

Remembering the Concentration Camps

*Aleksander Kulisiewicz and His Concerts of Prisoners' Songs
in the Federal Republic of Germany*

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In 1960, at an international symposium devoted to workers' songs held in Lidice, the Czech village where the infamous Nazi reprisal killings took place during the war, the East German musicologist Inge Lammell first publically urged her colleagues to collect and record the music of the Nazi concentration camps. In an atmosphere of Cold War politics and ideology, her plea was no doubt understood less as a call to commemorate victims of ethnic persecution than as a desire to document the valiant cultural efforts of political prisoners who had done their part to defeat fascism. As founder and director of the Arbeiterliedarchiv at the Akademie der Künste in East Berlin and the author of numerous writings on antifascist and revolutionary songs, Lammell was already a formidable scholar whose opinion carried significant weight with the participants.¹

Two Polish ethnographers in attendance, Józef Ligęza and Adolf Dygacz, heard her call and returned to Communist Poland energized to help in this international effort. With Ligęza heading up the ethnographic division of the newly established Śląski Instytut Naukowy,² the scholars sent out an official national press notice requesting that survivors come forward with songs they remembered from the camps. Responses trickled in, but by far the most helpful correspondent was Aleksander Kulisiewicz. He had spent some five years at Sachsenhausen as a Polish political prisoner; not only had he created his own songs there, but he had also memorized many more sung by his fellow inmates. A journalist by profession, Kulisiewicz found the work of collecting irresistible, and by 1964, he was a central player in the Institute's camp-music collecting

project. In less than a decade Kulisiewicz helped amass for the cause some five hundred songs from more than thirty different camps.³

Collecting music created in the Nazi concentration camps, however, would only be a prelude to Kulisiewicz's commemorative activities during the next two decades. Shortly after meeting Ligeza and Dygacz, Kulisiewicz traveled to East Berlin and met with Inge Lammel as well as members of the Komitee der antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer (Committee for Antifascist Resistance Fighters), who were equally committed to supporting antifascist causes. Through further contact with a number of key musicians active in the folk revival movements then taking hold in East and West Germany as well as in Italy, Kulisiewicz—who had performed only sporadically since the end of the war—was suddenly invited to take his repertoire of prisoners' songs on the road. He seized this opportunity, and in doing so, effectively returned music making to the significant place it had held in his life at Sachsenhausen, where it had sustained him and fellow prisoners.

This chapter explores some of the notable performance contexts in which Kulisiewicz appeared in the postwar years. Specifically, it assesses his contributions in West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s to both the remembrance of the Jewish genocide and the memory of non-Jewish victims persecuted by the Nazis. Kulisiewicz's concertizing, for its time, represented a unique approach to confrontation with the Nazi past, one that operated between performance and historical witnessing and eschewed the politics of the day in order to document more accurately and inclusively, not only the realities of life and death in the camps, but also the Nazi era's diverse victims. That Kulisiewicz's concerts of prisoners' songs found a home most readily amid the counterculture movement in West Germany—that is, thanks to the seemingly incongruous support of Europe's anti-authoritarian younger generation, who were agitating for greater political transparency and cultural openness—only adds to the remarkable quality of his life's work. Without this support, Kulisiewicz's songs would have had no other public outlet. More than two decades after the Cold War, Kulisiewicz's early musical memorializing offers us, through careful consideration today, a unique perspective on Germany's changing relationship to its fascist past.

"Someone Bold Enough to Sing Such a Song": Kulisiewicz's Activities before 1945

Even before the war Aleksander Kulisiewicz (1918–82) was drawn to the stage, and the soapbox. Attracted to popular and folk entertainment from an early age, he performed with a Roma ensemble in the Polish-Czech border town of Cieszyn, then studied the art of whistling and yodeling in Vienna. He found

opportunities to sing in a pair of European documentary and feature films in the years leading up to the war and worked as a clown's assistant in a traveling circus. He was also politically engaged, acquiring a decidedly leftist orientation while studying law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. He performed in the city's cabarets, singing songs that had been popularized by the German Communist singer and actor Ernst Busch. He also tried his hand at journalism, publishing anti-authoritarian essays under the pen name "Tytus" (his given middle name) in youth journals such as *Głos Młodych*, *Ogniwó*, and *Prosto z ławy*.⁴ It was one such antifascist essay—"Homegrown Hitlerism"—that landed him at the local Gestapo office in Cieszyn after Germany invaded Poland.⁵ From there he was eventually sent to Sachsenhausen, and was registered on May 30, 1940, as prisoner number 25,149.

At Sachsenhausen, Kulisiewicz continued his singing and fine-tuned his sense of social justice. He became something of a "camp troubadour"—poet, player, and songwriter. He favored "broadides"—songs of attack—whose aggressive language and macabre imagery mirrored the grotesque circumstances in the camp. Performed at secret gatherings, his songs helped inmates cope with their hunger and despair, raised morale, and sustained hope of survival. As one of his fellow survivors of Sachsenhausen, the Soviet POW Andrej Sarapkin, recounted years later:

In February 1943 I first heard a Kulisiewicz song. After each hard day of labor Aleks sang in the barrack, where inmates rested on four-tiered bunks. In those days the whole camp had thrilled to the news of Russia's defeat of the German army at Stalingrad. Aleks performed a group of Polish national songs, then completely out of the blue, he sang "Adieu Hitler." The title of the song we learned only later. He performed loudly, beating out the rhythm on the wooden beams of the barrack bunks. It was hard to believe that at Sachsenhausen, in the Kingdom of the SS-man, there could be someone bold enough to sing such a song. Each of its verses and each of its lines could lead the performer to the gallows...Kulisiewicz was known among people of many nationalities, and they loved his songs. He performed in Polish, French, and Russian. His songs were not only tragic but also filled with spirit. In the terrible conditions of the camp, Aleks's love of song and life turned his songs into banners and weapons.⁶

Kulisiewicz's songs, and those of others, gave him a sense of purpose, a reason to endure. He considered the camp song to be a form of documentation: "Other prisoners came to me—Czechs, Poles, Germans. 'Aleks, have you got some room in your 'archive'?' I would close my eyes and say 'Recite'... And

only this helped me survive: the knowledge that I'm fighting, that I am of use to someone, that day after day I'm still alive and that within me a 'poetic octopus' of hate, injustice, and sometimes even the most intimate longings of all of us is growing larger... Every work is a direct synthesis, a document, direct reportage."⁷ Kulisiewicz thus gathered strength by offering fellow inmates psychological uplift through song, and by serving as a living "archive" of the Nazi regime's atrocities.

Perhaps his most important transformational experience in the camp, however, was his encounter with the Polish Jewish choir director Martin Rosenberg, who was well-known in Germany's socialist-worker circles by his professional name Rosebery d'Arguto. Kulisiewicz, profoundly impressed after hearing a clandestine performance of Arguto's "Jüdischer Todessang" (The Jewish death song; a parody of an old Yiddish counting song, "Tsen brider") and deeply committed to their friendship forged through a shared love of music and hatred of the Nazis, pledged to remember the work and to sing it should he survive.⁸ Enduring torture, imprisonment, and eventually a death march, Kulisiewicz did indeed survive, to be liberated by the Red Army in May 1945. Rosebery d'Arguto, along with other Jewish inmates of Sachsenhausen, was transported to Auschwitz at the end of 1942.

After the war, thanks to his close friendships with a number of former Czech prisoners of Sachsenhausen, including the Czechoslovakian prime minister (and later president) Antonín Zápotocký, Kulisiewicz landed a job in Prague as a foreign correspondent for the Polish newspaper *Dziennik Polski*.⁹ He wrote about Polish-Czechoslovakian relations and Czech art and music—subjects he had learned about in the camp from his Czech friends. Significantly, he also made a private-release recording of "Jüdischer Todessang" in 1947 at AR-Studio in Prague, remembering the promise he had made to Arguto.¹⁰ Six years later, amid suspicions surrounding his loyalty to the Communist Party, he was compelled to leave Prague. Returning to Kraków, Kulisiewicz found himself estranged from his first wife (whom he had married in 1946) and adrift professionally. Still very much left leaning, but adamantly opposed to communist nomenclature and therefore unwilling to join the Polish Communist Party, he could not find work as a journalist. Instead, he swept the walks of Kraków's parks and worked as an itinerant photographer, mostly hired to take wedding pictures.¹¹

Sometime in 1956 he met again by chance a colleague from his correspondent days who secured him a traveling sales job with Dokumentacja Prasowa (Press documentation), a branch of the Robotnicza Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza "Prasa-Książka-Ruch" (Workers' publishing collective "press-book-movement"), in which capacity Kulisiewicz sold restricted news to regional government offices.¹² The position gave him the opportunity to attend meetings organized by survivor associations—clubs with local branches throughout Poland, such

as Klub Mauthausen-Gusen, Klub Majdanek, Klub Sachsenhausen, and Klub Dachau. There he expanded his knowledge of, and contact with, former prisoners who had been involved in the cultural life of the camps.¹³ Those meetings in turn provided the occasional setting in which to perform camp songs.

"The Singing Conscience of Europe": Kulisiewicz's Postwar Concerts

Around 1963–64 Kulisiewicz traveled to East Berlin to discuss preserving and performing the music of the concentration camps with the archivist-scholar Inge Lammel.¹⁴ It was as if he had prepared for that meeting his entire postwar life. He had the beginnings of an archive, many contacts with survivors, and a burning desire to fulfill his promise to Rosebery d'Arguto and other victims. His thoughts had never really left the camp: press clippings in his archive reveal that from the beginning of the postwar period he had kept track of the activities of various camp clubs, and had noted sporadic public concerts in Czechoslovakia and Poland devoted to memorializing those who suffered in the Nazi camps. Thus, when one of Lammel's acquaintances, the Italian ethnomusicologist and leading member of the Italian folk revival movement Sergio Liberovici (1930–91), invited Kulisiewicz to participate in the international festival *Musiche della Resistenza*, inaugurated at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in 1965, Kulisiewicz was more than ready to assume a more public persona.¹⁵ Liberation, oddly enough (and for too long), had put his performing life on hold. Now, there was once more an urgent need for his singing (figure 7.1).

A direct result of the festival was the 1965 long-play album *Il canzoniere internazionale dei ribelli* (International songbook of revolutionary songs) on which were recorded two of Kulisiewicz's set pieces, the camp songs "Jüdischer Todessang" and "Choral z piekła dna" (Hymn from the depth of hell; see appendix A). Summoning a remarkable vocal range and variety of tone, he spared no ugliness of sound when necessary to impart the magnitude of suffering experienced by his fellow inmates. His dramatic performance style—one that consciously turned to a highly theatrical mode of singing at times—attempted (paradoxically) to authenticate the intimate, spontaneous nature of camp song, ensuring that these intensely disturbing songs, with their pleading, despairing lyrics, would not soon be forgotten by audiences. For the next sixteen years, Kulisiewicz—"Bard of the Camps," "the Singing Conscience of Europe," as he was frequently described in press accounts across Europe and in the United States—performed these and other haunting camp songs in at least ninety venues in eleven countries, on both sides of the Iron Curtain.¹⁶ He recorded twenty-one radio and six TV broadcasts and ten long-play albums, and he was



Figure 7.1 Aleksander Kulisiewicz performing at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Italy, 1965. Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, Washington, DC, USHMM Archives. (Reproduced by permission of USHMM, Washington, DC.)

the subject of eight documentary films, the first one made in the Soviet Union, and then in Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, and Germany.¹⁷

Central to all of these concerts, recordings, and other appearances was his performance of Rosebery d'Arguto's song memorial to the Jewish genocide: Kulisiewicz's decision to sing it at every concert had been deeply personal, motivated not only by their friendship but also by Kulisiewicz's steadfast commitment to inclusion, one that in no way contradicted his unquestionably antifascist agenda. For Kulisiewicz, to remember Jewish victimization was perfectly consistent with his need to memorialize in an all-encompassing way the very real individual human suffering his fellow inmates had endured at the hands of the Nazis. His activities and engagements, without intentionally trying, dovetailed with the Polish Communist Party's official antifascist message, raising little concern within the Polish government, which readily issued him visas, even during the 1960s when travel to the West was otherwise severely restricted for Poles. Nonetheless, some assumed that he carried favor with party officials and benefited materially from his Western contacts. As was customary at the time with

any Pole traveling abroad in a public capacity, he was periodically placed under surveillance.

Directly following his engagements in Italy, Kulisiewicz traveled to Munich for the 1965 Schwabinger Woche festival organized by the leftist Komma-Klub, thus beginning what for the next decade would be a sustained exchange with West German counterculture clubs, student groups, and youth groups.¹⁸ The Komma Klub and similar organizations, such as Club Voltaire in Stuttgart and the Republikaner Club in West Berlin—where Kulisiewicz also performed—were independent, coffee-house-style affairs of the sort that by the end of the 1960s had taken hold in virtually every West German university town. The clubs offered jazz and folk concerts, literary evenings, foreign-film screenings, open political discussions, and art exhibitions. Individuals who gathered there were, on the whole, anti-authoritarian, calling for freedom of expression, and, significantly, advocating cultural activities that could bridge understandings between East and West.¹⁹ Organizers maintained close ties to East German cultural groups and personalities, and in a climate of intense East-West political division, were often suspected of being controlled by foreign agents, if not accused outright of being East German spies.²⁰ In these settings, messages of social consciousness, political resistance, nonviolent protest, and peace activism all found a home, merging with a heightened desire, also, to speak openly about the National Socialist period.

To a conversation about Germany's fascist past, Kulisiewicz, the Pole among West Germans, would seem invaluable, offering the perspective of concentration camp victims in the land of the perpetrators. Indeed, through his songs, he sought to contribute constructive dialogue among nations and across different generations, believing this to be essential for lasting peace. But more than anything, Kulisiewicz, the older Polish camp survivor from the other side of the Iron Curtain, was received as a novelty, a rarity, an "exceptional phenomenon."²¹ Wherever and whenever he performed, the West German press took note of his identity, featuring him as the "KZ-Bard" from Poland, the former concentration camp inmate turned folk-protest singer who performed "songs from Hell." To judge from his publicity package, this outsider, outlier identity was exactly the sort of image that Kulisiewicz wished to project; it was one he had come to embrace after a lifetime of marginalization.²² When journalists did occasionally have something else to say, they invariably alighted on his activities as "unique" and "unmistakable."²³ They were universally silent about the songs themselves—perhaps viewing them as beyond criticism, untouchable.

The most notable of Kulisiewicz's performance venues—the ones that gave him the greatest exposure and notoriety—were likely the fourth Burg Waldeck Festival in 1967 and, in the following year, the Internationale Essener Songtage 1968 (IEST 68), both held in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Burg

Wäldeck Festival originated in 1964, mostly through the efforts of the folk singer Peter Rohland and the cultural activist Diethart Kerbs, who envisioned an international gathering of singers and Liedermacher who would perform and discuss a revival of German song modeled on the French solo chanson style Rohland had discovered in Paris. The festival organizers were hoping to renew a German democratic folk-song tradition that would be distinct from the collective singing associated with the fascist period. From the beginning, the organizers also positioned themselves politically as supporters of peace between East and West. And while some dozen American, British, Israeli, and Swedish folk singers hit the open-air stage, it was the German Liedermacher with the intelligent social critiques in their songs, who garnered the most critical praise.²⁴ The Catholic-born antifascist Franz Josef Degenhardt was unequivocally the most important Liedermacher to perform at Burg Wäldeck. His songs best reflected the spirit of the festivals, which were growing ever more overt in their social criticism—and more political—with each passing year. It was largely Degenhardt, performing songs like “Die alten Lieder,” who served as the festival’s guiding hand, bringing a reckoning with the Nazi past front and center (see appendix B).²⁵ Through Degenhardt, Kulisiewicz in 1967 would find his way to Burg Wäldeck for the first and only time.

Burg Wäldeck began as a festival aligned with Kulisiewicz’s agenda—socially critical, folk, leftist, antifascist, and peace seeking but largely unpolitical. By the fourth season, however, when Kulisiewicz took the stage, the festival was well on its way to evolving, strangely, into a more commercial, popular, and political hippie-hashish party, as it eventually became at the sixth and final festival in 1969, which took place just a month after the infamous lovefest in Woodstock, New York. Titled “Das engagierte Lied,” the 1967 festival featured forty-two performers and speakers who gathered before an audience of some 3,000 attendees, once again straining the capacity of the site. Significantly, Inge Lammell was invited to speak on the German “democratic” folk song, becoming one of the first official representatives from the GDR to attend Burg Wäldeck. But in an atmosphere of increased political tension and suspicion, she and other invited GDR participants were uncomfortably grilled on the suppression of the East German Liedermacher Wolf Biermann, who had been prevented from traveling to attend any of the festivals.²⁶

Despite the well-intentioned efforts of organizers to accommodate the growing demand for a politically charged festival rather than one focused purely on musical and aesthetic concerns, there was little they could do to quell the turbulence of conflicting viewpoints. Walter Mossmann, Reinhard Meyand, and Hanns Dieter Hüsch, a cabaret artist from Mainz, complained of the growing radicalization of the festival participants who came seeking ban-the-bomb protests rather than any social critique relevant to Germany. The Communist Dieter

Silverkrüpp, on the other hand, who sang out against the nuclear arms race and against a decidedly anticommunist strain in the Federal Republic, did not think the festival’s agenda was political enough and had refused to return that year to the Burg Wäldeck stage.²⁷ Amid the unraveling, Kulisiewicz, dressed in a concentration camp striped uniform, performed songs to memorialize the dead.

The IEST 68, Europe’s first major music festival, however, cast a wide net from the beginning and welcomed folk song, chanson, pop, rock, underground music, and cabaret music onto its stage. Billed as “Ein Festival mit Politik. Ein Festival mit Kriterien. Ein Festival mit Pop” (A Festival with Politics: A Festival with Principles: A Festival with Pop) and intended to be a counterpart to the Monterey Pop Festival held in the United States a year earlier, it successfully avoided the conflicts that had defined the last years of Burg Wäldeck.²⁸ The five-day extravaganza brought nonstop music, workshops, and seminars delivered by some sixty artists and presenters who were among the one hundred invited guests. It was organized around a broad theme best expressed by the title of the culminating seminar: “The Lied as a form of expression of our time,” an all-encompassing topic that covered the psychology of protest songs, song and action, and more broadly, song as a reflection of contemporary politics and society.²⁹ Pete Seeger and Colin and Shirley performed alongside Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Pink Floyd, and The Fugs. Wolf Biermann’s songs were played in his absence, and Liedermacher veterans of Burg Wäldeck, Franz Josef Degenhardt, Hanns Dieter Hüsch, Walter Mossmann, and Dieter Silverkrüpp, sang songs of political protest and social conscience. The crowds reached into the tens of thousands, and some estimates were as high as 40,000. Much as he had done at Burg Wäldeck, Kulisiewicz played a unique role at IEST 68, providing a somber and ghoulish performance of protest songs of the dead in significant contrast to the other musical offerings.

Indeed, neither Burg Wäldeck nor IEST 68 would seem at first glance to be an entirely natural setting for Kulisiewicz’s repertoire of prisoners’ songs, his memorialization project, or even his idiosyncratic style of music making, which emphasized gestures and facial expressions adopted from theater. Approaching the age of fifty, and performing pieces distinctly rooted in the past, he was physically and acoustically unlike his younger, commercially oriented fellow performers, who had perfected a direct and simple song style. More so than in the intimate settings of the clubs or at student gatherings, Kulisiewicz’s song concerts at the Burg Wäldeck and IEST 68 events could only have been relevant to the issues then animating West Germany’s countercultural youth in the broadest of terms: a confrontation with the National Socialist past through protest song. But as a musician concerned with public remembrance of the Jewish genocide and the persecution of others in the Nazi camps, there was no one like him. Hanns Dieter Hüsch provided this poignant assessment of the 1967 performance:

He stood there before us, and we suddenly had the feeling that what we were doing was just feeble art claiming to make an enormous statement. But this man—it was no longer about art, not even about a statement, but rather we experienced a Sunday morning that we will never forget, because something was suddenly apparent: the thing that we were writing and singing about, this simple man actually had this behind him, with all its torture. And we?³⁰

Others attending the Burg Waldeck and IEST 68 festivals also saw him as “a welcome witness to German history.”³¹ The folk enthusiast and music critic Carsten Linde described Kulisiewicz as a singer “who brings the past to life to sing for the future.”³² In the newspaper *Mainzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, he detailed: “The gentleman from Poland presented in his songs something that is now so often callously forgotten: he forced his listeners to reflect, not in a useless or pessimistic way but in a way that was joyful in its art and buoyed by expectation.”³³ And the sociologist Martin Degenhardt (brother of Franz Josef) explained: “The most lasting impression was made by the Pole, Alex Kulisiewicz, ‘Songs from the concentration camps’... The songs, previously unavailable (perhaps because unwanted), received much conversation and discussion at this year’s festival at Waldeck.”³⁴ Although Kulisiewicz’s fame was not comparable to that of the high-profile festival participants, he was the only performer who elicited a decidedly emotional response.³⁵

Kulisiewicz also gained the respect of his fellow singers. Degenhardt, Mossmann, and Hanns Dieter Hüsch embraced him as a complementary voice in the German folk movement, an honorary Liedermacher; and Kulisiewicz returned the favor by being an ardent admirer of theirs.³⁶ It is no doubt thanks to their support that he was invited to be part of the IEST *Berrat* (braintrust), that is, the advisory board, along with leading performers and music and cultural critics from West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, France, and the United States. With them, he helped shape the program of the IEST 68 events.³⁷ But as well received as he was by audiences, critics, and fellow musicians, Kulisiewicz can only be called an outlier in the West German folk-protest, pop-rock scene, a role he had already come to know in the camp as a Polish prisoner among German communists, Czechs, Soviets, and his Jewish friends like Rosebery d’Arguto.

Between the two large West German festivals of Burg Waldeck and IEST 68, Kulisiewicz also toured twenty-four towns in England and Scotland in the winter of 1968, invited by the Sue Ryder Foundation to perform with a small group of other Polish camp survivors.³⁸ The Polish press singled out the excellence of Kulisiewicz’s performances of “Jüdischer Todesang,” and his rendition of a song he had learned from a Russian prisoner, Alexej Sasanov, created in memory of

the Soviet POWs murdered at Sachsenhausen.³⁹ Even in this decidedly conservative, non-leftist context (on the tour he performed in many church settings), Kulisiewicz remained true to his ideology of inclusion, refusing to differentiate among those whose lives his audience presumably considered worthy of honoring (prisoners of conscience, victims of genocide) and those whose lives and fates had heretofore perhaps drawn little notice. Willfully oblivious to his audience’s prejudices, made more pronounced in an era of East-West antagonism, for Poles he would remember the Jews and Soviets, for Jews he would remember the Soviets and Poles, for Soviets he would remember the Poles and Jews. He would do so no matter who in the audience might be offended.

Only in 1969 did Kulisiewicz perform his first concert of camp songs in his native Poland, playing at the youth club *Żak* in Gdańsk before an audience of progressive-minded Polish students. There, by coincidence, he encountered a friend from Sachsenhausen, the Soviet journalist Andrej Sarapkin who, upon hearing Kulisiewicz perform Sasanov’s musical tribute to the murdered Soviet prisoners of war, invited him to record radio broadcasts in Sverdlovsk and Kiev. One of those auditions inspired the Russian film director Josif Boguslavsky to make a film about Kulisiewicz and his songs that was released two years later, in 1971. Boguslavsky was captivated by Kulisiewicz’s personal rather than political story, but it seems that he, too, was motivated by the strained political relations between the East and West and the very real threat of nuclear war. A dialogue about the past and about peace was spreading eastward to the Soviet Union, and once again Kulisiewicz cultivated the opportunities given him to lend his voice to the discussion, and to sing for the future by memorializing the dead. As Boguslavsky told a reporter before the release of his film: “He saved not only songs, but also something more—a belief in humanity... His songs are a powerful memento, a warning against an ever-present, continuous threat of war.”⁴⁰

During the 1970s, Kulisiewicz became an archivist of the dead, tirelessly and with ever greater urgency collecting ever-more songs, poetry, artwork, and stories of the concentration camps, a mission, as already noted, begun modestly in the 1950s, and then, when joined to Ligęza’s efforts, with greater focus in the 1960s. He also made repeated return visits to the Federal Republic of Germany and, increasingly, to East Germany as well, performing at smaller venues, such as clubs, but more often at gatherings organized by student groups eager to discuss the National Socialist period. For a different life there was no room, and in 1971 his second marriage ended in divorce. That same year Professor Ligęza died, leaving Kulisiewicz alone to finish documenting Polish songs of the concentration camps.⁴¹

Weakened by travel and declining health, Kulisiewicz played his last concert in 1981 at the Nürnberger Bardentreffen, attended by a nurse. Festival film footage aired on West German television suggests that as the other

performing acts grew more anarchistic and outrageous, Kulisiewicz seemed to relish being smaller and quieter now, conspicuously drawing attention to himself in this new way amid the outlandish sounds and attire of the festival participants.⁴²

He desperately needed rest, and also more time. In the last months of 1981 he wrote letters in which he talked morosely about not making it much longer. According to his son, however, his relatively early death in Kraków on March 12, 1982, at age 64, was entirely avoidable. A simple antibiotic then unobtainable under the conditions of martial law (imposed by the government to clamp down on incipient protest) likely would have spared his life, at least for a little while longer. Embittered to the very end that he and his important work were unappreciated in his home country, he died in relative obscurity, considered by members of the Polish intellectual elite to be *szurnięty* (a “whacko-kook,” of no real importance), *podkaszany* (someone “frivolous,” “not all there”), or *wulgarny*—no translation required.⁴³ His singing was dismissed and derided as *niesznościowe wycie* (intolerable howling).⁴⁴ The European public largely forgot about Kulisiewicz too, busier with matters of walls coming down, and the construction of a new European order.⁴⁵

“He Wanted to Do Something for Society”:

The Legacy of Kulisiewicz’s Postwar Performances

Kulisiewicz’s concertizing represents an altogether unique form of historical witnessing for its time, one empathetic toward a range of Nazi victims, and governed by an idiosyncratic brand of social consciousness. His commitment to and insistence on inclusion was decades ahead of its time. While the official response of Poland’s Communist government—like that of other so-called Eastern bloc nations—was the telling of politically expedient stories of “international” suffering at the hands of fascists during the Second World War, Kulisiewicz took risks to voice a more nuanced version of history’s events to whoever would listen. Traveling abroad, he would remember exactly who those murdered victims were, giving them names, identities, and national and group affiliations, and provocatively conjuring them up as human beings through the power of musical performance. Moreover, he not only memorialized dead comrades but also sang songs that starkly documented the cruelty of their oppressors in the camp.⁴⁶ He could do so because he had been there.

As a performer, Kulisiewicz had no contemporary counterparts. The Polish “Bard of the Camps,” as he described himself, alone sang a repertoire of concentration camp songs, lending his voice and memory to counter-culture movements in West Germany that were welcoming and broad enough in their

agendas to embrace him.⁴⁷ While it would be difficult to deny that Kulisiewicz’s Bug Waldeck and IEST 68 appearances have been overshadowed with the passing of time by the more prominent and talented singer-songwriters who were involved, such as Biermann, Degenhardt, and Siverkriip, his performances there were critical, representing an early strong voice in the service of musical memorialization. As West Germany’s youth grew more interested in confronting the National Socialist past, Kulisiewicz, in a striped uniform, guitar in hand, was ready to meet them. Likely, in them he saw a version of his younger self: bold, questioning, and decidedly anti-authoritarian. With them, he could imagine a shared fight for understanding and peace.

“Whatever one might say about my father”—his son Krzysztof told me during an interview in 2007, still attempting after so many years to explain his father’s utterly unconventional activities and eccentric personality—“he was someone who wanted to do something for society.”⁴⁸ While many chose to forget the past, he could not. He had promises to keep. In a 1970 Radio Bern Switzerland broadcast, he told his listeners: “It is my duty to sing these painful songs. I do not sing in order to earn money, or to make a career, or out of revenge. I play only for the memory of millions, millions of murdered comrades whose voices were strangled *there*. They are always with me, in every concert hall, in each radio studio, or on television... I sing so that no one again can create songs like ‘Hymn from the Depths of Hell,’ ‘The Burnt Mother,’ or ‘A Lullaby for My Son in the Crematorium.’”⁴⁹

Kulisiewicz walked a fine line, motivated emotionally and psychologically by a hatred of the Nazis but also by a deep empathy for his fellow prisoners regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or identity. To him, they were human beings first, not “Communists,” “Jews,” “Soviets,” “gypsies,” or “deviants.” A leftist to his core, he despised such distinctions; they were all his comrades, innocent victims who could not be forgotten. Although his concertizing took him back to the horrors of the camp, he went there time and again because he believed that by doing so, he could help shape a better future. No doubt, too, on a more selfish level, turning himself into a living memorial helped him endure his own survival. Given his singular pursuit of musical remembrance, and perhaps our own inability to grasp fully a life devoted to such torturous singing, it is easy to misunderstand him and his intentions, to accuse him of opportunism or of attempting to garner favor with the Communist authorities. But as this chapter hopefully makes clear, despite the trauma of imprisonment, the totality of his life was remarkably consistent, a continuous whole. In survival as in imprisonment, and as before the war, Kulisiewicz played a giddy role that he maintained his whole life. It seems he couldn’t help but do so. It was a durable personality trait that often got him in trouble or at the very least placed him in uncomfortable settings, but to a sense of justice, fairness, and stark honesty he remained true.

Appendix A

Choral z piekła dna**Music: Aleksander Kulisiewicz****Text: Leonard Krasnodębski (1942)****Hymn from the Depths of Hell**

Slyszcie nasz choral z piekła dna!

Hear our hymn from the depths of hell!

Niech naszym katom w uszach

May our hymn ring in the ears of

gra choral!

our killers! Hymn from the depths

Choral z piekła dna!

of hell!

Niech naszym katom,

For our killers,

Niech naszym katom gra!

For our killers may it resound!

Slyszcie nasz choral,

Hear our hymn,

Slyszcie nasz choral z piekła dna!

Hear our hymn from the depths of hell!

Attention! Attention!

Attention! Attention!

Tu ludzie giną, tu ludzie są!

People are dying here, people are here!

Tu ludzie są!

We're people here!

Jüdischer Todesang**Jewish Deathsong****Music and Text: Martin Rosenberg**

Translation by Peter Wortsman

(1940s)

based on a Yiddish folksong

Bom bom bom bom...bom bom

Bom bom bom bom...bom bom bom

bom bom

bom

Bom bom bom bom...bom...

Bom bom bom bom...bom...

bom...bom

bom...bom

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

La-la-la-la-la-la

La-la-la-la-la-la

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

Bom bom bom bom...bom

Bom bom bom bom...bom

bom bom bom

bom bom bom

Bom bom bom bom...bom...

Bom bom bom bom...bom...

bom...bom

bom...bom

Zehn Brüder waren wir gewesen,

Ten brothers were we together,

Haben wir gehandelt mit Wein.

All of us merchants of wine

Einer ist gestorben,

One brother died one day

sind geblieben neun.

Now we're only nine

Oy-yoy!...Oy...yoy!

Oy-yoy!...Oy...yoy!

Yidl mit der Fiddel(e),

Yidl with your fiddle,

Moyshе mit dem Bass,

Moyshе with your bass

Sing mir mal ein Liedel(e),

Play oh sing a little

müssen wir ins Ga-a-s!

We're bound for the gas!

Yidl mit der Fiddel(e),

Yidl with your fiddle, Moyshе with your

Moyshе mit dem Bass,

bass

Sing mir mal ein Liedel(e),

Play oh sing a little

Liedel(e)...

We're bound for the gas!

Müssen wir ins Gas!

For the gas!

Ins Gas!

For the ga-a-s!

Ins Ga-a-s!

Bom bom bom bom...bom

Bom bom bom bom...bom

bom bom bom

bom bom bom

bom bom bom

Ein Bruder bin ich nur geblieben,

One brother now alone I remain

Mit wem ich weinen soll?

With whom shall I whine?

Die and'ren sind ermordet!

Nine brothers murdered all,

Denkt ihr an alle neun?

Remember all nine!

Yidl mit der Fiddel(e),

Yidl with your fiddle,

Tevje mit dem Bass,

Moshe with your bass

Hört mein letztes Liedel(e),

The last, I'll sing a little

Ich muss auch ins Ga-a-s!

Now I'm bound for the ga-a-s!

Yidl mit der Fiddel(e)

Yidl with your fiddle,

Moyshе mit dem Bass,

Moyshе with your bass,

Hört mein letztes Liedel(e)

The last, I'll sing a little

... Zehn Brüder waren wir gewesen,

... Ten brothers were we together,

Wir haben keinem weh getan,

We never hurt another soul,

Weh getan.

soul.

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

Li-lay, li-lay...li-lay

Appendix B

Die alten Lieder**The Old Songs**

Wo sind eure Lieder,

Where are your songs,

eure alten Lieder?

Your old songs?

fragen die aus anderen Ländern,

Folks from other countries ask,

wenn man um Kammine sitzt,

Whenever you're sitting around the hearth,

mattgetantzt und leergesprochen

Faint from dancing, and all talked out

und das high-life-Spiel ausschwitzt.

All sweaty from the whole high-life act.

Ja, wo sind die Lieder,

Yes, where are the songs,

unsre alten Lieder?

Our old songs?

Nicht führ'n i Heller oder Batzen
 mag Feinsliebchen barfuss ziehn,
 und kein schriller Schrei nach Norden
 will aus meiner Kehle flehn.
 Tot sind unsre Lieder,
 unsre alten Lieder.
 Lehrer haben sie zerbissen,
 Kurzbehoste sie verklampft,
 braune Horden totesgeschrien,
 Stiefel in den Dreck gestampft.

Not for a heller or a batz
 Will fair lassie dance barefoot
 Nor will any shrill cry northward
 Escape my throat.
 Dead are our songs,
 Our old songs.
 The teachers have chewed them to bits,
 Boys in short trousers have strummed
 them down,
 The brown-shirt hordes screamed them
 to death,
 Boots trampled them in the mud.

—Music and Text by Franz-Jozef Degenhardt (1966)

Notes

1. See Inge Lammell, comp., *Lieder der Revolution von 1848* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1957); *Lieder gegen Faschismus und Krieg* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1958); *Lieder der Aghthrop-Truppen vor 1945* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1959); and *Lieder zum ersten Mai* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1959). Lammell herself had survived the war as a Jewish Kindertransport refugee in England (her family was exterminated at Auschwitz), returning to East Germany in 1947. Following the success of the Lidice symposium in 1960, Lammell, with her Arbeitliederarchiv colleague Günter Hofmeier, would go on to compile and edit the pioneering anthology of concentration camp songs *Lieder aus den faschistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Leipzig: Hofmeister, 1962).

2. The Silesian Institute of Science was established in 1957 in Katowice, Poland—one of many such educational endeavors enthusiastically supported by Poland's Communist regime. Its central purpose was to document the Silesian regional diversity by studying and popularizing the socio-cultural "phenomena" of the Silesian highlands (also known as Upper Silesia). The studies it initiated, however, customarily either sidelined or totally ignored the rituals, customs, and songs of the ethnic Germans, Silesians, and Jews, who—in addition to ethnic Poles—had historically inhabited the territory but had been largely expelled or emigrated once the region was incorporated into the People's Republic of Poland as restitution for World War II. To be sure, this homogenizing impulse was not unlike that of the German ethnographers who did their part for Bismarck's Kulturkampf during Prussian occupation. See Andrew Demshuk, "Reinscribing Schlesien as Śląsk: Memory and Mythology in a Postwar German-Polish Borderland," *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* 24, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2012): 39–86.

3. The Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection is housed principally at the USHMM Archives, Washington, DC (RG-55). This collection includes fifty-five linear feet of archival material consisting of annotated song texts, music notation, cassette and open-reel tape recordings of interviews with fellow survivors about the music in the camps, as well as songs performed by survivors who either composed them or sang them during their imprisonment. It also includes poetry, original artwork, photographic material, scripts for puppet plays, and an extensive record of Kulisiewicz's correspondence from the 1950s until his death in the early 1980s. Several other important materials related to Aleksander Kulisiewicz can be found in different divisions of USHMM: published materials such as books and journals (USHMM Library); Kulisiewicz's record collection, video documentaries, and unpublished typescript, "Polskie Pieśni Obrozowe" (USHMM Music Collection); and his guitar (USHMM Collections). Remaining materials collected by Aleksander Kulisiewicz but not sent to

USHMM as part of the Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, can be found in the private collection of Aleksander Kulisiewicz's son, Krzysztof Kulisiewicz.

4. Marta Urbanczyk first established this chronology for Kulisiewicz in her unpublished master's thesis, written shortly before Kulisiewicz's death, under his supervision and with his approval, but similar contours of the story are traced in a number of other Polish and German sources. See Marta Urbanczyk, "Twórczości i działalność pieśniarska Aleksandra Kulisiewicza w obozie koncentracyjnym Sachsenhausen 1940–1945" (MA thesis, Uniwersytet Śląski, 1981), 50–76; Konrad Strzelewicz, *Zapis: Opowieść Aleksandra Kulisiewicza* (Kraków: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1984); Andrea Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle: Die musikalische Rezeption des Aleksander Kulisiewicz in der bundesdeutschen Folkbewegung" (MA thesis, Universität Freiburg, 1996); Guido Fackler, "Des Lagers Stimme"—*Music im KZ: Alltag und Höflingskultur in den Konzentrationslagern 1933 bis 1936* (Bremen: Temmen, 2000); Juliane Brauer, *Music im Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2009); *Lied!*,

5. Tytus [Aleksander Kulisiewicz], "Hitlerzym domoroszy?" [Homegrown Hitlerism!], *Głos Słanu Średniego*, October 25, 1939. A copy of the original article remains in the private collection of Kulisiewicz's son, Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

6. Andrzej Sarapkin, "Pśni za kolyuchey provolokoy" [Songs behind Barbed Wire], *Izvestia* (Moscow), October 10, 1971. I am grateful to Vladimir Altskan of USHMM for his translation from the Russian. Another former inmate of Sachsenhausen, Jozef Znamitowski, echoed the sentiment that Kulisiewicz's songs were both shockingly bold and highly effective at lifting the morale of the prisoners, Jozef Znamitowski, in discussion with the author, August 8, 2005.

7. Aleksander Kulisiewicz, *Sachsenhausen: Pamiętnik Poetycki 1939–1945* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1965), 8.

8. For materials concerning Rosebery d'Arguto, see Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.003*93, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC. Describing the passion and skill with which Arguto led his clandestine Jewish choir, Kulisiewicz also recalled the brutality that cut short what would ultimately be the choir's last rehearsal in Sachsenhausen, in October 1942, forever uniting in his memory Arguto's powerful musical performance with the rage and helplessness Kulisiewicz felt when witnessing the senseless cruelty of the camp guards: "The SS burst into the block. The entire choir was kicked, beaten. Stripped naked, the men were forced out in the rain onto the *Appellplatz*, ordered to kick the SS-men's boots. And yet, with their last bit of strength, despite everything and everyone, these Jews sang. It lasted two—maybe three—hours, until their voices grew totally hoarse, but nonetheless they still marked the rhythm with thin cries... I am the only living witness who was present at that last rehearsal. I committed everything to memory. I could not die in peace without transmitting this particular song." See also the transcript of the 1964 Radio Warszawa broadcast, "Żydowska pieśń śmierci" [The Jewish death song], RG-55.003*151, p. 9, Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC; and Strzelewicz, *Zapis*, 100–102, 136.

9. Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, in discussions with the author, December 19, 2007 and January 20, 2008. See also Strzelewicz, *Zapis*, 84–85.

10. According to Kulisiewicz, the recording listed the composer as "Moses Rozenberg," as Kulisiewicz was not entirely at that point certain of Rosebery d'Arguto's given name. It was a limited private release of 200 records. See the appendix to Marta Urbanczyk's master's thesis; list of recordings compiled in 1981, in the private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków; and materials pertaining to Rosebery d'Arguto, Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.003*93, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC. Kulisiewicz's remarkable friendship with Zápotocký and other notable Czech cultural figures who were also interred at Sachsenhausen merits further study.

11. Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, in discussion with the author, December 19, 2007.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Clubs organized by former political prisoners of the Nazi concentration camps were established across Poland in the postwar years to provide survivors with social and psychological support. The clubs were also invaluable in facilitating postwar reunions among individuals

and families, a means of finding friends and learning about the fate of loved ones. A small handful of these clubs remain active today.

14. Kulisiewicz's correspondence makes clear that he first contacted Inge Lammell in 1963, but it is not entirely clear whether he traveled that year or a year later. See Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.013*27, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC. Inge Lammell herself could not recall the exact year they met in East Berlin, noting only that it was before his concert tour of Italy, and that they had mutual friends associated with the Committee for Antifascist Resistance Fighters. Inge Lammell, in discussion with the author, March 12, 2013.

15. Along with Michele Straniero and Fausto Amodei, Liberovici created the Cantacronache project in 1937 in Turin, marking the birth of the Italian singer-songwriters. Born in Turin in 1930 to Moldovan Jewish parents, at the age of fourteen Liberovici joined partisan forces of the Italian resistance movement. After the war he collaborated with the writer Italo Calvino on creative projects, and politically aligned himself with the Italian Communist Party. As early as 1963, Kulisiewicz was in contact with Liberovici, who planned to record songs from Sachsenhausen, and specifically "Jüdischer Todessang," on an Italian disc to be produced by Edizioni Discografiche Dischi Nuova Generazione in Turin. See Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.003*150, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC. On his initial Italian tour, Kulisiewicz performed in seventeen different venues, including the Piazza San Carlo in Turin, where neofascists had allegedly planted a bomb (unsuccessfully) in order to prevent a crowd of tens of thousands from hearing a program of international protest songs. See, annotated list created by Aleksander Kulisiewicz, "Ważniejsze koncerty, recitale, występy estradowe, wieczorki z repertuarem pieśni obozowych," [More notable concerts, recitals, stage performances, and camp song evenings], private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków. For more information on the Italian folk music revival, see Sebastiano Ferrari, "The Advent of the 'Committed Song' in Italy: The Role of the Cantacronache in the Renewal of Italian Popular Music," in *Politics and Culture in Post-War Italy*, ed. Linda Risso and Monica Boria (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2006), 88–104.

16. See Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 70–98, especially 77–78.

17. See Urbanczyk, *Twórczość i działalność pieśniarska Aleksandra Kulisiewicza*, appendixes. See also Kulisiewicz, "Ważniejsze koncerty," private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

18. Of his twenty-six appearances in West Germany, eighteen were before such groups. See Kulisiewicz, "Ważniejsze koncerty," private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków. See also Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 75.

19. See Eckard Holler, "The Folk and Liedermacher Scene in the Federal Republic in the 1970s and 1980s" in *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, ed. David Robb (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 165, footnotes 42–43; Paul Hockenos, *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 47–49, 54–55, 71.

20. Bill Niven, *The Buchenwald Child: Truth, Fiction, and Propaganda* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 140.

21. Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 80.

22. See multiple versions of Kulisiewicz's biography written in German dating from the 1960s, private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

23. Ibid., 78–80.

24. Eckard Holler, "The Burg Waldeck Festivals, 1964–1969," in *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, ed. David Robb (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 103–4.

25. Ibid., 104–6.

26. Ibid., 116–17.

27. Ibid., 112–31.

28. Announcement for the IEST 68, *Spektrum: Zeitschrift für Chanson, Folklore, Protest* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1968): [n.a.].

29. Anon., "1st Essen Song Spectacular Set," *Billboard*, March 2, 1968; for program materials, see private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

30. "Nun stand er vor uns, und man hatte plötzlich das Gefühl, was wir da so machen, das ist ein ziemlich düftiges Kunstgewerbe mit dem Anspruch einer ungeheuren Aussage. Dieser Mann aber,—da ging es nicht um Kunst, auch nicht mehr um Aussage, sondern wir

erlebten einen Sonntagvormittag, den man nicht vergessen wird, weil plötzlich etwas sichtbar wurde: das, wogegen wir schreiben und singen, hatte dieser einfache Mann mit allen Qualen schon hinter sich. Und wirt? Hams Dieter Hirsch, "Burg Waldeck 67," in *Die Waldeck: Lieder, Fahrten, Abenteuer: Die Geschichte der Burg Waldeck von 1911 bis heute*, ed. Holte Schneider and Klaus Peter Möller (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2005), 355. First published in *song* 5 (1967): 4ff. I am grateful to Emily Hauze for her help with the German translations.

31. "... ein willkommener Zeuge deutscher Geschichte." Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 95.

32. "... der das Vergangene zum Leben erweckt, um für die Zukunft zu singen." Carsten Linde, "Lieder aus der Hölle," *Elan*, no. 3 (1969): 35.

33. "Der Mann aus Polen hat mit seinen Liedern das vorgestellt, was heute so leichtfertig dem Vergessen anheimgegeben wird, er hat seine Zuhörer zu Nachdenklichkeit gezwungen, keiner nutzlos-pessimistischen, sondern einer kunstfreudigen, voll Erwartungen getragener." Carsten Linde, "Gesang im Dunkeln: Alex Kulisiewicz in Mainz," *Mainzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 18, 1968. Quoted in Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 86.

34. "Den nachhaltigsten Eindruck hinterließ der Pole Alex Kulisiewicz. Lieder aus dem KZ trug er vor.... Den bisher vornehmlichen (weil vielleicht unerwünschten) Liedern galten die Gespräche und Diskussionen beim diesjährigen Festival auf der Waldeck." Martin Degenhardt, "Chanson Folklore International IV: Anmerkungen zum Festival auf der Burg Waldeck," in *Mainzer Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 5, 1967. Quoted in Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 86.

35. Baaske, "Lieder aus der Hölle," 86.

36. Kulisiewicz's admiration is made clear in his correspondence with Degenhardt and other players active in the West German folk movement, as well as his sizable collection of their commercially released albums now part of the USHMM Music Collection. See Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.013*34, especially folders 1 and 2, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.

37. See "Internationale Essener Songtage 1968 Programm und Organisationssteam," private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

38. See Ryder, known as "Lady Ryder of Warsaw" in her day, volunteered as a relief worker in Poland in the immediate aftermath of the war. In that capacity she visited the concentration camps, meeting survivors and hearing the stories of their experiences firsthand. When relief agencies like the Red Cross started to wind down their operations in the early 1950s, she single-handedly helped to repatriate over a one thousand young Poles still being held in German prisons. She remained devoted to helping Polish victims of Nazism throughout her life.

39. This performance was just months before the March 1968 anti-Zionist campaign that resulted in the expulsion of most of Poland's remaining Jewish population and sympathizers; see the anonymous review "Koncerty w 24 miastach Anglii," *Głos Ziemi Cieszyńskiej*, dated only "1968," private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

40. Anon., "Film radziecki," *Głos Wyzwolca*, December 3, 1971; private collection of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, Kraków.

41. In interviews Kulisiewicz often said, "I have indeed survived the Nazis, but never left the concentration camp." The result of Kulisiewicz's labors after Ligęza died was "Polskie Pieśni Obozowe 1939–1945," though Kulisiewicz also died before its completion. A copy of the unpublished typescript, which is nearly 3,000 pages long, can be found in the USHMM Music Collection.

42. Copy of film fragments aired on West German television, courtesy of Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, now housed in the USHMM Music Collection.

43. Mieczysław Tomaszewski, in discussion with the author, December 1, 2005; Konrad Strzelewicz, in discussion with the author, August 9, 2005; Krystyna Tarasiewicz, in discussion with the author, August 11, 2005.

44. Wanda Marossanyj, in discussion with the author, March 24, 2008.

45. Among the handful of words devoted to Kulisiewicz and his work are the pair of master's theses already cited; the 2000 documentary film *Der Sänger aus der Hölle: Aleksander Kulisiewicz* by Felix Kuballa; a Sachsenhausen Museum publication, Aleksander Kulisiewicz, *Adresse:*

Sachsenhausen: Literarische Momentaufnahmen aus dem KZ, ed. Claudia Westerman and trans. Bettina Eberspächer (Gertlingen: Bleicher, 1997); Brauer, *Musik im Konzentrationslager*, 203–34; Briet Werb and Barbara Milewski, "From Madagascar to Sachsenhausen: Singing about 'Raec' in a Nazi Camp," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 16 (2003): 269–78; and most recently, a compact-disc recording of his songs, Aleksander Kulisiewicz, *Ballads and Broadides: Songs from Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp 1940–1945*, program essay by Peter Wortsman, with annotations and translations, produced by the USHMM in 2008. Today no comprehensive study of Kulisiewicz and his work exists, though his collection at the USHMM remains the largest extant collection of concentration camp songs and supporting materials in the world.

46. One such song, "Czarny Böhmi" (Black Böhm) describes the Sachsenhausen camp kapo Wilhelm Böhm, who apparently seditiously relished his work as a cremation specialist; see, Kulisiewicz, *Ballads and Broadides*.

47. The writer, singer, and former inmate of Mauthausen-Gusen Stanisław Grzesiuk bears mentioning here. In his 1958 memoir *Pięć lat kaceru* (Five years in the camp), it was Grzesiuk who first broadly popularized the image of the camp bard for a Polish readership, describing his music making at Gusen alongside graphic depictions of camp life. Accompanied by the unique eight-string banjo-mandolin (or, "banjola") that he had bought for four hundred cigarettes in the camp, he went on to sing his repertoire of pre-war urban "outlaw" songs between 1959 and 1962, initially encouraged to do so at literary gatherings organized to promote his book. He performed the very same repertoire with which he had entertained his fellow inmates at Gusen. It is easy to imagine that Kulisiewicz was inspired by Grzesiuk, seeing in him a kindred spirit. Grzesiuk died in 1963, just as Kulisiewicz was taking the steps that ultimately would launch his own public performances of a very different kind of camp repertoire. Stanisław Grzesiuk, *Pięć lat kaceru*, 15th ed. (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2000).

48. Krzysztof Kulisiewicz, in discussion with the author, December 19, 2007.

49. Program fragment, Radio Bern Switzerland broadcast, March 13, 1970. Aleksander Kulisiewicz Collection, RG-55.003*152, USHMM Archives, Washington, DC.

Eberhard Rebling, Lin Jaldati, and Yiddish Music in East Germany,

1949–1962

DAVID SHNEER

At around 11 a.m. on November 9, 1952, two forty-year-old performers stepped out on the stage at the Haus Vaterland on Potsdamer Platz in the heart of East Berlin, the capital of the three-year-old German Democratic Republic. One of them, Eberhard Rebling, on piano, was already a familiar name in the world of East German music. Rebling, a non-Jew, had been raised in Berlin and had trained as a pianist and musicologist before and, for a time, during the Nazi period, until he left for Holland in 1936. He returned to Berlin in February 1952 to become one of the "mighty handful," a group of five musicologists responsible for building official East German musical culture.¹ The soul of the November performance, however, was not Rebling. He was there to accompany a Dutch Jewish singer and dancer specializing in Yiddish music named Lin Jaldati, who was making her East German debut that morning. She also happened to be Rebling's wife.

They were performing Yiddish music on November 9, an ignominious day in German history marking the 1918 abdication of the Kaiser and the armistice that ended World War I and Kristallnacht. It is not surprising, then, that on this November date, the fourteenth anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Berlin Jewish community was hosting a special memorial event. After all, they had been doing exactly that since the end of the war. The highlight of the morning program was the singing of Jewish battle songs in Yiddish by Jaldati, someone few could have imagined ever being in this august building, which was so far from her Dutch home, both physically and psychologically.²