Introduction

Biographies in Genocide

Eren Yıldırım Yetkin, Nazan Maksudyan, and Adnan Çelik

> It is dark. Bitterly cold. I'm crouched in the corner and completely huddled under my blanket. My breathing is shallow. Not move under any circumstances. No one is allowed in the cellar tonight. My heart is beating as loud and fast as a drum. Everyone can hear it.
>
> It's Sunday, 13 December 1942, and today I have to start a new life. From now on, I'm an "U-Boot." I have no more family. No friends. No home. I have to live alone. In the underground, in hiding. It's the only way I have a chance of surviving. I am nineteen years old.[1]
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> —Behar, *"Versprich mir, dass du am Leben bleibst": Ein jüdisches Schiksal*

Holocaust survivor Isaak Behar (1923–2011), born into a Sephardic Jewish family from Istanbul, starts his autobiographical book with these words, carved into his memories from the cellar. It took him half a century to write and publish his memoirs. In his book, Behar recalls his persecution by the National Socialist regime and his struggle to survive in Berlin as a *U-boot*. In addition, his account illuminates further aspects under historical violence such as migration, conditions of social inequality, and transnational contexts. In fact, his parents, Lea and Nissim, had left the Ottoman capital decades earlier in 1915 due to the growing environment of hostility and hatred directed at the non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, and arrived in Berlin in February 1916 (Behar 2002: 21). Born into poverty and speaking only Ladino and Turkish, Lea and Nissim had no choice but to settle in the German metropolis on the River Spree. The

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wartime alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire and Nissim's family connections were important factors in their immigration to Berlin. Nissim had learned the art of carpet weaving as a young boy and wanted to stay in Berlin in this business. Later, in 1920, they moved to Paris at the invitation of Lea's sister; their second daughter was born in the summer of that year. The family's growth and poverty in this new station pushed them back to Berlin (Behar 2002: 24), where Nissim more or less learned the tricks of the trade. Three years later, Isaak came to the world.

In 1933, after the Nazis came to power, the Behar family left Germany again, this time for Barcelona, thanks to Nissim's family connections. Four weeks later, however, they took the train back to Berlin; no one in the family was happy in Barcelona, especially Isaak and his sisters. The return to Germany would later prove fatal. In the years that followed, they were subjected to discrimination, segregation, and expropriation, just like the other Jews. They had to work as forced laborers in various industries in Berlin. In October 1941, the deportation of German Jews began. However, until the end of 1942, the Behar family and other Jews from Turkey had a kind of special status because of their passports and were not subject to deportation to the ghettos, concentration camps, and extermination sites in the eastern occupied territories until the Republic of Turkey revoked their citizenship in 1942 (e.g. Guttstadt 2008).

The opening passage of Isaak Behar's book that we quote here marks the day of the deportation of his family to the east and their following persecution, as well as the day Behar was forced to start his life as a so-called *U-boot*. While he lost his entire family, he survived the Holocaust in Berlin like 1,700 other Jewish *U-boots* (Lutjens 2013: 49), who changed their identities, stays, and help networks repeatedly. In his detailed account, we read how Isaak Behar, as a young man, paves his road of survival inch by inch with luck but also, at times, receives anonymous support or submerges at the right moment. He reminds us that mass political violence is not only about masses, political groups, and states with their capacity for dehumanizing organizational power. It is also about individuals. He also shows us in his 2002 German memoir that speaking about historical violence requires a critical turn in the postgenocide society.

Personal stories are thus intertwined with histories of violence and contain watermarks of the social conditions, changes, and processes that go hand in hand with persecution. In genocide studies, especially Holocaust studies, and interpretative social research focusing on the trauma and memory of mass violence, life-historical documents and biographical methods have been used as important components in the multiperspective reconstruction of social and political processes (e.g. Adler et al. 2011; Bar-On 1999; Pohn-Lauggas 2016; Redlich 2002; Stein 2019). Methodological designs may vary in terms of the type of data, its collection, and its analysis, but working with

biographies and life story narratives contributes to the analytical examination of violent events. Such an approach also offers the possibility of generating new data that can be compared with findings from other fields, such as biographical knowledge about survival strategies or the intergenerational transmission of memory.

This volume takes these aspects as its main paradigm and deals with biographies and biographical materials related to the Armenian genocide, which was orchestrated by the Ottoman state and local elites between 1915 and 1917 against the civilian Armenian subjects of the Empire (Kévorkian 2006). Noncombatant Christian peoples other than the Armenians, such as the Assyrians, were also victims of the extermination campaigns. The governing Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti/Fırkası*), the Ottoman army, local rulers, and civilian perpetrators on the local level, who, for example, sought to profit from the destruction, were responsible for the process of genocide. This process, which was constructed through systematic violence considering the local circumstances, included the political creation of various Armenian traitor images, the segregation of Armenian men in the army as well as in civilian life, mass killings with the participation of the victims' neighbors, deportations, and the camps in the Syrian Desert. Describing genocide as such an interplay of different actors and their actions tends toward a holistic view that should help to analyze, discuss, and understand the process. This volume uses life stories and biographical material to reflect on such a perspective and demonstrates how biographical reconstructions can provide valuable insights into the violent past and its memory in various collective, individual, and intergenerational forms (Bartlett 1995; Brockmeier 2015; Halbwachs 1992; Hirsch 2012; Rosenthal 2010).

The biographical interpretations that the authors foreground in their chapters in this book vary in their social positions, personal characters, places where they (had to) spend their lives, family histories, and their lives in historical or contemporary societies. What these subjects have in common is their connection to the genocidal violence committed and denied on the grounds of the present-day Turkish Republic. In other words, this volume deals with biographical experiences and memories related to the genocide. As the chapters in this book demonstrate, biographical materials allow us to rethink the historiography of social and political processes and to formulate new critical questions about the collective memories that have been constructed over time. The lens of life stories allows us to identify contested memories and counternarratives (Bamberg and Andrews 2004), as well as solidarities among vulnerable and marginalized groups who have been neglected by majority groups in society. Similar to contestations, the multidirectional quality of memory (Rothberg 2009) can be traced through such a lens. Reconstructing life stories and incorporating biographical

materials such as memoirs into research thus offer new ways of interpreting the social dynamics that led to acts of genocidal violence, their remembrance, and yet also their denial.

A crucial aspect is to consider biographies in terms of actors' agency and power to decide and act, rather than subsuming individuals within political processes, systems, and conflicts, where no individual trajectory is imagined. Taking into account the agency within life stories does not only resist victimization narratives but also means empowering research subjects, such as genocide survivors or their descendants, whose stories have been denied by society. Furthermore, the same kind of subsumption would lead to forms of relativization and trivialization of the perpetrator stories and the perpetration itself if their biographies were located in an allegedly omnipotent system that neglects personal agency. To avoid such consequences, biographical approaches—both historical and social scientific—acknowledge the agency of individuals and interpret their (hi)stories in relation to their respective societies. In this sense, biographical approaches problematize interpretations of social and political dynamics that per se do not consider personal agency as a genuine element of such processes. In order to critically reflect on the history and place of Armenian genocide denial in public debates that ignore individual paths, decisions, and trajectories, it is of utmost importance to engage with life stories, biographical sources, and methods.

The study of life stories also opens up new perspectives and questions on a methodological level. First, our volume aims to foster an interdisciplinary exchange between anthropology, history, literary analysis, and sociology. In doing so, the book highlights differences and similarities in approaches to life stories as working materials and brings together recent trends in biographical reconstruction. The interdisciplinarity is intended to fill a gap in Armenian studies (e.g. Suny et al. 2011) and lead to new collaborations between scholars from different fields. Furthermore, various methodological questions concern the field of research, its development over the years, and the positioning of the researcher in relation to the objects of research (see chapters 1 and 2, the methodological contributions to this volume). This engagement helps us to think critically about the limits of objectivity, the relevance of a "negative methodology" (Navaro 2020), and the extent of the fragmentation of personal narratives—or, rather, the interpretive work on life histories—in the aftermath of mass violence.

Reconstructing the Field and Life Story Documents

In their documentary *The Look of Silence* (2014), Joshua Oppenheimer and his fellow director from Indonesia, who wished to remain anonymous due

to the risks of revealing their identities, tell us the story of an everyday person, an optometrist named Adi Rukun, and his family. Their story is closely intertwined with the history of the Indonesian genocide under the military regime of Suharto, which carried out mass persecutions in 1965 and 1966 through the mobilization of numerous paramilitary groups (Üngör 2022) that are still active in the country. Adi's older brother Ramli, whom he never met, was murdered by the killing squads in 1965, two years before the film's protagonist was born. Growing up in hardscrabble conditions, Adi listened to his parents' stories about his late brother with deep grief and trauma. In the documentary, we see him searching for the missing pieces of his brother's story and confronting his murderers. Based on his previous documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012), which focuses on the perpetrators of the Indonesian genocide, Joshua Oppenheimer provides Adi with contacts to several of the perpetrators, as well as footage and recordings of his meetings with them, in which they describe and demonstrate the killings in which they actively participated, including Ramli's murder.

We learn about family members who were part of paramilitary groups and did not help Ramli, stories of gang leaders who profited from mass violence, and victimizers who are still proud of their actions. Through Adi's confrontations, we see perpetrators' firsthand testimonies that reveal the details of genocidal violence and its continuities in contemporary Indonesian society. Oppenheimer and his co-director also show us, through Adi's concealment of his identity in these moments of confrontation and through his parents' story, the complexities surrounding the question of what can be discussed in a postgenocide society. In this way, biographies emerge as points of entry to reveal the dimensions of violence and repression.

It is imperative to acknowledge that biographical materials, including memoirs, diaries, family albums, testimonies, letters, and eyewitness accounts, have been subjected to meticulous scrutiny in the reconstruction of historical events (e.g. Stein 2019) and the recollections of those events (e.g. Hirsch 2012). The long-standing tradition of historical research has relied on these materials to recover the biographies of particular historical actors and for comparative reconstructions of social and political processes (e.g. Stein 2019). A similar approach has been seen in the study of genocide, although the value of integrating individual perspectives and such documents into research has always been a crucial and polarizing point of discussion in the field (see Maksudyan on methodology in chapter 2).

The reconstruction of a biographical trajectory based on ego documents and other archival material, if the protagonist holds a decision-making position in his or her particular historical context (Kieser 2018), sheds light on neglected features and underlying factors. The comparative approaches come into play when the respective social setting is the subject of concentration

(Kurt 2018; Redlich 2002). In some cases, the comparative design considers different biographical materials; in others, the focus is on critically filling in the gaps in the narratives of state archival materials, as has been one of the core arguments of oral history. In sum, the field has shifted from the supposed binary of reality versus narrative (or archive versus survivor/personal account) to a comprehensive reconstruction of the complex subject matter. Currently, the perspective of survivors—for example, in the form of literature and diaries (Maksudyan 2019; Üngör 2011) and reconstructions of perpetrator biographies (Jasch and Kreutzmüller 2017; Kieser 2018)—has concretely become one of the main datasets and subjects for analyzing violent events and their social and political processes. Moreover, such materials have been rediscovered thanks to the growing interest in the aftermath of mass violence.

Survivor accounts and the narratives of their descendants, for instance in the context of intergenerational transmission within Holocaust survivor families (Inowlocki [1993] 2009; Rosenthal 2010), have been the subject of meticulous study employing methodologies of oral history and biographical research (see Inowlocki and Yetkin on methodology in chapter 1). In addition to the materials of these two approaches—the oral history interview and the autobiographical narrative interview—intergenerational interviews, group discussions, ethnographic observation protocols, and other ego documents such as memoirs, visual sources, and letters have also become sources for exploring the memory realms of the violent past. Qualitative and reconstructive methods, applied in various ways in the social sciences, have allowed scholars to understand biographical complexities and their interactions with broader social dynamics, such as collective remembrance.

Armenian genocide studies have developed through such passages and discussions. We can date its emergence to the early collections of survivor and witness accounts in the immediate aftermath of the massacres and to ethnographic engagements in the field. Then, in the second half of the twentieth century, scholars turned their eyes to state archives. The results of this turn were particularly arguments that described the genocidal process in terms of ideologies and growing tensions due to unresolved conflicts. Building on this tradition, scholars have explored the political economy of destruction and wealth transfer and the politics of demography. The so-called biographical turn included several elements that were new to the field, but parallel to the early stages of the study of mass violence against the Armenians. For instance, in the 1980s and 1990s, researchers began to conduct very detailed oral history interviews with survivors who were in their later years. Civil society institutions, such as the Zoryan Institute in Toronto, Canada, were established to organize and preserve hundreds of such recordings, and they continue to play this role. We can argue that this turn also prepared the

rediscovery of some early works, such as the ethnographic account composed by A-Do in Van (2017), and a different way of discussing memory, Armenian past, and the ruined heritage in Turkey. It has, for instance, led to comprehensive examination of the power and social dynamics through ethnographic sites—instead of analyzing the politics of memory (Biner 2010; Çaylı 2015; Çelik and Dinç 2015; Smith 2022; Suni 2023).

The biographical turn has become a significant component of the field. Nevertheless, life stories and related materials have not been widely considered as core data for reconstructing the history and memory of the Armenian genocide (for some exceptions, see Göçek 2014; Kurt 2023; Kurt and Uçaner 2015; Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan 2010; Yetkin 2022). At this juncture, this volume seeks to fill this gap in Armenian genocide studies by providing an interdisciplinary space for contributions from historians and social scientists concerned with post-Ottoman memory landscapes.

Outline of the Book

By engaging with different types of biographical materials and approaches that have been called into question in anthropological, historical, and sociological research, this volume brings a diverse range of analytical perspectives to discussions of narrating, recounting, remembering, and reconstructing violent pasts. The contributions in this volume do not discuss individual histories in isolation from social phenomena and circumstances (Bogner and Rosenthal 2023: 569–70); on the contrary, they highlight the intertwined individual and social processes and changes in diachronic and synchronic terms. By concentrating on personal stories with various backgrounds and social positions, including connections to the Ottoman state, upper-class biographies, yet also everyday people's stories, the book offers various access points to the history of the Armenian genocide and postgenocide societies. The edited volume is organized into three parts and contains original and insightful chapters that explore the role of power relations in social compendiums, individuals' agency, and diverse approaches to biographies as pivotal materials.

Part I, "Methodological Questions on Biography, History, and Memory," provides a methodological background for approaches to biography, memory, and life story narratives in both history and social sciences. Chapter 1, "Methodological Questions on the Intersection of Biography and Memory" written by Lena Inowlocki and Eren Yıldırım Yetkin, focuses on the sociological tradition of biographical research and specifically the method of autobiographical interview. The authors begin by presenting an overview of the terms and traditions, followed by a brief introduction to the methodology. They discuss the similarities and differences between oral history and

autobiographical narrative interviews and then the issues of speaking and silencing, addressing the relevance of social settings to narrativity. Inowlocki and Yetkin continue their contribution by concentrating on the terms of biographization and de-biographization of past events in life story narratives, highlighting societal aspects impacting such narrative processes, such as denialism, de-thematization of atrocities, and depoliticized remembrance.

Chapter 2, "Biographical Approaches to the Study of the Armenian Genocide" by Nazan Maksudyan, offers an overview of the literature that has relied on biographical approaches to the study of the Armenian genocide. Maksudyan suggests three different uses of biographical methods that offer new ways of approaching the question of mass violence in the Empire. The chapter discusses the intersectional limitations of biographical sources and methods for historical research, particularly in regard to the underrepresentation of subordinate identities and groups in first-person accounts from the early twentieth century.

In Part II, "Lives in Genocide," the focus is on the significance of biographical sources and methodologies in the historiography of the Armenian genocide. This section comprises five chapters that utilize biographical sources, ego documents, and life narratives. In chapter 3, Boris Adjemian focuses on Aram Andonian's (1879–1951) contribution to the historiography of the genocide through his extensive activities in collecting and archiving testimonies and documents as a librarian, as well as through his writing as a genocide survivor and intellectual. Adjemian's work employs an experiential historiography approach, focusing on the act of writing and documenting as a portal into the victims' experience of destruction.

In chapter 4 by Nazan Maksudyan, the "disappearance, dispersal, and ruination of indigenous lives, people, and knowledge within the context of the Armenian genocide" are traced in the context of the life and work of Johannes Jakob Manissadjian (1862–1942), a highly successful scientist at the Anatolia College in Merzifon/Marzvan. The chapter asserts the potential of biographical methods in studying the processes and structures of mass violence targeting the Ottoman Armenians. It also emphasizes the crucial importance of foregrounding the agency and subjectivity of genocide survivors.

In chapter 5, Bedross Der Matossian reconstructs the biography of Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan (1849–1939), an important religious and political figure, in the context of three turbulent periods and three extreme phases of violence targeting Armenians. These periods include the Adana massacres (1909), the Armenian genocide (1915–23), and the Turkish nationalist offensive in Cilicia. In his analysis, Der Matossian focuses on critical details in Khabayan's discourses and actions that are not present in state archives or official historiographies. This approach leads to certain revisions

to the historiography of the early Republican (denialist) history and the history of the genocide.

Chapter 6, written by Talin Suciyan and Paul Vartan Sookiasian, focuses on the personal letters of Sourpik Tekian (1868–1957), a survivor of the Armenian genocide from Ankara who lived in exile in Istanbul. The authors reconstruct the life trajectory of the subject through her letters, other ego documents, and oral historical sources. The focus is on her everyday struggle for survival in postwar Istanbul as a refugee in the big capital, a widowed mother, a poor woman, and an unprivileged provincial Armenian.

The last chapter of the section, "Reviving the Past: Postgenocide Armenian Memory through Song, Dance, and Photography" by Vahé Tachjian, introduces the genre *houshamadyan* (memory books). These books are dedicated to native cities, towns, or villages and intermingle the personal memories of individual authors with the biographies of their native places. Tachjian discusses the potential of the *houshamadyan* genre to reconstruct microhistories of localities with deeply penetrating details of mass violence, stressing their similarities with ego documents.

As the reader will readily ascertain, some of the individuals examined in this section by contributors, such as Aram Andonian and Catholicos Sahag II, are not simply ordinary people. Their experiences as religious, political leaders and intellectuals, the extant sources on their life courses, and their ego documents and self-narratives are considerably more abundant and varied than those of Sourpik Tekian, a widowed survivor with limited means. The lives that the Houshamadyan website's project focuses on, as well as the case of J. J. Manissadjian, represent potentially another group of Armenian subjectivities. These well-knit, vibrant, and flourishing provincial communities of Ottoman-Armenian society had been utterly eradicated and could never be reconstituted after the genocide. Despite the significant intersectional disparities among the protagonists depicted in these chapters, the subjects of Part II collectively provide a more comprehensive elucidation of the mass violence directed toward Ottoman Armenians.

Part III, "Afterlives of Violence and Genocide," explores the interplay between memory and biography through five chapters that utilize biographical analysis, drawing from memoirs, ethnographic accounts, and life stories. Alice von Bieberstein's chapter 8 engages with the literature on Islamized Armenians that has emerged in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, based on her ethnographic fieldwork between 2012 and 2015 on the material and political-economic aftermath of the Armenian genocide in the province and city of Muş. The author evaluates the value and limitations of the literature by comparing it with ethnographic material from fieldwork

in eastern Turkey/northern Kurdistan/western Armenia. This comparison reveals some of the complexities (or the "murk") that are often overlooked in individualized accounts. The author notes that the aftermath of the Armenian genocide has resulted in not only destruction but also lasting economic and epistemic violence, creating opportunities for profiting from historical violence.

Adnan Çelik's chapter 9 outlines research and reflection on what Kurdish intellectuals say and do not say (their discourses and silences) about the Armenian genocide. The memoirs of these intellectuals serve as a privileged place, situated halfway between collective history and individual trajectory. Focusing on individuals born between 1860 and 1915, who were direct contemporaries of the genocide, the author highlights the great variety of approaches to the question of Kurdish-Armenian relations and the genocide within this category. While some individuals remain silent or evasive on these issues, others deal with them in some depth: from anti-Armenian hostility to the promotion of the Kurdish-Armenian alliance, from denying or minimizing the role played by the Kurds during the extermination campaigns to putting forward justifications that seek to place the responsibility for the Catastrophe on the Armenians themselves.

In chapter 10, Duygu Taşalp examines memoirs written by Young Turk leaders who were perpetrators of the Armenian genocide. Taşalp interprets these accounts not only as historical documents but also as reflections of a collective guilt-ridden consciousness and evasion of culpability. She explores the impact of violence and genocide on the subjectivity and writing of the perpetrators, aiming to identify a genocidal literary style. Taşalp's analysis shows that the Young Turk leaders' narratives have a semantic unity. This aligns with the memorial discourse of Turkey's successive regimes and draws parallels with the rhetoric of Nazi officials in postwar years.

Annika Törne's chapter 11 examines challenges in the transmission of memories of the liminal experience on an "underground railway" through the analysis of Armenian survivor memoirs. A main escape route during the Armenian genocide, which was open between 1915 and 1918, led refugees from Kharpert/Harput across the mountainous Dersim Province to the Russian frontline in Erzincan. To clarify the purpose of Armenian survivor memoirs, this chapter analyzes the paratexts and senses of orientation regarding time, space, situation, and person contained in the narratives. The memoirs are structured and organized around these narrative means to address their intended audience.

In the last chapter of the volume, by Eren Yıldırım Yetkin, the life story of a woman born and raised in Van as a child of a Kurdish-Turkish mixed marriage is examined to understand the dynamics of remembering, silencing,

and trivializing the history of the Armenian genocide. The author employs the concept of relational racialization and explores how this specific past and the absence of the Armenian entity in the region contribute to othering in social and familial interactions. This chapter sheds light on the complexities of gender in encountering (historical) violence and conflicts in family settings and discusses the aspects of intergenerational transmission of memory.

Part III of this study examines the afterlives of genocidal violence, highlighting a shift in voice from the Armenians to the survivors, often Islamized, as well as to the actors implicated in this crime: the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) cadres, the organizers and orchestrators of the genocide, the Kurdish intellectuals of that time, and ordinary people in the present day. This section also uncovers the fractured and contentious character of the memory landscape in the aftermath of the genocide.

Instead of a Conclusion

Throughout his literary career, the late Turkish-German author Doğan Akhanlı (1957–2021) focused on the topics of transitional justice and reckonings of historical and political violence, especially in the context of the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust. His own life story as a political exile from Turkey living in West Germany and his engagement echo in his novels like *Madonna'nın Son Hayali* (2005) and *Sankofa* (2024) and his short pieces like "Mein Vater nannte mich 'Ford'" (2011). In addition to his literary life, he worked in the Holocaust memorials in Germany, such as the NS Documentation Centre in Cologne, which was founded in the same building as the former Gestapo headquarters in Cologne. For decades, Akhanlı sought the lack in the context of German remembrance culture: the "other" histories such as the figures of the Armenian genocide who lived in Germany after World War I or the histories of the "others" whose stories were neglected. In this regard, he looked into the legacies of the inmates from different countries who carved their voices in the cellar walls of the Gestapo jails in Cologne and refugees of the 1980 Turkish junta regime, like Cemal Kemal Altun, who took his life in 1983 just before his deportation to Turkey and after a strict detention for thirteen months in West Berlin (Akhanlı 2012).

In his autobiographical account that he wrote following his arrest in Granada, Spain, in 2017 due to a warrant issued by the Turkish government against him, Akhanlı recalls the journey of his memory work. Deriving from such a record, he (2018: 186) points out the transnational contexts and connections between different violent and genocidal regimes as an "expansion

and deepening of the German reckoning with the past." The core idea of his argument highlights an approach to understand the entanglements in historical violence and thus enhance the foundations of memory work. This idea can be traced in biographies. Like Behar's story, the legacies recovered in this book show us the tracks and crumbles of such entanglements, discussing various aspects concerning survival, rebuilding a life, remembrance, and beyond.

Eren Yıldırım Yetkin received his PhD in sociology from the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, Germany. His doctoral thesis is published under the title *Violence and Genocide in Kurdish Memory: Exploring the Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide through Life Stories* (Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2022). He also coauthored *Jugendliche Erinnerungspraktiken. Methodenplurale Forschung zur Auseinandersetzung mit Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2025). He is an advisory board member of Research Committee 38 "Biography and Society" of the International Sociological Association. He currently works at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin.

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Note

1. German original:
   Es ist dunkel. Bitterkalt. Ich kauere in der Ecke. Habe mich vollständig unter meiner Decke verkrochen. Ich atme flach. Auf keinen Fall bewegen. Heute Abend darf niemand mehr in den Keller kommen. Mein Herz schlägt so laut und schnell wie eine Trommel. Jeder kann es hören.

   Es ist Sonntag, der 13. Dezember 1942. Heute musste ich ein neues Leben beginnen. Ab jetzt bin ich ein "U-Boot." Ich habe keine Familie mehr. Keine Freunde. Kein Zuhause. Ich muss allein leben. Im Untergrund, im Versteck. Nur so habe ich eine Chance zu überleben. Ich bin 19 Jahre alt.

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