 the Jewish musician and composer, Geist, was returned to the ghetto, presumably after escaping, and was executed by the Gestapo.

In March 1943 a concert was held in which, as part of the programme, three groups of children presented their own songs and plays. They were accompanied by a gifted pianist, David Helerman.

The police orchestra was very busy with rehearsals during July as two concerts were held on the 20th and 21st days of Tammuz (see Glossary). Hebrew music and songs were performed at these

concerts and Hebrew poems were recited.

The concert on 24 July 1943 was a very prestigious event. The concert hall was packed with notables and the most active members of the Zionist movement that were left in the ghetto at that time. This concert was the last big performance of that nature in the ghetto. A certain S. Hofmakler, a violinist and conductor, played a large role in the concert both as organiser and conductor. The orchestra performed *Song of the Valley*. Other performers were Mrs Ratchka who sang *Two Letters* by Avigdor Hameiri and *Let Me In* by Bialik, the violinist Stupel, Kupritz who recited, and Zaks who sang *The Harbour Song*. The concert was concluded with the singing of *Hatikvah* to the accompaniment of the orchestra.

Many songs were composed and sung in this ghetto as a morale booster or as songs of hope. The first of these already imagines seeing liberators approaching on horseback (Rubin 1963:449):

Refrain:

*Nor nit veyn, yid, es kumen besere tsaytn,
Ich ze shoyn dos lid fun der vayt,
Soldatn oyf ferd dort es raytn,
Di fone, di fone zi veyt.*

*Undz shrekt kayne klep, kayne tsoymen,
Mir veysn, di tsukunft iz hel,
Di sonim, zey megn haynt shoymen,
Di frayhayt, zi vart oyfn shvel.*

English translation:

Refrain:

*Don't weep, Jew, better times are coming,
I now hear the song from the distance,
Soldiers on horseback are riding,
With banners, with banners waving.*

We fear not the blows nor the bonds,
We know that the future is bright,
The enemies now may be fuming,
But freedom for us now is nigh.

Another song sung as a morale booster was a favourite of the labour brigades. The song went as follows (Dawidowicz 1975:203):

*We don't weep or grieve
Even when you beat and lash us,
But never for a moment believe
That you will discourage and dash us.*

*Jewish brigades,
With rags for clothes
March day in, day out
And bravely bear their woes.*

The next example is a song stating the inmates' feelings about the Chairman of the Judenrat (Rubin 1963:435):

*Iz in geto do faran
Eyner gor a groyser man,
Velcher iz gevorn a tiran.
Yedn morgn inderfri,
Traybt er mentshn vi di fi
Un er meynt, az eybik blaybn vet er hi.
Shrayt un shilt, shtendig vild,
Vi a vildedhaye oyf di mentshn bilt.*

English translation:

In the ghetto there is one
Who is a very important man,
But who has become a tyrant.
Every morning early,
He drives people like cattle

Thinking, that he will live forever,
He yells and curses, is always wild,
And barks at the people like a mad beast.

13.3 The last years of the ghetto

According to Tory (1990:xxi) the Kovno ghetto became a concentration camp in October 1943. The last large deportation batch to reach Kovno was on 18 May 1944. The Jews were from Paris. As Soviet forces neared the ghetto in July 1944 many inmates were killed or deported to Stutthof or Dachau.

13.4 Conclusion

The musical activities in the Kovno ghetto were much more difficult to organise than in any of the other ghettos and camps. Musical activities were organised under the auspices of the Ghetto Police to enable the musicians to have rehearsals. All the other inmates were daily sent out of the ghetto in labour units. Apart from the "Ghetto Police Orchestra" there was also another, which specialised in playing for the German Jews.

Concert performances were allowed on a regular basis with most of the audiences consisting of members of the Jewish Council or Jewish Police. When the camp was dissolved most of the musicians were either shot or sent to concentration camps like Dachau or Stutthof (Gilbert 1982:200).

The role music played in this ghetto can be seen in two ways. The songs that were sung clearly show their purpose, that of raising morale and that of documentation of their life in the ghetto with its accompanying problems. The orchestras and many of the other cultural and musical activities were a form of escape from reality for many of the inmates.