

Practical Issues of Critical Research into Historical Photography: The Case of the Kaunas Ghetto Photographer Zvi Hirsh Kadushin

Keywords: Kaunas / Kovno Ghetto, Holocaust representation, Jewish photographer

According to representation and memory researchers, the Holocaust is one of the most photographed events in modern history on the European scale, and it is photographs that tell the story of this event to the broad public.¹ However, at the same time, the prevailing perspective is the views created by the Nazi or, to be more exact, the perspective of the perpetrators of the crime. Two cases stand out globally in this context – the Łódź Ghetto in Poland and the Kaunas Ghetto in Lithuania.

In the first case, two employees of the Department of Statistics of the Łódź Ghetto – Mendel Grossman (1913–1945) and Henryk Ross (1910–1991) – captured their environment on film. In the second case, it was the electromechanical engineer Zvi Hirsh Kadushin (1910–1997). With his amateur camera he took several hundred pictures in the Kaunas Ghetto. In both cases, ghettos were unofficially photographed by their inmates, and thanks to them, huge visual archives of the exterminated communities have been preserved for the future. In this way, a counterbalance to the Nazi perspective emerged in the historical visualisation of the Holocaust.

¹ Such claims were made by Marianne Hirsch: *Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory*, *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. by Barbie Zelizer. London: Rutgers University Press, 2001, 218; Janina Struk: *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence*, London: Routledge, 2004, 213; Susan A. Crane: *Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and the Holocaust Atrocity Photography*, *History and Theory* 47 (2008), 309; Michael F. Bernard-Donals: *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2009, 58.

Though the views from both ghettos are quite popular in the publications and exhibitions devoted to the Holocaust today, thus far the case of Łódź has attracted more serious academic attention.² The analysis of literature on the Holocaust in Lithuania revealed that any Lithuanian and international publication includes at least one photograph taken by Kadushin, and these photographs account for respectively a third or a fourth of the published views from that period. However, most often the publications totally disregard the photographer and only sometimes abstractly refer to thousands of secretly taken pictures which supposedly reveal the life in the Kaunas Ghetto. This is so because the history of the Kaunas Ghetto or, more generally, that of the Holocaust rather than the history of the photographs themselves is always in the centre of attention. A paragraph in the publication *Lietuvos fotografijos istorija*³ [A History of Lithuanian Photography] is devoted to Kadushin; however, other Lithuanian publications use the photographer's pictures without indicating the author.

The authors⁴ of the album of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum devoted to the history of the Kaunas Ghetto and, almost at the same time, the Nazi hunter from Canada Sol Littman⁵ who communicated

² For example, the historian Andrea Löw, based on the views and memoirs of ghetto inmates and texts of historians, not only discussed the circumstances of appearance of the photographs and their possible motivation, but also drew attention to the difference between what was sought to be recorded at the moment of taking photographs and what views as visual memories of the ghetto were favoured by the survivors after the war. Andrea Löw: Documenting as a "Passion and Obsession": Photographs from the Łódź (Litzmannstadt) Ghetto, *Central European History* 3/48 (2015), 387–404; <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938915000801> (06.11.2019). The art critic Lisa Bourla traced and compared these views with those in the collection of a Nazi official who took pictures of the same ghetto. Having analysed ever repeating and continuing transformations in the meanings of the photographs in academic and popular literature and films, she demonstrated that these photographs were too often used to strengthen stereotypes rather than to critically think about the established paradigms and narratives. See Lisa Bourla: Shaping and Reshaping Memory: The Łódź Ghetto Photographs, *Word & Image* 1/31 (2015), 54–72; <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2015.1022404> (06.11.2019).

³ Margarita Matulytė, Agnė Narušytė: *Camera obscura: Lietuvos fotografijos istorija 1839–1945* [A History of Lithuanian Photography, 1839–1945]. Vilnius: VDA leidykla, 2016, 563–564.

⁴ *Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto*, ed. by Dennis B. Klein. Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1997.

⁵ Sol Littman: *War Criminal on Trial: Rauca of Kaunas*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1998 [1st ed. 1983]. The statements presented by Littman about Kadushin's life should be treated with great

personally with the photographer were the first in Western literature to write about Kadushin and his photographs. More than a decade later, the student of Stanford University Catherine Gong described her first encounter with Kadushin's photographs and their author from her personal perspective.⁶ Finally, the researcher of the said museum, Judith Cohen, presenting photographs of the ghettos, discussed the phenomenon of Kadushin in the context of the history and memory of the Holocaust.⁷ Without going into too many details, it can be noted that in those few texts about Kadushin's photographs, the issue of the relation between the recorded views and historical reality was not raised, as if knowing in advance that the photographer revealed objectively the single common truth about all the Jews in the Kaunas Ghetto: the researchers' main aim is to make the existence of these photographs and their author's heroism known. Historical photography's greatest merit lies in its capacity to make a storyline more tangible by providing a very concrete scene with specific individuals, places or events. Still, the mainstream tendency is to treat images as symbolic illustrations in historical narratives. However, on the basis of expanding fields of academic research on both historical photographs and the Holocaust representations,⁸ such treatment of Kadushin's photographs seems hackneyed and narrow. Theoreticians and methodologists of photography unanimously state that a photograph conveys the subjective reality perceived and arranged by the photographer, and sometimes by the subjects of the photograph themselves. According to Allan Sekula, a photograph constructs an imaginary world and presents it as a reality, and it is there that its dangerous

caution, the text abounds in factual errors: for example, it is stated that Kadushin was liberated by the Americans from the Dachau concentration camp. Since the author's attention was focused on the history of the Gestapo officer Helmut Rauca, he mentions Kadushin only in passing.

⁶ Catherine Gong: *George's Kaddish for Kovno and the Six Million*. Xlibris, 2009.

⁷ Judith Cohen: Jewish Ghetto Photographers, *The Holocaust: Memories and History*, ed. by Victoria Khiterer, Ryan Barrick, David Misal. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, 90.

⁸ Theoretical and methodological insights in the present study are taken from Eric Margolis, Jeremy Rowe: Methodological Approaches to Disclosing Historic Photographs, *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, ed. by Eric Margolis, Luc Pauwels. London: Sage Pubns Ltd., 2011, 337–358; Gillian Rose: *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. SAGE, 2001; also see Footnote 1.

charm lies.⁹ However, at the same time, we cannot deny the fact that things represented in it are fragments of the real world, which can impart historical knowledge. As the German historian Andrea Löw who made research on the Łódź Ghetto noted, written ego-documents and photographs supplement one another as authentic sources; however, their authenticity rises from different qualities. A written text provides important contextual information, conveys internal processes of the author's thinking, images and sounds, and with the help of literary means strengthens the dramatic narrative. In the meantime, a photograph seems to offer a less transformed, direct view; however, it is capable of recording only one instant. Therefore, it provides the spectator with an impression of "being there" or "direct witnessing".¹⁰ Marianne Hirsch referred to this impression as "a gap in the present into the past".¹¹ According to the historian Mark Moss, a secret to unlocking the power of the image is to interpret and give meaning to a photograph without overshadowing the original circumstances of its creation. A printed or written archival resource asks to be explained; however, an oral narrative is necessary for a photograph too. Its meaning is not limited to its visual power only – a photograph exists to be interpreted and discussed. Only after it is no longer reduced to a mere image and is turned into a union of image and interpretation, can it make an impact on an untrained viewer.¹²

The present article is the first attempt to look at Kadushin's photographic legacy critically and analytically. It is a step into in the territory of the "studium" described by Roland Barthes, perceiving it as a field of meanings of a photograph which can be found in the image itself and traced back by carefully recreating the historical context of its appearance.¹³ The initial questions in regard to the photographs were those offered by

⁹ Allan Sekula: Reading an Archive, Photography between Labour and Capital, *The Photography Reader*, ed. by Liz Wells. Routledge, 2002, 443.

¹⁰ Löw: Documenting..., 399.

¹¹ Marianne Hirsch, Leo Spitzer: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?: Archival photographs in contemporary narratives, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 2 (2006, vol. 5), 245; <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725880600741615> (06.11.2019).

¹² Mark Moss: *Toward the Visualization of History: The Past as Image*. Lexington Books, 2010, 107.

¹³ Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

the researchers of the Holocaust representations Daniel H. Magilow and Lisa Silverman:¹⁴ (1) Who took them?; (2) Where, when, why and under what circumstances were they taken?; (3) What were their initial target audiences, and how did these audiences evolve?; (4) What narratives were created and transformed around these photographs?

Basically, these questions must be asked when analyzing any image. On their basis, the author of the article sought to recreate as exactly as possible the photographer's biography during the years of the Nazi occupation and in the post-war period, and to reconstruct the original circumstances of creating photographs of the Kaunas Ghetto, revealing the problematic aspects of image analysis, as well as to study the further development of the use of these photographs and their relation with memory construction.

The research is based on the aforementioned literature, as well as on a video interview given by Kadushin himself, testimonies and memoirs of other Jews, the survivors of the Kaunas Ghetto,¹⁵ as well as a thorough analysis of the photographs themselves. Kadushin spoke about more than a thousand shots of the Kaunas Ghetto, and people who wrote about him mentioned the same number. Perhaps a major obstacle in seeking to analyze this impressive photo material in a systematic way is the fact that it is not concentrated in one place but scattered in Lithuania, Israel and the USA. When living in the USA, Kadushin divided his photo archive into three parts – he gave one part to the Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot, another part to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), and reserved the third part for himself. After the photographer's death, his daughter gave that last part of the photographs to the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, and until

¹⁴ Daniel H. Magilow, Lisa Silverman: *Holocaust Representations in History: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, 1.

¹⁵ The main ones are as follows: Raya Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie: Berichte aus dunklen Zeiten*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbücher, 1999; Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, 1997, video recording, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection*, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn44256> (06.11.2019); Interview with Itzhak Segalis by Ilja Lempertas, 1996, video recording, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive; <http://vha.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=14534&returnIndex=0> (06.11.2019).

now, that collection has been accessible only by visiting the institution. Some prints have remained in Lithuania, and the digital archives of Yad Vashem and USHHM contain copies of photographs of unidentified origin collected and donated to the archives by different persons who accumulated information about the Kaunas Ghetto, most often its survivors. The present research covers fewer than four hundred images – only those that the photographer himself handed over to the museums in Washington and Tel Aviv. Though these and other archives contain more photographs of the Kaunas Ghetto (less than a thousand), their attribution to Kadushin is questionable, as their authorship is not entirely clear. Earlier, the research of this kind was almost impossible due to both the limited access to the photographs and time- and money-consuming trips to the archives. However, the growing number of digital projects, which provide virtual access to archival collections, offered a possibility to have a closer and more serious look at the images produced by Kadushin.

The photographer

Before presenting the photographer's biography, it should be underlined that the data were mainly collected from oral testimonies and memoirs, therefore, considering the drawbacks of sources of this type, they are lacking exact dates, names of institutions, and sometimes even consistency. As the period of the German occupation (1941–1944) was the most important in the framework of the present research, we are going to discuss it in more detail, leaving the full archival study of Kadushin's biography for the future.

Speaking about his early life and youth, few facts are known. Born in 1910, Zvi Hirsh Kadushin was the youngest of five children. His older siblings were Sonia, Zlate, Gita and Abraham. Their father, Solomon Kadushin, owned a successful printing house in Raseiniai, a province town in western part of Lithuania¹⁶. Having become of age, Hirsh

¹⁶ Lina Kantautienė: Kadušinų šeima – gyvenimai ir likimai [Kadushins' Family – Lifes and Fates], *Alio Raseiniai*, 17.01.2019 (no. 3), 23.

moved to Kaunas, the interim capital of Lithuania at that time, studied engineering at Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University, and took part in the activities of the Revisionist Zionist youth Beitar movement. Having graduated from the university, he worked as a teacher of mathematics at a local Jewish higher school, and taught in Hebrew.¹⁷ In his free time Kadushin took photographs and customized cameras, repaired radio sets in his workshop, took interest in latest technologies, and wrote articles on popular science topics for the Jewish press. According to him, he went in for sports too; he especially enjoyed training with gymnastic rings.¹⁸ Friends and acquaintances called him by the Russified name of Grisha; the Russian language was popular with non-religious Lithuanian Jews, and the transcription of names was influenced by the pre-war imperial tradition. He did not start a family of his own.

At the end of June – July of 1941, during the first weeks of the Nazi occupation in Lithuania, Kadushin, like the majority of Jews of Kaunas, was hiding at home, fearing arrests in the streets. A physically strong man, he kept a firearm for defence and, hence, was ready to put up resistance from the very beginning. At the end of June, while mainly attacks on individual Jews were going on, Kadushin's brother was killed in uncertain circumstances. Together with his sisters Sonia and Zlate and their families, Kadushin was relocated to the Kaunas Ghetto, which was started to be created on July 10 and closed its gate on August 15 in the suburb of Vilijampolė. Sonia had a daughter, Riva; she had lost her husband at the beginning of the occupation. The other sister Zlate was married to the chief of printing works Chaim Segalis, and they had two children – a teenager Sara and a two-year old Izia.¹⁹

¹⁷ Most probably this was the Kaunas Hebrew Real Gymnasium specialising in mathematics and science; besides, the school was famous for supporting the Zionist youth Beitar movement to which Kadushin belonged. For more about the gymnasium, see David Rachovich: *Hebrew Real ("Real") Gymnasium in Kovno/Kaunas, Lithuania before WWII*, 2012; <http://aaronrachovich.blogspot.com/2012/01/hebrew-real-gymnasium-in-kovnokauanas.html#.XcvNofZuLIX> (13.11.2019).

¹⁸ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

¹⁹ Information about Kadushin's family is scarce, the most part was provided by the same Izia Segalis, Interview with Itzhak Segalis by Ilja Lempertas, op. cit.

The Kaunas Ghetto functioned in a similar way as did ghettos in other locations. It was not only the isolation of the Jews that was important, but also the use of their workforce for the needs of the German army. Most often Jews were sent to work in different places outside the borders of the ghetto, usually in the Aleksotas airport, which was under construction. The highest autonomous body of the Kaunas Ghetto was the Council of Elders (German *Ältestenrat*) headed by Dr Elkhanan Elkes. The Labour Office and the Jewish Police also played an important role in the life of the inmates of the ghetto. At first, about 30 thousand Kaunas Jews were imprisoned in Viliampolė; however, their number decreased rapidly when the Germans started carrying out massacres of varying scale referred to as campaigns, thus exterminating Jews who, in the opinion of the Germans, were dangerous or useless. On October 29, the largest-scale massacre in Lithuania took place – more than nine thousand ghetto Jews were shot dead in the Ninth Fort of Kaunas in one day. This horrible event is known as the Great Action. Grisha's parents were among the victims. From the end of 1941, the massacres stopped and a relatively quiet period in the ghetto's life began.

When living in the ghetto, Kadushin became acquainted with Raya Kruk who arrived in Kaunas from the Klaipėda Region. Soon they started living together in the room that earlier belonged to Grisha's sister Sonia. The latter decided to move to one of the neighbouring labour camps in Kėdainiai.²⁰ As a repair specialist of radio sets and other electromechanical equipment, Kadushin was useful to the Germans. At first, they sent Grisha to different divisions of the Wehrmacht to carry out different repair works, and for some time, he was even granted an exclusive privilege – a permit of free movement in the city. Later, Kadushin set up a small workshop in the German military hospital, in the former Vytautas Magnus University Clinic (currently at 2 Eivenių street),²¹

²⁰ Escaped from the labour camp together with her daughter and joined the units of Soviet partisans. Finally, she was shot dead by German officials near Kėdainiai. Oral history interview with Itskhak Segalis by Ilja Lempertas, op. cit.

²¹ Blick ins Kauener Kriegslazarett [A Glance at the Kaunas War Hospital], *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 06.11.1941 (no. 23). A published article about the military hospital in Kaunas.

where he repaired mainly radio sets for the Germans.²² In the social context of the ghetto, it was a good position that allowed him to get in contact with Lithuanians and on account of less exhausting work to maintain sufficiently good physical health. Apart from his work at the hospital, Kadushin took photographs and provided electrician's services to the ghetto inmates; besides, having assembled a radio set from separate parts, he listened to the news about the war and shared this information with other people. He maintained close contacts with Lithuanians, and, as he had a permit to walk freely in the city without an escort and did not look like a typical Jew (he had blond hair and blue eyes), he could move around almost without any difficulties.

The situation in the ghetto began to change in September 1943. Upon his arrival in Kaunas, the SS-Captain Wilhelm Goecke started getting ready for taking over the ghetto from the German civil administration, and on November 1, the Kaunas Ghetto officially became a concentration camp within the jurisdiction of the SS. Cleansing actions were renewed, Jews were sent to labour camps in Latvia, Estonia and Kaunas environs. At the same time, the news about the liquidated Vilnius Ghetto, the largest ghetto in Lithuania, caused great disturbance. Initiatives of building hideouts, so-called *malinas*, and attempts to escape from the ghetto increased.²³ Kadushin and his relatives managed to avoid deportations; however, they started to look for the ways to run away. Grisha made an agreement with his acquaintance, the Kaunas teacher Vincas Ruzgys, who lived farther away from the centre with his wife and small daughter, to let him build a hideout in the cellar of his house. On March 26–27, 1944, a squad of armed SS men and Ukrainian auxiliaries broke into the Kaunas Ghetto. On instruction from Goecke, they dragged children and old people from their homes by force, threw them onto trucks, and eventually sent them to die in the Majdenek extermination camp. That horrible

²² The prevailing statement that Kadushin's work was to repair x-ray equipment is not fully true – it is illogical that equipment would malfunction so often that it would be necessary to have a permanent position for its repairs. A more convincing version, which the author of the article relies upon, is presented by Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie...*, 221.

²³ *Hidden History...*, 38.

event that claimed around 1,300 victims is known today as the *Children's Action*.²⁴ During this action, the Gestapo men broke into Kadushin's house. Together with Raja Kruk and the Segalis family they were hiding in a hideout built under the cooker. It is not known exactly who betrayed the identity and the whereabouts of the ghetto's secret photographer; it might have been someone among the ghetto's policemen, as they were arrested on the same day and tortured for information about the hideouts known to them. Grisha cooperated with the policemen, and the latter knew about photographing. Nonetheless, the Gestapo men failed to find Kadushin, and that very evening he secretly escaped to Ruzgys's place. That is where he spent several last months before the invasion of the Red Army in Kaunas on August 1. Raja Kruk with her mother and the family of his sister Zlate Segalis were hiding together with him. All of them managed to survive through the Nazi hell.

An important gap in Kadushin's story is the summer of 1944 in Lithuania re-occupied by the Soviets: it remains unclear what the photographer was doing then, what his plans were, and how he found himself in the American Zone of Allied-occupied Germany with all his negatives in the autumn of 1945. In Lithuania, first of all, he took pictures of the ruins of the Kaunas Ghetto,²⁵ recovered his photographs and negatives, possibly donated some of his photographs to the Vilnius Jewish Museum,²⁶ and visited the abandoned Nazi institutions looking for additional photo documents. According to archival documents discovered by Margarita Matulytė, in August 1944, Kadushin's name was

²⁴ Ibid., 40.

²⁵ Two photographs were published in the press of that time – Rudujų žmogžudžių pėdsakai [Footmarks of the Brown Murderers], *Tarybų Lietuva*, 13.10.1944 (no. 97/327), 2. Captions below the photos ran as follows: "Here we see two views of the ghetto, which the withdrawing Germans blew up and burned down, killing most of the people. At the top – blown up houses. At the bottom – a corpse taken out of the cellar. Photo by Kadushin." The photographs illustrated the article by J. Gar about the liquidation of the small ghetto on October 4, 1941.

²⁶ This assumption is derived from the fact that the majority of photographs attributed to Kadushin held at the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History bear stamps of the Jewish Museum. On the other hand, these photographs could have been handed over to the museum by someone other than Kadushin himself.

on the list of the photo correspondents who worked at the Lithuanian national news agency ELTA.²⁷

At that time, he parted ways with Raja Kruk. Raja laconically commented on this as follows: “Since he was much older than me, he treated the Russian period completely differently and soon turned towards the West”.²⁸ The last known photo of Kadushin in Lithuania is dated May 1945,²⁹ and at the end of September he was at the border of Czechoslovakia and Germany.³⁰ The surviving photographs showing the intermediate points of secret routes of Jewish refugees to the West and secret meetings of the members of the *Bericha* organisation³¹ in Łódź, Budapest and Prague³² testify to his journey to the West. Hence, it would be logical to assume that Kadushin fled Soviet Lithuania in secret, most probably making use of fake documents proving his Polish origin.³³ Upon arriving at the Landsberg Displaced Persons (DP) Camp,

²⁷ Margarita Matulytė: *Nihil obstat: Lietuvos fotografija sovietmečiu* [Lithuanian Photography during the Soviet Era]. Vilnius: VDA leidykla, 2011, 254.

²⁸ Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie...*, 222.

²⁹ A group of escapees from the Ninth Fort in Kaunas (Kovno) returning to visit the fortress after the liberation. In the photo: Pinie Krakinovski, Dov Belsberg, Meir Yelin, Zvi-Hirsch Kadushin, Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, Israel Gitlin, Vladislav Blum and Berl Gampel. Photographed in May 1945, Ghetto Fighters House Archives, Catalog no. 8118; http://www.infocenters.co.il/gfh/notebook_ext.asp?item=1277&site=gfh&lang=ENG&menu=1 (14.11.2019)

³⁰ Testified by a photograph: Border between Czechoslovakia and Germany, used as an escape route, Germany, September 26, 1945, photo Zvi Kadushin, Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection, Photo Unit no. 151969; <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/border-between-czechoslovakia-and-germany-used-as-an-escape-route-germany-1945> (14.11.2019).

³¹ During the summer of 1944, a mass movement of Jewish migration from Eastern Europe to the West and to Eretz Israel (Mandatory Palestine) began. This movement, both organized and spontaneous, is known as the “Bericha” (The Flight). Bericha organizers had to operate in secret, using forged papers, new names and trucks with false license plates, surreptitiously crossing borders at night, paying off border guards, etc. The limitations and quotas placed on immigration to Palestine forced some of the refugees to move to DP camps in US-controlled territories in Germany. See more at <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/learning-environment/bericha.html> (14.11.2019).

³² Photographs of this period are also kept in Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection.

³³ For example, that is how the Kaunas Jew Israel Ipson fled Lithuania in 1945. See the oral history interview with Jay Ipson, 1995, USHMM collections; <https://collections.ushmm.org/>

he became employed in the JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) as a photographer-correspondent. In January 1946, he staged a photographic exhibition about Eastern European ghettos and camps in Munich on the occasion of the 1st Congress of Liberated Jews held concurrently.³⁴ At that time, he shot newsreels about the life of displaced people in the camp and also collected photographs related to the Holocaust in all Europe from German soldiers and other people.

In 1950, he immigrated to New York alone, and changed his name to George Kadish.³⁵ Most often it is humbly noted that until his retirement he worked as a film mechanic; however, it would be more exact to say that he set up a profitable company producing high quality equipment for television studios.³⁶ Information about his private life in America could not be obtained; the only known fact is the birth of his daughter Georgia in 1964.³⁷ He died in Hollywood in 1997. His sister Zlate and her daughter Sara emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel in the 1970s. Only his nephew Izia Segalis and his family remained in Lithuania, in Vilnius.³⁸

Let us go back to the above-mentioned exhibition of 1946 in Munich. Kadushin displayed photographs of the Kaunas Ghetto alongside other photographs collected from other places. He treated his photographs as

search/catalog/irn504852 (14.11.2019). In 1946, Kadushin (then George Kadisch) had close contacts with Ipson, as testified by the photographs from Munich kept in the JDC archive, available at <https://bit.ly/2C2pyqv> (14.11.2019).

³⁴ Evidenced by the surviving photographs, e.g.: Photo exhibition prepared by George Kadisch (Zvi Kadushin) after the war, Munich, Germany, January 1946, photo Zvi Kadushin, Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection, Photo Unit no. 144402; <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/photo-exhibition-prepared-by-george-kadisch-zvi-kadushin-after-the-war-munich-germany-jan-1946> (14.11.2019).

³⁵ While in Germany, he used the name of G. Kadisch. A stamp bearing that name is found on some of his photographs too. The date of emigration was established on the basis of the article that appeared in an American newspaper in 1956, saying that Kadushin arrived in the USA six years ago. Success story, *Motion Picture Daily*, 11.04.1956 (no. 70), 4.

³⁶ According to Littman: *War Criminal...*, 178, and Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

³⁷ Jill Young Miller: This Holocaust Survivor Fought Back Using His Camera As a Weapon Against the Nazis, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, 06.12.1997; <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1997-12-06-9712060163-story.html> (12.11.2019).

³⁸ Oral history interview with Itskhak Segalis by Ilja Lempertas, op. cit.



Visitors at the photo exhibition prepared by George Kadisch (Zvi Kadushin) held during the 1st Congress of Liberated Jews held after the war in Munich, Germany, January 1946. The exhibition included the following topics: life in the ghettos, concentration camps, persecution of Jews. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

Beth Hatefutsot Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection

symbolic evidence of the experience of all the Jews of Europe rather than testimonies of a concrete place and time. This is witnessed by the abstract titles of the panels – *So We Lived; Isolation from the World; What Were Their Sins?; Work And Wages...; Destruction of Religion; Did They Come Back?; Where Are Our Parents*³⁹ and the like. Some photographs bear captions originally given by Kadushin, which also reflect his generalising strategy – *Body is gone* or *Transfer to nowhere*.⁴⁰ At that time, the exhibition

³⁹ Photos of the exhibition panels can be seen in USHMM collections, available at <https://bit.ly/2TMsJMB> (16.11.2019).

⁴⁰ <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa11842> and <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa11841> (14.11.2019).

attracted much attention of ghetto survivors; however, everything ended with that because from the 1940s to approximately the end of the 1980s, the photographs were forgotten and did not receive general attention. This should be related to the general context of the Holocaust memory. As has been noted by researchers of Holocaust photography, against the background of sensational and shocking views of massacres, photographs of ghettos were not in high demand as they did not convey the atrocities of the Nazis, and it was not until the last decade of the 20th century that they started to arouse interest.⁴¹ Though in the 1980s, Kadushin gave a part of his photo archive to Beit Hatfutsot and USHMM, it was only after his death that his photographs made their comeback as symbolic illustrations of the Holocaust experience and since then, have begun to appear in publications of general nature increasingly more often. In the last years of his life, the photographer complained to the author of the future book about him, Catherine Gong, that his photographs were forgotten.⁴²

Unfortunately, sources showing how Kadushin himself saw his role as a ghetto photographer during the first post-war decade have not been found yet. However, his speech made on the occasion of opening the photographic exhibition of the Kaunas Ghetto at the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington on April 27, 1987 is quite telling. Kadushin said: “I looked upon the photos that I took as a kind of revenge directed against the Nazis, the Murderers of my People. As I took more photos, my fear disappeared. My power and will to hide and preserve the negatives grew stronger with every day. In this way, I could realize the sacred order of the millions of my people who were killed and exterminated for their beliefs. I felt it was a HISTORICAL ORDER to take the terrible happenings in the ghetto to the outside world, to our future children and generations to come so that they would clearly know what happened during that time.”⁴³

⁴¹ Struk: *Photographing...*, 171.

⁴² Gong: *George's Kaddish...*

⁴³ Cohen: *Jewish Ghetto...*, 90.

It becomes clear both from this speech and from the interview taken a decade later⁴⁴ that photographs interested Kadushin as a proof of his heroic deed rather than a possibility to convey specific historical knowledge on their basis. The photographer created a narrative marked by the idea of his unconditional inner heroism or even the protection of supernatural forces. The main keywords in this rhetoric were “revenge” and “resistance”. Grisha insisted that from the very beginning the idea of showing the world what the Germans had done inspired him and gave him strength. Practically every event that he captured during the German occupation became shrouded in that heroic aura. Taking a critical look, however, one should consider whether Kadushin could, from the very beginning of his photographing, crystallize such a clear manifesto of activity in his mind when most of the Jewish ego-documents of that period most clearly reveal disarray, helplessness and uncertainty about the future. Usually, such symbolic actualisations of activity are created by memory already retrospectively. Besides, the very content of the photographs does not provide any direct evidence of the Nazi crimes. However, this did not prevent modern authors from adopting Kadushin’s discourse word for word, and presenting him in the way he wanted to be presented – a hero armed with a candid camera who risked his life so that he could reveal the reality of the ghetto and the crimes committed by the Germans. The questions as to *what exactly that reality was* or *whose reality it was* are neither raised nor considered.

On the basis of the surviving biographical data, one gets an impression that Kadushin (deliberately or not) wanted to conceal his clearly privileged position in the ghetto and the fact that it was his resourcefulness and useful connections rather than secret powers that protected his noble mission that helped him to act and save himself. In almost all wider testimonies about the Kaunas Ghetto, at least two distinct layers that existed in that micro community can be discerned – the majority barely managing to survive, and the privileged minority. However, memoirs are found in the reverse proportion because the greatest number of the

⁴⁴ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

survivors was from the privileged minority. Waldemar Ginsburg identified the privileged in his memoirs most succinctly and concretely. The Council of Elders, the bureaucrats running the ghetto's affairs according to the Nazi orders, and its subordinate police force constituted one group, and the other group was comprised of supervisors of work brigades and those who worked in easier conditions in the city.⁴⁵ It was the latter group that Kadushin belonged to. Due to his high professional qualifications, he secured himself a materially and socially comfortable job. Moreover, close relations with the police authorities allowed him to avoid actions or learn about the impending dangers in advance. The photos testify to his important connections in the ghetto's Labour Department⁴⁶ whose relations with the police were sometimes ridden with friction, but it did not affect the photographer. According to Kruk, it was through Grisha that she managed to receive a dream job in the conditions of that time – to clean the premises of the German hospital.⁴⁷ The relation between Kadushin and the Council of Elders (Ältestenrat) remains a mystery. He himself spoke about it and particularly about the author of the famous diary, the Council's Secretary Avraham Golub-Tory,⁴⁸ in highly negative terms, claiming that nobody liked “the committee”, and that Golub was a despicable person who today would be easily shot or at least sent to prison for forcing people to work and helping the Nazis to organise actions.⁴⁹ It can be presumed that such a drastic attitude was determined by a certain

⁴⁵ Waldemar Ginsburg: *And Kovno Wept*. Beth Shalom, 1998.

⁴⁶ For example, there is a photo showing the Chief of the Labour Department Pavel Margolis and his secretary at the desk in his office; another photo shows his three employees at the building of the Labour Department. Available at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1047319> and <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/margulis-family-in-the-kovno-ghetto-lithuania-1940-41> (14.11.2019).

⁴⁷ Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie...*, 61.

⁴⁸ Avraham Tory: *Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary*. Harvard University Press, 1991 [1st ed. in Hebrew in 1983]. Avraham Golub served as Secretary of the Jewish Council (known as the Ältestenrat) in the ghetto. He kept a diary from the first days of the German invasion through the last days of the ghetto. The diary is both personal and official. Being the Council's Secretary, Golub collected copies of written German orders and transcribed oral commands, which he included in his diary.

⁴⁹ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

negative view of the Judenrat institution as collaborative and conformist, which was formed in the public space of historical memory later, rather than the actual experience in the ghetto.⁵⁰ However, the Council of Elders of the Kaunas Ghetto was aware of his activities. Its members appear in some of the photos, though the authorship of those images is unclear.⁵¹ Kadushin mentioned that Golub-Tory was looking for him in the ghetto more than once with the intention to get some photos, but the photographer tried to avoid the Secretary of the Council at all costs.⁵² Since the members of the Council themselves were concerned about the preservation of the ghetto's memory, most probably they took every effort to ensure that Kadushin and his relatives should not find themselves on the list of persons to be deported. Hence, Kadushin had not only a comfortable job and the skills that were in high demand, but also the patronage of all the most important ghetto institutions. This is of course not an accusation by any means; it is rather an attempt to draw attention to the possible psychological state of Kadushin as a Jew who survived the Holocaust, known as the syndrome of survivor's guilt. Against the background of the tragedy of this scale, it was awkward to admit his personal privileges because of an unvoiced reproach that another Jew who might have been worthier to survive took your place in the pit. Hence, though judging from the photographs and Kadushin's narrations, it would seem that the photographer identified himself with the poorest part of the ghetto's inmates, his position in that society was more privileged.

Photographs

Roughly speaking, the timeline of the photographs should start with the after-effects of the Vilijampolė pogrom of June 26, 1941; however, it should be suspended immediately because no important event of 1941

⁵⁰ A problematic memory related to the Judenrat is described by Annette Wieviorka: *The Era of the Witness*. Cornell University Press, 2006, 17.

⁵¹ The majority of the photographs showing the members of the Council of Elders are found in Avraham Tory's collection presented to the Yad Vashem Museum. The photographer is not specified. Available at <http://bit.do/avraham-tory> (06.11.2019).

⁵² Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

(moving to the ghetto, the Great Action, liquidation of intellectuals and the small ghetto) is captured in the photos. Only the photos of the hospital that was burned down on October 4 can be precisely attributed to that period. The next recognisable event took place in January 1942 – the ghetto's inmates pulling furniture and other belongings on snow-covered streets, after the German commandant Fritz Jordan had ordered the Jews to abandon their houses in Vienožinskio, Strazdelio and Kulvos streets. It was in 1942–1943 that the largest part of the photos was taken, and the last recognisable event captured was the deportation of October 26, 1943, when approximately 2,700 ghetto Jews were sent to a concentration camp in Estonia. The timeline is cut short in March 1944, when Kadushin escaped from the ghetto. Thus, the period of the ghetto as a concentration camp and its liquidation remained unrecorded. It was not until August 1, 1944 that he returned to the territory of the ghetto with his camera, in his words, half an hour before Soviet soldiers appeared there. The most common model of speaking about the Kaunas Ghetto and other ghettos – a timeline-based narration of the most significant events including several prominent personalities – does not work in trying to interpret Kadushin's photos, above all, due to practical reasons. Since his photos and negatives randomly appeared in different museums without exact dates of being taken, it is impossible to consistently arrange them in the chronological order. Very few photographs bear the year or the names of the portrayed written down by the photographer himself, so mostly they can be placed only in an abstract timeframe by establishing the dates of institutional or socio-cultural practices with the help of historiography or recognising the time of the year in the photo itself. Secondly, a non-linear approach is dictated by the nature of images.

Kadushin recorded the ghetto's inmates above all as persons in their surroundings and devoted much attention to repetitive daily practices rather than concrete events. This is a gaze of an attentive anthropologist rather than a scrupulous chronicler. Putting aside later interpretations and looking at the photos from the perspective of the time when they were taken, i.e. a perspective with the unknown future, they first of all speak about the aspiration to preserve as comprehensively as possible a



Residents of the ghetto move to new housing after the Germans reduced the borders of the Kovno Ghetto. The man pulling the disassembled wardrobe is George Kadish's brother-in-law. He never put it together because there was not enough space in his new quarters. Clothes were hung from nails (made out of barbed wire) in the wall. Kaunas, ca 1941–1942. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

This is the only public photo capturing a man from the Kadushin family circle – his brother-in-law Chaim Segal. It might have been taken in January 1942, when Commandant F. Jordan ordered the ghetto inmates to abandon the houses in Vieñožinskio, Strazdelio and Kulvos streets.

visual testimony about a specific community and place. This aspiration comes from the apprehension about the fragility of this existence. Paraphrasing the words of the renowned photography theorist Susan Sontag, photographing means giving significance.⁵³ Everyday life becomes

⁵³ Susan Sontag: *On Photography*. New York, 1977.

important only when you realise that very soon, at any minute, it can irreversibly disappear. As in the case of Mendel Grossmann and Henryk Ross who photographed the Lodz Ghetto,⁵⁴ these photographs show Jews as individuals with a certain degree of freedom of action. In my opinion, the first impulse for photographing is implied on the margins of these photographs – the premonition of an uncertain future, which makes it so important to record everything around you and thus protect it if not against death then against oblivion, possibly without clearly realizing what is going on in front of the camera at a given moment, and why.

From the stories told by Kadushin himself, Kruk and others, of course, assessing them with caution, we can try to recreate the technical subtleties and circumstances of photographing. It is often emphasised in literature that Kadushin took photos secretly, having built himself a perfect camera whose lens was hidden in a buttonhole of his overcoat and the shutter was operated by a button in his pocket.⁵⁵ Actually, some of the shots with a lowered or tilted perspective and black edges betray secret photographing, both through a buttonhole and from behind the windows or corners of buildings. However, there is another part of the photographs that look quite traditional. Kadushin used a compact Leica camera which could be installed in a heavy overcoat, and a standard 35 mm film. He used to buy films from Lithuanians in the city or would steal them together with chemicals for developing films from the German hospital where he worked. Of course, the Jewish police helped him in illegally acquiring materials and bringing them to the ghetto, especially at the gate. True, once Kadushin was caught with a film, severely beaten, but released. It is not known what excuses he gave about carrying the film.⁵⁶ He developed photographs in his small kitchenette at night, and also, whenever necessary, would load a new film because he always had his camera ready when walking around the ghetto; he did not carry the camera outside its territory.⁵⁷ Kadushin would also give some photos to

⁵⁴ Löw: *Documenting...*, 387–404.

⁵⁵ E.g.: *Hidden History...*, 55, or Littman: *War Criminal...*, 102.

⁵⁶ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie...*, 221.

a Lithuanian acquaintance, also an amateur photographer in the city, to be developed.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, no data is available about this person at the moment.

At first the photographer hid the developed negatives in empty milk bottles, having sealed them with wax and having lowered them to the bottom of a dried up well in the ghetto. Later, fearing that the place was not safe enough, he buried the bottles in different places.⁵⁹ Most likely the ghetto police and unknown Lithuanian friends helped him to hide the negatives. Finally, Kadushin took all his photographic equipment to the hideout in the Ruzgys house. He unearthed the negatives from the hiding places after the Red Army had invaded Kaunas.⁶⁰

An interview with Kadushin reveals another contradictory aspect of his photographing, which is omitted in historiography, but which he himself brought up most frequently. Only a small minority of the large community of people forcefully settled in the ghetto knew the photographer personally. Making use of his “Aryan” appearance, Kadushin, in his own words, pretended to be a civil German official – wearing a long leather coat, polished high boots, and a peaked cap, and having hired a coachman, he took photographs openly from the carriage in the ghetto streets. This might have been a single occasion, but Kadushin stressed it with the intention to create an image of himself as a fearless person. Some photos are indeed taken from a high angle perspective, while in other cases, it is more difficult to decide. Can it be said in such cases that the photographs show a unique Jewish perspective? If the photographed people thought that they were in the presence of a Nazi official, hence, a perpetrator, how do these photos differ from those taken by the Nazis in other ghettos? These and similar questions still remain open.

In some of the photos people are clearly posing and gaze bravely at the camera and, through the camera, at us. Though the photographer mentioned that sometimes he instructed the photographed people to

⁵⁸ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Kruk: *Lautlose Schreie...*, 222.

⁶⁰ Cohen: *Jewish Ghetto...*, 91–93.

smile or stand in a certain pose,⁶¹ at the same time these photos show the ghetto Jews as active figures seeking to leave behind a memory about themselves and thus to resist the threat of passing into oblivion. Some cases of people asking Kadushin to take a photo of their family are recorded.⁶² A similar situation is known to have existed in the Lodz Ghetto where, according to testimonies, inmates were obsessed with preserving the memory and a photographer was welcome everywhere with eagerness to become engaged in the process.⁶³ The absolute majority of people who lived and perished in the ghettos did not leave any written documents, and today Kadushin's photographs are the only tangible proof of their existence. When we meet the piercing gaze of a prisoner of the Kaunas Ghetto, we fulfil his/her actively expressed will – to be remembered in the way he/she himself/herself wanted it.

Another feature characteristic of all photographs is the lack of references to the private life of Kadushin himself. He did not photograph the members of his family, his living environment, or his place of work, though photographic portraits of other families in their homes can be found in the archives. The woman with whom Grisha lived in the ghetto, Raya Kruk, had to choose a photograph of another girl for the cover of her memoirs since he never photographed her. Kadushin's brother-in-law Chaim Segalis was recognised in the only photo among the ghetto inmates carrying some parcels outside in winter. During a video interview, his son Izia showed a photo of himself from the years of his life in the Kaunas Ghetto.⁶⁴ However, the picture remained in the family album and did not appear either in archives or museums. One of the possible explanations can be Kadushin's conscious adoption of the perspective of a passive observer, seeking to create an impression of an objective photo document. This might also have been determined by practical

⁶¹ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, *op. cit.*

⁶² For example, Shraga Wainer asked Kadushin to take a picture of his little nephews Emanuel and Avram Rosenthal. Photo with a description is available at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1035323> (06.11.2019).

⁶³ Löw: *Documenting...*, 387–404

⁶⁴ Oral history interview with Itskhak Segalis by Ilja Lempertas, *op. cit.*



Jewish police direct people to the assembly area in the Kovno Ghetto during a deportation action to Estonia. Photographer George Kadish captioned the photo “Transfer to Nowhere”. Kaunas, October 26, 1943. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

The photographer’s shadow is visible on the right, and the perspective betrays his position above his subjects. Kadushin himself has mentioned that thanks to his “Aryan” appearance, he often pretended to be a German officer in civilian clothes, wearing a long leather coat, polished knee-high boots, and a fashionable hat with a spout. He would take a carriage, so-called “droshky”, and sitting there, would openly photograph street life in the ghetto.

considerations: should the photos get into the hands of Nazi officials, it would be impossible to identify their author from the images only. Led by similar motives, the policemen who wrote a secret history of the Kaunas Ghetto did not indicate their authorship and did not mention



Portrait of two young boys wearing Jewish badges in the Kovno Ghetto taken shortly before their round-up in the March 1944 “Children’s Action”. Pictured are Avram (5 years) and Emanuel Rosenthal (2 years). Emanuel was born in the Kovno Ghetto. The children, who were deported in the March 1944 “Children’s Action”, did not survive. Their uncle, Shraga Wainer, who had asked George Kadish to take this photograph, received a copy of it from the photographer after the war in the Landsberg displaced persons camp. Kaunas, February 1944. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

Over time, the photo gained iconic status and was used for the covers of books on different subjects, such as: *Life in the Ghettos during the Holocaust*, ed. by Eric J. Sterling (2005), Ryan Jenkins, *Surviving the Holocaust: The Tales of Survivors and Victims* (2014); *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, ed. by Dan Stone (2012).

the underground activity.⁶⁵ Some people, however, found their own perpetuation more important than possible deadly consequences. In any case, Kadushin's perspective shows a wish to embrace and preserve the view of the ghetto as a socio-cultural construct rather than to convey his personal experience. It singles his work out from the personal narratives of the Kaunas Ghetto – both diaries written at that time and later memoirs where history is told through the prism of the individual experience of the authors of these texts.

Preservation of memory

There were quite several inmates among the Jews of the Kaunas Ghetto who took pictures, and it is worth making a small but significant digression to introduce them. The USHMM archive holds seven group photographic portraits of the members of the Zionist youth underground movement Irgun Brit Zion⁶⁶ that operated in the Kaunas Ghetto. They were handed over to the institution by the ghetto survivors and their relatives. For example, while living in the ghetto, a member of IBZ, Hana Zippora Trozki, used to glue photographs in her diary. She hid the diary, and was killed during the liquidation of the ghetto. After the war, her sister found these diaries; however, for the fear of keeping this authentic material in her possession, she burned down the diaries and kept only the photographs.⁶⁷ The square format of the photos, which is utterly uncharacteristic of Kadushin, and his questionable relation with the IBZ movement raises doubts if those photographs were taken by him – most likely, they were taken by some member of the IBZ.

⁶⁵ Samuel D. Kassow: Introduction, *The Clandestine History of the Kovno Jewish Ghetto Police*, Anonymous members of the Kovno Jewish Ghetto Police. Indiana University Press, 2014, i-xvii.

⁶⁶ Irgun Brit Zion was established during the first years of the Soviet occupation as a response to restrictions imposed by the authorities on the Hebrew culture. It was a more or less centrist Zionist movement. For more, see Laura Weinrib, *Nitzotz: The Spark of Resistance in Kovno Ghetto and Dachau-Kaufering Concentration Camp*. Syracuse University Press, 2009.2009 Photo prints donated to USHMM by Sara Trozki Koper and Shlomo Shafir, available at <https://bit.ly/2UCNVIA> and <https://bit.ly/2JbOY1o> (06.11.2019).

⁶⁷ This information with a photo description is included in USHMM Collection; <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn515475> (06.11.2019).

The former partisan Eliezer Zilber who later worked in Soviet Kaunas as a historian-archivist, spoke about the Jews who took pictures in the Kaunas Ghetto in an interview given to the Yad Vashem Museum. Besides Kadushin, he mentioned Chaim David Ratner,⁶⁸ who belonged to the leadership of the communist underground and was infiltrated in the ghetto police. During the interwar period, he earned his living as a professional photographer, and perished in an unsuccessful partisan operation in the woods at the beginning of 1944. According to Zilber, while living in the ghetto, Ratner took many photographs because, while carrying out police duties, he could walk freely in the territory at any time and capture important events. After the war, many of his photographs were found and placed at the disposal of Zilber as an employee of the archive.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, until today, any images attributed to Ratner could not be found in Lithuanian archives or museums. However, the Lithuanian State Central Archives hold a collection of ten photographs of small format (6 × 9 cm)⁷⁰ that could be related to Ratner. Though the content of four photographs depicting brigades of Jewish workers at the gate is highly characteristic of Kadushin, no other photos by him represent underground activities, while here we see a secret library and a school to which Ratner, as a member of an underground organisation, had access. Moreover, public execution of the captured fugitive Nahum Mek⁷¹ shown in two photographs corresponds with the narration presented in Wulf Mishelski's memoirs:

⁶⁸ Oral history interview with Eliezyer Zilber by Nathan Beyrak, video recording, 1993, USHMM Collection; <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn502924> (06.11.2019).

⁶⁹ Unfortunately, it is unclear what photographs were discovered and under what circumstances it happened. Judging from the context of the narrative, the photographs along with other documents of the Kaunas Ghetto were discovered in 1963, after construction works had been started in the territory of the former ghetto. Oral history interview with Eliezyer Zilber by Nathan Beyrak, op. cit.

⁷⁰ This collection of ten pictures was acquired from the Institute of the History of Lithuanian Communist Party in 1992; provenance unknown. Photograph no. P42750-P42759, Photo documents division of the Lithuanian Central State Archives, Vilnius.

⁷¹ Nahum Meck was the only Jew hanged in the Kovno Ghetto. He was publicly executed after he had fired a gun into the air when caught trying to escape from the ghetto in November, 1942. The Germans ordered the Jewish Ghetto Police to hang Meck in the public square next to the

Late in the night we heard steps on the stairs, or were our nerves so strained that we were imagining things? But suddenly there was a knock on the door. We almost fainted. With a cold sweat on my forehead, I opened the door. There stood a Jewish policeman from the ghetto. "Don't get alarmed," he said, "can you keep a secret?" "Yes," I said, "what is it?" "Remember," he said, "if anybody finds out about this, we both and all the members of our families will be in deep trouble." I started to shiver. Through the window I saw the brightly lit body swaying on the gallows, and next to me, a ghost, a stranger with a mysterious threat. Without answering my question, he took out a hidden camera from under his coat and snapped a few pictures through the window. Merely the possession of a camera was a sufficient reason to be shot, let alone taking a picture of the gallows. But before I had a chance to say another word, he disappeared.⁷²

Though the atmosphere of late evening was most likely dictated by the emotional memory of the author, the figure of a Jewish policeman is reminiscent of Ratner rather than Kadushin. The contours of the window through which the photo was taken are also clearly seen in the photograph. Other nine photographs by Ratner found their way to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) thanks to his comrade Moshe Musel's wife. Photo portraits of Musel's relatives sitting by the window comprise a series; there is another series of photo portraits of the closest brothers-in-arms of the communist ghetto underground.⁷³ Hence, though all the photographs showing the communist underground of the Kaunas Ghetto⁷⁴ can be unmistakably attributed to Ratner, the nature of his other photographs remains unclear. Zilber mentions that the underground communists Moshe Sherman and Icik Vainer also took pictures, but he does not give more information about this matter.

Jewish Council building and to leave his body for twenty-four hours as deterrence against future acts of resistance. See Dov Levin, Zvie A. Brown: *The Story of an Underground: The Resistance of the Jews of Kovno in the Second World War*. Jerusalem: Gefen Books, 2014, 226–227.

⁷² William W. Mishell: *Kaddish for Kovno: Life and Death in a Lithuanian Ghetto, 1941–1945*. Chicago Review Press, 1999, 140–141.

⁷³ USHMM collection, courtesy of Pola Musel, available at <https://bit.ly/2Uzmyss> (06.11.2019).

⁷⁴ Held mainly in the Ghetto Fighters House archive; <http://infocenters.co.il/gfh/search.asp?lang=ENG> (06.11.2019).



Public Execution of Nahum Mek in the Kaunas Ghetto, Democrats Square.

November 15, 1942. The frame of the window through which the photo was taken is seen on the right. Photographed on a 6 × 9 cm plate, the presumed author of the photo is Chaim David Ratner.

Originally the photo belonged to the archive of the Institute of the Communist Party in Vilnius, its original caption was: *Public execution in Kaunas Jewish Ghetto in Viliampolė. Ghetto residents are forced to watch the hanging of a Jew who has found a revolver in his pocket. Ghetto buildings are seen in the distance. Kaunas, 1942.* Lithuanian Central State Archives, The Department of the Photo Documents, inv. no. P 42759

The collection of photographs gifted by Golub-Tory to Yad Vashem also raises many questions. Some of them, though unidentified, are recognised as taken by Kadushin; besides, the collection also includes many other images.⁷⁵ Neither in his diary nor in his later interview does Tori mention his activity as a photographer; however, the content of

⁷⁵ Golub-Tory gifted a total of 315 photographs to the museum, including 161 related to the Kaunas Ghetto; some views are repetitive. Available at Yad Vashem Photo Archive; <http://bit.do/avraham-tory> (06.11.2019).

the photographs does not leave any doubt that they were taken either by him or by someone else from the Council of Elders. The subjects of the photographs are very specific – apart from group portraits of the members of the Council of Elders and the employees of the Secretariat in their offices, there are as many as six photos of Golub's partner and wife-to-be, Pnina Sheinson, and another five photos show the couple together. Alongside, there are photographs capturing life in the Kaunas Ghetto, which cannot be found in any of Kadushin's collections.

Since all of the above-mentioned archives, in addition to the photographs gifted by Kadushin himself, contain images from the Kaunas Ghetto whose provenance is unclear, they cannot all be blindly attributed to one author knowing that there were other authors too. This is, however, more than just a problem of primary source analysis. It was not only photographers who were engaged in visual documentation of the Kaunas Ghetto. Today, four artists of the Kaunas Ghetto who left their paintings and drawings are known. Three of them worked in the so-called Art Workshop,⁷⁶ and all four of them fulfilled the order of the Council of Elders to document the life of the Kaunas Ghetto with visual material, supplementing the archive built up by that institution, consisting of administrative documents, statistics, plans, drawings and, most importantly, the diary of Secretary of the Council Golub-Tori.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The workshop was founded and headed by the professional graphic designer, German Jew Peter Gadiel, who arrived in Kaunas in 1940. He was in charge of designing all emblems, posters and other symbols used in the ghetto, and thought that the aesthetic environment had a positive effect on the mental health of the ghetto inmates. For more see Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, *Through the Eyes of the Witnesses: Visual Evidence of Ghetto Life in Vilnius and Kaunas during World War II*, report delivered at the conference *Art and Holocaust: Reflections for the Common Future in Riga*, 02.07.2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw-oD2mhXzk> (19:01.2022).

⁷⁷ At first, the professional historian Israel Kaplan was secretly entrusted with writing a chronicle of the ghetto; however, in February 1942, he was deported to Riga by mistake, and his chronicle disappeared. He survived the war and spent first post-war years in a DP camp; in 1948, still in the camp, he edited the periodical publication *Fun Letstn Hurbn* [From the Last Extermination], which is considered one of the earliest collections of texts about the history of the Holocaust. In his lifetime, Kaplan remained an active writer and was also known as an editor. For more, see Eilati Shalom: *Crossing the River*. The University of Alabama Press, 2008, 58–63, and the description of *Studio portrait of Israel Kaplan and Leah Greenstein taken shortly around their*

The painter Esther Lurie who was famous already before the war painted watercolours and drew in Indian ink, at first scenes representing confusion in her own environment, and later, important events for the whole ghetto; she conveyed the suffering of Jews in scenes filled with blood-curdling emptiness. Jacob Lifschitz drew both street scenes and portraits; he tried to capture the atmosphere of disarray that prevailed in the ghetto and the bewildered faces of the Jews. Josef Schliesinger drew mainly portraits of the ghetto administration, policemen⁷⁸ and other professionals. Nolik Schmidt who found himself in the ghetto as a pupil left a single drawing – a dramatic scene of relocation of Jews.⁷⁹ All these people worked together and had an advantage first of all in the sense that they could represent important events which were too dangerous to be captured directly with a camera, for example, different actions carried out by Nazi officials and Lithuanian units of the auxiliary police. Also, artistic means allowed conveying the mood and emotions more powerfully, though to the detriment of certain authentic details. However, it is hardly productive to counterpose the drawings and the photographs created in the Kaunas Ghetto trying to decide which are better because they give answers to different questions. A hardline positivist historian would choose the photographs as more precise sources of factual information, while a researcher of culture might find original artistic representations more interesting.

The historian Gerhard Paul, an active promoter of research on visual history, has offered the term *Bildakt* (image act) presented by the German art critic Horst Bredekamp to define these and similar initiatives

wedding day, photograph number 78499, USHMM collection, courtesy of Shalom Eilati; <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pai173905> (06.11.2019).

⁷⁸ Some of the original portraits of the Kaunas Ghetto policemen are held among the Records of *Žydu geto policija* [Jewish Ghetto Police; Jüdische Ghetto Polizei] in the Lithuanian Central State Archives: LCVA, f. R-973, ap. 2, b. 83, l. 1–21. I am very grateful to Dr. Nerijus Šepetyš for this information and his help on my work preparing this article.

⁷⁹ For more about the Kaunas Ghetto artists, their work and fate, see *Hidden History...*, 168–171. The manuscript of the report by Dr. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, *Through the Eyes of the Witnesses: Visual Evidence of Ghetto Life in Vilnius and Kaunas During World War II*, delivered at the conference *Art and Holocaust: Reflections for the Common Future in Riga*, 02.07.2019, also provided a lot of useful information. Cf. also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw-oD2mhXzk> (19.01.2022).

of visualization. The essence of the *Bildakt* concept is that sometimes the act of creating a view *per se* is not a less important historical event than the content of the view.⁸⁰ All the views created by Jews during the Holocaust are included in this category because no matter what internal or external impulses they had, the picking up of a pencil, a brush or a camera in itself was already an important act of resistance. According to the historian Andrea Löw who wrote about the Lodz Ghetto, resistance manifested itself by not allowing the Nazis to take complete control of the way Jews will be remembered.⁸¹ The photography theorist David Bates also asserted that in the long history of civilisation, the ability to capture and to characterise events and persons undoubtedly was and still is an expression of social power.⁸² In the context of the Holocaust, it was one of the possible forms of resistance for Jews in general. Visual documentation took its place alongside other more abundant written initiatives of memory preservation, be it a collective project like an archive built by the Council of Elders and the chronicle of the Kaunas Ghetto Police, or a personal diary like the one Herman Kruk kept in the Vilnius Ghetto. It was quite often that ghetto councils accumulated and properly maintained historical archives of various nature because they felt the duty, in Golub-Tori's words, "to remember and record the events, people and forms, views and moments, orally and in writing, in clay and in drawing, in any place and in any possible way."⁸³ Initiatives of memory preservation and transmission on a personal or collective level could be found in almost every ghetto of Nazi-occupied Europe.⁸⁴

Though visual representations created with different techniques can be studied referring to similar principles, specific mechanics of

⁸⁰ Gerhard Paul: Visual History, 2011, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*; http://docupedia.de/zg/_visual_history_v1_en_2011 (06.11.2019).

⁸¹ Löw: Documenting..., 388.

⁸² Bate: The Memory of Photography, *Photographies* 2 (2010, vol. 3), 248; <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2010.499609> (06.11.2019).

⁸³ Tory: *Surviving...*, 442.

⁸⁴ The best known case is the Warsaw Ghetto archive; for more see Samuel D. Kassow: *Who Will Write Our History?: Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*. London: Penguin Books, 2009.

photography raises it a notch higher in the hierarchy of historical sources. While works of art, graphics or sculpture yield completely to the artist's control, views that have not been intended by the photographer can get into a photograph and bring in new meanings.⁸⁵ The uniqueness of the photographic legacy of the Kaunas Ghetto is even greater if we take into account the fact that not only Kadushin but also other Jews who were not directly related to each other photographed the same ghetto. It is a big advantage. In the world where the visual history of the Holocaust is told mainly through photographs taken by the Nazis, the authors of all known visual representations of the Kaunas Ghetto are Jews.

As a historical source, Kadushin's photographs inevitably have to be compared to the history written by the Jewish Ghetto Police,⁸⁶ which also reflects the perception of the described period of 1942–1943, as the authors of that history were killed before the end of the war and could not re-interpret their text retrospectively. In the introduction they clearly state that they were encouraged to write the history of the ghetto not only by the need to record the horrible events, but also by the feeling that the entire ghetto population was on the verge of extinction.⁸⁷ The structure of this history sometimes follows a similar logic to that of Kadushin's photos – instead of a linear narrative of events, certain aspects of the life in the ghetto are explained, separate micro-studies of the material conditions, social inequality, morality, principles of the activity of the institutions, and the role of separate individuals are described.

The link between these two historical sources might not be accidental. Yehuda Zupovitz who worked in the Jewish police is usually mentioned to have helped Kadushin to hide photographs. They became acquainted during the period of Lithuania's independence, in the 1930s,

⁸⁵ Ulrich Baer: *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma*. The MIT Press, 2002, 127–177.

⁸⁶ The manuscript is held in the Lithuanian Central State Archives: LCVA, f. R-973, ap. 2, b. 18.

⁸⁷ According to the Jewish historian Dalia Ofer, policemen were well aware of the final solution. See Dalia Ofer: *Through the Lens of a Contemporary Historian: The History of the Jewish Police in the Kovno Ghetto Written in the Ghetto (1943), Ethics, Art, and Representations of the Holocaust*, ed. by Simone Gigliotti, Jacob Golomb, Caroline Steinberg-Gould. Lexington Books, 2014, 238.

when they both studied engineering at Vytautas Magnus University and belonged to the same Beitar Zionist youth movement. After the Kaunas Ghetto had been established, Zupovitz volunteered to work as a policeman and eventually was promoted to deputy police chief. At the same time, together with other heads of the Police, Chief Moshe Levin and Ika Grinberg, he played an active role in the underground, saving members of secret organisations, training partisans leaving for the forest, etc. Moreover, almost without doubt Zupovitz and Grinberg were among the authors of the secret history of the Kaunas Ghetto Police. According to the testimonies of Zupovitz's wife Dita, it was he who urged his friend Grisha to document the ghetto with his camera and in this way leave visual testimonies to the future generations.⁸⁸ Thus, Kadushin's photographs can be interpreted also as the visual part of the history of the ghetto written by the policemen. In part, it can be seen from the photographs themselves, because no other institution of the ghetto received so much attention from the photographer as the police. In their offices, in the street, in prison, even at home, policemen posed to Kadushin and in many cases confirmed their voluntary involvement by looking directly at the lens. In March 1944, Zupovitz, together with thirty other ghetto policemen, was killed during the action of policemen's liquidation. According to the witnesses, during the policemen's interrogation, the Gestapo was interested not only in the hiding places of the members of the underground, but also in the whereabouts of the photographer and his negatives.⁸⁹ Most probably Kadushin took photos of both what seemed important to him and what could be used to illustrate the policemen's activities. The first photographs were recorded at the end of June 1941, when neither the ghetto nor its police existed, and later their contents did not exactly coincide with the written text.

⁸⁸ Testimony of Dita Zupovitz is available in the description of *Deputy Police Chief Yehuda Zupovitz poses with his wife, Dita, in their apartment in the Kovno Ghetto two weeks before his arrest*, photograph no. 09112A, USHMM collection, courtesy of Yehudit Katz Sperling. See <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/par094953> (06.11.2019).

⁸⁹ Levin, Brown: *The Story...*, 403–404.

Authenticity

Misleading captions of the photographs make the study of Kadushin's photo archive really complicated. This is especially obvious in researching the collection of the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, Beit Hatfutsot. Kadushin donated more than seven hundred photographs and negatives to this museum, 140 of which were related to the Kaunas Ghetto, and the remaining ones represented the post-war period in DP camps in Germany or were collected from other sources by the photographer. Photos of the Kaunas Ghetto undoubtedly are very interesting; however, the provided information is always very scant and sometimes incorrect. For example, there are two photos that clearly represent the same situation; however, one of them is titled "Line at the Public Kitchen, Kovna Ghetto, Lithuania, 1941–44", and the other – "People in Line for Food, Landsberg DP camp, Germany, 1945–46". Since none of the people in the photographs wear yellow stars, one can guess that these are post-war photographs. Further it is indicated that a series of images showing smoke rising above the buildings in Kaunas were made by Kadushin at the end of July 1944, implying that these were the Nazis setting fire to the ghetto being liquidated.⁹⁰ However, an identical picture titled "Aleksotas Warehouses Set on Fire by the Russians" was published in June 1941 in the newspaper *ĮLaisvę* [To Freedom]; hence, it is obvious that this photo was not taken by Kadushin. Another photograph arouses suspicion at first glance already. Its caption is "Distributing Food at the Kovno Ghetto".⁹¹ However, the glossy tins on the shelves or a man on the right wearing Soviet military memorabilia have nothing to do with the reality of the ghetto known from other sources or with other

⁹⁰ View of Smoke Rising from the burning Kovno Ghetto, July 1944, photo Zvi Kadushin, Beth Hatefutsot Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection, Photo Unit no. 122609; <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/view-of-the-burning-kovno-ghetto-afterits-liquidation-lithuania-1944> (06.11.2019).

⁹¹ Distributing Food at the Kovno Ghetto, 1941–1944, photo Zvi Kadushin, Beth Hatefutsot Photo Archive, Zvi Kadushin Collection, Photo Unit no. 48388; <https://dbs.bh.org.il/image/daily-life-at-the-kovno-ghetto-lithuania-1941-44> (06.11.2019).

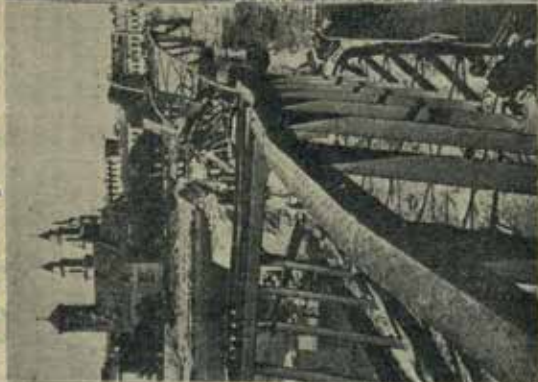
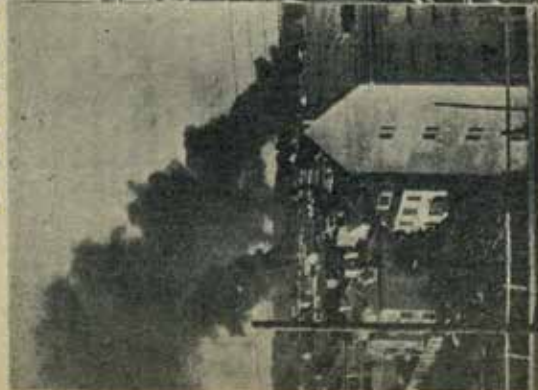


Photo above: *Line at the Public Kitchen, Kovna Ghetto, Lithuania, 1941–1944.* Hundreds received free soup daily in the ghetto. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). Beth Hatefutsoth, Photo Archives, Kadushin Collection, Photo Unit Number 7542

Photo below: *People in Line for Food, Landsberg DC camp, Germany, 1945–1946.* Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). Beth Hatefutsoth, Photo Archives, Kadushin Collection, Unit Number 151274



Besitraukiančių bolševikų palikimas Kaune



18. kadrės i dešine: 1. rusų padėpti Aleksošo sandėliai; 2. rusų susprogdintus Vytauto Didžiojo tiltus; 3. ant tilto žuvusių raudonosių kurticomėnės palatėlių; 4. suskimau lieptu, padarytu per susprogdintą tiltą.

Clipping from the newspaper *Laisvė* (To Freedom; 1941, no. 5, p. 4). The negative of the first photo from the left, along with five more shots from the same series, is held in the Kadushin Collection at the Beit Hartsot Museum in Tel Aviv. It has a caption: View of Smoke Rising from the Burning Kovno Ghetto, Lithuania, July 1944. The same or similar caption is repeated in various publications



Distributing Food at the Kovno Ghetto, Lithuania, 1941–1944. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). Beth Hatefutsoth, Photo Archives, Kadushin Collection, Unit Number 48388

Kadushin also photographed propaganda Soviet scenes in early postwar years. The abundance of goods on the store shelves and a Soviet military order on the chest of the soldier sitting on the right obviously show that the photo was taken after the war. Russian inscriptions can be seen on the packaging of the goods as well. Thus, it is definitely not a shot from the Kaunas Ghetto, but a scene enacted in the autumn or early winter of 1944 or even later, in 1945

photographs taken by Kadushin. It is clearly a photo from Lithuania reoccupied by the Soviets. There are more such examples.

The attempt to get in touch with the museum and ask if it was Kadushin himself who gave the captions to these photos and if they were verified by archivists did not give any results. Thus far only hypothetical attributions can be offered. One of the possibilities is that Kadushin deliberately lied about the content of some of his photos, perhaps either to create a mesmerizing story or to solidify his heroic narrative. For example, he tells that already having escaped from the ghetto, at the risk of his life, he photographed arson attacks in the territory during the liquidation

of the ghetto from a distance.⁹² In this case, the photographs discussed become a proof of his brave act which might not have happened at all. Or it might have been merely a mistake of the institution. Or it might have been both. In any case, the result is the same – some photographs leave imprints in our historical memory of the views of the Kaunas Ghetto, which actually never existed. Instead of the declared authentic historical reality, we receive fake substitutes. Moreover, the largest depositories of the Holocaust iconography – the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Israel and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – took over the copies of these images along with erroneous captions, and the vicious circle continues. Of course, in-depth research would put everything into place; however, thus far it has not been carried out.

There is a pair of photographs that raises even more inconvenient questions. The first photo has a caption in the Yiddish language: “Jews, Take Revenge” and the other one carries a shorter caption “Revenge”. Both captions are supposedly written with the blood of Jewish victims. According to the different archives where these photographs are held, Zvi Hirsh Kadushin is the author of both of them. Both photos were often used in Holocaust literature by both professional historians and the survivors of the Kaunas Ghetto.⁹³ However, they were never used together in the same publication, with the exception of a rather controversially assessed book by Alex Faitelson⁹⁴ where he raises a question that is also of interest to us: how should we understand the existence of these two similar photographs?

First of all, let us see what stories are related to each of them. Kadushin himself spoke about the first photo at least several times,

⁹² *Hidden History...*, 55.

⁹³ E.g. Michael Berenbaum: *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Boston: John Hopkins University Press, 1993, 92; Leyzer Ran: *Jerusalem of Lithuania Illustrated and Documented*, vol. 2. New York: Volno Album Committee, 1974, 480; also Efroim Oshry: *Hurbm Lite* [The Ruins of Lithuania]. New York, Montreal, 1951, 408.

⁹⁴ Alex Faitelson: *The Truth and Nothing But The Truth: Jewish Resistance in Lithuania*. Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2006, 452–457.



Word “Nekama” (Revenge) written in blood on the door. Kaunas, Ghetto, c. 1944.

Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). Beth Hatefutsot, Photo Archives, Kadushin Collection, Unit Number: 30050

The Yiddish words “Jews Revenge!” scrawled in blood on the apartment floor of a Jew murdered in the Slobodka pogrom. Kaunas, June 26, 1941. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin). United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin)

but he never mentioned the other one. Below is his narration from the interview:

Early on Sunday morning, when the war started at two o'clock in the night, I heard a tremendous yelling and screaming at about 8–9 o'clock in the morning. The neighbour who lived next door was also the owner of the building. I put out my head, heard yelling and screaming. I did not want to go at once because there was too much commotion, too many soldiers around. After the yelling and screaming and crying from a lady stopped, I walked down the staircase, I opened the kitchen door and I saw my neighbour lying on the floor with his arm and finger stretched. Half of his finger was reddish and around his chest was all blood. I saw him picking up some blood from his chest and putting and writing the word *nekama* [revenge] on the floor. I had a feeling that he was writing and talking and telling me: “Revenge. Don't use a gun. Revenge by helping people, advising people and giving them help as much as you can with your camera”.⁹⁵

In this narrative, it is not so much the actual information which, unfortunately, cannot be verified by any sources, but its function that

⁹⁵ Interview with George Kadish by Herb Krosney, op. cit.

counts. This function is very clear – to justify his activity and provide a meaningful starting point in the photographer Kadushin's heroic narrative. A desire for revenge written in blood allegedly inspired Kadushin for heroic deeds and never allowed him to stray from his noble mission. USHMM widely uses an abbreviated version of this story in its publications and on the website; however, in the album devoted to the exhibition of the Kaunas Ghetto, the other photo was chosen to illustrate it.⁹⁶ In 1962, a ghetto partisan, later an Israeli historian Dov Levin, wrote the following about the first photo: "In one of these apartments, Akiva Puchert, before he died, used his finger to write the word 'Revenge' in blood on the wall."⁹⁷ Golub-Tory presented another version below the same image: "Upon entering a room in the ghetto, the photographer Hirsh Kadushin saw a man who was lying in blood and dying of hunger. That man wrote the words 'Jews, take revenge!' with his own blood on the wall."⁹⁸ In the text of his diary, however, he seems to mention the situation related to the second photograph:

Before their death hundreds of thousands of victims of modern dictatorship wrote their testament thereby they begged us not to forget anything. This testament was written with their fingers dipped in blood rather than in ink and in a usual way. There was one word there 'Revenge!' We see this testament on the wall of a house of a Jew in a narrow street in Vilijampolė: the man was lying by the threshold in a pool of his own blood before dying. His last will that was written in blood charges us with the historical duty: to carry the cry of thousands of martyrs 'Revenge!' from one part of the world to another.⁹⁹

It is already a second case when the historical mission of the narrator is justified by the myth written in blood – to preserve and communicate the memory about the Kaunas Ghetto to the world. Several other authors expressed their opinion about one of these photos; however, they did not

⁹⁶ The caption runs as follows: "This photograph of the Yiddish word Nekoma, 'Revenge', written in blood on the door of a murdered Jew in Slobodka, was among the first taken by George Kadish to document the Kovno Ghetto." (*Hidden History...*, 58).

⁹⁷ Levin, Brown: *The Story...*, 57.

⁹⁸ Tory: *Surviving...*, 298.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 442.

include the image itself. Here are two most detailed versions. First by the writer and ghetto partisan Meir Yellin:

Once I was stopped by an acquaintance of mine (in the ghetto) and he asked me to drop in for a minute. His room was terribly small, crammed with furniture, boxes and suitcases. Without uttering a word, he pushed a big box aside and brownish red marks appeared on the wall. At a closer look, I saw that the marks formed letters, which were blurry, broken, discontinuous, forming the word *Nekoma*.¹⁰⁰

Dimitry Gelpern:

Fascists killed the entire family in a flat at 10 Ariogalos street where the metalworker Akiva Puchart lived. For many days after the pogrom, the inscription *Yiden, nekoma!* written in large red-brown letters could be seen on the wall beneath the window. It was written by the head of the family who was lying dead, wounded on the floor, dipping his finger in a puddle of his own blood. I saw that inscription and asked to photograph it. After the war, the photograph was published in many books and displayed in museums.¹⁰¹

A separate research is needed to study the different versions of appearance and contextualisation of the photographs; however, the problematic points remain the same. Could two so dramatic but very similar events have taken place independently of each other, and moreover, at the exact time when a photographer happened to pass by? Would a dying man be physically able to leave such neat inscriptions written in blood? Why did a photographer who had a full film in the camera record only the inscription, but not the body and the surroundings? In all these stories it is almost impossible to distinguish a fact from a myth, a rumour from memory. Generally speaking, both the photographs and the narratives hardly stand to common sense.

In August 1944, Kadushin photographed inscriptions on the walls of the prison cells of the Ninth Fort. One of them reads: “Hirsh

¹⁰⁰ Meir Yelin: *Blut un yofn* [Blood and Arms]. Tel Aviv: ha-Menorah, 1978, 19.

¹⁰¹ Дмитрий Гельперн: Еврейское сопротивление в годы гитлеровской оккупации Литвы (1941–1944) [Jewish resistance during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania (1941–1944)], *Žydų muziejus*, vol. 1, ed. by Jevsejus Ceitlinas. Vilnius: Valstybinis Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejus, 1994, 86.

Burstein was brought here July 7, 44. We are burning bodies and awaiting death. Brothers, Revenge! We are dying courageously for the people.”¹⁰² Perhaps this or similar inscription could have inspired the story of a call for revenge written in blood? Or perhaps Kadushin first heard the story of Akiv Puchart¹⁰³ which became a part of the ghetto mythology, and then tried to recreate a similar inscription, which would make both of these photographs partly falsified? Actually, there is not a single fact that would allow to make a conclusion that they are genuine; on the contrary, everything that we know about them raises doubts.

Alternative routes

Kaunas Jews who survived the catastrophe actively used photographs to illustrate their personal narratives. The existence of photographs as if proved the authenticity of their narrative, and among the abundant images everyone could find a detail that they needed – a person, a building, a street, an action, or a feeling. As early as 1948, Josef Gar and in 1951, Ephraim Oshry¹⁰⁴ used Kadushin’s photos to illustrate their memoirs, and after the photographs found their way to museums and became more widely accessible, this tendency intensified. For example, almost all Kadushin’s photographs held in USHMM are supplied with commentaries of the Kaunas Ghetto inmate Solly Ganor (Zalke Genkind). In this way, each image is enriched with new contextual meanings arising from the information provided by witnesses, which was not necessarily known to the photographer. Did Kadushin take pictures

¹⁰² *Messages scrawled by Jewish prisoners shortly before their execution on a wall of Fort IX*, photograph no. 81147, USHMM collection, courtesy of George Kadish/Zvi Kadushin; <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa11922> (07.11.2019).

¹⁰³ It is a true that the thirty-year old metalworker Akiva Puchartas lived in Vilijampolė with his wife. According to the testimony of Puchart’s sister-in-law, he was killed in 1941; however, the circumstances are not specified. See Akiwa Pochart, *Yad Vashem – Pages of Testimony Names Memorial Collection*; <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/nameDetails.html?language=en&itemId=537025> (06.11.2019).

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Gar: *Umikum Fun der Yidisher Kovne* [The Extermination of the Jewish Kovne]. Munich: Farband fun Litvishe Yidn, 1948; Oshry: *Hurbm...*

of the ghetto's pharmacy because one of the employees secretly kept a radio set in the cellar? Did he know that a member of the communist underground was standing behind a coachman? In general terms, these inscriptions imply that the photographs of the Kaunas Ghetto became separated from their author and got into the field of collective memory. Though the narratives vary and change depending on the narrator's experience, generally it is not difficult to notice that photographs, first and foremost, play the role of proof in these narratives. Their existence alone is a sufficient confirmation that the narrator speaks the truth. By adding corresponding captions, the author or a publisher (it is not always clear who is responsible for illustrations) can convey whatever meaning is necessary. This reciprocal relation between image and text creates a suggestive effect of direct participation for the reader. According to Catherine Gong, Kadushin's photos together with the text speak about the same moments and places, the same people and their life. That dialogue creates a specific experience of being there and now, which was unfamiliar to her before.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the most obvious and powerful example of such a dialogue is two photographs published in a memoir-type book about the Ipson family. The main narrator Eta Butrimowitz-Ipson gives a totally different meaning to the images with her commentaries. The photograph shows a group of people carrying their belongings next to a barbed wire fence. Knowing the historical context of the Kaunas Ghetto, it is easy to guess that it is one of the deportations, the group will be soon taken to Latvia or Estonia and most likely all of them will perish. But who could guess from the image alone that the woman with a kid standing next to a wooden fence pole will soon meet an acquaintance, a ghetto policeman, who will drag them by force from the line and thus save them? Only the woman's father and mother will stay in the line, and some decades later Eta will come across another photo, from which Chananya Butrimowitz will stare at his daughter several minutes before leaving for Riga. It will be the last photo

¹⁰⁵ Gong: *George's Kaddish...*



A group of Jews is gathered at an assembly point in the Kovno Ghetto during a deportation action. Kaunas, October, 1943. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

A woman with a boy next to a wooden fence pole is Etta Butrimowitz-Ipp with Jacob Ipp, waiting for deportation to Riga. In a few minutes, a familiar ghetto policeman will pull them out of the line, saving their lives.

of her father whom, after she was dragged out of the line, she never saw again and always felt guilt.¹⁰⁶

More emotional reactions have been recorded after the survivors and their relatives recognised themselves in the photos several decades later. For example, after her visit to Kadushin's exhibition in Israel in 1986, Rina Joels said:

¹⁰⁶ Nancy Wright-Beasley: *Izzy's Fire: Finding Humanity in the Holocaust*. Richmond: Brunswick Publishing, 2005.



Jews in the Kovno Ghetto are boarded onto trucks during a deportation action to Estonia. Kaunas, October 26, 1942. Photo by George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Kadish (Zvi Kadushin).

According to Etta Butrimowitz-Ipp, the man in the centre of the photo who is standing at the edge of the crowd of the deportees to Riga and looking at the lens of camera is her father Chananya Butrimowitz. This is the last photo of him alive.

To my delight and astonishment we discovered several photographs of my relatives on the walls of the museum: my father, my mother, my aunt and myself with my sister. I treasure these photographs as the only precious memento I have of my father and mother from that time, all that is left from that childhood ruined by the war.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Rina Joels-Parason: There's a Yellow Dog Running By, *Smuggled in Potato Sacks: Fifty Stories of the Hidden Children of the Kaunas Ghetto*, ed. by Solomon Abramovich, Yakov Zilberg. London, Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011, 297–300.

Or Rona Liptzin after her visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1988:

In my wildest dreams, I could never have imagined this scenario. I hoped I would be lucky enough to see a picture of her. It would make her story real. I never dreamed I would see a full-sized picture of my mother in the museum. I stood there and stared right back at her. I stood there frozen in a particular space and time. I no longer noticed anything or anyone around me and forgot I was in the museum. I was in Kovno – and it was 1941.¹⁰⁸

In an interview, a resident of Kaunas Abe Reznick showed a photo in which he recognised himself at the ghetto gate:

This is a very unique picture. [...] It happened to be that I found myself by recognizing the police officer that is right in front by the name of Aronstam who used to rough me up quite a few times. And looking at him, I found that I am part of this picture. And it was remarkable that I also found the photographer, George Kadish, who lives in Hollywood and who had the original. And he was able to offer me the picture with an inscription, very graciously, about this incredible event.¹⁰⁹

In some cases, the photographs even altered the perception, as, for example, is shown by Kama Ginkas who was taken away from the ghetto as a one or two year old child:

In this photo you see young women on the shore in their bathing suits; people continued to live their lives. They continued to love one another. They tried to dress well. They raised their children. They prayed. They made plans for a better life: they sought to remain human in inhuman conditions. This was a stunning revelation to me. Because long into my adult years I imagined the ghetto as a horrendous place where people, crushed in spirit, did nothing except sit and tremble and wait for death. Of course they were crushed in spirit. But they lived their lives.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ J. Correspondent: Woman finds mom in a museum photo, *Jweekly*, 11.09.1998; <https://www.jweekly.com/1998/09/11/woman-finds-mom-in-a-museum-photo/> (07.11.2019).

¹⁰⁹ Oral history interview with Abraham Resnick, 1995-03-31, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive; <http://vha.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=1836&returnIndex=0#> (07.11.2019).

¹¹⁰ Kama Ginkas: Kamočka, Come with Your Whole Family and I Will Shelter You Again, *Smuggled in Potato Sacks...*, 383-402.

Thus, even for those who did not write memoirs, Kadushin's photographs served as the only tangible memory of their own traumatic experience and of their family members who perished, and as an actualization of the stories told by their parents and relatives. For those who wrote down their narratives, they served as a proof of authenticity. At the same time, the photographed people who later recognised themselves in these photos expanded the field of the meanings of specific images with narratives which were not familiar to the photographer. Ulrich Baer wrote about "ghostly" photos – photos in which moments not necessarily registered in the consciousness of the subject have been mechanically captured.¹¹¹ In the case of Eta Ipson, two ghosts were combined – a photograph that captured the subject in time but remained silent about the next moment, and the subject remembering the next moment but unaware of being captured in a photograph. This union is meaningful at least in two aspects – the subject receives confirmation about the validity of her experience, and the spectators receive an answer to the question what happened later, even though that answer is unexpected. Such cases are extremely rare in history and are always amazing.

As was already mentioned, Kadushin took his negatives out of Lithuania, but prints of some of the photographs remained in the local archives and museums. Today, the majority of them are held in the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History (24 items) and the Lithuanian Central State Archives (18 items);¹¹² the imprints on the back of the photographs testify that they were originally held in the Vilnius Jewish Museum that operated in 1944–1949. No information is available about how these photographs appeared in the museum; however, there is a strong possibility that Kadushin himself donated them to the museum before leaving, i.e., in 1944–1945, when the bulk of the museum's collections was formed.

¹¹¹ Baer: *Spectral Evidence...*, 8.

¹¹² In the case of the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History, photographs are dispersed, and in the Lithuanian Central State Archives, they are collected in an album, which the archives obtained in 1988 in an unspecified way: albumas *Vilniaus ir Kauno getai vokiečių okupacijos metais. Vilniaus ir Kauno miestų vaizdai* [Vilnius and Kaunas Ghettos During the German Occupation. Views of Vilnius and Kaunas], [1941–1944], LCVA, A081.

After the Soviet authorities liquidated the institution, photographs and some other exhibits were transferred to the State Museum of Revolution and History of the Lithuanian SSR,¹¹³ and some of them were used in exhibitions and publications. Prior to that, having taken into account the negative attitude of the Soviet authorities to the Jewish legacy, the former inmates of the Vilnius Ghetto, rescuers of cultural treasures and employees of the post-war Jewish Museum, Szmerke Kacerginski and Abraham Sutzkever,¹¹⁴ illegally took away twenty negatives and positives together with other important documents. The topic of the Holocaust was avoided during the years of Soviet Lithuania, and narratives about the persecution of the Jews were included in the general narrative about the crimes committed by the “Hitlerite fascists” against the Soviet citizens. There, the story of the Kaunas Ghetto served as a background for the activity of pro-Soviet underground fighters whose Jewish origin was given secondary importance. In this case, as, for example, in the book about the Kaunas Ghetto¹¹⁵ published in 1969, Kadushin’s photographs were used to convey the dire living conditions in the ghetto, thus illustrating the Nazi atrocities and highlighting the heroism of Soviet underground fighters. The identity of the author of the photographs who had fled to the West was erased; sometimes, the pictures were falsely attributed to the members of the underground themselves.¹¹⁶ The captions given to

¹¹³ The Jewish Museum in Vilnius was founded in the autumn of 1944 on the initiative of Jewish survivors, and was closed down in 1949, in the midst of the Stalinist anti-Semitic campaign. See Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė: Žydų muziejus Vilniuje: pirmieji bandymai įprasinti trauminę patirtį ir skatinti tvarią atmintį [The Jewish Museum in Vilnius: The First Attempts to Give Meaning to Traumatic Experience and Promote Sustainable Memory], *Knygotyra* 71 (2018), 130–160; <https://doi.org/10.15388/Knygotyra.2018.71.6> (07.11.2019).

¹¹⁴ At present, the photographs and the negatives are held in YIVO archives in New York, The Abraham Sutzkever-Szmerke Kacerginski Collection, RG 223. For more about the transferring the material from the Vilnius Jewish Museum, see David E. Fishman: *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis*. ForeEdge, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Mejeris Eglinis-Elinas, Dimitrijus Gelpernas: *Kauno getas ir jo kovotojai* [The Kaunas Ghetto and Its Fighters]. Vilnius: Mintis, 1969.

¹¹⁶ “The organization acquired a camera – an object also strictly forbidden in the ghetto. Besides a large number of characteristic scenes of daily life, various atrocities of the Hitlerites and bourgeois nationalists in killing, beating and torturing people were captured with this camera.”

the photos indicated an abstract situation rather than a specific fact – “The area of the ghetto is reduced again”, “Family ration”, “Departure to a forced labour camp”, “The ghetto is on fire” and the like.¹¹⁷ Photographs from the Kaunas Ghetto did not appear in the books of a more general nature about the Great War and “fascist bourgeois atrocities”.

In 1991, after Lithuania re-established its independence, archival material was taken over inertly from Soviet institutions, along with old descriptions. Due to a lack of researchers, the author of these photographs has remained unidentified and information has not been specified until today.¹¹⁸ Twenty years later, the story of Kadushin and his photographs is still shrouded in mystery, though the images themselves continue to be actively used.

Conclusions

From the technical point of view, research on Zvi Hirsh Kadushin’s photographic legacy is complicated, because documents are scattered across different archives and museums, the origin of some photographs is unclear, their captions are erroneous, information is incomplete, and there were other photographers besides Kadushin. Not less confusing is the photographer’s biography, in which the real motives of his activity are intertwined with symbolic stories dictated by an arbitrary memory narrative. While living in the ghetto, the photographer belonged to the privileged minority both due to his professional skills and his connections in the main institutions of the ghetto. However, later he used a symbolical

(Eglinis-Elinas, Gelpernas: *Kauno getas...*, 81). Although the members of the communist underground did own a camera, pictures published in the book are recognizable as Kadushin’s. Besides, no pictures of Nazi atrocious actions (as this citation suggests) taken by Jewish photographers are known.

¹¹⁷ Eglinis-Elinas, Gelpernas: *Kauno getas...*, 41, 50, 106, 183.

¹¹⁸ VGMJH Holocaust exhibition should be mentioned as an exceptional case (Pamėnkalnio St. 12, Vilnius). In the room devoted to the Kaunas Ghetto, Kadushin is also presented; however, it is asserted without grounds that he photographed being urged by the Council of Elders and the underground. Basically, it is an echo of the narrative developed by USHMM. See *Holokausto ekspozicijos katalogas* [Catalogue of the Holocaust Exhibition], ed. by Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, Milda Jakulytė-Vasil. Vilnius: VVGŽM, 2011, 149.

and mythologised narrative of his personal heroic revenge to the Germans to cover up these circumstances, which undoubtedly had a huge impact on his photographing possibilities and, eventually, on his survival. Therefore, rather than taking any photograph and its caption for granted, we should answer the following questions: to what extent does it reveal the historical reality that can be confirmed and verified, and to what extent does it function as part of heroic mythology? Taking into consideration the intricate, confusing and politicised history of the Holocaust memory and Kadushin's personal traumatic experience, his strategy is understandable. However, it is not clear why that narrative was directly adopted by modern memory institutions. Without a critical assessment of photographic documents, we encounter paradoxical situations when serious and competent archival institutions along with authentic images present false substitutes to billion-strong audiences, thus contributing to the establishment of false historical memory. In the general sense, this can be considered as a striking example of the fact that in the 21st century the belief in the power of photography to give direct access to historical reality is still very much alive.

A consistent analysis of the photographs themselves clearly reveals that not all of them fit in the narrative of "a hero who took pictures secretly through his buttonhole". Rather than specific events, Kadushin above all captured the inmates of the Kaunas Ghetto in their surroundings and their repetitive daily practices. Therefore, his archive should be treated not as a chronological narrative, but as an anthropological study of his community. Pictures taken when Kadushin pretended to be a Nazi official raise additional questions about the uniqueness of his perspective in the context of Nazi photographers.

As a historical source, in their nature and motives Kadushin's photographs are most closely related to the secret history of the Kaunas Ghetto written by the Jewish police – they both cross the boundaries of personal experience and communicate the aspiration to preserve the community's memory in the presence of uncertainty about the future. Visual documentation supplemented other more abundant textual initiatives of memory preservation; however, the absolute majority of the

Jews who lived in ghettos did not leave any written documents about themselves, and today, Kadushin's photographs are the only material trace of their existence. By posing for the camera, Kaunas Jews resisted the threat of oblivion as much as they could, and finally, they managed to win at least a war of representations against the Nazis.

After the war, Kadushin actively promoted his photographs as a generalising experience of European Jews. However, they have become such only recently when they found their way to the largest depositories of the Holocaust iconography and have become accessible from any device with the internet connection. It was much earlier that the photographs became part of the collective memory of Kaunas Jews. The survivors actively used the images to illustrate their personal narratives, and Kadushin's photographs served those who did not write memoirs as the only tangible memory about their experience and the family members who were killed, and actualized the oral narratives of their parents or relatives. In some cases, the people who had been photographed and later recognised themselves in the photos expanded the field of the meanings of specific images, unknown to the photographer. The story of the photographs took an alternative route in Soviet Lithuania. Due to ideological restrictions, the images that had remained there were "cleansed" – the author's name was erased, and the circumstances of creating them were distorted and made abstract, leaving them only the marginal illustrative function. In independent Lithuania, the photographs have been brought back into historical narratives, but still serve the same illustrative function.

Šarūnė Sederevičiūtė

Istorinės fotografijos kritinio tyrimo praktiniai klausimai: Kauno geto fotografo Hiršo Kadušino atvejis

1941–1944 m. Kauno geto kalinys Hiršas Kadušinas (1910–1997) mėgėjiška kamera slapta fotografavo geto gyvenimą ir kitus žydus. Išlikusi gana gausi šio unikalaus vaizdinio archyvo medžiaga sudaro atsvarą Holokausto fotografijos istorijoje dominuojančiai nacių perspektyvai. Kadušino nuotraukos yra plačiai naudojamos Lietuvoje ir užsienyje, tačiau fotografo ir jo palikimo istorija vis dar nepateko į akademinį diskursą. Straipsnyje, remiantis įvairiais egodokumentais, interviu, periodikos tekstais ir pačiais vaizdais, siekiama rekonstruoti fotografo biografiją, veiklos metodą ir tikslus tiek nacių okupacijos, tiek pokario laikotarpiu. To siekiant, tiriamos fotografavimo Kauno gete aplinkybės ir atskleidžiamas tolesnis šių vaizdų panaudojimas. Tyrimas atkuria kompleksiską istorinės tikrovės, kolektyvinės atminties, institucinių praktikų ir asmeninio veikimo tinklą.