

JEWISH CHILD SURVIVORS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF JEWISH FAMILIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Dr. Joanna Beata Michlic

In her poem, titled “About My Father,” Irena Klepfisz, a poetess and Polish-Jewish child survivor, pays tribute to her father Michał Klepfisz. Her father with whom she shared the same birthday, April 17, was a vital person in her rescue from the Warsaw ghetto: “He left me on the street to be picked up by the nuns from an orphanage. He watched me from a distant doorway.”ⁱ Irena was born in 1941, two years before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 19, 1943, the first major uprising against Nazi Germany in German-occupied Europe where her father, a leading activist of the Bund (the secular Jewish Socialist party) and one of the key pillars of the Uprising, was killed on April 20, 1943, the second day of fighting against the Germans.

As a social and cultural historian of the Holocaust, studying Jewish child survivors’ early and late postwar testimonies and their parents’ letters written during the Holocaust, I am compelled to re-evaluate the role of parents as the first critical rescuers of their children. Jewish parents executed major actions to smuggle their children out of the ghettos and to organize the shelters on the forbidden Aryan side. Of course, historians are familiar with accounts of Jewish parents fighting for the survival of their children in the ghettos amid daily hunger, multiple diseases, and regular deportations. For example, in her early postwar testimony of December 12, 1946, one of the mothers, Mrs. Majdanowska (Majdanowa), describes her ordeal to keep her baby son safe and alive during the Great Deportation of the Warsaw Ghetto, starting on July 23, 1942, and ending on September 21, of the same year.

“I wish to describe some episodes from the life of my 5-year-old son, but I am not sure where to begin. By writing about them now, I go back to those terrible days, however it seems to me that those days were just an awful nightmare. When the first Deportation (Great Deportation) took place, my boy was fifteen months old and straightaway we began to hide in cellars and various ‘holes.’ Hunger was terrible at the time because bread was not baked and food shops were closed. Still, no one thought about food, only about finding a hiding place. No one wanted to let me in anywhere with my boy because his cries might have had everybody killed. On the whole, the situation of a mother with a child was pitiful then. It happened to me on one occasion that someone wanted to suffocate my boy because he started to cry during the street blockade. If at the time I had not acted as a lioness with a desperate look on my face, they might have killed him. They became afraid of me and left us in peace.”ⁱⁱ

In the autumn of 1942, in the full swing of the Nazis' Operation Reinhard (codename for the plan to exterminate Polish Jews in German-occupied Poland), surviving Jewish parents desperately attempted to relocate their children to the Aryan side. Some hoped to find a safe haven for their children in the hands of Polish friends and acquaintances; others could only hope to find a refuge for their children among merciful strangers. All parents prayed for luck to be bestowed upon their children. Before the children departed the ghettos, the parents often would instruct them about the new Christian Polish identities they were about to assume. This urgent, life-saving lesson, taught in haste, was often the last time the parents and the children would see one another. Therefore, for a long time, this moment remained fresh in children's memories, and they could recount it in great detail after the war. For example, in her testimony of 1955, Irena Grundland recalls her last night with her beloved mother in the Warsaw ghetto:

"The last night, before my departure from the ghetto, the whole family was awake. My mother was carefully preparing my clothes. She was asking me questions about Catholic catechism and examining my knowledge of all the daily Catholic prayers. She was hugging me and kissing me the entire night." ⁱⁱⁱ

Very few Jewish parents were lucky to survive on the Aryan side either together with or in close proximity to their children. Some parents had high hopes that they would be reunited with their children after the Holocaust, while others knew they were facing an ultimate death and could only attempt to safeguard their children's physical survival. In the latter cases, they hoped against hope that after the Holocaust their children would be united with and raised by their surviving adult relatives in Poland or abroad. This was their final will, articulated in their emotional letters and written with pressing urgency. However, these parents' wishes rarely came to fruition.

Within this history, the moment of separation is crucial to our understanding the possibilities and limitations of the family's reconstruction after the Holocaust. It is also vital to understand the postwar fate and cultural identity of some child survivors. In this essay, I will discuss five different cases of child survivors to illustrate the various trajectories in the lives of Jewish children who were separated from their parents during the Holocaust. I will focus on cases that reveal the complexities and impossibilities of a smooth reconstruction of Jewish families after the war. The long shadow of the Holocaust on Jewish families is seen in the continuous presence of secrets, in the missing fragments in their stories of survival, and in the ongoing suppression of their Jewish identity.

In the poignant letter of June 4, 1943, written in a small, forced labor camp in Czystylów, near Tarnopol (Ternopil) in eastern Galicia, Szymon Ginsberg addresses his three siblings living in Haifa, then Palestine. He informs them about the birth of his daughter Anna, born on April 17, 1943, and about Anna's rescuer, Mr. Walenty Laxander, a Pole of German origin, who with the help of a medical doctor, Karol Pohoriles-Buczynski, smuggled the baby girl out of the forced labor camp 16 hours after her birth. Without disclosing Laxander's name, to protect both his daughter and her rescuer, Ginsberg tells his siblings in Haifa that a Polish engineer whom he calls an "angel in a human body" saved his newborn baby girl. The

infant was given the name of Gizela Anna Zofia Darmont and was baptized immediately to protect her.

Szymon Ginsberg hopes that his siblings will establish contact with his daughter's benefactor. At the time of writing this poignant letter — his last will — Ginsberg is fully aware that he and his wife, Zofia Distelfeld, whom he met sometime in 1942 in the Czystylów labor camp, are doomed to be murdered like the rest of their families. At that time, Ginsberg already knew about the killings of his parents and other relatives by the Germans, and he suspected that the Jews of the entire Tarnopol region would soon be shipped to the Bełżec extermination center. With heavy heart, Ginsberg realizes that he will never see his baby daughter again and his last wish is that after the war his siblings in Haifa will care for and adopt the “poor baby I leave behind in this world.” Ginsberg writes:

“I beg you, as a man who has already crossed into the next world, I beg you from the depth of my parents’ heart and my own heart that you will carry out a search for my infant girl and that you will provide her with everything that I could not: that you will become her parents. I know that you will do that. I regret, and it pains me, that this is inevitable. The world is so large, there is so much space on earth, but there is no place for us. Our tragedy is even greater because we know that the world will be transformed and that the beastly hydra will be killed. However, we will perish before that.”^{iv}

Mr. Laxander was the chief manager of the construction firm owned by the German Artur Walde, where Szymon Ginsberg was forced to work in Czystylów. After smuggling out the baby girl, Mr. Laxander also attempted to get Szymon and his wife out of the camp, but this second rescue action failed. Someone denounced the hiding place of the young Jewish couple, and they had no choice but to return to the labor camp where they perished on July 2, 1943. Mr. Laxander was sent to prison for two years for assisting in their rescue. Nevertheless, before his imprisonment he managed to place the baby girl in a nearby Christian orphanage run by nuns.^v Once released from prison, Laxander brought the baby girl with him to his family and in 1947 he adopted her officially. In her letter of July 22, 1994, addressed to the Righteous Among the Nations section at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, the daughter A. Z. (Anna Gizela Darmont-Laxander) recalls that on May 18, 1952, her adoptive father, Mr. Laxander, gave her his brief memoir in which he revealed for the first time the secrets of her personal history.^{vi} On that day Anna celebrated an important Christian ceremony, the Catholic rite of First Holy Communion. Until then she had not been aware that Walenty Laxander was not her biological father and that she came from a different ethnic and religious background.

Not only did Laxander present Anna with his brief memoir, he also gave her a very special gift, a farewell letter from Anna's biological father Szymon Ginsberg, dated May 4, 1943. In that letter, addressed to the engineer Laxander, Szymon Ginsberg expresses his regret that he could not meet with Laxander again; he thanks him for everything he did for him and his wife, and he praises him as a noble human being, filled with goodness.^{vii}

Studying Laxander's brief memoir, one can detect the reasons why he decided to disclose her origins to the then 9-year-old Anna, and to present her with her biological father's farewell letter addressed to him. He was motivated by a strong Catholic faith, the importance of the Catholic rite of Holy Communion, and the respect for Anna's biological parents.

“During such a festive day I give you the farewell letter of your father. Let this letter, a gift of great love bestowed upon you by your parents, be a reminder of God's mercy. Let the letter lift your spirits during the challenging days of your life and let it be a reminder of the love of one's neighbor.” ^{viii}

What is also clear from his statement is that, in 1952, Laxander had no doubt that it was God who intervened and made the rescue of Anna possible, and that it was not his intention to conceal from Anna information about her deceased biological parents but, on the contrary, to make sure she knew about them and cherished their memories already at a preadolescent age.

What one can infer from Anna's letter of 1994 is that she considered Laxander a loving, dedicated and deeply religious parent. However, there are many aspects of Anna's personal postwar history that remain concealed and unclear, a situation not unusual in the postwar lives of some child Holocaust survivors. From another letter deposited in the collection of the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP), one learns, as Laxander declares, that out of a moral obligation, he indeed contacted Ginsberg's siblings in Haifa in the early postwar period. In fact, Walenty Laxander and a teenage Anna visited the relatives in Haifa in 1956. However, Anna did not remain with her biological aunts and uncle in Israel, but she returned with her beloved adopted father to Poland. Apparently, she was too emotionally attached to Mr. Laxander, his wife, and their daughter Stefania to make the life changing decision to emigrate to Israel and start life anew in a completely different culture and social environment.

In 2015, a male representative of the second generation of Anna's family in Haifa contacted me after I published the first article in which I described Anna's history and her rescuer. From his recollections, filled with sorrow and disappointment, I learned that the conversations between Mr. Laxander and Szymon Ginsberg's siblings did not go well during Anna's visit to Haifa, and in the aftermath, links were cut off between Anna and her remaining biological family. Mr. Laxander passed away in 1961 and received the title of the Righteous Among Gentiles, on September 2, 1996, thanks to the efforts of his adoptive daughter Anna, the child Holocaust survivor.

In a documentary film, *Wyrzutki* (Castaways, 2013) directed by Sławomir Grünberg and Tomasz Wisniewski, we learn about Jola who today still lives in Łapy, a small town in northeastern Poland. During the Holocaust, Jola was one of the so-called luggage children tossed out from trains by desperate parents heading for the Treblinka extermination center. Elderly Polish witnesses remember that the baby girl thrown out of “the death train” laid for some time in a ditch near the railways. They also remember her crying. Taking pity on her, a

local Polish Christian family took her in and raised her as their own daughter. Today, this child survivor is unable to speak about the past and her identity.

Anna's and Jola's cases show that the rupture from their soon-to-be murdered biological parents was the decisive moment in shaping these child survivors' future lives. Such children, who were cared for and loved by their rescuers/postwar adoptive parents, could not return, and recreate their Jewish identity. They could not embark on a painful and scary journey that would have brought them back to the Holocaust, and they could not embrace a Jewish identity that includes all the pains and fears associated with it. These children and their children would rather not touch upon the subject for a variety of psychological, social, and cultural reasons. They keep their "dark, painful secrets" to themselves. Moreover, some must be painfully aware that their social environment, which includes spouses and in-laws, might not be overjoyed at the discovery of a Jew in their family.

The late Romualda Mansfeld-Boot, born at the end of 1939 as Esther Goldynsztajn (Goldstein), learned only as a mature woman in 1989 that her biological mother Helena Goldynsztajn (née Bohm, 1919 - 1977) searched for her in vain through towns and villages in Volhyn, (today, Ukraine) for almost two years at the end of the Second World War. In great anguish, Helena explored all possible options in search of her daughter. In the hope that she would come across her daughter on a children's ward, she worked as a nurse in one of the hospitals in the post-1945 Volhyn region. The Germans killed the Polish railway-man to whom Helena had entrusted her blue-eyed, blond-haired toddler daughter, Esther/Romualda, sometime in the first half of 1943. With his death, Helena (known later as Lena) could not retrieve the next traces of her young daughter's wartime and early postwar existence. In 1977, she died in Israel, not knowing that her daughter from her first marriage was alive and living in Toruń, a charming medieval city in north-central Poland.

Romualda only discovered the names of her biological parents and some sketchy details of her wartime history in 1989. At that time, she learned that after the death of her father Jakub Goldynsztajn in the Bełżec extermination center in eastern Poland, her mother, pregnant with a second child, escaped with Romualda from the Brody ghetto to the Aryan side. This took place in the early spring of 1943 before the final liquidation of the Brody ghetto in May 1943. Romualda's mother managed to obtain a shelter for her daughter on the Aryan side thanks to the unknown Polish railway-man before she went into hiding with other members of her husband's family in a bunker prepared by her rescuer, a local Ukrainian man. A mixed Polish-Ukrainian and childless couple, Maria Titarenko née Kucharska and Mikołaj Titarenko took care of Romualda sometime around the Easter holiday of 1943. After the war, the couple became her official adoptive parents.

In her interview conducted for the poignant, 2015 Polish exhibition on Jewish child survivors, their perished parents (known and unknown) and adoptive Polish parents, Romualda, then a member of the Association of Jewish Child Survivors in Poland, recalls fragmentary vignettes of her postwar life and reflects on the complexities of her life as a child survivor. In early 1946, with her emotionally cold and strict Polish mother, Maria, she

embarked on a new life journey to Żary near Żagań in Silesia in the first repatriation transport from the East (*Kresy*) where she was born. Mikołaj, the baker whom Romualda recalls as a warm and caring father, joined them in Żary later that year.

“Mother wandered around Wołyń (Volhyn) for a year and a half, combing through towns and villages, while I was then in the Recovered Territories (Ziemie Odzyskane, Poland). I had a new personal data, I did not figure on any list of recovered people, therefore my mother could not find me. Certain that I had perished, she decided to leave for Israel. On the way there, she got to know her second husband with whom she later had two sons. After many years, in 1989, I managed to find them thanks to genetic tests. Unfortunately, my mother did not live to witness that. It was not given for us to meet.” ^{ix}

In a 2018 video interview for the memory project, *Zapis Pamięci*, created by the members of the Association of Child Holocaust Survivors and their children, members of the Second Generation in Poland, Romualda speaks with sadness about her lack of memories and knowledge about any Jewish organizations searching for her as a young girl in the early postwar period.^x Her encounter of 1989 with Mr. Reihman, an Auschwitz survivor from Łódź and the second husband of her biological mother, and father of her two half-brothers, the older one, Eli Ramon, resembling closely Romualda, was a “miraculous moment” in her life. Yet, as she recalls with stoic resignation, she couldn’t imagine moving to Israel and reshaping her entire life. Romualda’s encounter with her half-brothers and other relatives in Israel was on many levels a life changing experience, yet at the same time her life has been fully rooted in Polish culture and social environment. Therefore, after the emotionally powerful three-month visit to Israel, she returned to Poland where she had lived her whole postwar life and had created her own family.

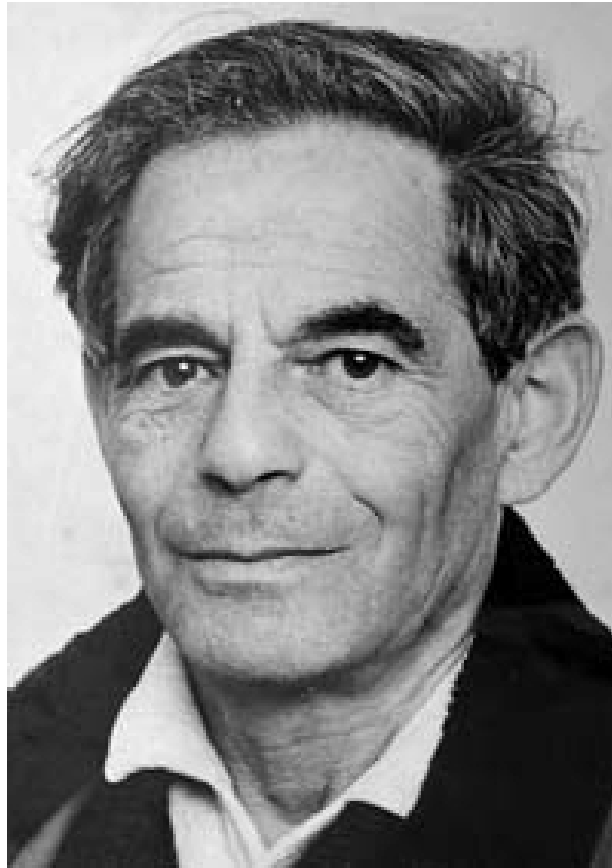
Romualda’s case shows that for child Holocaust survivors like her, at a mature age, it is too late to rebuild close and strong emotional bonds with a newly discovered biological family because of the lack of such bonds in early years and the long passage of time since the Holocaust. The sheer bad luck encountered by her biological mother Helena in her search for Romualda in Volhyn at the end of the war was decisive for the future fate and cultural identity of Romualda. We know from various archival and oral history sources that Helena was not the only surviving Jewish parent who did not retrieve her child in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in spite of tremendous efforts and years of searching for both the children and their rescuers. There were also Jewish parents in Poland (and also other countries) who successfully located the whereabouts of their surviving children after the war but were not reunited with them for a variety of reasons. This is another painful aspect of the postwar history of Jewish family that begs for a full investigation and retelling.

In some cases, searches for missing child survivors have continued until now by members of the second generation, cousins and nephews, who could only cling to fragmentary evidence and hope against hope that their lost child survivors could be identified and found. Ori Bickels, born in a small green Polish town, Tuchola, in 1953, immigrated to Israel with his parents in 1957. Ori’s father, Józef Bickels, was born into a highly

acculturated and educated Polish-Jewish family and had five siblings, four brothers and one sister: Samuel (Milek), Lonek (Arie), Wiktor, Jakub (Kuba) and Róża. Józef's cousin also named Samuel (Milek) Bickels (1909 -1975) immigrated to Yishuv Palestine in 1933 and became a well- known architect. Among his works is the *Ghetto Fighters' House Museum* in kibbutz Lohamei HaGetaot.



Bickels family before the Second World War, Private collection of Ori Bickels.



*Samuel (Milek) Bickels, 1909 - 1975. Photo from a website about Polish architects,
http://www.inmemoriam.architektsarp.pl/pokaz/samuel_bickels,18496.*

At the outbreak of the Second World War, on September 1, 1939, Józef Bickels, who before the war was trained as a veterinary doctor, was drafted into the Polish army as a lieutenant. He fought in the Defensive Campaign of September 1939, and soon after was captured by the Germans. He spent almost the entire war in a German POW camp, Oflag II-E in New Brandenburg in northeast Germany. While Józef was incarcerated in the POW camp, his brother Wiktor experienced harsh conditions in the Lviv ghetto where he was confined with his young family: his wife Roma Bickels, née Ratz whom he married on May 7, 1939, in Lviv, and their toddler son Alexander, already born in the Lviv ghetto in the autumn of 1942.

NA ŚLUB
ROMY RATZÓWNEJ
Z
WIKTOREM BICKELSEM

KTÓRY ODBĘDZIE SIĘ W NIEDZIELĘ
DNIA 7 MAJA 1939 O GODZ. 5-TEJ
POPOŁUDNIU W MIESZKANIU WIE-
LEBNEGO RABINA DRA J. LEWINA
WE LWOWIE, UL. KOLLATAJA 3,
MAJĄ ZASZCZYT W. P. UPRZEJMIIE
ZAPROSIĆ

RODZICE I NARZECZENI

ADRES TELEGR.: RATZ-BICKELS, LWÓW, KOLLATAJA 3

J. Friedman. Lwów, Sykaturka 4

The wedding invitation of Wiktor Bickels and Roma Ratzówna (Ratz), Private collection of Ori Bickels.

On July 4, 1943, Wiktor Bickels wrote to his brother Józef a desperate letter that he knew was also his last will. Wiktor wrote the letter in the shelter where he and his family were hiding for months. The shelter was located in the house of the selfless rescuers, a Polish couple, Jan Jurdyga and his wife Henryka Jurdyga, née Gwizdalska, and their three young boys. However, by July 1943, the shelter underneath the entrance hall to the rescuers' house at no. 359 Pieracki Street on the outskirts of Lviv, was not safe any longer. Neighbors began to inquire about the origins of the toddler boy whom the Jurdyga family kept "above ground" because of Alexander's young age. In contrast, his parents had to remain seated all day in the shelter, and only could stretch their legs at night. One month after the liquidation of the Lviv ghetto, in June 1943, the Bickels asked their rescuers to arrange a new shelter for their son, believing that Alexander could survive the Holocaust since he was not circumcised and had blue eyes and blond hair. The Jurdyga couple arranged a new shelter for Alexander: an unnamed Ukrainian peasant woman from a nearby village, who regularly came to their house in Lviv to sell milk and butter, took Alexander with her one day. Shortly thereafter, Alexander's parents left Jurdyga's house in the hope of escaping to the East. But, at the same time, they were fully aware that their chances of survival were virtually nil.

In his eloquent and poignant letter to his brother Józef, Wiktor writes about the scope of their family's destruction, the death of their parents and other relatives, and he expresses a wish that if he and his wife do not survive, Józef will track down Alexander and raise him as his own son.

“My dearest Józieńko, 4 July 1943.

I am writing my last words to you here. No one survived from our family, everybody has been killed. People who will give you this letter will explain everything to you. Mr. and Mrs. Jurdygowie, they have a heart of gold. They have been sheltering us till today. They were also the couple who were looking after our boy, but we were forced to give him away into the hands of strangers. In general, please remember to help THEM (Capitalized in the original letter) and be grateful to them throughout your life, do not forget about this. If you locate the boy, please bring him up as if he were your own child. He is our only descendant. He is not circumcised, and he has blue eyes. Mrs. Jurdyga could recognize him. These are my wishes. Now I need to say farewell to you. May Almighty God have mercy upon you and the child.

I hug you and kiss you with all my might, all my might. Yours, forever, loving brother Wiktor. Please remember about the dearest and loved people.”^{xi}

Józef Bickels received this letter only a few years before his death in 1996. Between July 4, 1943, and 1989, the letter was in the possession of the Jurdyga family, who in the aftermath of the Second World War, like many other Polish families from the Eastern Territories (*Kresy*), were repatriated to the Western territories in Poland. Once repatriated, the Jurdyga couple searched in vain for Wiktor and Józef Bickels through the international and the Polish Red Cross. In the aftermath of 1989, when diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel were reestablished, the eldest son, Edward Jurdyga, felt compelled to establish a contact with the Department of the Righteous Gentiles at Yad Vashem to honor his rescuer-parents who by then were deceased, and to search for Józef Bickels in Israel. This is how Wiktor’s letter eventually reached his addressee, Józef.

Józef Bickels’ son, Ori, still hopes that someone might know the whereabouts of Alexander who, if alive, would be 79 years old today, could still live in Ukraine, and might not know about his Jewish roots and tragic childhood.



Ori Bickels, May 20, 2020, Private collection

In similar fashion, Jack Skovronsky, the son of Eliyahu Skovronsky (Skowroński), today hopes to recover traces of the whereabouts of Mira (Mirka) Moneta, born in 1938. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Mira's parents, David Moneta, born on October 14, 1910, and Mindla Moneta, born in 1906 (or 1908?) née Skowrońska, lived at no. 26 Nowomiejska Street in the central neighborhood of the prewar multicultural and multi-ethnic city of Łódź. Mira was most likely born there. What we know about Mira's wartime fate is based on sketchy evidence, mostly memories of Mira's youngest maternal uncle, Eliyahu Skovronsky, born on July 14, 1920.



*Mira Moneta with her parents, Mindla and David Moneta, before the war.
(Private collection of Eliyahu Skovronsky and his son Jack Skovronsky)*

According to Eliyahu Skovronsky, in the summer of 1942, he was in charge of hiding Mira in a brick factory in Prądnik Czerwony, a northern neighborhood of Cracow, where he worked. However, someone denounced them and Eliyahu had to send Mira away to his cousins, the families of Rakowski and Banach in a small town, Kazimierza Wielka, 45 kilometers northeast from Cracow. The Rakowski and Banach families owned a lumberyard factory in Kazimierza Wielka.



The Rakowski and Banach family of Mira Moneta in Kazimierza Wielka. Before 1939, from the USHMM collection.

At their home, Mira was reunited with her mother, Mindla, but their reunion did not last long. With the liquidation of the ghetto in Kazimierza Wielka, only 22 local Jews survived the daily killings. Most likely, in the midst of everyday terror, between the different Actions, Mira was smuggled out of the ghetto and placed with a local Polish Christian family. According to Eliyahu who had contacts with local Christian Poles, he arranged a hiding place for Mira. It is possible that one of the headmasters of the two local middle schools, gymnasia, hid Mira in his home, and might have adopted her in the aftermath of the war. But the headmaster in question and any other witnesses have not yet been located. Both Mira's parents perished separately during the Holocaust. But the uncle, Eliyahu, survived and searched for his niece immediately after the war. At that time, he did not encounter any traces of Mira and he left Poland for good soon after.

Nevertheless, Eliyahu could not give up and he kept searching for his niece Mira into the 1960s. On January 25, 1965, from his home in the USA, he wrote an emotional letter to the Jewish Community of Cracow, asking for assistance in finding Mira. Eliyahu passed away in 1971. Today, a Polish woman, Katarzyna Szuszkiewicz, of the Jewish Community Centre of Cracow, with the assistance of a local historian, Tadeusz Koziół, are trying to help his son, Jack Skovronsky in his ongoing search for Mira. If alive, Mira is now an 83-year-old woman who may, or may not, be aware of her painful past and her family's origins. Like Alexander Bickels, Mira Moneta belongs to a group of missing child Holocaust survivors from Poland.

PS: Dr. Joanna Beata Michlic would be grateful for any potential information about the whereabouts of Mira Moneta and Alexander Bickels. She would also be interested in receiving information about other missing child Holocaust survivors. Please write to j.michlic@ucl.ac.uk

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Her research focuses on social and cultural history of Poland and East European Jews, the Holocaust and its memory in Europe, East European Jewish childhood, rescue and rescuers of Jews in East Central Europe and antisemitism, racism and nationalism in Europe. She is a recipient of many prestigious academic awards and fellowships, most recently Gerda Henkel Fellowship, 2017 - 2021.

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<sup>i</sup> Irena Klepfisz's recitation of her poem, "O moim ojcu" (About my father), 18 April 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrSwjM5C2U>

<sup>ii</sup> Testimony of Mrs. Majdanowska (Majdanowa) in Polish, of 12 December 1946, File no. 301/5289, Archives of ZIH.

<sup>iii</sup> Irena, Grundland, (born Morgensztern). CKŻP, File No. 301/ 5543, 4, Archives of ZIH.

<sup>iv</sup> Szymon Ginsberg to his relatives in Haifa, June 4, 1943, (Letter in Polish), file no. M31/7211, Archives of Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem.

<sup>v</sup> A slightly different version of Laxander's rescue mission of Anna is cited in Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt, 2003), 46. Gilbert bases his description of Laxander's rescue operation on the article by Mordecai Paldiel, "A Last Letter and a Precious 'Bundle,'" *Yad Vashem Quarterly Magazine* 26 (Spring 2002).

<sup>vi</sup> Anna Z. wrote the letter to provide evidence in support of awarding Walenty Laxander the title of Righteous Among the Nations; see the file of Waldemar (Walenty) Laxander, file no.M31/7211, Archives of Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem.

<sup>vii</sup> Szymon Ginsberg to Walenty Laxander, May 4, 1943, file no. M31/7211, Archives of Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem.

<sup>viii</sup> File no. M31/7211, Archives of Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem.

<sup>ix</sup> Testimony of Romualda Mansfeld – Boot in *Moi żydowscy rodzice, moi polscy rodzice*, an album accompanying the exhibition at the Museum of Polish Jews Polin Museum in Warsaw, in April 2015) published by the Association of Child Holocaust Survivors, 2015, 42.

<sup>x</sup> The 2018 video-interview with Romualda Mansfeld – Boot, <http://zapispamieci.pl/o-projekcie/>

<sup>xi</sup> Wiktor Bickels' letter of 4 July 1943 to his brother Józef Bickels, (Private collection of Ori Bickels) Translation of the letter by the author of this essay).