



NewsMilitary and Security

# The archive that reveals the polite language behind the Nazi death machine

Philologist Nachman Blumenthal gathered around him historians who transcribed, collected testimonies and collected about 3,000 evidence and countless documents. Now his archive is moving to the New York Museum

 min. Reading 1 15:24 07/09/2019 **Mordechai Haimovich**

World War II / Soviet Union / Nazis :Tags



Nachman Blumenthal (center photo) in the Chelmno extermination camp (Photo: Courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

**August 1944** The Wehrmacht was pushed into the death trap in Berlin, the Red Army washes Eastern Europe, followed by a small man in armed grandfather glasses in the notebook. Nachman Blumenthal tries to document the still-bubbling evil, the horror before it freezes into history

He himself managed to get around the inferno. Upon Hitler's invasion of eastern Poland he reached Soviet areas that were not trampled under Nazi chains. Upon his return, he discovered that his wife Maria and 3-year-old son, Ariel, had been murdered by the "blue police" of the Poles. With them his entire world was swirling around. "Imagine you go back to Tel Aviv and find a desert," said Miron, who was born of his father's marriage after the war

.who was born of his father's marriage after the war

Nachman Blumenthal was a multilingual philologist. Connected to Jewish and Polish culture. The distortions of language, ambiguous definitions and word-typing were his enemies. In the last months of the war, scholars of Eastern European Jewish history, linguists, Yiddishists, gathered around him and formed the Jewish Historical Commission, which later became the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw and was its second director

restless historians. After everything was over, they feared, people would want, to forget, repress, and they were urgently required to produce the first copy of the Extermination, to print their story of the Holocaust of Polish

Jews. In 1944 - 1947, they transcribed, recorded, copied, laid hands on testimonies that were still going on. They collected some 3,000 survivors' evidence and countless German documents. Nuremberg Trials and the burden of the war crimes tribunal in Poland

Besides, the dictionary has compiled a useful Nazi, the polite language of genocide science. All the words, concepts, definitions meant to make genocide a soft product, a palate. "We did not go to the study with learned objectivity," explained N. Gross, a member of the committee, in his summary report, "We went to work to reveal information, but not just information in itself but one that would be a tombstone for our fathers, brothers, children - for all our heroes who ceased. The face of Hitlerism, the face of racism, the face of anti-Semitism, the fight against injustice and the punishment of criminals

Prof. Shaul Friedlander defined the way he wrote as "mixed historical writing."

Dr. Catherine Stoll believes that historians at the Hebrew University did not understand and did not accept the interdisciplinary approach of their surviving colleagues. Stoll made a first inventory of the Blumenthal archive, before it was brought from his son Miron's cellars in Vancouver to the YIVO Institute for the Study of Eastern European Jewish History in New York. , Capture the angle of those responsible for crime and the victims, and understand the impact of the events on the Poles, the role they played





Photo courtesy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

The late Maria and Ariel

## Everyone looked

Nachman Blumenthal was born in 1902 in Borshchov in eastern Galicia. "On the Metaphor" is the name of the thesis that earned him the title of "Magister" from the University of Warsaw. After graduating, he taught philosophy and Polish at a high school in Lodz, at the Humanist Gymnasium in Lublin and opened a circle for Yiddish enthusiasts. "He was known for his ability to simply explain complicated philosophical questions," he wrote in the Postcard Encyclopedia and was quoted in the Voice of Lublin booklet 48. "Professor Blumenthal called the students the charismatic teacher." On Saturdays he would tour with them to get to know their city. "Even juicy curses taught us," one of the students said. High school in Lublin probably knew the Polish teacher and fell in love with it. Maria, or Miriam Taibel as her name from home, was born in the village of Dabice near the town of Wielopole where she passed away. She was the first Jewish woman to receive a PhD from the University of Krakow. Maria and Nachman got married in 1930. In 1939 she became pregnant. Later Blumenthal will say that his son Ariel is the victims of the Holocaust who have never been counted. "There are about a million children born after the last census before the war in 1930," explains Miron. "Their names and numbers were unknown because in 1940 ".there was no census

In 1944 - 1945 the Red Army pushed the Germans westward. Armed with a mighty urge and inquisitive eyes, Blumenthal walks in the back. In every liberated Jewish area he pops up with his notebook. "And my eyes saw a strange thing. In the small towns the periphery hardly resembled what it was: the center where pre-war Jewish houses, synagogues, etc. were abandoned or completely destroyed. Later, when I visited larger cities in Poland, I saw him play everywhere: neighborhoods where Jews lived were fundamentally swarms. The Warsaw ghetto area looks like after an earthquake. In Lodz, the picture was even sadder, as there was no sign of destruction. The war hardly touched the city. Not even in the area where Jews once lived and then became a ghetto. Same streets, same houses. Only one thing was missing - life. There were no people there. City ".is off

In the summer of 1948, Blumenthal came to Vilopol in southern Poland to investigate the circumstances of his wife and son's death. "A dead city," he describes as he saw, "almost all the Jewish houses were destroyed. I didn't discover one or a single Jew here. Before the war there were 2,000 people, headed by Rabbi Do the Wonders." The murder of Maria and Ariel Blumenthal was no exception in the city's Holocaust history. "You could say it was almost typical," states Catherine Stoll. A year before the murder of Maria and Ariel, another mother and her 8-year-old son were murdered. About 60 of the town's

.Jews - and maybe even more - were shot in the Jewish cemetery

Blumenthal spoke to non-Jews who were in Wilopol when his loved ones were murdered and put it in writing. The report, in his handwriting, revealed Catherine Stoll last year at the first meeting with the Vancouver Archives. The writer describes his horror with restraint, carefully crafting the quotes and passing a .frozen finger on the spine

For a while, Maria hid with Ariel in her brother's attic. Lawyer Morrissey Taibel held an office in Debbie and was married to a Catholic. But in 1943, probably because of neighborly detention, he was banned and sent to Auschwitz and did not return. Maria and Ariel escaped this imprisonment but could no longer hide from sister-in-law Felicia Howell Table. "Pele," as Blumenthal calls it, said that Mary was looking for a shelter that would allow little Ariel to breathe fresh air, which he could occasionally go out (to the yard) and play. She left the child, probably at Pele's, to tell him that from now on, "Grandma" would keep looking for a new refuge. "Grandma," as far as conditions allowed, tried to pad my little life. Eating, bathing every day and he was attached to it. He liked to climb on her knees Ariel. When someone came home he immediately fled and lay behind the closet. "Once," Blumenthal reports, "Peretz Crying and crying: 'I have no father, no mother, and grandmother beats me.' "Grandma" cried with him and promised, "You have a father, a boy, you have a mother, and they will come ".back

After a while, Maria came back and picked up her son. "Pella," a "Righteous Among the Nations" Yad Vashem, suggested that Maria dress the child in her child's clothing. Apparently Maria did not accept the offer. Someone by the name of Kostolova left her passport on the window sill facing the backyard. Maria collected the certificate that was supposed to save her and left with her son on the roads. But on the roads was also the Polish "blue police". The mother and her son were trapped in a small forest near the village of Mala. Maria presented the same passport that was supposed to be extracted. The cops insisted to check if the child was Jewish. Stick to their mission and don't buy the story. "If it ".wasn't for the boy," Blumenthal wrote, "my wife would be alive today

Bring them to a police station. Police were located in a school building, they were seated on the first floor. Little Ariel started playing. He jumped happily on the sofa in the room. There were cops who couldn't look at the play. Some brought bread. Someone on the outside connected a bottle of water to the stick and sneaked it through the window. A German gendarme confessed that they should not be arrested at all. They had to let them escape. "They (German and Polish police)," Blumenthal tells us, "led my wife and sons from the police station, through the village and along the creek to the Jewish cemetery in Vilopol. An old woman told me she saw them being led (to their deaths). They were calm. The picture is in front of her eyes. The cemetery is planted on a bushy hill. It looks " .good from the small town near the hill. Everyone looked

This is perhaps the key phrase in Blumenthal's report - everyone looked. Everyone was involved in what happened. To them it was a public spectacle.

Perhaps they interpreted it as an event taken from the Christian martyrs' tradition marching to their death. "She gave the boy a piece of bread and said to him, 'Eat it, boy, it's yours.' My wife tried to calm the child and said to him: 'Relax, .boy.' Then she took him by the hands. She stopped three times. She rested

Zlatnik the carpenter says he can't remember anything, "Blumenthal "" continues." He knows no one wanted to shoot my wife and son. One of the Polish police was given my wife's coat, but he did not want to shoot her either. .Even the German officer Windich (from Vienna) did not want to He wanted to bring her back to her hometown, Debbie. He called there but told

him (the locals) to shoot her. They drank vodka and still didn't want to shoot. My wife claimed to be Polish and asked to be brought to her by a priest. They did not let the priest come. She refused to undress. Her clothes were torn off her. She asked to be shot first. She doesn't want to watch the child die. With her last breath, and to save Ariel, she tried to prove that she was Polish. She exclaimed: "Hello, Mary, the Most Merciful" (from the prayer to St. Mary - NIV). One shot was ".fired at her

No Blumenthal's interlocutors say who fired. Some have been shot six times seven times. Here, too, the identity of the shooter is unclear. What is certain is that a vodka and a fever shook his hand. "The boy cried: 'Mom, Mom, where's Mom?' They (again the same 'they' are not clear) shot him once and he rose in the air, they shot him again and he fell breathless into the grave dug ".beforehand. It was 11:20 a.m. June 7, 1943



Part of Ariel's shoe





A cross found on one of the graves

## Stone, not heart

I don't want to tell you, sir, what a woman she was," says Blumenthal's town manager standing next to the Jewish cemetery. "The whole town cried when she was led to her death. I wasn't the town manager then, "the man tries to demonstrate helpless stagedness." You have a stone, not a heart, if you want to know about it, sir. " And one woman implores him not to take his wife out of the ".grave: "Here she died, here everyone knew her. Leave it here, sir

In the matter of burial, Blumenthal goes beyond his merits and shares us with his arguments. "At first, I really thought about leaving them in Vilopol. Here they will not corrupt the grave and treat it. Their case is well known to everyone. But then another thought came to me. It is hard to get to Vilopol. Other families may be taking their loved ones out of here. My wife and son will be left here alone. I want to arrange an impressive funeral for them. Many people will come. Whose condition would be sublime. If I leave my wife in the village, everything will be interpreted as an admission that she is not Jewish. But also in Vilopol, I want to leave a signal and a mark. Stone with a suitable inscription. Something that will attract attention, something will be built around a legend. "Blumenthal decided .to move his wife and son buried in the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw

**.In addition to my funeral father rarely expresses his feelings**  
Miron Blumenthal:" Dad never talked about his feelings. He was very businesslike "He wanted to understand things, to make them accurate. There was something ".scientific about his character

It hurt him to have lost his entire world. That everything was deleted. There is" no recollection that the people disappeared and he was obsessed with documentation. "In

the Warsaw ghetto he found the first and second parts of the" Oneg Shabbat "collection. Jewish historians understood what was going to happen in the ghetto and hid documents and testimonies for large milk. These are now on display at .the Jewish Museum in Warsaw and the Holocaust Museum in Washington

In the area where the Lodz ghetto was, Blumenthal walked among the ghost houses. He walked the silent streets and came across a plethora of Jewish originals. In the deserted offices of the Gestapo, he took the occupation paper. The Nazis were compulsive documentaries, and Blumenthal accepted what he wanted - words, words, words. And there were words that aroused his suspicion. Every Nazi document that fell into his hands had a circle around the non-malicious words. prima facie. The innocence. like. Nachman Blumenthal understood a very basic thing: these words are collaborative. When they appear in official documents, in some contexts it means death, elimination. The task he undertook was this: he would reveal how the Nazis used the German language .to obscure the mass murder apparatus

The first purpose," states researcher Catherine Stoll, "was to diminish, confuse,"

The archive revealing the polite language behind the Nazi death machine Maariv

deceive the victim and prevent the meaning of the words from him."

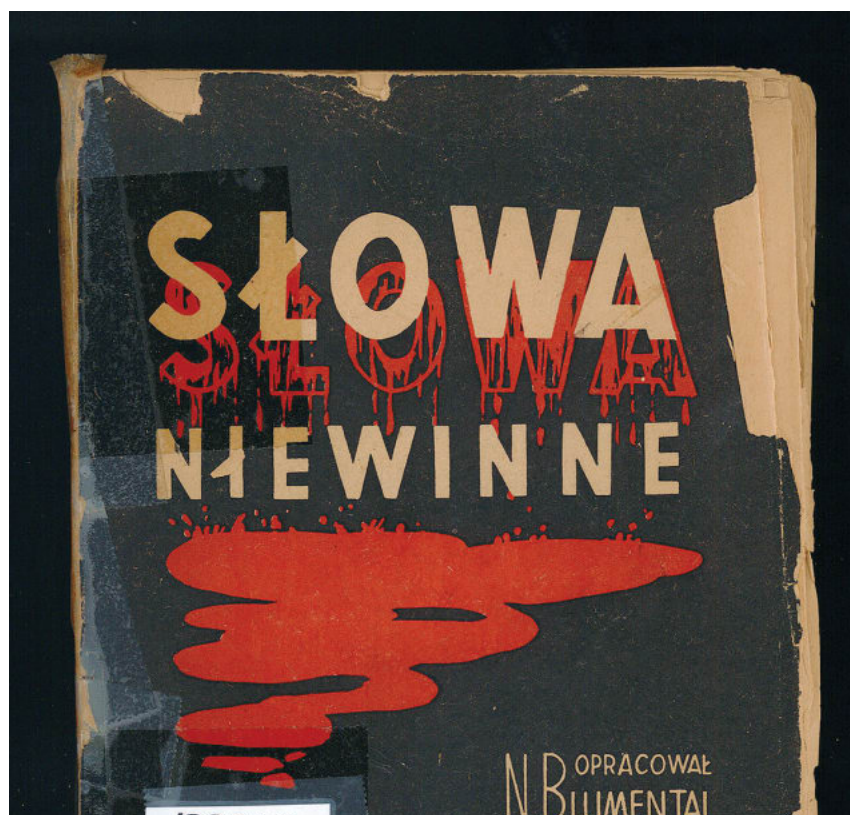
Blumenthal's dictionary was published in 1947 "The Central Jewish History  
."Council" in Warsaw. His Polish name is "Słowa niewinne", "Innocent Words

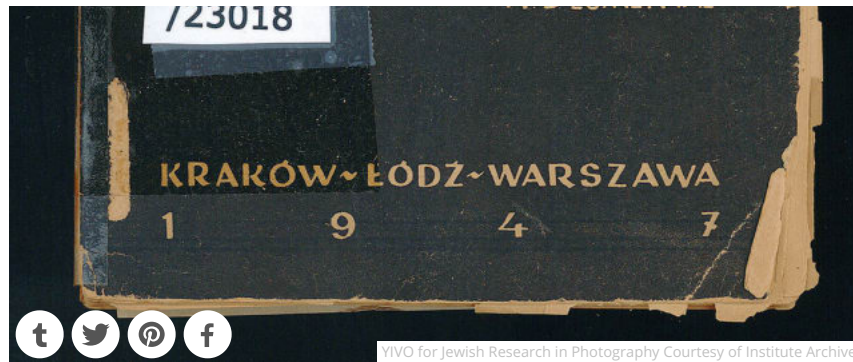
In order, from A to I, all terms expressing German liquidation policy are presented. Alongside the author's comments, copies of documents such as official correspondence between the German authorities, messages, newspaper clippings, entries from German dictionaries and testimonies of the victims. The .second volume of the dictionary has not yet seen light

Blumenthal brings to his dictionary a precise translation from German to Polish.

Sometimes he adds: "The true meaning of the word in Polish." Here's an example: The word AKTION in German is a masowe tepienie ludzi translator, but in practice tepic is used to describe insects and worms. At the heart of the Nazi plot: Human beings must be destroyed at all costs, which are actually parasites that threaten the German body. Here are some other words that were disguised: ABDIRIGIEREN - to refer. True meaning: to eliminate. The real meaning: to kill. Except for these, Dr. Catherine Stoll lists some 30 more concepts that mean .failure

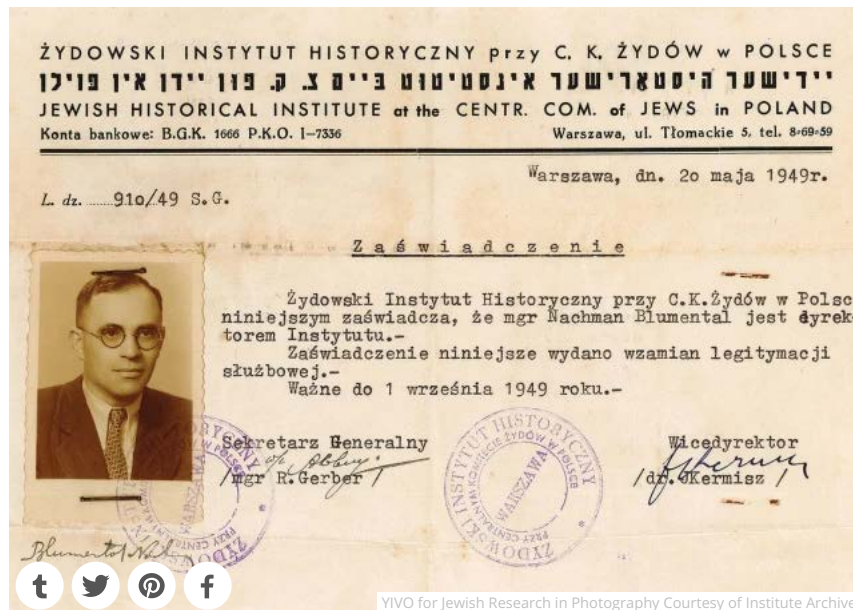
Another document from the Blumenthal archive shows how organized, meticulous the death machine was, and it was strict about every legal tag. The idea of the "final solution" sprang up here behind the sentence: Abschiebung nach dem Osten, "Deportation to the East". The date is September 23, 1943, and the document leaves the office of the head of the Security Police in Berlin to the Gestapo leaders in the occupied countries. The issue is: "Treatment of Jews with Foreign Citizenship in the German Sphere of Influence." ". But on the margins of the epistle, it states: "For reasons of foreign policy, the deportation of Jews to the East cannot be immediately realized. Temporarily housed men aged 14 and over in 'KZ Buchenwald' and children in 'KZ Ravensbrook'. But when it comes to implementing the deportation policy to the East, Italian citizens must be .immediately imprisoned on October 20, 1943, on the Turks The document reached the Foreign Office, the Gestapo chief assures, and was ".sent to the von Taden axis "to his attention





YIVO for Jewish Research in Photography Courtesy of Institute Archive

"Dictionary cover "innocent words"



YIVO for Jewish Research in Photography Courtesy of Institute Archive

Blumenthal's certificate of membership in the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw

### at 11:20 7.6

As Nachman Blumenthal was busy gathering his testimony, on the eastern bank of the Wisla, in the still-ongoing storm of war, the first chapter of his life began to unfold. The date is again August 1944, where our story opens. Soviet tanks raced west, and Lucia, who lost her husband, dug into a shallow canal. With her daughter is Ina, 3, and her sister Vieira. Between a bundle and a shell she managed to erect her head and saw a tank approaching them to the east. She panicked for forgiveness, glanced at the war again, and noticed that the tank had a red star. Was in ecstasy. She tore the little one out of the excavation, skipped between the shells, reached the tank and climbed it. "I'm Jewish," the Russian shouted to the officer in the turret. He put a finger to his lips and answered, "Shh" ".... well me, don't say that out loud

The three are saved. Sister Viera was active in the Communist Party and involved in the establishment of the post-war Poland administration. When she was stationed at the Soviet headquarters east of Lublin, she took her sister and daughter with her. In the apartment that she has available is a telephone and even a sofa, "with bedbugs, of course," Meron Blumenthal bothered to detail. In the living room of this apartment is established "a Jewish historical committee." Among her heads, we already said, is Nachman Blumenthal. "That's how mum .and dad knew," Blumenthal Jr. tells me But after a brief meeting, Nachman and Lucia Leah separate. Armed with fake .papers, she immigrated in 1947 with her daughter to Israel

Blumenthal remained in Poland, active in the Jewish Archives. But the murder of his wife and son did not let him go. Tried to prosecute those responsible



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 his wife and son did not let him go. tried to persecute those responsible.  
 Prosecute them. On an official letter from the Jewish archive, he wrote to a  
 prosecutor in the Tarnov District Court: "When I recently visited Dabitsa and  
 Vilopol, the peasants told me that Officer Kepalush and his colleague Jackich  
 arrested my wife Dr. Maria Blumenthal and my 3-year-old son in June 1943.  
 Transfer them to Vilopol, where they were shot the next day. If it seems to you,  
 Mr. Prosecutor, I'm ready to meet the defendant and come to Tarnow any time  
 " .you choose

Thanks to the letter, which is in the Blumenthal collection, the plaintiff has  
 announced preliminary proceedings against Kepalus. He ordered the Wilopol  
 police, led by a new chief, to investigate. The charge is: "Cooperation with the  
 Enemy." But police have determined that Maria and Ariel Blumenthal murdered  
 the German Hindus, which is actually the same Windich from Vienna mentioned  
 above. Several police officers from Wilopol station gave a hand to capture Jews,  
 including a coup, and he was arrested and denied. Blumenthal reach the area on  
 05.22.1951. but at this time Blumenthal is already in Israel, and proceedings  
 .against the policeman evaporate

Nachman Blumenthal came to Israel after secretly filmed microfilms Jewish  
 archives in Warsaw. with the historian Joseph Kermish smuggled them into  
 .Israel's diplomatic mail embassy in Poland  
 he started to work in an institution Isaac Katznelson at the Ghetto Fighters'  
 ."House. Edit the journal "Pages for the Study of the Holocaust and Rebellion

Then he moved to Yad Vashem. Lublin continued to accompany him in Israel as  
 well. Much of his work was devoted to his beloved city. Two of his most  
 important books on the subject were "Lublin Ghetto Certificates" and "Postcard  
 Encyclopedia." In the introduction to Vol. 5, which deals with Lublin, he wrote  
 with his co-editor Meir Kozan: "We put our hearts first, mainly, to enclose the  
 material on Lublin that was alive and well "Our grief and sorrow are no more.  
 Our ambition was to portray and perpetuate the still alive Lublin, who is still  
 ".ourselves and our flesh

Lucia-Leah and Nachman Blumenthal got married in Tel Aviv. Their son Meron  
 saw a world at Assuta Hospital. On June 7, 1954, 11:20 am. The same day, the  
 same time that his brother Ariel was killed 11 years earlier. "It doesn't happen all  
 that often," Miron tells me in a saturated conversation from Vancouver. But that  
 fantastic coincidence was hidden from him until he turned 19. So he was staying  
 abroad and the date at the top of his wish letter sent to him by his father was  
 7.6.1943, 11:20 p.m. Meron rang worried about his mother and said: "Dad went  
 .crazy." Only then did he tell him what the story was

**?What man was that**  
 ".Little man. Very kind. Loved the people. Very humble"

**?Do you remember which story**  
 Once booked for El Al flight. When he was taken for a drink in the bar, he didn't"  
 know what to do with himself. He didn't think we would do anything in his  
 " .honor

The experience of loss has pervaded Blumenthal all his years of life. On his way  
 he tried to pass it on to his son. When Meron was only 7, he had already taken  
 him to watch Holocaust films with ghetto fighters. Friends said, "He is too small,"  
 ".Blumenthal replied, "He is big enough

In 1983, when he was a law professor at the University of Ireland, Miron arrived  
 in Israel for what would be his father's last birthday. He was admitted to the  
 Levinstein home. His son made sure to ring every day. The word man was left

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