

THE HIDDEN CHILD

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VOLUME XXIV 2016



25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

INFANT SURVIVORS

OF THE

*Photo: Vesna Domany, age 10 months,
when separated from her mother. Zagreb, 1942.*



HOLOCAUST

THE LAST WITNESSES



Claims Conference ועידת התביעות
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

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We are dedicating this 25th anniversary issue to the youngest among us—the last witnesses—because time now weighs heavily upon all survivors, and because the lot of the infants, ignored or dismissed for decades by older survivors, historians, scholars and psychologists, has been given its due only recently.

We're pleased to bring you articles from, and about, infant survivors in this year's publication of *The Hidden Child*. The contributors range from distinguished Israeli psychologists, Elisheva van der Hal (born in Amersfoort, Holland, in 1944) and Danny Brom (also born in Holland), to prominent scholar and rabbi, Joseph Polak (born in The Hague, in October 1942), to remarkable survivors, Renée Sachs (a teacher, born in Paris in March 1940) and Vesna Domany Hardy (a teacher, translator and journalist, born in Zagreb in May 1941). Each had to overcome a lifetime of thoughtless taunts, "What can you remember?" and careless comments, "You're so lucky not to remember!" Meaning, so lucky "not to have suffered."

Most survivors, including the infants, succeeded, professionally and personally, in most surprising ways. Yet many still feel that life's gifts are ephemeral, mere shadows that can be taken away from them in one catastrophic instant. As Joseph Polak says in his recently published book, *After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring*, "You can lead a reasonably healthy and productive life, while constantly feeling that it can happen again, at any moment."

There is a separateness that inhabits all hidden children, the youngest most particularly. Renée Sachs expresses it best: "...you're just watching the world around you. You're never really a part of it. So everything around you just happens. And if you don't make waves... they'll leave you

alone, and they did and I think throughout most of my life... events just happened."

When discussing their experiences, hidden children will often speak of fears and confusions that seem unique to them. Our readers will gain great insight from the study of infant survivors, written by Elisheva van der Hal and Danny Brom, which deals with topics such as "Attachment, Loss and Coping" and "Remembering and Identity."

If there is one passage in this issue that best encapsulates the state of infant survivors, it is the one expressed by Rabbi Joseph Polak on page 5, and abbreviated here:

What then does it mean to be a witness to such an event which you don't remember, especially amidst the urgency that you may be its last witness (shades of Job's servants: "and I alone have escaped to tell thee...")?

What does it mean to witness an event which, when someone describes it, is not believable? What does it mean to witness an event which, when you inquire about it during your early years, no one hurries to describe?

What does it mean to witness an event which by your very survival, you negate?

The answer to these questions is that one experiences one's self as an utter fraud, and this sense of fraudulence carries its own apparatus of destructive corollaries. It is to experience the utter de-legitimization of one's childhood; it is to be penalized as no other child for the normal amnesia of pre-verbal childhood; it is to be discouraged into probing too deeply into one's past, out of fear that whatever is unearthed will by definition be illegitimate; it is to join the hapless roster of other self-invalidated witnesses – they for their madness, you for your infancy.

We hope you will enjoy all the articles in this special issue.

Rachelle Goldstein, Editor

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AFTER THE HOLOCAUST, THE HOLOCAUST CONTINUES

By Joseph A. Polak

Joseph A. Polak survived two concentration camps, Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen, as an infant. With permission of the author and Urim Publications, the following article has been excerpted from After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring, Rabbi Polak's prize-winning memoir. (The book received the 2015 National Jewish Book Award; Biography, Autobiography, and Memoir.) This passage appears in the book as Chapter 8. (See also the Books section, page 41.)



Joseph and his mother, reunited. The Hague, Netherlands, circa 1946.

COURTESY, URIM PUBLICATIONS.

Below the proscenium of my childhood, somewhere in my third year, a massive curtain starts to rise. Some gray corduroy of exceptional heft is rolling up perfectly, as if onto a bale for the first time. I alone am on the stage, looking out into the world. With the hiss of the curtain's rise, the darkness of the stage is no more. From here on in, I am privy to all experience, in Technicolor. The amnesias of childhood are finally over. I am not very self-aware. I am old enough to retain memory. No more deleted scenes of Westerbork or Bergen-Belsen. I am able to take in ("apprehend" the philosophers say) the world as my own. The curtain rises to a streaked, flawed dawn.



To understand, though, the times in which my mind finally opened up so that memory could form in a coherent, recoverable way, to understand the times, the culture, the background in which Mother and I, but especially Mother, found ourselves facing in those immediate post-war years, allow me to depict in a few lines, the sheer headiness, corruptness, madness and – yes – joyous exhilaration of those days.

Remember that no country in Europe – certainly Western Europe – bore within it such deep and enigmatic contradictions in its politics and ethics, its sadness and joy, and in its guilt and innocence, as did the Netherlands.

Time and again, certainly early in the Nazi occupation, the courageous Dutch stood up to their conquerors. Serious public marches and vigorous protests were organized. An effective Resistance was developed that engaged in all kinds of subterfuge against the German military and the SS, and managed to hide hundreds of Jewish families and close to 5,000 Jewish

children.

Yet the population numbers, the death counts, yield another story. Belgium lost 50% of its Jews, even Germany too lost "only" 50% of its Jews. The Netherlands, on the other hand, lost 90% of its Jews. Of 135,000 Dutch Jews, fully a 108,000 were sent off to their deaths: 80% of Dutch Jewry.

In his book, *Hitler's Bounty Hunters*, Ad Van Liempt (Berg Publishers, Oxford/NY, 2005), describes the particular zealotry exhibited by bounty hunters delivering Jews to the SS. In the years directly after the war, these bounty hunters were indeed prosecuted and sometimes executed, but the picture emerging from these legal depositions is in stark contrast to the world of the Resistance, and to the Dutch as a humanitarian nation.

In fact, when the surviving Jews emerged from hiding after the war, or limped home from the camps, and they encountered their old gentile neighbors, they had little certainty as to whether they were meeting friend or foe, hero or villain, supporter or betrayer.

As Judith Miller has pointed out,* the Dutch poured millions into the Anne Frank house to give the impression that every Dutchman had been hiding a Jew in his attic, when this was tragically very far from the truth.

Returning Jews, moreover, encountered a Dutch community that in addition to its overall grievous war experience had also faced a massive food shortage in the last year of the war. Thousands had died of hunger, and so, not unlike the Poles, the Dutch saw themselves as victims of the Nazis and not as bystanders – certainly not as perpetrators.

The treatment of returning Jews was awful – some were placed in concentration

Continued on next page

camps on the Dutch border. Their fellow inmates often included Nazi perpetrators awaiting trial. The Jews were detained until they could prove their Dutch nationality. Others, upon reaching their homes, found their houses occupied by strangers and were permitted only the partial return of their confiscated effects. The Dutch did not seem to realize that treating Jews like regular Dutch citizens and not like a nation scheduled for extermination was itself a form of cruel anti-Semitism.

Moreover, if a Jewish child had been separated from its parents during the war, and these parents had survived, it was not a given in Dutch law that parent and child



Mr. Levi and Joseph in the Home for Jewish Holocaust Survivors in The Hague, 1947.

COURTESY, URIM PUBLICATIONS.

would be reconciled. On matters of family reconciliation, Dutch laws seem to have been written to protect these children from their parents, especially if their parents were Jewish, and Dutch courts soon became clogged with hysterical mothers and fathers who just wanted their kids back.

Was this Dutch culture of having to prove parental competency in order to retrieve your own children utter madness?

Was it cruelty beyond cruelty? You come back from Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, physically and emotionally decimated, having no certainty that anyone in your family is left alive — not even your children. You then engage in what must be history's most desperate, harrowing manhunt for your missing child, and when in some moment of divine grace, you locate your child, the authorities tell you your child is no longer yours — that the child's adoptive parents, who have hidden them all these months and years, are more competent than you are in your laughingly humiliated, compromised and shaken condition, and that these adoptive parents now get to keep your son, your daughter. Such a parent is left feeling that where the Nazis did not ultimately succeed in separating parent from child, the Dutch did.

Even in those cases where the adoptive family is more competent than the hapless returning concentration camp survivors, the cruelty involved in refusing these parents their children, to me, overrides any consideration of "what's best for the children."

If these are the biological parents that God provided these children, then place this moral dilemma at His feet, and do not play His role yourself.

The Dutch Jews, having a growing sense that they were not among friends, began to leave the Netherlands for Israel, the US, and Canada. Before the war Holland had 135,000 Jews; in 1946, there were fewer than 30,000; by 1954, the Jewish population had dwindled further to 26,000.

Against this culture of grief, displacement, and the intolerable loss of vast communities of people, despite a post-hunger culture that hardly brought out the best in people in day-to-day neighborly relations, 1946 was nonetheless a heady time. The Allies had won the war, the Queen had returned to her country signaling the end of the five-year period in which the Dutch had been deprived of their sovereignty — people danced in the streets and the smell of freedom was everywhere. Mother found a few of her surviving women friends, and the three of them brought much pleasure and companionship to each other in those days of exploded society and café life, of street romps, and exponential joie-de-vivre. Albert Camus successfully portrays this joy and its accompanying amorality in his novel *The Plague* when he describes the social behavior that emerges with the dis-

sipation of the plague. It is also surprisingly well depicted in Paul Verhoeven's film (2007) *Black Book*.



It must be April 1947, and although the sun is shining, the Dutch spring still feels cold. I am four years old, in The Hague, seated in the large living room of the *Joods tehuis* (pronounced *yode's ta-House*), a place which today we would call a recuperative center; this one is for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. The intended recuperation is not physical. People in the home have largely recovered from the dreaded illnesses which befell them in the camps. There are no nurses or physicians here, and I remember no wheelchairs. What they are recovering from is the Holocaust itself, from which, needless to say, there is neither recovery nor escape. Their worlds are long shattered, everyone that matters is dead, and the point of going on in a country in which your neighbors betrayed you more extensively than almost any other country in Europe — the point of going on in this land with its inhabitants who avoid your eyes, and with its canceled dreams, is less than clear.

A group home, in which there is no group, in which people retire to their bedrooms silently after dinner. A group home in which the lights go out early, followed by screams and madness.

The *Joods tehuis* has bedrooms upstairs, a kitchen and living and dining rooms downstairs. Of the large group that lived there, a few faces are preserved in my memory, one of which is that of Mr. Levi, who is very serious and very bald and very tall, and who, in his unsmiling way, is very kind to me. We sometimes climb high into the stairwell where a massive oval port window rides inwards on hinges so sensuously smooth that just opening it is a treat. Here Mr. Levi shows me how to toss the pieces of bread high out into the salt air so that, to my great glee, even before they reach the ground, they are swooped up by the seagulls.

During those years in the *Joods tehuis* I was often overcome by fits of hysterical, tear-filled screaming, usually initiated by Mother's mad expectations of me. Fits which I was powerless to stop, and which in turn led Mother to beat me in desperation with the wooden back of a clothes brush I still own. The clothes brush did little for the

Continued on next page

screaming, and the fits ran a long watery course: my nose filled to bursting and my tears completely drenched my blouse and eyes and face and pillow (a big, starched, pink affair that felt like sandpaper). I could barely see my world through this foggy spray, it smothered me in a blanket of soft acid, leaving my face hot and raw. Sleep could relieve these fits, sleep, and Mr. Levi, who with his calm, high-seriousness and his unshakable respect for Mother, managed to steer me back to equilibrium.

• • •

I am up early this morning, glad to be out of the hard bed Mother and I share. Mr. Levi is the administrator of the *Joods tehuis* and the only other person awake. I am staring at three red balls lying in a clear glass bowl, a fruit knife perched vertically in their midst.

“What are these red balls, Mr. Levi?” I ask.

“Apples,” he replies.

“What are apples?”

“A fruit that one eats. Would you like to taste one?”

“Yes.”

He takes the knife, and with astonishing dexterity, peels and cuts it, and hands me a slice.

It tastes tart and utterly unpleasant, and I say so. Mr. Levi remains serious.

Mother, I discover later that morning, loves apples. Later in life this knowledge of our differences helps me separate from her.

• • •

Haya, my age, also lived in the *Joods tehuis*, with her brothers and mother. My memories of her then are indistinct. But when I caught up with her in the United States some sixty years later, I remembered with perfect clarity the explosive heartache I felt when she and her family moved unannounced out of the *Joods tehuis*. I am still able to come close to tears and experience how deeply I grieved for her when I searched for her the morning after they left and could not find her.

• • •

The child that totters out of Bergen-Belsen denies by his sheer survival that Bergen-Belsen happened. There is no stage entrance for a child amidst the thousands of corpses the British buried there in April 1945, there is no role — the audience wouldn't believe it. Those who survived the hunger and the typhus are



Hendrika Polak, Father's mother, and me, early 1943, before we were all sent to Westerbork. She was subsequently murdered at Sobibor, like everyone there, within three hours of arrival.

COURTESY, URIM PUBLICATIONS.

often spoken about in theological terms: a miracle, people say. But children? Toddlers like myself playing near the unburied dead are beyond what the mind can assimilate, they veer at the furthest edge where even theology dare not tread. The word “miracle,” however true, here rings inadequate, as theology itself is inadequate. It is somehow easier for those who look back at these children to exclaim that it was impossible for them to survive (how often have I been asked incredulously — *you* survived the Holocaust? How old were you?) than to simply accept this. For the children themselves it is certainly easier to pretend that they hadn't been there, that they did not act in their own drama, that their story belonged to others, perhaps to those who did remember.

• • •

What then does it mean to be a witness to such an event which you don't remember, especially amidst the urgency that you may be its last witness (shades of Job's servants: “and I alone have escaped to tell thee...”)?

What does it mean to witness an event which, when someone describes it, is not believable? What does it mean to witness an event which, when you inquire about it during your early years, no one hurries to describe?

What does it mean to witness an event

which by your very survival, you negate?

The answer to these questions is that one experiences one's self as an utter fraud, and this sense of fraudulence carries its own apparatus of destructive corollaries. It is to experience the utter de-legitimization of one's childhood; it is to be penalized as no other child for the normal amnesia of pre-verbal childhood; it is to be discouraged into probing too deeply into one's past, out of fear that whatever is unearthed will by definition be illegitimate; it is to join the hapless roster of other self-invalidated witnesses — they for their madness, you for your infancy. It is to refuse to stand among fellow survivors who do remember, out of the conviction that you are not one of them. It is to smile stupidly at Holocaust memorial events, while they, when they can, weep.

It is also to piece one's life together on the basis of the accounts of others. Your story is never really your own, it is always what others tell you it is, you are dependent on *them* for your biography, and you can never let these authors go for fear that when they are gone, your story will be obliterated.

• • •

In 1992 I finally find the courage to go and look at this place called Bergen-Belsen. I cannot begin to describe the desperation I feel: let me find just one tree that is familiar, one barrack that will link *me* to that bleak past for which I suffer — so run my prayers on the train ride into Germany. I arrive at the Memorial. There is a documentation center, and an historian appears at a desk.

“Can I help you?”

“I... I spent a couple of seasons here in summer camp....” He does not smile. “Would you mind telling me your name?” he asks. He punches my name and my birth date into the computer. It begins to print furiously.

“You are on three lists, sir. One is the list of passengers on a train from Westerbork to Bergen-Belsen...” I cannot listen to the rest — he has said enough. The list says that I have indeed been there, it does what memory cannot do — my past was finally my own. It is okay not to like apples.

• • •

Oh, the dawn, the dawn.

Less than one thousand of The Hague's 35,000 Jews returned. The magnitude of

Continued on next page

this void, the initial realization of the enormity, of the scope of the murders, was more than the survivors could manage. No one had the coping mechanism for the synagogues that refused to fill, for the postwar return that didn't happen.

This was not about missing family and loved ones; it was about being the scattered remnants of something terrifying in its very vastness. It was a thunderclap from a slaughter larger than the human imagination.

In Bergen-Belsen, we slept dreamless like the dead. In The Hague, it was during the dawn that the nightmares first began — how we awakened screaming, how we sweated in our beds, our voices hoarse, dreading the night, dreading the enormous emptiness, dreading the camps we still inhabited. Thirty-four thousand inhabitants of The Hague (say it slowly) taken from our midst, taken while Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman played in the movies, taken when we already owned cars and radios. The trains and trolleys that took them away were still running.

In 2005, Rose, then well into her eighties, found me. She was one of the few who was a friend of my family before the war, and one of the few who survived, her husband with her.

"I became crazy after the war," Rose said, when I rushed to visit her in California. "It was impossible to be asleep or awake. I remember needing medication. It was all about the proportions of the tragedy, the

vivors were next to impossible to parent, wild and unmanageable. And children born into these families — families for whom the Holocaust during these years was not a thing of the past but an ongoing reality — such children I would classify not as children of survivors, but as survivors themselves.



After the Holocaust, in 1946, the Jewish home for survivors in The Hague sold its leavening to a gentile before Passover, as Jews had been doing for thousands of years — it sold it as if the Holocaust had never taken place. Not a beat was missed, not a hesitation apparent. I have in my possession the original certificate of sale. The Jews gathered at the table for this, my first *seder*, battered, limping, palsied, unreal, snuffling without joy, barely looking at each other. We sang *Dayenu* that year. That was the year I learned the melody.

They sang *Dayenu* that year — these Jews who in Westerbork had witnessed the hospital being emptied and its patients put on trains to Auschwitz thereby putting to bed any illusion that Auschwitz was a labor camp. These self-same Jews, who with the arrival of a new train every Tuesday morning heard the death knell toll for them. These Jews sang — If You had taken care of us in the wilderness, Almighty God, and not provided us with the manna — *Dayenu*, that would have been enough!

They sang *Dayenu* that year — these



Father, circa 1940. A copy of this photo is disintegrating before my eyes.
COURTESY, URIM PUBLICATIONS.

east, the train filled with the *umbakante kinder*, the unknown children, the ones whose parents had preceded them on the train trips to the gasses and the shootings and the burnings, the children who had forgotten their names, who were inarticulate, who were pre-articulate, who held each other's hands, their eyes frozen in fear. These self-same Jews who screamed and never again slept through the night for having seen those eyes, these Jews sang — If You had given us the Holy Sabbath, Almighty God, and had not given us the Torah, *Dayenu*, that would have been enough.

They wept through *Dayenu* that year.
After the Holocaust. ■

*Judith Miller, *One by One by One*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1990, p. 96.

Joseph Polak has published extensively in leading popular and scholarly periodicals and newspapers, including the Boston Globe, Commentary, Jewish Law Studies, Judaism, and Tradition. He is an assistant professor of public health (health law) at the Boston University School of Public Health; the rabbi emeritus of the Florence and Chafetz Hillel House at Boston University; and the chief justice at the Rabbinical Court of Massachusetts.

THEY WEPT THROUGH *DAYENU* THAT YEAR. AFTER THE HOLOCAUST.

vastness of it. And when we realized it, we could not live with it."

Rose's nightmares started to subside in the late 1950s; Mother's, as I recall, lasted longer.

What all this speaks to is the extraordinary unimportance of the year 1945. It marked the end of the war, but hardly the end of the Holocaust. The trauma of the Holocaust, only now being faced, only now being processed, hurtled through the 1950s and perhaps the 1960s. Survivors acted out; certainly many of the child sur-

Jews who had their children snatched screaming from their hands in Westerbork and tossed onto the train to Sobibor, these self-same Jews who waved to their children as the train pulled out of the camp, a train no one in heaven nor upon the earth saw fit to stop, these Jews sang — If You had given us the manna, Almighty God, and had not given us the Holy Sabbath, *Dayenu*, that would have been enough!

They sang *Dayenu* that year — these Jews who had witnessed the departure of the last train to leave Westerbork for the

LIZZI, WAR, AND MY FAMILY

By Ruth L. Weiss Hohberg

This story is a blend of what my mother told me and of my own memories. It focuses on the letters my nanny, Lizzi, wrote about her life in Germany during the 1940s. My own memories of this time are fuzzy, with only an occasional episode vivid enough to mention.

I must have been three years old when my mother hired a new governess or nanny after a series of unsatisfactory ones. Anna, whom everyone called Lizzi, was very promising. Tall, blue-eyed, and attractive, with a friendly disposition, she was 20 years old when she joined our household. At the time, my mother felt she was the right person for the job; my paternal grandmother was gravely ill, and an upbeat, cheerful presence in the house would be helpful. Many years later I learned that Lizzi was the illegitimate daughter of my grandma's parlor maid.

The young woman accepted my mother's condition that she give up seeing the ill-behaved crowd she ran around with in exchange for a clean steady job, a pleasant home, and the extensive dental work she needed. Her arrival brought a ray of sunshine to our home.

Lizzi delighted in fussing over me, changing my freshly ironed clothes and polishing my shoes more often than needed; we went for wonderful walks in Bielitz Old Town, where there was much open space and many grasses and wild flowers. She always let me pick a few, but kept it to a minimum, teaching me to let them live, not to destroy them by breaking the stems. On these outings she would buy me a delicious ham sandwich on a Kaiser roll sprinkled with poppy seeds.

For Christmas 1939, she invited me to visit her room, all decked out for the season with a dark green fir tree decorated with brightly painted objects.

In a letter below she comments that I probably don't remember a train ride she describes. She's right. I don't. I do remember the day, but not the date when she left in the morning to buy bread and didn't return for a very long time. When she did, she was disheveled, dirty and bruised, and had a harrowing story to tell of an air raid and being buried by debris.

I remember one particularly stressful evening in the apartment where we were living with an aunt after we had fled to Lemberg. Through a closed door I heard agitated voices and weeping in an exchange between my parents and Lizzi. My parents announced to her that she would have to leave us in view of the expected war and her impending marriage to a German soldier. She said she would rather stay and share our fate. That made no sense to my parents, who felt her future was with the young man. She left that evening.

We lost all contact for the following six years. The war took its global course of death and destruction. We had no idea what had befallen her, and she didn't know that we had been shipped to Siberia in padlocked cattle car transports in the wake of an agreement made between Hitler and Stalin. Those two dictators divided Poland between themselves, and as part of the pact the Germans withdrew troops westward. The Soviets rounded up thousands of refugees in border areas of eastern Poland, including us, and transported them to places in Siberia as newly-minted political prisoners. They used the manpower to clear forests, build roads, and do heavy labor wherever needed.

Eventually WWII ended. We were living in Central Asia. The Soviet Government extended an offer for repatriation and we accepted. On April 26, 1946, we boarded another long train of cattle cars, this time their doors were wide open for the trip "home."

The last leg of the homeward journey was on trucks furnished with rows of benches to Bielitz, now called Bielsko, the Polish name of my hometown. Now it was under the Soviet sphere of influence. We stopped at a curb in front of a building with a hand-lettered sign identifying it as the temporary Jewish Center. My dad jumped from the truck bed to the sidewalk, took our baggage, and helped Mother and me down. I could hardly believe that the fantasies of a beautiful home I nursed for the last six years would end on a street lined with grey buildings, with nowhere for us to go. I stood among the bundles, looking around, feeling forlorn and disappointed. The elation I had expected was gone.

The street that warm afternoon in May was quiet, no people traffic. Very far down the street I noticed a small moving object. I fastened my attention on it. In a few moments it became larger, coming in our direction. In another moment I could see that it was a woman pushing a baby carriage. As the woman came closer and her shape became clearer, she began to run toward us calling my dad's name and identifying herself as Lizzi. Recounting that moment brings tears to my eyes even now, close to seven decades later.

That very day she took me to the apartment where she lived in the service of a doctor's wife whose baby was in Lizzi's care. She gave me a bath, the first in a tub in seven years, wrapped me in some of her own clean clothes and fed me. This was a day to remember. A "certifiable" miracle. We saw her several times during the next six months that we remained in Poland. Her young German soldier husband had died in battle long ago, and she was about to be married to a Polish man.

In some of the conversations with my mother before we left Poland, Lizzi told of how it was for her when she left our home. One of the things that left an imprint on me, although it's not detailed, is the story she told of when she went to the German command to report herself as wanting to return. She was subjected to severe reprimands and vilification as penance and punishment for being polluted by working for a Jewish family.

Soon we departed for Sweden, hoping to reach the U.S.

Anna Lizzi and my mother began a correspondence at some point after our arrival in New York. As a busy teenager I had no interest in the matter, although my mother shared some of the information from occasional letters.

After the year 2000 my mother was no longer able to continue writing. I had aged and matured sufficiently to be eager for the connection and willing to make an effort to keep it alive. The question was the language. I was doubtful about my ability to express myself in German after so many years of disuse. I tried and found that I

Continued on next page

could do so and in fact Lizzi even praised the quality of my letters.

In time and with some prodding she wrote me a little of what she experienced after our separation in 1939. I offer three of her letters that bear on the wartime experiences as a memorial tribute to a person of value and valor, a great nanny, and an exceptional human being.

The following are memories as expressed in German by Lizzi and translated by me.

Her life span was October 1, 1917 – December 11, 2005.

I don't know where to begin, and what will interest you.

I think I'll start with when I left the family to join a German Welfare Group. I was walking down the street when I heard two women talking to each other, saying something about a commission at the Evangelical Church that accepts many who register, and that the NKVD arrests people during the night. Your dear mother had told me to hide for the night at Josefova's, a poor old woman who helped the building's owner Moldau hoist the coal up the stairs,

During the day I went to the commission to register. They asked if I can write German, and I helped them with the registrations. With God's help I was to leave with the first transport, which met with an accident, and I didn't leave until the third transport was ready. For two days the Russians held us back in cattle cars; little babies in the charge of peasants died and they buried them alongside the rails. We rode over temporary bridges that swayed dizzily when the train rumbled over the span.

Over Zwickau we passed a ghetto in a factory where textiles were woven. We slept there on the oiled floor between the machines. As the peasants had sheepskin fur coats we all got lice. Thus a delousing procedure was done: cutting our hair, and spraying our heads.

We rode for five days along the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, Dresden, and the former Czechoslovakia, to Steinschönau, where we were housed in a former Czech school. We slept next to one another on straw. During the day we had to go to work. I went to a vulgar saloon to clean it. The proprietor, a large-bellied man with a toothpick-thin wife always goped me when I passed him. I told the supervisor the next day that I'm not a laying hen, and that I'd rather be a laborer or work in the glassworks, or with the peasants in the field. And so it was.

One day a man came from the camp. He said a commission from Berlin had

arrived, and I was to come immediately. As I was coming through the door something hit me hard on the shoulder, and the camp overseer said: "How fortunate for the House of Ribbentrop!" I didn't know what that was, and the overseer, who was standing behind me exclaimed: "You (sheepbrain) Schafskopf! Such luck!" Thus I was the first to leave this camp. It was a touching scene with everyone waving goodbye with white paper hankies as I left for Budenbach Teplitz..

There I received my documents and a small suitcase with some clothes, and was told to continue by train. Large tears were running over my cheeks when an elderly gentleman seated nearby remarked: "Such a young and pretty Fraulein, and she cries?" At that I sobbed more because I longed for my homeland, not to be going to Berlin.



Lizzi with Ruth in Bielitz (Bielsko), prewar.

A beautiful wide limousine took me to an estate where I was led to the ground floor; my clothes were changed to a class 3 servant's uniform, and I was set to sweep the pantry where fruits, vegetables, and other foodstuff were kept. Very hygienic storage for life-sustaining things. I was again deeply unhappy there, and wept day and night because I saw neither daylight nor sunshine. At home I was always outdoors wandering in the Beskidy Mountains and rejoicing in nature.

This went on until the chief house maid Lisowski asked if I can serve at table, if I know how to carry trays. I said no. You must

know, she said, because wounded soldiers are coming here, and I am putting you to serve where her serene highness will see you; so try hard, give it your best. I received a festive outfit with a headdress of bone lacework and the apron had a lace border.

On another day, I was transferred from level three to level one, into the rooms of the ministry. Only the hair, her serene highness said, was a bit too wild and needed the attention of the house hairdresser. In the garden there was a moveable stage where the wounded soldiers sat. The estate was once Hindenburg's property; Hitler's estate abutted it. Once when I was helping out, I needed to go to the hen house to collect the eggs.

Suddenly at a small rear door, Hitler stood before me. I, holding the eggs only said: "Heil Hitler," but didn't raise my arm, only held the eggs tightly.

I was also helping out for her serene highness when the father of her governess died. At the time her highness was pregnant with her sixth child, and wore dresses with yokes and tiny pleats. Each pleat had to be individually pinned with a straight pin and pressed. I was up at 5 in the morning and sang to myself while doing this work, when the lady suddenly appeared and I fell silent abruptly. She was very kind, asked where I was from and requested that I continue singing. She was an ailing woman. Pus had been extracted from her head; she always had terrible headaches and suffered a great deal.

Undated:

My dear Ruthie,

You probably can't remember how in 1939 before the outbreak of the war, your dear mother, you and I packed and fled by train to Lemberg, to an aunt who lived way on the top floor of a building. Your Papa remained in Bielitz.

On the first of September the war broke out. At ten o'clock the war was announced, and at ten minutes after ten there were bombers over Lemberg. I was just on my way to take a walk with you. We got as far as the large university when there was a crashing sound and the first bombs fell on Breyerouska Street. There was a large shoe store on the corner, Bata was its name; a young woman lay dead in front of the door and a two and a half year old child crawled on her chest, crying loudly and whimpering. I will never forget this scene to my dying day.

Since we lived so high up, and were being bombed night and day, we slept on grain sacks in the cellar of the four-story build-

Continued on next page

ing. The owner of the building was named Moldau. She was confined to a wheelchair and had stacked these sacks in the basement because she also owned a grain store.

During the night there was a heavy attack, and I was the only one who dared stick her nose out the door in the morning. The women from across the courtyard called and pleaded:

“Doesn’t anyone have some tea for our men?” (The Blue Police, the popular name of the Polish police in the German-occupied area of the Second Polish Republic). I went back inside and begged the stingy landlady to give me some tea. Unwillingly, she directed me to the sack in which the tea was kept. I took a piece of paper and reached deep into the sack, pulled out a fistful of the tea, rolled it up in the paper, and took it to the police who were glad and thanked me. As their thanks one of the policemen told me to stand at the house gate at 6 o’clock every day and accompany one of the policemen with a basket to bring bread to the guardroom.

Thus I took care of my people in the air raid shelter with bread, which I got free of charge. The bakery was near a gasoline depot. There was a large round plaza, gas cisterns nearby where there were many people sitting on the ground. The armed policeman walked abreast of me on the way there, but for the return trip with the full bread baskets he had to clear the path ahead of me with his rifle at the ready.

Here too I had an experience as people knocked down and trampled a wizened old man.

He was still alive, yelling loudly at first, and less and less until he was stomped to death over a piece of bread; a horrible sight.

One day I was returning from marketing with my purchases held to my breast. Here and there, a merchant would open his stall and let a few people come inside. At that time I had sausages, because the Jews were making sausages in the cellars on Persian rugs (they had brought them from their upstairs apartments for safekeeping). In Lemberg there were many Jews who owned kiosks in the marketplace where they sold their wares. I was also carrying Suchard chocolate in attractive wrapper with a St. Bernard painted on it, eggs, and many other things; when I was about to turn the corner on Breyerovska, suddenly there a whistling, whizzing, and an endless detonation. A piece of shrapnel hit the ground right in front of me. Had I taken three more steps I would have been hit.

I lay in a cellar for three days, seeing figures above me, but my eardrums were damaged.

After three days it was as if something in the ears burst and I could hear again. I heard a lady say she was from Bielitz and that she recognized me as being from there too. My people thought I had been hit and

Russians the right. That was the border, and your poor father was caught by the Germans because he was traveling on foot. The torn soles of his shoes were tied with string to the uppers. At that time they were still beating a Jew when they caught one. Only when the border was breached and the Germans

WITH MANY LOVING REGARDS AND A THOUSAND KISSES I REMAIN AS ALWAYS, YOUR FAITHFUL ANNI LIZZI

was no longer alive, and just around the corner from where your aunt lived near the movie house Marysienka. When I came back everyone was jubilant, happy that I was alive; also your poor mother.

Before the war a gypsy fortune teller told me that mine is a very difficult life because I have many crossed lines on my palms, and that I would have two husbands. That the first would be lost under tragic circumstances (he was killed soon after the war began), and the second would suffer from heart disease (he did), and that I would be as in the lion’s den, (in Berlin in the house of Ribbentrop). (Ribbentrop was foreign minister of Germany during the Hitler years). Finally the Gypsy said if I survive all of this I might reach a ripe old age. When would I ever have thought that I would reach 85 years of age?

Now I have to end. My hand hurts already. Forgive me my dear Ruthie for telling you so much. You’re probably bored.

With many loving regards and a thousand kisses I remain as always,

Your faithful Anni Lizzi”

The beginning of the letter quoted below wouldn’t be of interest here. It’s reverential and filled with expressions of love and prayer. Then the following:

“And now a few lines about the war.

I no longer remember where I left off, but I do want to tell you about your poor father. The poor fellow appeared one day, quite unexpectedly, he stood at the door. He was badly neglected, half starved, beaten black and blue about the face and the body. The Germans were advancing on Lemberg, they had already reached the railroad station. Then they retreated as the Communists (Soviets) advanced toward them as far as Przemysl on the banks of the San River. The Germans occupied the left bank, the

advanced into Russian territory did they arrest and shoot Jews en masse.

So you were lucky that your father could drive a car and that you were able to go as far as Siberia with the Russian military. I don’t know your fate and what you lived through there. Most likely your poor mother has told you about that.” (Translator’s note: By the time this took place Lizzi had already left us. This is an assumption on her part. My father was taken on the cattle car along with the rest of us from an apartment in Lemberg.)

In any case the Russians protected you from arrest and execution, although life in Siberia wasn’t very good. My good friend Mrs. Sonntag, whom I met when I was in camp, told me that she and her whole family were also in Siberia. She related that the icy cold was piercing and that one got nothing but sauerkraut to eat. You certainly did not have a rosy life, but praise God you survived the need and hunger. It was most important to your poor mother and father that nothing should happen to you. And today your poor mother has to suffer so much. May the dear Lord help her and free her from her pain. (My mother was an unhappy resident in a nursing home at this time.)

When our transport, where I was with the Wohlheimer Germans went over the Lodz Bridge we had a view into the Jewish Ghetto from above. Dead children lay about; those starved, barely alive sat huddled in groups - a gruesome picture. One asks why the SS and Hitler’s hangers-on commit such an atrocity. Without conscience they tortured those innocents; they did no one any harm. Why did they have to perish so inhumanly? It is also the misunderstanding of many religions. People don’t understand one another and murder each other. ■

PORTRAIT OF A HIDDEN CHILD: RENÉE SACHS (1940-2015)

By Keith Sachs

Renée Sachs' quotations in this article were transcribed from a sequence of videos, taped by high school students, between October 2007 and March 2008, for an AP history course and the "Adopt a Survivor" program.



Renée around age 4.

On March 13, 1940, a few short weeks before the Germans marched into France, a baby girl, named Renée, was born to Abraham and Sara Lyszka, a Jewish couple living in Paris. By 1942, as the danger increased and France's Jews were ordered to register with the police (the first step to the Final Solution), Abraham Lyszka obtained false papers for the family. With little formal education, but lots of "street smarts," he trusted no one. He had come to France from Poland at the age of five or six, and over time had become a French citizen. Sara had become a French citizen in a very different manner. Her brother had paid Abraham to marry Sara so she could escape Poland. The contract, not unique for the times, was very straightforward: they would marry, she would become a French citizen, and after the war each would go his and her separate way. No one had contemplated Renée's birth and how it would affect the marriage agreement.

As a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jew, Abraham could "pass" as an Aryan. So Abraham plied his trade as a master tailor, working for one of the big fashion houses, and the family lived a quiet but cautious life.

My mother was not educated. She had very poor eyesight, so she couldn't work. I remember very little of her, except that she was... a nervous person, warm at times, very cold at others. Her favorite method of punishment was not to talk to me for days, the silent treatment, which is very popular in Eastern Europe. As for my dad, I didn't see him very often. He wasn't a disciplinarian. He wasn't there.

Everything changed in 1944 when Sara was denounced as a Jew. Renée was alone in their two-room apartment when there was a knock at the door.

People say, 'well you were four, how can you remember? I remember every detail! I remember being absolutely paralyzed with fear. I knew I shouldn't have opened the door, and he [a stranger in blue overalls]

asked, with an odd accent, 'Is your mother home?' And I said 'No, she wasn't.' But the biggest fear was that she would appear as soon as he asked me that question...

The stranger replied that he would return the following day. When Renée told her parents what had happened, they moved her to a neighbor's apartment. The police came the next day and arrested Sara while both her husband and daughter were away. She was taken to Drancy, the infamous transit camp north of Paris. Eventually, Abraham managed to bribe the French guards and get Sara released before being transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

He promised to make them [the French guards] uniforms... So she was released and I saw her. And she was angry, she was sad, she didn't talk. I didn't recognize her as a loving person at all. I think that her stay in the camp really did destroy her. I remember just anger; I remember her looking at me, then looking away.

Renée's parents then decided to send her to a place where she could assume a new identity and be safer. As a 4-year-old, she thought she was being punished for opening the door and talking to the stranger. She felt responsible for her mother's arrest.

I'll never forget... hanging onto my mother's coattails, saying 'please don't leave me. I didn't do anything wrong. I'm so sorry.' And she remained motionless, very cold.

I was placed on a subway platform alone, with careful instructions to take the next train to its final stop, and later board another train with a certain number. I was further instructed to sit near an open window. I sat near a couple to appear as if they were my parents. When the train stopped and an official came around calling "papers, papers, papers," I was swiftly pulled through the open window by a man I did not know. He took me to my aunt's home. The trip from Paris to my aunt's home town took over 8 hours.

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Renée was taken to her new home in Saint Pardoux, a sleepy town several hours south of Paris. Here, her transformation from a little Jewish girl to a Catholic child was immediate, and here her childhood ended. She was hidden with an aunt who had fled Paris sometime earlier. She and her aunt were fair-haired and blue-eyed, and both could “pass.”

My Aunt Renée was a very pretty, smart lady. She spoke a number of languages. And ‘Uncle’ Alexandre was one of the best influences in my life, as far as being a father’s concerned. He truly enjoyed a little girl around... for the first time in my life, I really did feel wanted, that I wasn’t a burden, that he truly enjoyed being with me. And I truly enjoyed being with him. So, if ever there was a relationship that I treasured, it was his... I had probably the best childhood there that I’ve ever had, which I know sounds weird for a hidden child. I suffered a great deal more after the war and for the rest of my life as a result of what happened to me.



Parents, Sara and Abraham Lyszka.

In Saint Pardoux Renée went to mass every day, and to school. She learned the prayers in French and Latin, but was always sure she’d expose both her aunt and herself as Jews.

I had false identity papers... but I knew I was Jewish. I was constantly worried about being discovered and denounced to the Germans as had happened to my mother.

And part of me wanted to believe... part of me bought the idea that you can pray to Mary and she’ll be your mother for life, and

I related to that, needing a mother... the church was very pretty, the statues were benevolent, some statues carried roses... it wasn’t hard to imagine an angel or Mary or a fairy... somebody out there watching. It didn’t help very much later in life, but it helped then.

She would sit in the back of the church so she could follow the congregants in standing up and sitting down. In class, the nuns said that anyone who was not a Catholic would burn in hell. So she worried about her parents. How could she warn them? When she saw the priest in the street, she became ill and ran for the bushes.

While there, I was constantly afraid. I mean twenty-four hours a day. But Alexandre was such a lovely man, and he would joke with me, play with me. He’d pick me up at school... I felt loved...

Renée survived the war, but the years that followed were ones of more self-proach, distress and rejection.

We had to leave [Saint Pardoux] and I was sad. I didn’t want to leave. All these fears came back again... what if we left too early and the war was still on? What if they didn’t really know that the war ended?

Renée came home a different person to different parents.

We didn’t communicate. I’d had all the attention I wanted when I was there [in Saint Pardoux]; people played with me. My parents didn’t. It was uncomfortable, and I felt guilty about it, because I much preferred at the time my aunt and her friend than my parents. And I felt, oh God, I don’t love my parents.

Then my mother took ill, so I basically took care of her... I was the grownup. So she would tell me all of her problems, and she’d tell me a lot. And part of me wanted it to be that way... It was like, ‘Wow, they gave me all this responsibility; I must be very good.’ In reality, you shouldn’t do that to a child; it’s too much to bear. But I felt good about being a grownup with her. Like, I was her best friend, or a sister, a therapist, her mother. I was the connecting line between her and the outside world.

I remember being a kid just once. She got sick when I was nine, so I had to be between six and nine. We lived on the third floor, and she had a really hard time walking up the stairs. For some reason, she dressed me one day. I don’t know why, because I could dress myself, but maybe she liked the idea. She forgot to put my under-



Renée with her mother, right, and aunt, left.

wear on, and I knew it, and didn’t tell her. We went to the park and the poor woman could barely walk. It took probably an hour to get to the park, which was really a short walk for me. For her it was impossible. When we got to the park I told her that I didn’t have my underpants on, and she lost it. She slapped me, she screamed, she yelled. I was just trying to make a joke; it wasn’t in my mind to tick her off, or to make her walk more. But we did, and back up the stairs we went. So that was the end of being a kid.

About three years after Renée’s return, her mother suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed on one side. So Renée was sent away again, this time to an orphanage.

Then I had to become a child again, and I didn’t like it. I didn’t like somebody telling me what to do. It took a while to adjust to being in a school and obeying the rules.

In the orphanage, Renée received letters from her mother (written by someone else). When the letters stopped coming, she knew her mother had died. No one told her. Over 15 years later she visited her mother’s grave for the first time. She was philosophical about the time lapse. After

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all, there were many hidden children who had no grave to visit.

Many of the other children, true orphans, went to Israel at the age of 13. Renée still had a father and an aunt, so she chose to stay in France with her family. As the daughter of a tailor, she would be trained to become a seamstress. When she was 15, however, her father made another decision that would change her destiny. He arranged for Renée to go to the United States, to live with her mother's brother. She did not want to leave. She did not know this uncle. She did not know the language or the culture of this country. No doubt, some money changed hands. Her father signed away all parental rights and she was told that she was going. Another rejection.

I said goodbye to my dad at the airport and to my mother's friend, Madame Gugu. I got on the plane; it was like history playing itself out again; last time I was on the train by myself, and this time I was on the plane. And it happened so very, very fast. It seemed like a dream as did everything else... like you're just watching the world around you. You're never really a part of it. So everything around you just happens. And if you don't make waves, and if you don't tell anyone that you're involved in anything, they'll leave you alone, and they did and I think throughout most of my life, these big events just happened.

We had talked about it, we corresponded with my uncle, I asked my father if I should stay or go and he said, "Go." I didn't want to come at all. And it seemed again like I lost the fight, like I did when I was four. Not that I could have won it, but it was always this feeling of having no control over this. Somebody told me to go, so I went. And at the age of fifteen, I should have known better, but again I was taught not to make waves, not to give my opinion, and as long as I kept quiet, I would be safe.

The door closed and I said to myself, well you know I could still open it, I mean I could still ask them to open the door and let me out. And I said that until the plane went into the sky. It was paralysis, just like it was when I was a kid. It was total paralysis. I don't know what it is, whether it's not that I can't think, because I do too much. It's that you're used to looking at life from an outsider's viewpoint. I'm always ... I was always the outsider. My life didn't really count for very much; I did whatever I was told.

Now in a strange country, she could only speak to her uncle in French and to his wife



Renée in America, with Uncle Martin and Aunt Terry, 1956.

in Yiddish. They lived in York, Pennsylvania, which made it unlikely she would meet other Jewish children. Her uncle was the foreman of a suit company whose factory was in York. He and his wife had never had children, and it was no doubt difficult for them. Because she spoke no English, Renée was placed in the 7th grade.

They [Americans] seemed like everything was going their way; everything was so big and pretty and clean. They seemed happy, naïve, innocent—God is on our side and all is well. And then the first question they would ask me was where I went to church, and I was taken aback because nobody went to church, or any place else for that matter.

I was asked to speak in different classes. I felt like a new toy on the market. I couldn't speak, so, heh, there wasn't much I could say until about three, four months later when I was able to get the language together. I met a young girl who went to my school; she was from Germany, so the two of us kind of hit it off. I felt a little closer to

her because she was European... and I felt at home with her.

My aunt and uncle were nice people... very little emotion, very little warmth. I don't know what I was expecting. I didn't get any emotion, whether good or bad. And it was the same as going to the orphanage. 'This is the guy who's going to take care of me; this is his wife whom I don't know. And I have to behave myself.' I don't know that they didn't like me; I don't think they liked children. They were way in their forties when they got married.

And I was the best little kid ever. I often joke about that; someday before I die, I want to be bad! I didn't go on dates, I didn't come home late, I did my homework, I didn't drive when everybody else was driving at sixteen, I didn't even ask for it. They were very nice as people, and I'll be eternally grateful to both of them for coming here. But, Mr. Warmth, he wasn't, and neither was she!

I gave him a Father's Day card. I remember that very well. They didn't have Father's Day cards then for uncles. I couldn't find one, so I gave him a Father's Day card, and he looked at it, and he handed it back to me and said, "I'm not your father." And I thought, hmm, you got that right! Heh, but then my father wasn't Mr. Loving Man either. It was a very lonely, lonely time. I wanted to go home, but I didn't want to upset him since he wanted me to leave, so I kept saying, 'everything's fine.' I wrote glorious letters about how beautiful it was here and how nice my uncle was, and what a good thing he did by sending me here. I had a whole life here I would never have had there. But on a daily basis, I was very unhappy.

Language was always Renée's friend and she mastered English and finished high school at 19. Her uncle, true to his word, gave her \$2000 to be used for college or whatever else she wanted. He also made it clear that his obligation was over, and she should not plan on returning to his house. One more rejection.

In order to save money I lived off campus with a family of four kids. Mrs. Hoops was widowed at a very young age. My job was to be there when they came home from school and to take care of them every night. I had one day off a week, and that was Sunday. I was a mother's helper. I took care of the laundry; I took care of the kids. And then she remarried a man who didn't particularly like having a live-in young woman in the house. He made my life very difficult,

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and so I got the message and left. I couldn't afford to live back in the dorm, so I took a job as a waitress. That's the way my senior year went. I just worked and went back to houses to sleep, and I paid them rent.

Renée earned a BA in Education at West Chester College, and set out on her teaching career.

I found my first job in a public school in Gilford, Connecticut, teaching Spanish. That was the only job I could land in January. I graduated in January, a half year ahead, because I worked very hard at summer school so I could get out earlier. There were very few choices. Your best choice was to get married, have kids, live happily ever after. Just about everybody I knew in my senior class was engaged, because that's what you did.

I said, 'I will never be this way.' I will always be able to work. If the marriage doesn't turn out right or if I'm alone, I will never depend on anyone. I was never going to get caught like my mother in a terrible marriage where I couldn't get out.

I met Renée on June 23, 1968, a beautiful day. I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan, working in New York

that Sunday, and three times during that week. By the next Sunday I was in love.

After we married, Renée enrolled at the University of Michigan and she obtained an MA in Comparative Literature. She was



Renée and Keith, Central Park, 1968.



Joshua, Anne, Renée and Keith, a family rebuilt.

City for the summer. I was enjoying Central Park when I saw this woman, walking, actually gliding, through the grass with her shoes slung over her shoulder. I had to meet her, so I followed her to a park bench, sat down beside her and started to talk. Luck was on my side, because she knew someone with whom I had gone to undergraduate school. We went to dinner

offered a grant for a PhD program, but wanted a family so that was put on hold. She dedicated her life to rebuilding the family she had lost and to teaching. She taught the French language and its literature and everything beautiful about her native France. But she also taught the valuable lessons of the Holocaust to both children and adults at Holocaust Remem-

brance events and religious workshops,

Renée's story is also that of young woman who realized she had a responsibility to teach that there were better ways to resolve the world's problems than war and that each of us has a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it. As a member of the very few Jewish children who survived the Holocaust, Renée questioned many times why God had saved her. What did He want her to do? When He did not respond, she chose to do two important things: to replace some of the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust by creating a family, and to teach. She wanted to teach children, young adults and older adults how to love and be loved. She taught the danger of silence when evil threatens the world.

Our daughter, Anne, said it very well in her eulogy after her mother's death. "... Mom treated people not as she was treated, but as she wished people would treat each other. She had every right to think the world was an ugly place, but instead, she saw beauty in the smallest things."

My objective was to teach both beauty and hope, and my message is one of hope, living a good moral life and speaking for others who cannot speak. You can learn from tragedy. You can find strength and courage even when you're afraid for your life. Yes, bad things do happen to good people. My hope is that you will appreciate every minute of your life and make the world a little better for having been there."

Is anything going to change? I hope so. That's why I taught all my life. I certainly hope that I reached some of them. And that's all I can do. I can't change the world. So, the only thing I can do is talk and hope that others listen. And I think that you, the next generation, are going to be able to fight when anti-Semitism raises its ugly head along with racism and all the other 'isms.'

Renée ended many of her presentations with something she not only said, but lived.

Even in the worst of times, I have seen good people step up and do the right thing. Now I charge you to be one of those people.

We had 46 wonderful years together and raised two amazing children. My wonderful wife Renée passed away from brain cancer on March 8, 2015. Now that I have lost her, my heart aches for her presence. For you see, she was also my teacher and she taught me how to feel with one's heart and soul and speak for those who cannot speak. ■

A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER IN WARTIME CROATIA

By Vesna Domany Hardy



Mother and daughter, Eva and Vesna, 1948.

From the mid-1930s, my mother, Eva Izrael, then a high-school girl in Sarajevo, had been actively engaged in the antifascist movement. She had not yet met my uncle, Robert Domany, who served as an artillery officer in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, or his younger brother, my father, Rudolf Domany, who stayed on in Zagreb to be of support to their aging parents.

Eva Izrael and Rudolf Domany met as antifascist agitators, a dangerous activity in the then fascist regime of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. They married in 1940, as war intensified throughout Europe. When, on March 27, 1941, the government signed a treaty joining the Axis powers, the people of Belgrade rebelled with the slogan “Better war than treaty.” A week later the Germans bombed Belgrade without a declaration of war, and the Axis armies attacked Yugoslavia, which then included Croatia. The King and his government capitulated, dismissed the army and escaped to London. On April 6, 1941, the country was partitioned between Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Italy. The occupiers instantly installed quisling regimes in each of the segments, with the immediate introduction and even faster execution of the racist and anti-Semitic policies and laws.

Barely one month later, in May 1941, I was born in Zagreb, Croatia, amid all the tragedies that subsequently enveloped my once middle class, progressive Jewish family. It would be many years before I learned about the execution of my father and my maternal grandfather when I was three months old; about my uncle Robert’s death in the resistance of Croatia; about the deportations to Auschwitz of my parental grandparents and great grandmother; about the disappearance of another thirty members of my maternal grandfather’s Sephardic family in the horrific Croatian extermination camps. Their names were embossed at *Vraca*, Sarajevo’s monument to the 11,000 victims of fascism, erected by the previous regime. The Zagreb Association of Veterans of the Second World War honored my father and his brother by naming a street after them, “The Street of the Brothers Domany.”

I owe my own survival to brave women, but primarily to my mother, then only 21 years old. Through courage and presence of mind, she managed to hide me, thus saving me from deportation and certain death. The second woman I owe my life to is Ruža Fuchs, initially an acquaintance of my parents from the same trade union, who, in spite of all the danger to herself and her family, took in a Jewish child. In doing so, she also helped my mother to save herself, allowing her to join the resistance movement organized by Tito and the Communist Party.

Since my mother’s story preceded my birth and frames my subsequent survival as a hidden child, I shall begin my history in my mother’s own words. The following was extracted from Chapter Two of her memoir, published in Croatia in 2002 under her name, Eva Grlic. I translated this segment, which appeared in “Jewish Renaissance,” a British Jewish cultural magazine, under the title “One Woman’s War,” published in July 2009 as part of a feature dedicated to the Jewish Community in Croatia.

I saw the heavily-armed and well-trained German troops arrive in Zagreb with their tanks on 8 April 1941. Several excited women and girls showered them with flowers and oranges and climbed onto the tanks, kissing and embracing the soldiers. Later the Germans said that nowhere had they been received as well as in Croatia.

On 10 April, Salvo Kvaternik, a retired general of a defunct Austro-Hungarian army, hastily declared the Independent State of Croatia. Immediately the posters appeared, listing the people who had been court-martialled and executed by firing squad. The Zagreb police arrested the leading left-wing intellectuals and workers’ leaders, handing them immediately over to the police of the new Ustaša state.

Soon my father was arrested. My father was a gentle and good man. I felt desperate, the combination of my wish to save him and being able to do nothing hurt so much that my whole body ached. I dared not cry in front of my mother, lest I should upset her even more. She worried so much that in the few days after his arrest she lost 20

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kilos. Overnight my 46-year-old mother had turned into an old woman.

On 23 May, I gave birth to a little girl. In those days, visits to a woman in hospital after childbirth were not permitted, nevertheless my mother and Rudi [Eva's husband] and his mother and father came to see me. They were outside in the garden and we managed to communicate through the open window of the room. All my visitors wore a yellow cloth with a black Star of David printed next to the letter Ž for Židov (Jew).

Seeing my family wearing these humiliating signs, which recalled the Middle ages and spoke worlds about the character of the new Independent State of Croatia, I contracted a high fever. The other women in the same room tried to comfort me by telling me not to cry because my milk could dry up.

Every successive day brought more unpleasant surprises, such as having to report to many newly-improvised offices. Almost daily new warnings appeared on the walls. One day, such a notice read that Serbs and Jews were not permitted to live in the north (better) part of the town. Then it was ordered that all Jews and Serbs must relinquish their cars and radios.

It was on 21 June 1941 that we heard about the German attack on the Soviet Union. Soon after, agents came to take us to the premises of the Trade Fair. Ustašas with machine-guns stood at the entrance ready to shoot. Vesna was one month old. They arrested a considerable number of Zagreb Jews. Several well-organised and talented young women, perhaps teachers, grouped all the children in one corner and kept them calm by telling them stories. I was breast-feeding Vesna when Ustaša officers began calling out our names. The women advised me that

HE LOOKED AT US AGAIN, HIS EYES RESTED ON THE CHILD AND THEN HE BELLOUED: "HOME!"

when our names were called I should keep the baby on my breast. I approached the table with Vesna and Rudi in this way. The Officer in charge said: "But you are not Jews!" I answered "Yes, we are!" He looked at us again, his eyes rested on the child and then he bellowed: "Home!" It must have been with some speed that we found ourselves on the



The only photo Vesna has in which she appears with both her parents. Rudi (center front) and Eva, holding infant Vesna (on right), sunbathing on rooftop of condominium in June 1941.

outer side of the gate of the Trade Fair.

A few days later the police came to arrest Rudi. I never saw Rudi again. He faced the firing squad with 90 Serbs, Jews and communists in reprisals for an attack on the Ustaša patrol.

In the middle of all these convulsions and tragedies, a stranger appeared at the door of our comfortably furnished apartment: a tall, skinny man in a worn suit with a hat pulled down over his forehead. He pushed a piece of paper in front of me, saying that the apartment had been requisitioned: "It is no longer your apartment, but mine. Take the most necessary things with you and get out!"

My mother and Rudi's parents were turned out of their apartments at the same time. All of us took refuge in the spacious apartment of a relative, Tonka. On the door of Tonka's apartment, a notice read that it had been assigned to the Italian military mission for the director/conductor of their band. We believed that we would be safer here

because Italians were kinder to the Jews than the Ustaša. The director occupied the larger room while his orderlies were in the kitchen. In my school days in Sarajevo I had studied French and Latin and found Italian easy to understand so I became the apartment's official interpreter.

The rest of us were somehow squeezed in the two remaining rooms. My mother slept with Vesna in the maid's room, but we used to spend the rest of the time in the kitchen. My mother-in-law crocheted and knitted baby clothes commissioned by a shop. All of us learnt to do this and production was booming. In this way, we managed to make some money to buy food.

Our 'own' Italian officer was settling down well in Zagreb. With his band he performed at the bandstand on Zrinjevac (the park square in the centre of the town) and he would encourage us to come and to listen to them playing. The Italians also played while marching through the streets, with our maestro marching in front, waving his conductor's baton. He made friends and acquaintances in Zagreb whom he began inviting for dinners. On one occasion he even invited all of us for dinner. His orderlies were busy in the kitchen, talking loudly while cooking. They would bring in delicacies we could only dream about at that time. One day I was shocked when one of his visitors

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was the younger sister of a friend of mine. The girl only nodded in greeting and went straight into the Italian officer's room. I was ashamed on her account.

One night we were awakened by the noise of heavy lorries, and shouting, screaming, rough voices. One after another the trucks pulled into the little square bellow. Entire families, with their bundles, were loaded onto them. The Ustašas shouted: "Faster! Faster! Get on!" The women were lamenting, crying, the children screaming. We knew our turn was coming. I grabbed Vesna and a handful of her things, hurrying with her to the basement. I woke the caretaker and she took my child in, promising that she would take care of her and ensure she had a Christian upbringing.

Everybody was in a state of anxious agitation, fear and indecision. We were helpless, caught in a mousetrap. It took a while before they rang at our door. About ten men, mostly in civilian clothes, burst into the apartment. One of them began reading names from strips of paper.

I decided to wake up the Italian officer and we knocked on his door. I told the Ustašas that they were not authorized to burst into an Italian officer's residence at night. At that moment the Italian came out and I asked him to protect us. I told him that being an honourable man he could not permit them to burst into his apartment at night without any permission. The agents refused to listen. "We don't know anything about this. You have to come with us, hurry up!" But I protested loudly in the name of the Italian officer, and told him what they were saying. Finally, they agreed to sit down in the salon and negotiate.

Although my knowledge of Italian was minimal, I boldly translated what the Italian was supposedly saying, and reported back to him my version of their reply. I told them that he was not happy, that his military command would lodge a protest about such unwarranted disturbance, that they were allies and that such conduct was intolerable. The Italian was desperate, being even more frightened than we were. In the end the Ustašas demanded a guarantee that we would all be there the next day when they would return for us. Our maestro was bleating that he had a wife and bambini in Milan; what was to become of them if something happened to him? Naturally, I did not translate his laments.

Finally, the agents made a list of names that the Italian officer had to sign. He signed

with a trembling hand and the Ustašas left. The racket in the street went on. Nobody slept any more that night but the toilet was in constant use.

Every day, for the next ten days, I looked for different places for my mother, my parents-in-law, grandmother Teresa, aunt Tonka and her daughter Ružica to spend the night. I had many comrades from SBOTIC (the trade union) and knew many other people. Some



Eva as a partisan

of them gave shelter to my family for a night or two. I bleached my hair in order not to be recognised by some agent in the street while I went about town to complete various tasks, such as making the contacts to leave Zagreb as soon as possible.

After ten days, when I came to Tonka's apartment, I found the bags and rucksacks ready in the entry hall. My mother-in-law said, "We cannot go on like this. We are too old to sleep at a different place every night and exposing to risk our hosts on our account.

We are staying here to be taken where all the others are." She was then about 50 and could have come with us, but she did not want to leave her aged mother and her aged husband who could not be without her help. It was clear to me that she knew she was sacrificing herself.

I did not permit my mother to stay, and I continued to hide her at different places. I do not know exactly the date, that early spring in 1942, when Debora and Josip Domany, Teresa Kohn, her nieces Tonka and Ružica were deported. We never heard from them again. Much later we learnt that they were taken to Auschwitz.

During one of these perilous days I met Ruža and Otto Fuchs in Jurisiceva Street (in the town centre). We knew each other from SBOTIC. Otto was a journalist and, although of Jewish extraction, he believed he was safe in Zagreb because Ruža was of German extraction and registered as a Catholic. (Even so, he was executed, by hanging, as a Jew at the end of 1944). Ruža asked me what was going to happen with Vesna and as I could not tell her, she offered: "Leave the child with me; I am going to look after her along with my baby Silva until your return." It was easier for me to leave the child with people I felt akin to, so I brought then ten-month-old Vesna to them, in March 1942.

I have never undergone psychoanalysis or counselling, so my early memories have never been pulled out from under the cover of the sub-conscious. Until I reached the age at which memories are sorted out in more or less chronological order, what I recall from my early childhood is rather a collection of random tableaux in which the war is present as the howl of anti-aircraft sirens. It was then that we would be awakened in the night, hastily dressed and carried into the air raid shelter wrapped in blankets. Another vivid memory is of desolation and fear of abandonment when I was left in the hospital, ill with diphtheria. Quarantined behind a glass wall, I could see my guardians leaving me, and this made me inconsolable. I must have been about three years old at the time.

My foster mother was a linguist. She worked as a translator in an office, although not long after they took me in, she was dismissed as undesirable. My foster family had absolute confidence in their live-in maid Rezika who knew about me and stayed with the family all through the war, and in fact for the rest of her life. The Fuchs

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had two little girls of their own. The older one Silva was 18 months old when they took me in, while Milana was born 18 months later. Both girls had flaxen hair and blue eyes; in contrast, I was dark haired and dark eyed. In order to protect me, as well as themselves, and with the help of the underground resistance, my protectors managed to procure false documents portraying me as an orphaned Christian child from Bosnia. The ruse obviously worked against often suspicious and not too well-meant questioning.

We three girls were attached to the maid in spite of her occasional cruelty. When I would wet the bed, even as a toddler, she would spank me with prickly nettles which she later cooked as spinach. Formerly a farmer, she had come to work for the Fuchs family after being widowed years before the war. Without the convenience of present-day appliances, she never stopped working—as a cook, nanny, washer-woman, fire-maker, cleaner



Vesna and Eva, when reunited, with foster sister Silva.

and, during the war years, often as the only food provider. That we never went hungry, we owe to her. She knew how to find and use so many natural resources. She would collect wild vegetables in the nearby meadows, teach us about medicinal plants, when to collect and how to dry camomile flowers, etc. She kept ducks, chickens and angora rabbits in the woodshed in the courtyard.

My foster mother made us dresses from the remains of my mother's wardrobe and, judging by a few photos taken at the time, we looked beautifully turned out. She was a very kind person with a wry sense of humor. I remember her being angry only once, when Rezika took us to church and made us kneel on the cold stone. Not wanting to leave her, her Jewish husband Otto refused to join the resistance in spite of the frequent warnings my moth-



Wedding photo of Eva Izrael and Rudolf Domany, 1940.

er sent him through underground channels. He believed he was safe because at the beginning of the Ustaša regime the Croatian Cardinal Stepinac had managed to obtain a guarantee for Jews married to Christians. The uncertainty must have made it hard for my foster mother.

In spite of the cardinal's guarantee, Otto was arrested as a Jew and executed by hanging in December 1944. The women must have protected us children from learning about it. Such a shock is something a child between the age of three and four would remember. After Otto's death Rezika was of great help taking the three of us to her village home for what were to be the last months of the war, to protect us from the possible last minute crimes by the *Ustašas*.

Because Rezika had dark hair in the otherwise blond family, I was convinced that she was my mother. So what a surprise I had one day when, while sitting on the toilet, a photo of a young woman was pushed under the door towards me. This must have been some time after the war ended, as I remember vividly asking who was in the picture. The answer from behind the door was that it was my mother. Naturally I did not want to know about it, I did not need another mother. I already had two.

In the Resistance my mother had been working in the Agitprop of the Communist Resistance movement as a journalist. In October 1944 she was flown by the Allies from their base on Vis Island to just liberated Belgrade. There she worked in children's publishing until she was finally demobilized in the summer of 1945 and allowed to return to Zagreb several weeks after its liberation.

When I was reunited with my mother, she learned that the two of us were the

only survivors of the entire family, apart from her young uncle Moshe Izrael, who survived as a POW in a German Stalag and who left for Israel in 1949.

Back in Zagreb in 1945, My mother had to pick up the pieces of her destroyed life. She dedicated a lot of time to me, with much love and attention to win me over. Gradually we got used to each other – she probably spoiled me to compensate for the lost years. My foster mother was a great help to us and her home and family remained open to me as long as she lived. Very soon I found life with my mother exciting. Sometimes she would take me along on the official car journeys which took her to interview people or write reportages. At other times I would sit with her in her newspaper office, drawing pictures.

A year after her return my mother remarried. She was only twenty-six and my stepfather Danko Grlic was three years younger. He was a journalist as well, an enlightened and progressive man in spite of his young age. He was not Jewish and, like many people who have experienced war first-hand, he was against any organized religion. A year after their marriage, I had a little brother and we became a family, with the house always full of their journalist friends, making merry, playing games such as chess or table tennis. All of them believed in the possibility of social justice in the new socialist Yugoslavia. The three years we lived together were probably the happiest of my childhood. My little war sisters lived in the same neighborhood, and we continued to play together frequently.

Soon this was shown to be but a dream: ugly politics destroyed our lives once again.

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When Stalin decided that Tito was too independent to be left in power, Yugoslavia split from the socialist block. For Tito and his group this was an opportunity to get rid of any possible dissent. So anybody who dared voice an opinion was soon arrested and imprisoned—arbitrarily, and without trial—often on the barren rock island of Goli Otok in the North Adriatic. The majority of these prisoners were falsely accused of being Stalin's spies. One hundred thousand Yugoslavs, many former partisans, including many Jewish intellectuals who fought in the war, were imprisoned in Tito's gulag.

Both my mother and my stepfather were arrested, and we, the children, were evicted from our home. Our maid took me, then age eight, to the orphanage, while my stepfather's family took in my little brother. He had just started to walk.

I was twelve years old when we came together again. We'd been thrown back to start life anew, now as second-class citizens, struggling under great poverty and deprivation. Our parents were not allowed to continue their careers as journalists. My mother could only work as a secretary, while my stepfather studied, eventually to become one of the best known philosophers of aesthetic in Yugoslavia. But this is now another story, for me perhaps more traumatic than the war spent as a hidden child, simply because I was aware.

My mother, who'd been a journalist, a resistance fighter, a political prisoner, a writer and a translator, twice married, a mother and finally a grandmother, published a book of her life memories entitled

simply "Memories." She had felt it important to publish, in Croatia, an objective account of the traumatic events she had lived through. This was of particular importance to her, seeing that so many people in the newly independent Republic of Croatia, as elsewhere in Europe, continued to flirt with fascism. The fall of the Iron Curtain also brought the now widespread vogue of revising the past so as to show that fascism was not defeated, and depicting



Eva, center, with son Rajko Grljic and daughter Vesna, 2000.

the fascists as the victims by proclaiming the wrongdoings of the Allies and the antifascist resistance. In today's Croatia, this process has been ongoing since its independence in 1991.

In spite of the political climate, "Memories" was widely reviewed and well received by the public and critics alike, not only for its honestly conveyed content, but for the quality and spontaneity of its writing. The chapter dedicated to her years in the Resistance was praised as the best account of Tito's partisans ever written on the theme. The book inspired some TV and radio programs in Croatia and Germany,

received ample press coverage in most parts of the former Yugoslavia, and was translated and published in Hungary and Italy.

My little brother became a professor of cinema and a successful film director while I studied comparative literature and history of art. ■

Vesna Domany Hardy obtained an undergraduate degree from Zagreb University and an MA in Art History from London's Goldsmith college. She began her career in Zagreb, teaching in secondary school, working in radio and TV programming for schools and at translating plays for an experimental student theater. She met her English husband, Malcolm Hardy, in Croatia where he'd been posted as a cultural officer for the British Council. Once married, they had postings in Pakistan, France and for many years in Italy. She raised two children, all the while freelancing as a translator, language instructor, stringer for the BBC World Service, and art consultant for the British Academy in Rome. She has worked as an interpreter in the ICTY investigations of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and as a coordinator on a project for unaccompanied refugee children from war torn Yugoslavia. She has translated several books into or from Croatian to English, and has written articles about Jewish culture for the magazines of the Croatian Jewish Community Ha Kol and Omanut, and Jewish Renaissance. Vesna and Malcolm (now a Jewish genealogist) have two grandchildren in London and, since last year, one in New York, where their film scriptwriter son and his family live. She travels a lot between the UK, Croatia and Italy.

Dear Editor:

Your journal is always interesting and informative, but I should like to correct a historical inaccuracy relating to the article about the film, *As If It Were Yesterday*, in Vol. XXIII 2015.

It is true that Myriam Abramowicz's film was the seminal event which led eventually to the Hidden Child Foundation, but you have completely ignored my role in this project.

We set up a small committee to turn the idea into reality. I was introduced by friends to Abe Foxman, Director of the Anti-Defamation League, and suggested the Gathering which he agreed to sponsor.

I attach a photograph of myself open-

ing the Gathering, with Abe Foxman. If my role was non-existent, as your article implies, would I have been asked to open the Gathering?

A book was subsequently published about the Hidden Children in which the author Jane Marks, in the last paragraph of her introductions, mentions that some people call me the mother of the Hidden Children, not a description that would have been applied to someone whose role was non-existent.

I hope you will have the courtesy to set the record straight in your next newsletter.

Kind regards,
Nicole David

Editor's response: The unintended omission is hereby corrected.





EDUCATION OF HIDDEN JEWISH CHILDREN DURING THE SHOAH

By Jacqueline Silver, EdD

When the deportations to the death camps began, a chasm opened up in the lives of Jewish children. Throughout Nazi Europe and North Africa they fled and hid, separated from their parents and other loved ones. Many Jewish children were hidden in convents, monasteries and boarding schools. Others were forced to roam through forests and villages, hunting for food and relying on their own ingenuity and resourcefulness. In some places, Jews were able to offer clandestine education to their children.

For children in hiding, life was constantly frightening and often boring. Many were in situations requiring them to control all of their natural impulses to avoid discovery. They had to be silent most of the time, not make noise or play. Often, these conditions lasted two or three years, sometimes longer.

There were Jewish children who were fortunate enough to receive some kind of education while in hiding. At times this education was formal and academic, including math, reading, writing, music, and art, while at others it was social in nature.

Although there is a plethora of information available about the *Shoah*, and even about conditions under which Jewish children lived, there had been no comprehensive collection regarding efforts to educate the children during the Nazi era between 1933 and 1945. I researched and wrote my doctoral dissertation from the historical literature to correct this omission.

My inquiry illustrates some of the ways in which educators resisted Nazi oppression non-violently and clandestinely. When Jewish children could not attend public schools and Jewish professors and schoolteachers were no longer permitted to teach in public schools, they set up places where Jews could teach and learn in safety. Even when Jewish schools were forbidden, instruction in many subjects continued clandestinely. This took place in cities, ghettos, in hiding and even in some concentration camps.

One of the positive consequences of 'schooling' in hiding places was the estab-

lishment of a modicum of normalcy provided by the insistence that children learn and do what needed to be done. As adults imparted information in various ways, children's attention was diverted away from the terror of their surroundings, sometimes even providing moments of happiness and fun for those beleaguered children and their caretakers.

The places where Jewish children were 'schooled' while in hiding varied and covered a wide geographic area. The form and the extent of the education Jewish children received depended on conditions, adult caretakers, and available materials.

In his memoir, Zandman described being hidden with four other Jews in a small pit under the floorboards of his Christian rescuer's bedroom in Grodno, Poland. Unable to move around, having limited food and water, life was stressful and boring. With limited subjects to speak about without causing mental anguish, Zandman's older brother-in-law, Sender, decided that he and the younger boy could speak about a neutral subject. Sender chose mathematics. Thus, during long hours in the darkness of the pit, and without books, paper, pencil, or blackboard, Zandman was verbally taught mathematics. He described having "a continuous mental exercise, an endless discussion and lecture and dialogue about geometry and algebra... I was hungry for knowledge. I was thirsting for it" (Zandman, 1995, pp. 113-114). Despite the hardship he endured, Zandman learned information that would later help him to continue his education, even to earning a doctorate in physics from the Sorbonne.

There are many other examples of Jewish children who were "home-schooled" while hiding with caring adults, including Anne Frank, her sister, and her friend Peter. In her diary, Anne described receiving schoolwork from a friend of the Frank family, Miep Gies. She wrote about "working hard at French, cramming five irregular verbs into my head every day, studying math and history, reading, and shorthand" (Frank, 1952, p. 37).

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Rochelle Velt Meekcoms was twelve years old when the Germans invaded the Netherlands and for a time was hidden with her family by kind neighbors. Meekcoms recalled her experiences hiding with a family of five children ranging in age from nine to sixteen. The children treated her like another sibling and “brought their books home to me so I could continue studying. They taught me to play piano and the guitar.” Although life was constantly frightening, she described the time with that family as “a happy time in an unhappy time” (Rothchild, 1981, pp. 176-177).

In France, Greece, Italy, Holland, and even in Eastern Europe, heroic Catholic nuns and priests were involved in the rescue and education of Jewish children. Catholic institutions varied. Some were boarding schools, others orphanages, and still others facilities where judges sent young delinquents. In her book, *Vromen* described experiences of Jewish girls in Belgian Catholic convents “as being initially bewildering. They were living in dangerous times, had recently lost their parents, and were hungry for affection and security” (Vromen, 2008, p.68).

Catholic religion was always part of the educational program in Catholic institutions. For Jewish children from non-Orthodox families, studying Catechism and eating non-kosher food was not problematic. However, children from Orthodox families had additional difficult decisions to make. For some Jewish children, Catholic prayer was calming and provided a sense of security, and some considered baptism and even becoming nuns or priests.

Many Jewish children in Belgium found refuge in Christian orphanages where conditions varied from place to place. Some offered safety and basic needs, but very little kindness or comfort from the trauma and loneliness children were feeling. However, in some Christian orphanages, children did receive sympathetic treatment and even education beyond religious curriculums. In her memoir essay, Edith Knoll related her experience in a Catholic boarding school outside of Brussels where the girls learned “practical things, aside from poetry and music, literature and history. She [the Mother Superior] gave us skills like shorthand, and I spoke several languages by the time I was twelve” (Greenfield, 1993, p. 36).

In France, examples of great bravery occurred in the small, southern agricul-

tural village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, an area known as the Creuse. The entire village of Christian people collaborated, at great risk to their lives, to save and educate over four hundred Jewish refugee children. Under the guidance of their Protestant Pastor, André Trocmé and his wife Magda, the good people of the village opened their homes and their school, Cévenol, to many Jewish refugees, including children who were incorporated into the school and received the same education as the Christian village children.

Survivors of Cévenol, including the teachers, have recounted an educational program designed for both intellectual and physical development. The school included a kindergarten for the younger children. Older children learned science, French language and grammar, math, and for vocational training, leatherwork. The cultural life of the school included music and literature and the children put on plays, had an orchestra and dances. It is clear that the experience at Chateau Chabannes not only saved the lives of these Jewish children’s physical and emotional lives, but also prepared them for successful adulthood after the war. (Hallie, 1979)

In Albania the situation for Jews was unique because none of that country’s Jews perished because of Hitler’s “Final Solution.” There were fourteen Jews who were either killed in battles as members of the anti-Fascist Albanian forces or in the line of fire. Those Jews have been recognized as martyrs in the fight against Nazi-Fascism in Albania. They were partisans with Communist formations killed in battles; some of whom were non-Albanian Jews. (Lolja, 2013)

According to Yad Vashem’s archives, Jews had lived in Albania since the second century C.E., and for centuries the country had offered safety to them. Prior to the 1930s, only about two hundred Jews had lived in Albania, however, as Jews in western and central European countries became threatened by Nazi policies, many migrated to Albania. By the outbreak of World War II, between six hundred and eighteen hundred refugees, had arrived in that most tolerant country. Despite efforts of Albanian and Italian officials, and Albanian citizenry, a small number of Jews were caught in the German web.

Albania’s dedication to saving its Jewish neighbors was based in BESA: The Code of Honor” in the Albanian Kanun, which

is a critical part of the hegemonic community’s values. Lolja stated, “BESA is a fundamental part of the Kanun, an ethnic code and ancient protocol ... a collection of Albanian traditional laws and rights that regulate all aspects of conduct within one’s family, village, clan, with members of other classes and with strangers.”

Among other components of BESA, is a requirement to protect guests, even to the point of sacrificing one’s own life. Lolja explained, “BESA is a promise, but not simply a promise. It implies essentially and spiritually not to stay indifferent to someone in need or being persecuted... It is a moral pledge” (Lolja, 2013, p. 20). Because BESA is deeply imbedded in Albania’s way of life, ordinary Albanian citizens and their government officials saved 3,244 Jewish refugees from other areas of German occupied Europe.

All during World War II, Jewish and Albanian children attended public schools. Lolja stated that during World War II, school life went on in towns and villages. Where it was safe, Jewish children studied under the same difficult conditions as any other child in Albanian schools. The Albanian method of teaching was classical, with blackboards and chalk in frequent use.

Simon Vrusho reported that Jewish children were registered at the “Kastrioti” elementary school, grade 2, during the 1942-1943 academic year. The children passed the exams and graduated. One was Juso Mihal Ruben who had been born in Prishtina in 1933; another Jewish student in the school was Voli Danilo Albahari, who had been born in Beograd in 1934. Albahari’s parents were registered as immigrants. Vrusho reported the name of the teacher, Nevzat Lalpardhaja. He also stated that the school register contained names of some Jewish students who were listed under false Albanian names. (Vrusho, 2010, p. 45)

Johanna Neumann, who along with her family was a Jewish refugee from Germany in 1939, spent the war years in Dures, Albania. In her interview with this writer, Neumann recalled her education during the first year in Dures as minimal. Adult refugees organized lessons for some of the Jewish children who were taught German, writing, math, art, and some reading. After most of the Jewish children in Dures had left for America and other

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countries, Johanna's parents continued to teach her. Importantly, her mother insisted that Johanna read anything she possibly could, and so she read many German books. In 1942, a strict Italian school, run by Catholic nuns opened up, and for two years Johanna learned to read and speak Italian. Johanna recalled that children learned to live with danger that was all around them and to get along with each other, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish children. She stated that she was extremely happy and proud to finally go to school for the two years that she attended the Italian school. (Neumann, 2014, email interview)

Although most of Nazi Germany's war against the Jews was focused on Europe, the *Shoah* went beyond that area. The Germans also conquered a large part of North Africa, including Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, and Algeria, an area with half a million Jews. During the war, Germany, French Vichyites, and Italian Fascists occupied different parts of North Africa. Devastating conditions that wreaked havoc in Europe did the same in North Africa. As was the case in Europe, Jews who lived under Italian occupation fared better than those living under the Germans. Italian soldiers were not as anti-Semitic and were generally less committed to using excessive force as were their German counterparts.

Reporting on Abitbol's work on this subject, Ochayon wrote that in October 1940 Algerian Jews lost the French citizenship they had been given seventy years earlier. In fact the Algerian government zealously implemented restrictions on their Jewish citizens. Until public education for Jewish children was eventually forbidden, the *numerus clausus* limited the number of Jewish schoolchildren to 7 percent.

As Jewish communities in Europe had done, Algerian Jews turned inward and established their own educational system. After the expulsion of Jewish students from public schools, the Jewish community created a network of secondary and elementary schools where Jewish teachers instructed Jewish children. The schools adopted the same curriculum, schedules and methods of the public schools, even including music lessons and physical education, where possible. (Ochayon, 2014, n.p.)

Even in some forests, Jewish partisans took on responsibility for the education of children, mostly orphans, living among

them. In the Bielski *Otriad* in Western Belorussia the majority of the children were teenagers, but there were a few who were younger than ten. Duffy related the following:

Two teachers, one of them a woman named Tsaysha Genish, instructed the camp's many children in a dugout school, which avoided non-Communist subjects like Zionism. "She taught us every Russian song that was popular in those days," says Anna Monka, who was then thirteen. She also led the children in games, taking them on short field trips and providing them with glasses of milk. But the school was less about instruction than keeping the children busy and out of trouble (Duffy, 2003, p.217).

The youngsters from the school formed a choral group, and they were often featured performers during the [partisan] shows. "I remember we used to sing a Russian song that tells the story of a woman making contact with a partisan and being grateful to be among them," said Monka. "Around the Russians we had to sing about Stalin" (Duffy, p. 220).

Levine described a group of almost three hundred Jews in the Nacha forest in Poland. They "were living openly and apparently without fear in the middle of the forest. They laughed and called to one another, and the children played noisily." (1998, p. 141).

Cholawsky reported on the Zhukov family camp in the Belorussian forest where two orphans, Yehuda, about age ten and Levi Neufeld, age seven, found a place among the partisans.

Though they were sad, the children retained that certain look in their eyes—the noble look that comes with suffering. Gentle, quiet, and well behaved, they gradually found their place in the forest. Levi learned to read and write, and both of them studied geography and arithmetic (Cholawsky, 1980, p. 155).

The trauma endured by hidden Jewish children during the *Shoah* was complex and has had lasting effects on all of them. However, it is clear from survivors' memories that some of their distress was diminished if they were fortunate enough to receive education during that time. It is important to understand what happened to the children and the psychological and social consequences of their trauma. It

is also important for scholars and others interested in understanding social conditions in time of war. By identifying the circumstances under which hidden Jewish children were schooled, and by reading the philosophies, priorities, and teaching methods of professional and non-professional educators during the *Shoah*, contemporary educators can learn how children were taught academics, survival skills, and civility even under unstable, frightening and dangerous conditions. ■

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Throughout her professional career she has been interested in teaching children to believe in themselves and to fulfill their innate potential while learning the values and principles of a democratic society.

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She is the mother of two grown daughters, grandmother of two boys, and presently lives in Seattle, Washington.



Krysia Plochocki

MY WORK IN CLANDESTINE EDUCATION IN THE PIOTRKOW TRYBUNALSKI GHETTO

Written in 1984 by Maria Trzcinska (Bejla-Ruda Ejchner)

Translated by the author's daughter, Krysia Plochocki, née Ejchner

As I write my recollections concerning clandestine work in education in the ghetto of Piotrkow Trybunalski, I feel somewhat uneasy. I am now 75 years old and have experienced a lot of pain and grief in my life. Perhaps for this reason, some facts, dates, names have escaped my memory.

Possessing an MS degree in history and education, I started this secret work in the spring of 1940 and stopped in the autumn of 1942. At the beginning I taught on my own, and only later joined Eugenia Rosenzwaig-Rozycka, who had an MS in Polish literature and had previously taught at the Jewish Gymnasium in Piotrkow, and one more teacher, whose name and specialty I cannot recall. We were three qualified teachers, working together illegally, providing classes called "komplety" for about 15 to 20 students, the majority of whom were girls. Our curriculum was based on pre-war Polish textbooks. Most of the students were in final primary school grades; some, high school classes.

At the beginning I was a "know-all," meaning I taught all classes, even math., which had once given me lots of troubles. I had barely passed my high school math graduation exam and still dreaded and hated it. To excuse myself for trying to teach a subject so foreign to me, I can only say that when our group of teachers was eventually complete, my students could not believe that I was only a historian and not a mathematician. Actually, it was quite simple: I put a lot of time and effort into preparing for my classes, and I never gave my students a problem to solve that I had not solved before.

Working conditions were very difficult. Classes were taught in one room of a communal apartment where, alongside the classes, numerous members of my family also conducted everyday activities, such as cooking, bathing, washing clothes, eating, and sleeping. At the beginning our family group consisted of my elderly parents, me and my four-year-old daughter. Later, in the summer of 1941, my sister and her two-year-old son came to live with us



Maria Trzcinska (Bejla-Ruda Ejchner), 1946.

too.

Classes were taught all day long, from early morning to late at night. Kids were hungry and were frequently getting sick, seriously sick. People in ghetto were starving and great numbers were dying of typhoid fever. It required a lot of determination and commitment in order to study under these circumstances.

At first we lived and I taught at Rycerska Street, sharing the apartment with the Fayflewich family. In 1941 the ghetto was shrunk and Rycerska Street was no longer within the ghetto's limits. Germans made us move to the outskirts of the city, to a hovel without a roof at Leonarda Street. Despite this new difficulty, we had resolved to continue educating children. My whole family lived on the tuition we received from the parents (I think it was 500 zl per month) and cheap meals from the soup kitchen run by the Jewish community. At Leonarda Street, we were able to grow some vegetables on a minuscule garden patch. All of that was barely sufficient to survive. My daughter and nephew were malnourished and constantly

Continued on next page

hungry. They were dreaming about food, particularly about growing eggs on our garden patch.

What sort of youth were these students in our “school”? How did they work and study? Whenever I think back on those years, I remember only their commitment and enthusiasm. Despite great hardships, there was no absenteeism; no one ever showed up without their homework done. There were no issues of misbehavior, with perhaps only occasional lapses of proper caution needed to keep the “school” secret. I’ll say even more: the test of our students’ commitment came at the time just preceding the liquidation of ghetto. Despite grim foreboding, classes were taught as usual and students worked as hard as ever. One has to understand that from the very beginning almost everyone in the ghetto sensed that it was not going to last, that the murderous noose was closing on us, that we were not going to live long. I am sure our students understood it too. Kids were maturing very fast in the ghetto. At the beginning there were only rumors, we tried not to believe in them, we tried to believe that it was just someone’s sick imagination... But in the end, we had to believe...

I’ll never forget the last day of school. We had our regular classes. Although most of us were aware that it was one of our last days, students bade me farewell, strongly believing that we would meet again, and study together again. It is hard to believe now, but on the same day I made preparations to leave the ghetto. That night I escaped with my daughter to Warsaw. My sister and her little son were already there. Thanks to the help of her Polish friends, she had obtained Aryan papers for us and a job for herself. This is how we survived... A few days later, the ghetto of Piotrkow Trybunalski was liquidated and most of its people were put to death by the Germans.

I don’t know how many of my students survived. In Ravensbruck concentration camp [author was arrested in February 1944], I saw a young boy, who used to be my student. Both he and his mother survived the war. After the war I met in Lodz my former student, Ben Giladi, to whom Eugenia Rosenzweig-Rozycka and I issued an official, notarized diploma for graduating high school. When I visited Israel in 1967, I met on the street of Tel-Aviv or Jerusalem a father of my former student.

With tears in his eyes he thanked me and introduced me to his family and neighbors “as a teacher of my daughter in the ghetto.” This was the most moving reward I ever got for my many years of work in education. I don’t know what happened to the others.

Finally, I want to emphasize once more the limitations of these brief notes. I am unable at the moment to put all the events in their proper time and place. I don’t remember names of our students. Nevertheless, I feel that this recollection may have some value as a supplement to the history of clandestine education in the Piotrkow Ghetto. I believe that some material on this history was collected by Eugenia Rozycka-Rosenzweig, who deposited it in the Yad Vashem archives. ■

Maria Trzcinska (Bajla Ruda Ejchner), my mother, was born in Belchatow, Poland, on Jan. 20, 1908. Her parents were Israel Pytowski, from Parzniewice, and Rozia Margules, from Piotrkow. My mother graduated from high school in Lodz, married Abraham (Broniek) Ejchner,

and continued her studies at Warsaw University. In the early 1930s, she received her MS degree in history and education. As a result of high unemployment and anti-Semitic rules regarding government employees, she could not find a position as a teacher in the Lodz public schools. She taught as a volunteer at a Free University. With the start of WWII, she spent almost three years in the Piotrkow Ghetto. In October 1942, she escaped to Warsaw, where she lived under the name of Maria Trzcinska. In February 1944, she was arrested by the Gestapo for helping a Jew, and was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp as a Polish political prisoner. Her parents, brother, sister, nephew and I (her daughter) survived on “the Aryan side,” but her husband (my father) was murdered by the Germans. After the war, my mother worked in Lodz and Warsaw University libraries. At the same time, she taught history and library science at both of these universities, as well as at Teachers’ College in Lodz. She wrote her memoirs in 1984. She passed away on January 21, 1986, in Warsaw, Poland.

A CHILLING REUNION

In hiding in Budakesziut, Budapest Red Cross Shelter 1944-45

How did this happen?

Who had the job to shave little girls’ hair?

I do not remember at all, at this hiding place.

It was so cold a winter in 1944.

But my reunion with my mother

Had brought it to my attention.

“Oh, Dear Mother, I am home!” I said

The response as I recall, was

“You are bald! What happened to you?”

“Please, Mother, I am so scared

Hold me, hold me

Tell me you love me

With or without my hair.

Tell me I’m pretty and my hair will grow back.”

Mother just stood helplessly at the door

Directing me to an orphanage

For my own good.

By Greta Elbogen

From “God Plays Hide and Seek,” (see page 42) Published by Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft, 2015

INFANT SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST: CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN VERY EARLY CHILDHOOD

By Elisheva van der Hal, PhD, and Danny Brom, PhD

*This article has been adapted from a paper in Hebrew that first appeared in *Childhood in the Shadow of the Shoah*, published by Hakibbutz Hameuhachad in 2007, edited by Zahava Solomon and Julia Chaitin.*



Dr. Elisheva van der Hal with her infant granddaughter.

It is estimated that between 6 and 11 percent of Jewish children in Europe survived Nazi persecution (Krell, 2003; Dwork, 1991). We will never know precisely how many Jewish babies born in Nazi-occupied Europe between 1940 and 1945 remained alive: As the Nazis aimed to exterminate the Jewish people, all Jews were in danger from the moment of birth, and thus many children had their names and identities changed before they were aware of who they were. Babies born in hiding were not officially registered until years after the war. If their parents or relatives did not survive, they kept the names given to them by their caretakers, never knowing their real origins or names. Many remained with their rescuers, never to know that they were Jewish or learning that they were only much later. Some discovered who they are and where they came from; others are still unaware of their real identity, mourning for parents they cannot remember.

The majority of infant survivors managed to make lives for themselves and build families, but even now, many struggle with issues of loss and separation connected with their past. In this paper we will provide insights into the special challenges faced by those born during a time of persecution. Using insights from psychobiology and attachment theory, and knowledge about coping with trauma, we will highlight concerns from early childhood development. We will illustrate these concerns with vignettes, venturing into the complex matter of early childhood memory, which has repercussions for identity, belonging and emotional well-being in later life. We will conclude with several suggestions for therapeutic approaches in supporting these individuals.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SURVIVING

During the Holocaust, babies were born

in open fields and forests, prison cells, labor and concentration camps, in cattle cars, and, if their mothers had forged identity papers, in hospitals. They were born underground, in holes where their mothers hid, and behind the barbed wires of crowded ghettos to parents hidden by non-Jews. They were the result of their mothers having been raped by the Nazis or their collaborators. When caught by their persecutors, most of these babies were murdered, often sadistically. Some were killed in despair by their parents, particularly when it was feared that their crying would endanger the lives of adults.

In concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt, where the inmates succumbed to malnutrition and fatal illness, a very small percentage of babies survived with their families (Garwood, 1999) or without them (Meijer, 2001). But with those exceptions, the few infants who survived did so largely because their parents had connections with non-Jewish caregivers. Though they might not have known what fate awaited them, these parents understood that the “relocations” were dangerous. Some parents entrusted their babies to non-Jewish friends; others had to rely on resistance organizations to find a safe home. Newborn babies were smuggled out of hospitals in laundry baskets and garbage bins, or taken from mothers awaiting deportation in transit areas. Desperate parents who did not have connections with non-Jews left them on the doorsteps of houses, churches, convents and monasteries. Young children were hurled out of deportation trains or over ghetto walls in the hope that a compassionate and courageous soul would save them. The motives of the rescuers ranged from religious or political beliefs, to financial gain, sheer compassion, or even the opportunity to obtain

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a baby for themselves; whatever their impetus, all of them risked their lives in caring for a Jewish child.

After the liberation, new problems awaited. If the parents did not survive or did not manage to find their child, some foster parents kept the child that had come their way. But the majority of these infant survivors suffered at least one separation – often several consecutive ones, if they had been moved from one hiding place to another. They were claimed by parents they had never known, by relatives of the murdered parents, or by representatives of the Jewish community. Many were placed in orphanages because parents or other kin were too weak or too ill to care for them.

Much more so than older children, such infant survivors were not acknowledged as having experienced wartime traumas or after-effects. More often than not, they were considered to have been too young to remember and thus “too young to have suffered.”

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the consequences of separation, loss and persecution on the later development of Holocaust infant survivors. Risking his own life during the Nazi occupation, Dutch child psychiatrist Hans Keilson visited and treated Jewish children in hiding. After the liberation he evaluated the effects of Nazi persecution on 2,000 Jewish war orphans; when these orphans reached age 30-40, he examined the consequences of their traumatization in a longitudinal study (1994). Among the orphans separated from their mothers from birth to 18 months of age, Keilson found a high percentage of character-neurotic problems, disability, emotional disturbance, and problems of personal isolation, insecurity and identity.

Anna Freud and Sophie Dann (1951) also studied young children who had lived through the Holocaust, noting their impressions from the Bulldogs Bank (England) refugee home, where six toddlers, former inmates of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, had been taken in. Born during 1941 and 1942, their parents had been deported soon after their birth, and the children had been passed from hand to hand. Apart from their hypersensitivity, restlessness and aggressiveness, Freud noticed their unusually strong attachment to one another. She continued to fol-

low up on the orphans’ personal development during childhood and adolescence after they left the group home (Freud, 1960).

Sarah Moskowitz (1983, 1985) followed up this same group of children, interviewing them when they had reached their forties; she describes how the infant survivors found ways to adapt themselves in adult life. Another researcher and clinician, Judith Kestenberg (1988, 1996), stressed the importance of recollecting the Holocaust years and described how she helped infant Holocaust survivors recall their earliest memories by making use of their sensory and imaginary abilities (being held, rocked, sensing certain smells).

While acknowledging the problems concerning recollection of early childhood memory, Robert Krell (2000) has stressed the need to explore these earliest, often traumatic memories. He points out that many of the very youngest survivors always felt that they had been discouraged by their caregivers to express fragments of memory, which then were experienced as symptoms.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT UNDER STRESS

By the end of the 19th century, early research on the development of mental processes had made it possible to understand that stress and traumata could lead to disturbances in mental development. However, it was only towards the second half of the 20th century that mental trau-

IT IS LIKELY THAT INFANT HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS WERE ALREADY EXPOSED TO STRESS IN THE PRENATAL STATE.

ma in early life began to elicit scrutiny and understanding. Bowlby (1969) notes how Freud paid attention to the nature of trauma only in his latest writings (1939). While Freud asserted that children are not vulnerable to traumatic experiences before the age of two, analysts and researchers have since challenged that notion.

Until the 1940s, most understanding of the effects of early childhood stress and trauma had been gained retrospectively, by working with adults. Anna Freud was one of the first to directly observe recently traumatized children. In her work with

children evacuated during the Second World War in England (Freud and Burlingham, 1942), she noticed the strong and painful reactions of infants between 12 and 24 months of age to the traumatic separation and loss of their mothers or caregivers. According to her findings, suitable care and attention could effectively remedy resulting symptoms within a few days.

Basing his Attachment Theory on the observations of infants in hospitals and on etiological studies of animals, Bowlby (1960) concluded that, beginning at the age of six months, infants are capable of mourning the loss of a caregiver. He found that traumatic separations at that age could prove detrimental to future personal development.

In his observations of infants, Stern (1985) found that, besides age and the developmental stage of traumatization, lack of attunement in the relationship between caregiver and infant can lead to pathological consequences. In his view, next to constitutional and genetically determined variables, this “core-relatedness” is, from birth on, of greatest importance for the future mental health of the infant.

NEUROBIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRESS

It is likely that infant Holocaust survivors were already exposed to stress in the prenatal state. During pregnancy their mothers lived with the chronic fear of persecution, as well as with all the dangers connected

to the war itself. Results of neurobiological research can help us understand the impact of peri- and post-natal childhood traumatic experiences.

Low birth weight is a primary cause of mortality and morbidity among infants. Recent research indicates that stress, lack of personal resources and the problematic socio-cultural status of pregnant women influence the birth weight of their babies. These findings imply that biological, psychosocial and behavioral factors contribute to fetal growth (Rini, Dun-

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kel-Schetter, Wadhwa, Sandman, 1999; see also: Da Costa, Dritsa, Larouche, Brender, 2000). It has also been found that a high level of the maternal hormone that regulates stress responses (corticotropin-releasing hormone) during pregnancy negatively affects fetal development (Glynn, Wadhwa, & Sandman, 2000). In a study of women who were pregnant during an earthquake, the traumatic stress experienced was detrimental to the fetus during the first trimester and was associated with shorter gestation lengths (Glynn, Wadhwa, Dunkel-Schetter, Chicz-Demet, Sandman, 2001).

Post-natal traumatic stress, directly or vicariously through the caregiver, can have consequences for the brain development of the infant. Perry (1999) postulates that brain development is hierarchically organized. At birth, the brainstem and midbrain areas responsible for regulating bodily functions must be intact. The higher parts of the brain, the limbic and the cortical areas, connected with motor, emotional and cognitive tasks, develop over time. By age three, the infant's brain is ninety percent adult size, suggesting that the brain is nearly organized by that age. Plasticity occurs in more or less the same hierarchy. Lower brain parts remain quite inflexible to new input once they are organized, while the higher parts retain some forms of plasticity throughout life. Traumatic experiences during infancy may thus affect developmental tasks of the growing brain. Neurons, responsible for modifying external input, are activated at the same time in the different brain systems during distress. Adversity later in life may reactivate memories of traumas during infancy and automatically elicit responses belonging to lower-level brain functioning. In this way physical and emotional responses are recaptured, without clear cognitive or narrative associations.

Sarah's case provides an example of how skin problems could be related to extreme stress in early childhood relationships (see also Esther Bick, 1968):

For as long as she can remember, Sarah has scratched her legs so badly that they bleed from open wounds. In therapy she came to recognize that this uncontrollable urge follows experiences of extreme agitation. Two months after her birth, the family house was raided. Parents and children were dragged out, shoved into a truck, and transported to a transit camp. There, Sarah

developed a rash that covered her entire body. Her mother told her later that when she was no more than three months old, covered from top to toe in bandages to prevent her from scratching, she used to pull herself up to a standing position from apparent discomfort. Later, in the concentration camp, the mothers were encouraged to feed their babies milk that had one day been unexpectedly provided. Sarah's mother was suspicious of this sudden generosity and did not take the milk for her child. The following day, all the babies who had been given the milk died. From then on, day and night, her mother carried Sarah under her own clothes to keep her from being harmed by the bereaved mothers. Could Sarah's scratching problems be related to the times when neither she nor her mother was able to release their anxiety and agitation without endangering their lives?

PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STRESS

How did life-threatening situations affect the infant Holocaust survivor? How can we understand the effects of the sudden and severe disruption of synchronic affect regulation in the infant-maternal unit? What happened to an infant who experienced the shock of sudden separation(s) from his/her mother or from other caregivers? What happened if an infant had to be kept silent and consequently suffered

somato-sensory and emotional-affective upheaval after the incident.

In spite of these distinctions, a certain response pattern has become increasingly recognized by different researchers and practitioners (Spitz & Wolf, 1946; Levine, 1997; Bromberg, 1998; van der Hart et al., 2000; Rothschild, 2000; Perry 2001b). As Perry (2001 b) explains, exposure to a stressor activates a set of threat responses in the developing brain. In animals as well as in humans, two primary and interactive response patterns, hyper-arousal and dissociation, can be distinguished. The activation system prepares the body for fight or flight from the imposed threat. Infants, however, are not capable of effectively fleeing or fighting. When a threat is perceived, the infant will initially react with a hyper-arousal response, moving his or her body and crying, in an effort to attract the caregiver's attention. This behavior will be successful if the caregiver responds in the right way. If there is no caregiver, or if the caregiver is unable to react in a way that is good for the baby, the infant will give up its alarm response, and a defeat reaction sets in. Usually the baby begins whimpering and will gradually become sleepy, dissociating himself or herself from the scene.

According to Schore (2001b), post-traumatic stress disorders of hyper-arousal

POST-NATAL TRAUMATIC STRESS, DIRECTLY OR VICARIOUSLY THROUGH THE CAREGIVER, CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFANT.

near-suffocation during a search or when Nazis or their collaborators were in the near vicinity?

When a young child perceives a life-threatening situation, his/her entire body mobilizes to meet the challenge. Responses to the threat involve physiological, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social functions. The degree and the pattern of threat response vary from incident to incident and are highly individual. The impact on the infant depends on the caregiver's ability to regulate the infant's

and dissociation during infancy set the template for later childhood, adolescent and adult post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). In each later phase of life, new encounters with excessive stress may lead to the impairment of the normal counter-regulatory mechanisms producing hyperactivity of the HPA and sympathetic nervous systems, which could lead to excessive anxiety, feelings of hopelessness and defeat, and depression. This latter symptomatic triad represents unreg-

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ulated parasympathetic activity that is connected to dissociation. At any point in life, dissociative defensive reactions are elicited almost instantaneously.

COMPLEX TRAUMA

Herman (1992) introduced the term “complex trauma” to describe dimensions of severity, intensity, duration, repetition, and accumulation of interpersonal trauma specifically concerning the effects of

tion trauma. This view led to the misleading presupposition that infant survivors did not suffer from the persecution itself, but rather from the aftermath or by intergenerational transmission.

During the last decade, the consequences of Holocaust traumas in child survivors have become more evident. They tend to show more symptoms of post-traumatic stress and to have poorer quality of life than their counterparts in control groups

endangers his “secure base” (Bowlby, 1988). Relationships with caregivers not only organize ongoing experiences of distress reduction, but are also crucial for neural growth in the developing brain. They have a direct effect on the development of the capacity for self-regulation in times of traumatic stress in later life (Siegel, 1999). Insecure attachment is considered one of the risk factors for the development of psychopathology; secure attachment may contribute to the development of emotional resilience (Greenberg, 1999).

THE CONCEPT OF “COMPOUND PERSONALITY” EXPLAINS HOW CHILD SURVIVORS WERE ABLE TO GROW UP AND BUILD SUCCESSFUL LIVES WHILE PRESERVING WITHIN THEM THE TRAUMATIZED CHILD.

child abuse, torture and Holocaust-related traumas. Infant Holocaust survivors had to endure potential traumatic experiences from the peri-natal stage and later, directly and/or vicariously through their caregivers. Some of these babies endured complex traumatization during the war. The infants, who had to cope with the changes in caregivers, and incidents of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, must have been especially at risk. Although babies who stayed with their parent(s) may not have been affected by separation traumas, they shared the stresses experienced by one or both parents. Their “protective shield” and basic needs for safety and security were continuously being jeopardized.

Liberation from the Nazi regime did not bring an end to adversities for these children, as the majority of them were shifted to new situations. They became exposed to trauma-inducing inconsistencies and to the unpredictability of the behavioral idiosyncrasies of total strangers, sometimes including their own traumatized parents. Keilson (1994) described the “third sequel of trauma” occurring with the re-entry into society. Many infant survivors report that the post-Holocaust separations had the most traumatic impact on their lives. It may be that these separations felt especially painful, as they held the first explicitly remembered separa-

(Cohen, Brom & Dasberg, 2001; Amir & Lev-Wiesel, 2003). In a therapy group of survivors born between 1927 and 1943, age-congruent components of the traumatized child were recognized in the group members who were late middle-aged (Tauber & Van der Hal, 1997, 1998). Tauber (1996) developed the concept of “compound personality,” which explains how child survivors were able to grow up and build successful lives while preserving within them the traumatized child.

ATTACHMENT, LOSS, AND COPING

Attachment

The concept of attachment concerns the extent to which the parent or other primary care provider is attuned to the needs and safety of the infant, on the one hand, and to its gradually developing need for autonomy, on the other. The sensitivity of the parent, her ability to be emotionally connected and read the signals of distress and fears, provide, in terms of evolution, the best chance for the child to survive.

The way the infant experiences the parent’s transactions is what initiates basic feelings of security or insecurity. The more the parent is able to reduce emotions of fear, anxiety and distress, the more the infant will feel an internal sense of security. Attachment behavior is elicited when the infant experiences distress, which

Attachment and Loss

In insecure attachment, three different attachment behavior patterns are discerned: avoidance, ambivalence/resistance, and disorganization/disorientation. In avoidant attachment behavior, the baby expects rejection by the caregiver. Therefore, by avoiding the caregiver, the infant adapts to the relationship by reducing the anticipated rejection. In ambivalent/resistant attachment, uncertainty about the caregiver’s response prevails. The infant is preoccupied with the caregiver’s attention and shows this by exhibiting anger or passivity, or by crying. Fear, freezing and disorientation mark disorganized/disoriented attachment. Prevailing in situations of attachments with a provider of traumatizing, neglecting, unpredictable care, the infant is placed in a conflictive situation: he or she must find safety in a source of care that is frightening and dangerous.

Bowlby (1969, 1982) considered an infant capable of experiencing loss from the age of six to seven months. His theory of attachment is consistent with Piaget’s observations of developmental stages (1952). Piaget held that when the infant shows a specific preference for his or her primary caregiver, he or she will react when separated from that caregiver and stretch out to her at reunion. While Bowlby’s views have been generally accepted, Polan and Hofer (1999) have provided recent impressive insights on how attachment evolves from birth and even originates from prenatal processes. For instance, one study has shown that newborn human babies favored the mother’s breast which had amniotic fluid spread on the areola (Varendi, Porter and Winberg, 1996; Teicher & Blass, 1977, in Polan & Hofer, 1999, page

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171). Another study showed that newborn babies preferred to hear their mother's voice rather than that of a strange adult female (Moon, Bever, and Fifer, 1992; in Polan & Hofer, 1999, page 171).

These studies provide some further understanding of infant Holocaust survivors and other children growing up without their biological parents. Even if these children were rescued prior to or during the optimal developmental period, they often seem to continue to feel a tie to their birth parent, no matter how positive and secure their attachment to their foster/adopted parents was. Rescued children are at one and the same time abandoned children; although the loss of attachment happened before the mother could be remembered, it seems that some process of mourning has to take place, no matter how early the loss.

Attachment and Coping during the Holocaust

As secure attachment relations with caregivers seem to buffer traumatic stress, it is important to find out how these relationships worked between the infants, their parents and other caregivers during and after the Holocaust. Did hidden infants who were separated from their parents fare better or worse than infants who stayed with their parents? How did the postwar changes in care influence them? The answers seem to depend considerably on how sensitive the caregivers (whether biological or foster parents) were to the children's needs.

Although separation and loss in attachment relationships is well researched and cross-culturally validated, most research results are based on measurements of attachment patterns between infants and their own parents. Moreover, the *in vivo* measurements of attachment behavior are, understandably, based on short, one-time separations in otherwise ongoing attachment systems. However, in the case under consideration, the rescued, separated infant survivors often experienced multiple separations and the loss of entire attachment systems. As we can infer from recent research on multiple care-giving, it is important to bear in mind the caveats of inducting results of recent findings to attachment patterns formed some sixty years ago, under widely different circumstances.

The majority of recent studies on children who were adopted or placed in



Dr. Danny Brom

foster care or in an institutional setting has shown that security in attachment with a new caregiver was, in most cases, easily achieved so long as the caregiver committed him- or herself to predictability and exhibited sensitivity in the new relationship (Howes, 1999).

However, one study shows that the caregiver's commitment is not exclusively associated with security in attachment; the length of exposure to prior traumatic experiences seems to play a role as well. Chisholm, Carter, Ames & Morrison (1995, in Howes, 1999) found that orphans who had been adopted from Romanian child-care institutions fared worse if they were adopted after the age of eight months than did infants who were adopted from the same institutions before the age of four months. The orphans adopted at a later age, who were rated as insecurely attached, showed more behavior problems, scored lower on an intelligence scale, and had adoptive parents who reported more parental stress (Chisholm, 1998).

It appears that infant survivors had the best chance to become securely attached if they were separated from their mothers/caregivers at an early age and if they suffered less prior neglect or other severe traumatic stress. However, this was contingent on the foster caregivers being sensitive to their needs; an insensitive,

rejecting, unpredictable, or frightening care-providing environment made for insecure attachment. Similarly, frequent care substitutes and other environmental changes involving multiple losses, traumatic separations and unpredictability contributed to insecurity of the pattern of attachment.

Jacob expresses his connectedness with the Shoah in touching paintings and poems. When he was about four weeks old, he was smuggled out of a transit camp in a laundry basket; his parents were deported and later killed in Auschwitz. For six weeks he was passed among several caretakers until, severely neglected and dangerously ill, he was brought to an elderly couple. They nursed him to health and gave him a stable, loving home. The couple let him believe they were his grandparents. After the war Jacob was claimed by the only surviving relative of his mother; he and his wife raised Jacob as if he were their own child. But his strong positive feelings toward them changed overnight when he was ten, when the couple revealed that they were not his "own" parents and told him what had happened to his "real" parents. Sorrow, fear and anger at having been abandoned persistently became the dominant themes of his life.

Did infants who were not separated from their parents cope better? Some findings from attachment research are quite illuminating in this regard. In a meta-analysis of the assessment of adult attachment, Van Uzendoorn (1995) found that measures of infant attachment security/insecurity corresponded positively with how securely/insecurely the mothers were attached to their own mothers. Even before the birth of their children, mothers with insecure attachments could be predicted to have insecurely attached offspring. This finding was later confirmed by Fonagy, Steele & Steele (1991); their study and two other studies investigating fathering showed the same expected relation between secure attachment in adulthood and providing sensitive, supportive care (Cohn, Cowan, Cowan, & Pierson, 1992a; Van Uzendoorn, Kranenburg, Zwart-Woudstra, van Busschbach, & Lambermon, 1992).

Studies on the origins of disorganized, insecure attachments indicate that parents who themselves struggle with unresolved loss or trauma display frightening or frightened behaviors towards their children (Main & Hesse, 1990). Two other studies suggest that parents with unre-

Continued on next page

solved traumatic loss and a primary insecure state of mind are less likely to provide for the secure attachment of their offspring. Secure, attached mothers with unresolved loss, however, displayed less frightening behavior than other mothers and did not predict for disorganized attachment of the infants (Schuengel, Van Uzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Blom, 1997; Schuengel, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van Uzendoorn, 1999).

The outcomes of these studies lead us to expect that parents who felt secure in their attachment relationships had a better chance of being sensitive to their infant's needs. They were more successful in developing a secure attachment with them, notwithstanding the traumatic experiences they had to cope with simultaneously. The following case example illustrates this point.

Alexander relates how his father, much like the protagonist in the film "Life is Beautiful," was able to turn the family's concealment in pit dug underground into an adventure. He kept the children spellbound by telling stories and reciting nursery rhymes, although they suffered from terrible cold, had no food and, when spring arrived, had to sit in pools of water. Alexander began to feel fear only when his father taught him how to find his way to

village. A childless couple took him in and nursed him to health. Alexander was able to function extremely well for most of his life. Only recently did he decide to go into psychotherapy to deal with a depressive mood and nightmares triggered by a health condition that threatened his life as well as that of other family members.

Parents who were insecure in their (pre-war) attachments with their own parents were more likely to frighten their child or transmit their own fears to them. In this context, evidence was found (Lidar, Van der Hal & Brom, unpublished) that child abuse in post-Holocaust survivor families occurred when the abusive Holocaust survivor parent(s) had experienced pre-war interpersonal traumata of betrayal and aggression during their own childhood.

Attachment and Coping in a Post-Holocaust Culture

For most of the infant survivors, the end of the war brought major life changes. Infants who had lived in hiding with non-Jewish caregivers went back to surviving parents. Some remember how frightened they were of the unknown man or woman who came to fetch them from their secure homes: Parents had become frightening strangers. If their parents did not survive, the orphans were often taken away from the sites in which they had

ambivalence of being personally grateful to the rescuers while at the same time hating them collectively as a group that had permitted the Holocaust to happen. One of the reasons for massive migration in the years after the war was to extricate the children from their prior attachments with the "parents" who had hidden them.

Infants who had been in a camp with one or both parents were now separated from them if they were recovering from tuberculosis. Other infants' parents were too weak, malnourished and/or depressed to take proper care of them and allowed them to be sent to institutional care. Parents who had lost their partner re-married, further complicating attachment structures. Some of the infants' siblings had died in the war; others suddenly met siblings they never knew they had because they had been hidden in different places.

Even infants who had continued to enjoy a fairly secure attachment had to deal with dramatic changes in attachment systems after the war. Matters changed for the worse as caregivers discovered the magnitude of their losses, whether they were the "real" parents, Jewish foster parents, or institutional care providers.

Keren, mother and grandmother of a large family, muses about her inability to feel grief over the recent death of her father. She is aware of the fact that her father had always treated her well and fairly, but as he was permanently preoccupied with grief, bitterness and fear, he never managed to spark her emotional attention in a positive way. Perhaps that is why she could never forget the day he took her away from her "daddy and mommy" (the foster parents who had hidden her during the war) when she was only four years old. She still religiously safeguards her feelings of loyalty, warmth and love for them, still mourning their deaths some twenty years ago. Keren feels securely connected to her biological mother, convinced that it was only out of pure love that she handed her over to be saved by strangers when she was six months old, just before the mother herself was murdered.

What happened to the orphaned infants who were cared for lovingly by their foster parents, formed secure attachments and were later adopted by them? It would be worthwhile to examine how having to deal with multiple attachment systems affected their later interactions and inter-

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PARENTS WHO WERE INSECURE IN THEIR (PRE-WAR) ATTACHMENTS WITH THEIR OWN PARENTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO FRIGHTEN THEIR CHILD OR TRANSMIT THEIR OWN FEARS TO THEM.

the next village in case they were detected. How would he be able to exist without his father? Then the dreaded moment came. His mother went out to look for food. Some hours later, German soldiers found their hiding place and shot his father and his older sister. Alexander fell down, unhurt. He stayed immobile until the next evening and, after a moment of terrible fear, decided to survive the way his father had told him to. Too weak to walk, he crawled to the edge of the woods where he happened on the

been hidden by "real" strangers and placed in the care of Jewish foster parents or institutions.

Very few of the hidden children were given the opportunity to become gradually used to the new situation, enjoying thoughtful cooperation between the different caregivers; often these situations involved competition and animosity among the caregivers. There were also cultural and religious differences. Parents did not know how to handle the conflict and

personal connections to learn whether later empathic encounters (Van der Hal, 1996), positive attachments and accessing supportive networks were beneficial (Valent, 1998).

REMEMBERING AND IDENTITY

Early Childhood Memory

How, and how much, a person can recall of his early childhood is a question that has been under intensive investigation recently, stirring up considerable controversy along the way. Contemporary research indicates that the capacity to recall (early childhood) events is, in general, a complex process involving the whole organism (e.g., van der Kolk, 1996; Le Doux, 2002; 1996; Siegel, 1999). Leuzinger and Pfeifer (2002) refute the classical, mechanical view of memory functioning like a computer hard drive. They suggest that the entire organism is involved in the memory process, which is complex, dynamic and constantly categorizes and re-categorizes events.

Current neurobiological thinking differentiates between two tracks that facilitate remembering: maturational and determined. The earliest – procedural, implicit or non-declarative memory is present at birth and includes the emotional, perceptual, behavioral, sensorial, and somatic memories. It is centrally involved in unconscious processes and, according to Schore (2001a), takes place in the right hemisphere of the brain. The later – explic-

Gaensbauer (1995) provides impressive case examples of children in therapy who retained and could recall memories of traumatic events that had occurred in the pre-verbal stage, from as early as seven months of age. Their traumas concerned circumscribed events, with predominant sensory-motoric aspects. Terr (1988) also mentions children traumatized before the age of eighteen months who were able to hold on to pieces of memories, often connected to sensory perceptions. Her impression is that children younger than 28 months create visual imprints, which are “burned” in their memory. These findings correspond to our own experience with infant survivors who persistently held on to recollections of events that occurred during the pre- and early-verbal period (see also Krell, 2000).

The ability to retain, lose or recover a recollection of traumatic memories seems to be highly individual and dependent on various factors, among them the severity and duration of stress during the event. Moreover, when retained, such memories usually consist of subjectively sensed emotional impressions of the event.

Remembering Trauma

It seems that the majority of infant survivors do not retain much conscious memory of positive or traumatic events that happened to them during the war, even after acquiring language skills. Apart

considered the first five to seven years of life to be veiled in childhood amnesia (Siegel, 1999). By encouraging children to keep silent, the caregivers unknowingly assisted in delaying the resolution and integration of the traumatic experiences, perpetuating developmental conflicts and enhancing implicit memory residues with increased risk of developing PTSD (Cohen et al., 2001). Related symptoms became manifest during the later years, especially when the infant survivors had to deal with unusually stress-provoking situations (Dasberg, 2001).

As infant survivors approach old age, posttraumatic stress complaints are triggered more often than before (Aarts & Op Den Velde, 1996). These triggers connect either to implicit or explicit memories and may not necessarily be perceived as belonging to negative emotional experiences. As a result, symptoms are even more frightening, embarrassing and inexplicable to others. Positive events, such as the wedding of a child or the birth of a grandchild, can trigger the same symptoms as negative experiences connected to loss and separation. The case of Avraham is an apt illustration:

Avraham came to therapy “bone tired and at his wits’ end.” During the session, he could barely utter a word as he wept unceasingly. From the few words he was able to express, it appeared that crying had become a problem after his grandchildren were born. He could not endure their visits, but was too embarrassed and ashamed to tell his wife and children that the crying of the babies was unbearable for him. Gradually gaining control over his crying, he could elaborate his complaints. He had nightmares in which German soldiers chased him. He often woke in a panic, gasping for air and frightened of going back to sleep. He was also worried about his inability to control anger. In therapy he realized that when his own children were small, he had always left the house and begun to cry.

Avraham was born in 1941. Some months after his birth, his parents decided to split up the family. His father left to join the partisans; the two older children stayed with the grandmother; and his mother took him and his sister, who was two years older than him, into hiding in the mountains where they lived mainly in caves. Avraham was not allowed to make any noise. He knows from what his mother told him afterwards that

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BY ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO KEEP SILENT, THE CAREGIVERS UNKNOWINGLY ASSISTED IN DELAYING THE RESOLUTION AND INTEGRATION OF THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

it, declarative or processing memory – starts developing gradually during the first two years of life and progresses from there. From the age of three, children are able to recall autobiographical narratives. This form of remembering seems to coincide with the ability to master semantic and language skills (Siegel, 1999). Traumatic memories are processed along both tracks and thus it stands to reason that very early memories are mainly of implicit-procedural nature.

from the need to distance oneself from the traumatic events, this form of forgetting is often attributed to compliance with parents and other caretakers, who tended to encourage them to forget what had happened (Kestenberg & Brenner, 1996). The caregivers could barely deal with their own wounds, let alone express empathy toward the suffering of others or show interest in what had happened to the children. They were justified in acting this way: At the time, even professionals

once, when German soldiers were searching the area, his mother, desperate to keep him quiet, covered his mouth until he turned blue. He never cried after that incident. Helping him to find connections between his complaints and his trauma-narrative contributed to a cognitive understanding and some relief of symptoms.

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Reviewing one's life seems to become more urgent in the transition between middle and old age. People search for schoolmates, organize reunions, and feel nostalgic about childhood memories. Erikson (1950) has explained this urge as coming to accept that the life one lives is the only life one has, offering a choice between despair and integration. For many infant survivors it often becomes a search for integration of identity.

Unlike the older child survivors who frequently have some memories of their family from before the war, when infant survivors feel the need to look back, they encounter only sparse and shattered fragments. While lacking the explicit memory of what happened to them during infancy, many infant survivors do seem to hold on to scraps of early impressions and experiences in the course of their lives. Consequently, many are unable to fully rely on their own ability to recall and need the recollections of others. Often this leaves them with a sense of self-estrangement and incompleteness. While successfully functioning in the external world, they retain deep emotional questions about their identity, which involves painful issues of belief and trust in themselves; they may describe themselves as "fakes," "imposters," or "not the person I could/should have been."

Laub and Auerhahn (1993) speak of the tension between the gradual forms of "knowing" and "not knowing." In this context "knowing" refers to being able to come to terms with one's autobiographical identity. For many, finding out what really happened to them has often been too fear-provoking, too painful, or too conflicted where it concerns their relationship to parents or caregivers. Now, in later life, the fear of knowing is outweighed by the need to know; there is an urgency about integrating the autobiographical facts into one's sense of self in order to acquire a more complete sense of belonging.

An infant survivor and clinical psychologist relates how, when he had some spare time after a conference in Budapest, he decided to search for the foster mother who had taken care of him during the Holocaust. He was born in Slovakia in 1942, a few weeks before the Jews were deported to Auschwitz. His mother managed to escape with him to Budapest, while his father joined the partisans. When she ran out of money and it became impossible to care for him, she handed him over to strangers, and eventually he was cared for by a young

INFANT SURVIVORS, RAISED AND LIVING AS CHRISTIANS, HAVE AN EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFICULT TIME, ESPECIALLY WHERE RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES AGAINST JEWS ARE STRONG.

woman in a small Hungarian village for two and a half years. Both parents survived the war. His father found him, a "thin, starved little boy, ill with TB, refusing to leave his 'family' and go along with a stranger. After several days, my father took me away by force. It took many years for me to accept my parents as my parents."

Armed with only the name of the village (his parents claimed to have forgotten the woman's name), he found her after intensive investigation. "For me it was a most important achievement for two reasons. First, I finally rejected my parents' demand to forget her and to accept them as my only parents. I have proven that one does not have to choose one over the other. [...] Secondly, visiting that Hungarian village brought me great relief; I found out that all those foggy, frightening memories were not the product of a sick imagination but real remnants of real places, people, and occurrences. What I vaguely felt and remembered was reality!" (Bar Semech, 1998/9).

Sometimes identity is unexpectedly forced upon infant survivors: an adoptive parent's deathbed revelation of the survivor's true origin, or the chance discovery when the survivor sorts out the parents' documents after their death. Obviously, identity conflicts become a heavy burden when one has to cope with the cultural and spiritual implications of learning the

truth. Infant survivors, raised and living as Christians, have an extraordinarily difficult time, especially where religious prejudices against Jews are strong.

At one of the conferences for child survivors of the Holocaust, a survivor from Poland, who chose not to marry, raised her concerns about her relationship with her married sister, who was the only family she had left. They had sometime earlier learned about their Jewish origins. As the sister was a devout Catholic, she chose to keep the Jewish part of her identity a secret

from her large church-going family. As the single sister became increasingly connected to Judaism, their relationship became tense with the unhealed wounds of their family history and the troubled coexistence of both religions.

When origins are unknown, the first fragments of explicit memories can become very precious and well-guarded. These fragments can then take over the survivors' autobiography, as it did in Shoshana's case.

Shoshana's earliest memory is of three women rescuing her from the ruins of a bombed-out house. She might have been three, four, or five years old; she does not know. Nor does she know who she is. In a later memory, Shoshana sees herself sitting on the wall of an orphanage in a central European city, showing herself off to the people passing by, because one of them might be her father or mother and recognize her. A passerby gives her an apple. Over the next two years, she is placed in five different orphanages, in five different cities. To this day, she can recall exactly the homes and the names of the people that worked there. She remembers, in great detail, one after the other, the nurses who took special care of her, what they looked like, what they said, how they related to her.

Other infant survivors were able to
Continued on next page

“adopt” the memories of an adult eyewitness and incorporate them as a source of positive self-perception, creating an autobiographical narrative and using it as a metaphor that helped them sustain resilience in later years (Dasberg, 1992).

Nine months after Carola was born, her Jewish father was betrayed and arrested. Her Christian mother, who had hidden the father and the baby, volunteered to follow him to a nearby concentration camp, where they were held for some time before being killed. Carola was left with a friend of the parents who later told her that she regularly took her in a pram to the camp's barbed wired fence to “visit” her parents. This piece of information helped her Carola feel that she had stayed connected to her parents until the end; equally important was the information that a loaf of bread was hidden under the mattress of the pram and stealthily handed over. She was thus instrumental in caring for her parents in their ordeal until the end.

For infant survivors, despair over not knowing any details about their origins becomes at times unbearable. They tenaciously search for their roots. With the help of historians and others, they study archives, reviewing endless lists. At survivors' reunions they try to find a clue or an association to some fragment of memory of their own. They travel to the places where they may have been born, nursing a secret, desperate expectation of meeting someone on a street who will exclaim, “I know you; you look exactly like your (grand)mother.” These efforts tend to be heartbreaking, for they seldom bear fruit. Some find relief when they are able to transform their search into a creative narrative through writing, painting, sculpting, or any other form of free expression.

CONCLUSION

The few infant Holocaust survivors who managed to stay alive had to cope with stressful and traumatic events during their earliest years. Later in life, any psychological and existential problems that may have arisen were seldom understood or connected with this troubled period. Only a few authors took notice, either during or immediately after the Holocaust. Some took it upon themselves to follow up on the development and social integration of these infants.

Interest in the consequences of early childhood trauma has grown over the last

decades. Results from neurobiological and psychobiological research have enabled us to understand more, in general, about the workings of early developmental processes and how they are affected by early traumatic experiences. Thanks to an impressive body of research on attachment theories, we are beginning to understand individual differences in later-life outcomes of early childhood stresses and separations. Infants who were cared for by preoccupied parents or other caregivers in insecure attachment relationships were predicted to suffer from later intra-psychic and interpersonal disturbances. It could also be predicted that those who had the good fortune to enjoy a secure relationship with rescuers would reflect a greater strength and resilience.

A special challenge for infant survivors earing old age is the necessity of dealing with the somatic- and sensory-affective memories, which seem to intrude upon them increasingly, while explicit autobiographic memory is nonexistent or, at best, fragmented. Resulting gaps in the experience of self-cohesiveness are likely to hinder the process of self-integration, which is of great importance at the transition to the later stages of life.

Psychotherapists working with infant survivors need to be attentive to unconscious (and therefore non-retrievable) processes of procedural memory residues. Priority has to be given to work on the affect regulatory processes and trying to reach a degree of stabilization (Steele, van der Hart, Nijenhuis, 2002). As infant survivors often experienced insecure attachments to their caregivers, the therapist needs to create a therapeutic setting and a relationship of consistency and reliability in which firm boundaries enable the infant survivor to feel safe. Infant survivors are encouraged to learn to respect bodily sensations, expressions of emotions and behavior they had suppressed during adulthood. Avoidance of these expressions often served to defend and protect the traumatized baby inside. Therapy may offer an opportunity to face the overwhelming and confusing events of earliest childhood. It is deeply moving to witness how infant child survivors, some now themselves grandparents, struggle to explore the intrinsic meaning of their life story often without explicit narrative facts. Many find surprisingly creative responses to emotions of helplessness,

loss, sadness, rage and fear, and succeed in finding their place in the context of what “feels that has happened” (Damasio, 1999). Searching for ways to mourn the early losses provides access to as yet unrealized sources of strength and hope.

(An extensive bibliography will be e-mailed upon request; contact *The Hidden Child* at hidden-child@adl.org.) ■

Dr. van der Hal-van Raalte has been involved with the treatment of very early childhood trauma, with extensive experience in individual and group psychotherapy and supervision, and with Holocaust survivors and their families. She was born in 1944 in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, while her parents were in hiding. In addition to her private practice in psychotherapy, she is Clinical Director of the Jerusalem Branch of Amcha (the National Israeli Center for Psychosocial Support of Survivors of the Holocaust Survivors and the Second Generation), with which she has been associated for more than two decades. Her (co-)publications have appeared in professional journals, periodicals and books.

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Young Hugo in Germany.

AN EMOTIONAL HANDICAP

By Hugo Holzmann

I believe my handicap first appeared on the day of my bar mitzvah, Saturday, February 28, 1942. By then, there were only a couple dozen schoolchildren left in Munich, my hometown. Most of them were now living in the Jewish orphanage.

My father had died in 1934, due to seared lungs, which he'd contracted as a German soldier in 1918 during a British gas attack. In 1938, my mother, Anna, had managed to get my sister, Herta, then 14 years old, to a Jewish couple in Philadelphia who adopted her. Mother had tried to get me adopted by an American couple too, but by 1940, when my papers were ready, the ship that would have brought me to America could not leave because of U-Boat danger.

We were forbidden to use public transportation, so Martin Sandbank and I walked every day to the only remaining synagogue, in the Lindwurmstrasse, to meet Cantor Lachmann who taught us our Torah portions. Martin had his bar mitzvah a week before mine, and he and his sister, Bertel, left for Nuremberg to join relatives. Their father had been killed in Dachau. Scheduled to take the Kovno transport in November 1941, their mother and the children had taken poison. She died, the children survived. But in the end, in April 1942, Bertel, Martin and their Nuremberg relatives were sent to Izbeka and then to Chelmno.

On the day of my bar mitzvah, my mother and I walked the one-and-a-half hour to the synagogue.

In the courtyard, our names were checked off a list held by two Gestapo men, who also examined our yellow stars to make sure they were sewn on properly.

As we entered the synagogue, Dr. Kessler, the only teacher we had left, told us that the Gestapo had arrested Cantor Lachmann, and that he would conduct the service and my bar mitzvah. Terrible news on my day of confirmation!

When the men to be called to the Torah gathered in front, I did too. When Dr. Kessler called my name, I went to the *bimah* where the Torah lay open and sang the *broches*. Before chanting from the Torah, I glanced down and there sat the Gestapo men, staring at me.

Out of extreme fear, my voice trembled,

my body shook. Could I continue in such a moment of panic? Emotionally overwrought, I willed myself to go on and finish. Upon returning to my seat, a man said "the Gestapo left when they saw you in a panic, but you did well."

From this time on, into adulthood and old age, I have not been able to speak in front of a group or audience, not even to state my name. There was the time when I was in the army in Honolulu. My wife and I were in a large group of military men, some with families, going over to a rest camp in Hilo. The MC had a list and said he would call everyone by name, asking each person to state his name and unit. When he reached my name, I was in a dreadful state. My voice quivered as I knew it would. This was but one of many incidents when I succumbed to panic. Only now in my old age, am I able to overcome this emotional handicap. ■

Hugo and Anna immigrated to Philadelphia to join Herta in 1947. Anna died in 1982 at age 86. Hugo joined the Army, became a sergeant and served for 20 years, including in Korea and Vietnam. After he retired from the service, he worked for the University of Colorado in a supervisory capacity.

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TREASURED MEMENTOS

Photos and text by Lydia Aisenberg

A TESTIMONY FROM THE ABYSS

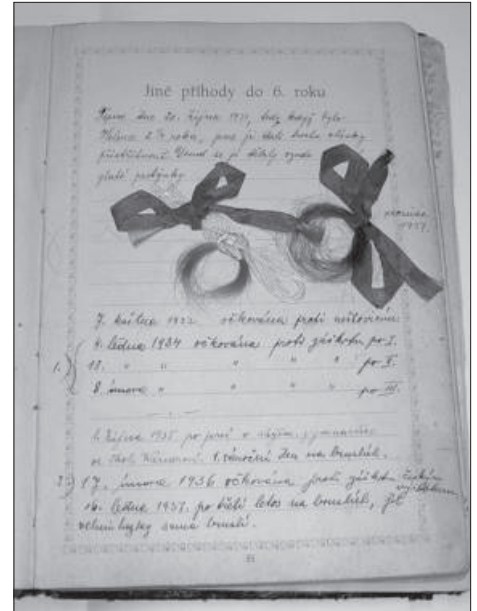
A leather-bound journal recording the birth and short life journey of a Czech-born Jewish girl in the 1930s awaits restoration in the archives of Moreshet, the Mordechai Anielewicz Holocaust Study and Research Center at Givat Haviva. The Czech child's mother had intended to present the journal to her daughter at some milestone of her life. That was not to be as Helena Paltin, her mother, father and sister were murdered in Auschwitz just months after she would have celebrated her bat mitzvah.

As was the custom in those days, the private nursing home gave Helena's mother a leather-bound journal intended to record the development of her daughter, born on July 11, 1931. Anna, born in Prague, had married Ernst Paltin from an established family immersed in Czech culture. Another daughter, Hannaleh, was born two years later, but no journal was found for the second Paltin child. There are a number of black and white photographs of the girls in Helena's journal, and on one page two locks of hair and ribbons.

"At birth your eyes were dark blue. At age 15 months the color changed to green/brown and at the age of 3 became a golden brown," reads one of Anna Paltin's entries in bold, clear and neat handwriting. "Hair coloring, blonde. On forehead and just above the nose, a small patch of red which I am told will disappear in time," she writes, having already recorded that Helena weighed 3,650 kilos at birth and upon leaving the nursing home on July 19, weighed 3,580. By July 22, the Paltins' firstborn was tipping the scales at almost 4 kilos.

During her first week at home, a children's nurse bathed her while Anna watched and recorded in the journal: "Helena didn't make a sound during the bath – just kept glancing around, trying to understand what was happening. The jaundice has almost passed. The skin on body, hands and head is flaking and after the bath we put Nivea cream all over her, and on top, scented talc... After a few baths, Helenka no longer closes her eyes and is smiling all the time!"

On July 27, under the heading of 'First Walk,' the young mother writes: "before noon



One Testimony: The story of a mother's love for her young daughter, both murdered in Nazi concentration camps.

MORESHET ARCHIVES, GIVAT HAVIVA, ISRAEL.

and after bathing we went out for a walk in the Stromoboska Park, and in the afternoon strolled in the park near the Pisitska gate." The child's first smile is registered. "On August 3 she even laughed out loud," and a few months later Helena's mother notes that her daughter has begun to suck her lower lip and sometimes her fingers. "At age 18 weeks she is roaring like a lion, already sits and on April 28, stands up," writes the proud young mother.

Advice about food for her toddler daughter is recorded: when she began to receive Vitamin A and D drops and when she ate her first orange. On January 1, 1932, Helenka Paltin said "pappa" for the first time and a few months later, "mamma" was added to her developing vocabulary.

On March 30 she says "tik tak" while pointing to a clock on the wall, and six months later mimics a conductor when she hears music. When out for walks, she points to tall buildings and repeats "tik tak," "knowing there are clocks in the towers," writes Anna. A bank account is opened in the child's name and 1,000 kronot depos-

Continued on next page

ited. “She now has a real bank book in her name,” Anna writes with amusement. By the time Helenka Paltin reached her first birthday another 6,000 kronot were added to her bank account.

In 1938 the mood of the journal changes drastically. Having taken Helenka and sister Hannah on holiday to a mountain resort where they had rented an apartment, Anna Paltin begins to register events leading up to the Second World War. “An announcement has been made about general conscription of the Czechoslovakian army and notices are posted all over town,” she writes ominously. On October 13, 1938 the family returns to Prague and she writes of the German entry into the city. Toward the end of May 1939 the family moved apartments. An aunt visits for Pesach.

“Helenka has written a letter in Czech with mistakes in spelling and grammar and peppered with words in German,” writes Anna, and underneath comments that the school year finished on June 25, 1939. “This has been a very sad year indeed. During the year Helenka had 7 different teachers and changed schools 5 times,” states Anna a few days before the family takes a holiday on a farm, and she describes how her

obvious sadness.

“The Germans are behaving abominably. They have plundered nearly all the Jewish property. The Jewish men are forced to sign a declaration that they give up freely their belongings and volunteer for courses in vocational training... in the meantime they have been sent to forced labor in Poland and it would seem this will be the fate of the women,” she writes.

She notes that German is being taught in schools and Helenka has done well in that language and now is also studying French. “She has a good accent,” comments Anna. In June 1940 Helena received “excellent” grades in all subjects except in her handwriting where she gets “good.”

“The war is developing and moving forward – Norway, Holland, Belgium, France and Poland are under the Germans. Italy fights alongside the Reich. Because of the war this year we will not go on holiday.” In a single sentence set aside, Anna Paltin writes starkly, “The headmaster of the school has begun to speak German with the children.”

In October 1940 the Paltins receive visas for America and Helenka is being taught English. She is no longer going to school

year. She rebelled and I found myself having to sit with her to do her homework ... We didn’t go anywhere for a holiday this year obviously. Jews are not allowed to leave their place of residence.”

From September 19, 1941, “all Jews have to wear a yellow star and inside is written the word ‘Jude.’” Once more she makes comparisons between pre-war prices of foodstuffs and the black market prices at the time of writing. “What will things look like in another year?” she asks.

The journal then jumps to 1943 with Anna Paltin lamenting that her last entry was to do with the price of food. “So many events, the transporting of Jews from October 15, the wearing of the yellow star and more I didn’t write in this journal ... Jews no longer receive meat. The Ayrim (a Czech word meaning ‘non-Jews’) get 200 grams a week. Also synthetic honey is no longer given to us. Only children up to the age of 6 receive milk. We don’t get any jam, sweets, wheat, preserves and more. Flour costs 100 kronot, but you cannot get any,” and she continues with a list of the prices of various food items.

In May 1943, Anna Paltin registers anger at Helena, writing: “Your words and actions of yesterday were so shocking that I feel compelled to write in your life’s journal. You have learned from the simple people expressions that only street girls such as prostitutes would use. I don’t want you to be like that,” writes Anna, listing a number of the words she had heard her daughter utter. “A girl from a good family does not use those words and when I told you this you answered: ‘What, we are a good family? After all, we are only Jews!’”

“Only Jews!! Have you forgotten Helenka that the Jews were the Chosen People? That from among the Jews came exalted sages and also Jesus Christ! Have you ever heard of a Jew being a murderer? Look at your extended family, at our forefathers and so on. Look at our relations, friends – not one of them, not one single one of them, took something from somebody else that wasn’t his. And you say ‘Only Jews! The opposite – because we are Jews it is forbidden we should be anything but honest, we must stand out because of these characteristics. We need to support each other, be honest, not to lie and not to behave in a provocative way. In a few years’ time when you will read these lines, take them to heart and remember them well.”

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B'Derech (On the Way), published in the mid-1940s, distributed to educators working with child Holocaust survivors in European DP camps.

eldest daughter manages to milk a cow. “She wasn’t at all scared,” she writes.

In August 1939 the Paltins try to register their daughter at a local school but are refused. They are told that Jewish children who transfer must have the permission of the Ministry of Education. “War has broken out between Germany and Poland, and France and England have also entered the war and because of the situation we didn’t send the girls to school,” writes Anna with

and being taught by a private teacher at home. Anna Paltin also writes about the high cost of food and compares prices before the war with those at the time of the entry. She also states “the Jews do not receive coupons for clothing or shoes.”

The school year draws to a close. “We had the girls tested at the Jewish school. They passed everything with excellence. I was surprised with regard to Helenka because she was a little lazy during the

The final entry states: “3.7.1943 Travel to Terezin.”

A small sticker has been applied underneath the underlined last words of Anna Paltin. Written by a researcher of Moreshet, the inscription informs the reader that on 6.9.1943, the Paltin family was transported from Terezin to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

B'DERECH, A POSTWAR PUBLICATION

On the table before me are a number of yellow, mottled, stained pages, fraying at the edges and held together with disintegrating, rusty staples. The fragile pages are a Hebrew language magazine, focusing on the story of Shavuot, containing photographs and texts of how to celebrate the holiday. Published in the mid-1940s the magazine, named B'Derech (On the Way), was distributed to educators working with child Holocaust survivors housed in displaced persons camps throughout Europe.

As the Shavuot holiday approaches, one of my favorite holidays in the kibbutz where I have resided for almost 5 decades, I look through the copy of B'Derech and am mesmerized by a grainy photograph of serious youngsters in a D.P. camp classroom. They are tightly squashed into wooden bench-desks, most with somber, dark clothing, as the teacher stands behind them. The children gaze forward, but not one is smiling.

I wonder how many of these children eventually ended up in Israel, or possibly my birthplace, Britain—or maybe even America or Australia. Some may have stayed and built lives in post-Holocaust Germany, or other war-torn European countries where D.P. camps were created. Who knows...

But then, of course, there is the distinct possibility they succeeded in eventually boarding one of the ill-fated ships, full of hopeful immigrants, clandestinely heading for Israel. Or, again, did they end up back in Europe, or in Cyprus in a British detention camp for illegal Jewish immigrants?

The wondrous publication I am pouring over is one of thousands of equally intriguing and poignant pieces of the past to be found in the Judaica collection of kibbutz-born Israeli collector, sculptor and mastercraftsman, Aviram Paz, who collects items of Jewish interest from the Second World War period.

In this issue of B'Derech there are a number of pages dealing with the Shavuot holiday, the giving of the Torah to the Jewish

people on Mt. Sinai thousands of years ago. There are suggestions for quizzes and games with a Shavuot theme, and photographs showing bare-legged and barefoot young Israeli girls and boys dancing in fields of wheat. The first page dealing with Shavuot is a full-page, black and white picture of Mt. Sinai and its foothills, with tent-dwelling folk in the rocky valley below, and a herd of camels wandering off out of view.

“The B'Derech publication was a combined effort of the Jewish Agency, the Joint Distribution Committee Education Department, and the Central Committee of Liberated Jews and aimed at providing Israeli educators who had gone to Europe from British Mandatory Palestine—in the main members of Zionist movements—

also from Hungary and some from Poland. Through the intervention of Abraham Klausner, an American Reform rabbi and US Army chaplain, it was decided to take the non-Jewish Polish and Hungarian displaced people from the camp and give their places to Jewish survivors from the Dachau concentration camp in the same city.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1915, but raised in Denver, Colorado, Klausner was one of five children born to a Hungarian immigrant father and Austrian mother. Just a few days after the 1945 liberation of Dachau, Rabbi Klausner (who died in 2007 at the age of 92) entered the concentration camp and earned a reputation as a strong advocate for thousands of the survivors who remained in DP camps for years after the war.



Child survivors in classroom at the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp near Munich, 1946.

with suitable material to teach the children in the camps the Israeli approach to learning about and celebrating the Jewish holidays,” explained Paz.

I take a closer look at the serious, sad faces of the children in the classroom. It was taken at the Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp near Munich in 1946. Located a short distance from Munich in the American zone, Feldafing had been a summer camp for youngsters in the Hitler Youth. The US Army opened the Feldafing D.P. camp in May, 1945, initially absorbing over 3,000 Hungarian survivors, but after a short period they were joined by non-Jewish DPs

It was at Feldafing that the Joint Distribution Committee created the first all-Jewish hospital in a German displaced persons camp. The facility featured over a thousand beds.

Religious institutions, schools and a yeshiva were created at Feldafing. A nursing school and ORT Vocational Training School were established, and there was the opportunity for secular adult education classes in the evenings. Around 450 children and teens lived in a separate part of the camp, alongside European teachers. Emissaries from the Israeli-Zionist

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Journey of the Teheran Children celebrated two years later on a 1945 Rosh Hashana card.

movements worked with them, successfully organizing Zionist leaning groups with a view to joining secular as well as religious kibbutzim when aliya to Israel became possible.

"The magazine was published in Munich and on the heading it says, in rather small print, that it is intended for children in Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium and also mentions Morocco and Tunisia," explains Paz.

"There was a great effort made to give educational content not only about the holidays but also Israeli history and heritage, culture and short stories around characters that the children could easily identify with, especially those waiting to be taken to Israel with Aliyat HaNoar," said Paz.

"In every publication there was a sizeable corner given to the Keren Kayemet to Israel (JNF) who used the opportunity to introduce the children to the importance of nature, the land and forests of Israel.

"Emissaries from Israel worked industriously to bring the Israeli flavor to all the holidays in particular, and their work is strongly felt in these publications. The Zionist messages are practically shouting from the pages," Paz comments and turns the page to a short story with the heading 'A Visit to My Soldier Uncle.'

This Shavuot holiday, as I'll watch my grandchildren parade around the kibbutz fields, carrying sheafs of wheat, broad smiles on their faces, and the kibbutz choir singing at full volume as they proudly stand on a stage set up in the middle of a Jezreel Valley field, I will be thinking of the children from Feldafing, wherever they might be now.

JOURNEY ON A ROSH HASHANA CARD

In February, 1943, a group of about one thousand Jewish children, rescued from Europe, arrived in Palestine. They were gathered in Teheran from where, eventually, the majority was taken by sea to Egypt, then by train to Palestine, while others were taken by truck to Baghdad and overland to Palestine. The latter group was accompanied part of the way by Jews from Palestine serving in the British army.

The rescued kinder became known as the Teheran Children. Their arduous, dangerous and frightful journey to Palestine via Teheran is depicted on a hand-drawn map on the inside of a 1945 Rosh Hashana card, bearing on the outer portion the emblem of the Royal Engineers 18 Pal. Field Survey Map Depot. Two years after the children from Teheran were safely in their country, some of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine, serving in the British army, celebrated the successful operation with a Rosh Hashana greeting.

The story of the Teheran Children is a fascinating one, and the Rosh Hashana card, along with hundreds of other such cards in the vast collection of Israeli Judaica collector Aviram Paz, were designed and printed by Jewish soldiers from Palestine serving in the British army throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

With the outbreak of World War II, hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews headed for the Soviet Union, a sizeable portion ending up in Siberia, while others spread throughout the Central Asian Republics. On the march toward a safe haven, some 300,000 Jews were on the move, staying in

makeshift camps along the way, enduring hunger, illness and death.

During the long march, thousands of children lost one or both parents. In 1942, a large group of Polish soldiers who had served in the Anders Army, as well as Eastern European Jewish refugees who had ended up in Soviet territory, were allowed to leave, and taken to Teheran via the Caspian Sea.

"Hundreds of Jewish children ended up in Iran, most of them orphans, and they were then joined by other Jewish orphans who had been taken out of Polish orphanages by emissaries from Israel. These children were left with nuns by their parents, thinking they had a better chance to survive there than on a march to the unknown," explains Aviram Paz, having gingerly placed the fragile Rosh Hashana greeting card, penned on a thin card many decades ago, on a table in front of him.

Emissaries were sent from Palestine to organize the children and adult refugees in Teheran. Food was in short supply and conditions were dire. The Mandatory authorities capitulated in January, 1943, allowing the children and adult caretakers to set sail in a British-authorized ship for Karachi, from where they went to Suez. The complement of 861 children (over 700 of whom had no parents) and 369 adults eventually arrived in Palestine in the winter of 1943.

"Initially the Teheran Children were housed at Atlit, but eventually absorbed in kibbutzim and youth villages through Youth Aliya," said Aviram.

"Like all the memorabilia in my collection stemming from Jews from Palestine serving in the British Armed Forces, there is a great deal of history and deep emotion imprinted on this small piece of card. Possibly this one even more so than some of the others as one of the Teheran children eventually became a member here of my kibbutz, Mishmar HaEmek, and his personal story was a very powerful one," mused the collector, carefully returning the item to a small plastic transparent pocket of a large album of greetings from the fighting front of yesteryears. ■

Lydia Aisenberg is a freelance journalist and informal educator in the International Department of Givat Haviva, a non-profit organization founded in 1949 by the Kibbutz Federation. She is a resident of Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek.

HISTORY IN A BOTTLE

By Lydia Aisenberg

Born in the Polish town of Plotzk, Poland, in 1935, Israeli artist and illustrator, Yaacov Guterman, survived the Holocaust posing as a Polish Catholic boy. His father, Simcha, died fighting in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and toward the end of the war Yaacov was reunited with the mother he thought had also perished. When the persecution of the Jews first began, the Guterman family moved from place to place to avoid capture, and wherever possible, Simcha wrote of the horror taking place around them. His notations



A Yaacov Guterman illustration for the Givat Haviva Art Center project 'Postcards for Peace.' August, 2015.

were penned in compact Yiddish script, covering both sides of narrow strips of paper. When Simcha ran out of space, the strips were rolled up tightly, hidden in bottles, and concealed in cellars and other temporary hiding places frequented by the Guterman family.

Originally published in Hebrew by Moreshet, the Mordecai Anielewicz Center for Research and Documentation at Givat Haviva, an English translation, *Leaves from Fire*, has recently been published. It is a 300-page book based on Simcha Guterman's discovered writings, handed over after many years to the Jewish Historical Institute in

Warsaw. Through a number of chance events, including a visit to the Institute in Warsaw by a close friend from America, some of Simcha's strips became known to his son Yaacov in Israel. Later, a documentary film was made of Yaacov's retracement of his childhood journey through hell, and unfortunately, of his failed attempt to uncover more of the hidden bottles in places he remembered their hiding.

The cover of *Leaves from Fire* depicts a faded black and white photograph taken by a German officer recording the deportation of Plotsk Jewry. The photo seems haphazardly thrown over the handwritten strip of history, painstakingly recorded by a Jewish witness and eventual Holocaust victim, Simcha Guterman. That the author's "accusing" language is Yiddish adds even more intensity and pathos as the number of its speakers declines around the world.

A heart-rending 35-page introduction written by Yaacov Guterman, now 80 years old and a member of Kibbutz Haogen in the Sharon Plains in central Israel, takes the reader back to his pre-Holocaust childhood which he describes as idyllic. He recalls a loving family, an aunt's beloved fruit garden, with a resident goat and dog to play with—a child's paradise until everything turned into a people's nightmare.

Yaacov recently met with a group of youths, mainly non-Jew from around the world, presently living and working in kibbutzim participating in a 2-day seminar of the International Department at Givat Haviva. Some, from South and North America, Western and Eastern Europe and South Korea, knew little of the Holocaust and were in awe of the strength of the narrator, particularly after hearing how he eventually made Aliya to Israel, settled on a kibbutz, lost his first wife to cancer at a very young age and how he was "both mother and father" to his firstborn son Raz, killed in the 1982 Lebanon war when serving in a commando unit of the IDF.

"In my town of Plotzk, one of the three oldest Jewish communities in Poland, the population was 30,000, of whom 10,000 were Jewish. In other words, every third person spoke Yiddish," explained Yaacov Guterman, who has illustrated more than 150 books



Holocaust survivor Yaacov Guterman holding a copy of one of the many strips of paper his father wrote – in Yiddish – when in hiding during the Holocaust.

for children and adults in Israel and abroad, and has had his work exhibited in the National Library in Warsaw, Poland, as well as in Tel Aviv. Yaacov also illustrated *Leaves from Fire*. "You know, even as long ago as 1237, an Archbishop wrote about this Jewish community existing in his midst," Yaacov told the group of first-time visitors to Israel.

"I had a happy childhood, albeit very short at just 4 years. I was a spoiled child, lots of toys and beautifully illustrated books, and every day I went to spend a few hours in the fruit garden of my Aunt Malka. Really, a child does not need more."

"When the Germans invaded our city, life got harder by the day. One night there was a knock at the door and when my mother opened it, she let out a strangled scream of terror as my father, covered in blood, staggered into the room. I woke up to see my father half-naked, badly beaten and remember him trying to smile at me, to calm me because I was really shocked and very frightened."

"He and some other Jewish people had been stopped on the street by the Germans, who said they had infringed the curfew, which wasn't true. They were taken to a police station, forced to take off their clothes and then wantonly beaten all over. I loved my father very much and the image of how I saw him that night has stayed with me vividly until this day," he said in a quiet voice

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before continuing to explain how they were forced to leave their spacious home for the ghetto, ending up in a small dark airless room.

“Conditions in the ghetto were very bad although admittedly not as bad as in Warsaw. Then on March 1, 1941, rifle butts on the door, noise, confusion and wrapped in a small blanket, ousted from the room by German soldiers yelling “Raus, Raus, Juden!” and into the snow filled street where we became part of a herd of people being loaded onto military trucks and a terrifying journey to Soldau concentration camp. After a few days in this camp we were loaded onto a train and deported to the southeast, to the vicinity of Kielce, in the zone of the General Government, beyond the territory of the Third Reich.”

“The Jews of Plotzk were spread out to several Jewish communities in small towns and with nothing to sustain them, some starved and many died from typhus.”

A friendship with a Polish man, Stanislaw Szczesniak, enabled the family to obtain a copy of the original birth certificate of a female relative of his, and after claiming she had lost her identity card, his mother was issued a new one. Later they were able to obtain Polish identity cards for Simcha and Yaacov. The latter became Stanislaw Duda and wore a pendant around his neck depicting Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms.

“I learned to cross myself correctly so as not to arouse suspicion and I learned the Lord’s Prayer, eventually reciting it every morning and every night like a good Catholic.” Just a short time before the Germans rounded up all the Jews of Ostrowiec and transported them to death camps, the Guterman family, with their new identities, had moved to the outskirts of the town, with a wide area of marshes between.

“We became the last surviving Jews of Ostrowiec,” emphasized Yaacov.

“Just imagine,” he said to the rapt listeners in the library of Givat Haviva, “a strip of marshland was all that was between us and being sent to our certain deaths.”

The Guterman family began an odyssey of long train journeys, attempting to find a safe haven. “Over and over again showing our tickets and identity cards to conductors for inspection, dreading something would give us away, trying to hide who we were, constantly pretending to be someone else, living on the edge of fear with no let up.”

Eventually they arrived at a small, relatively remote Polish village. Here, Yaacov was attacked by three young Poles, who knocked him to the ground, and as he managed to get away, heard them say if they found he was circumcised they would hand him over to the Germans.

“My father had a great urge to convey to future generations what had befallen the Jewish people and he took great risk in filling strip after strip of paper, detailing all the horrendous events he encountered and heard from others. When he finished writing both sides of the paper in tiny Yiddish script, he would roll it up, tie black thread around it and squeeze it into the neck of a bottle. He packed as many as possible into each bottle, then melted hot wax from a candle over the cork to seal it.”

Every time Simcha hid a bottle, he would urge Yaacov to remember where it was hidden, convinced that if one of them survived, it would be Yaacov.

Using false identities, the family made their way to Warsaw in 1944, but because no two of their family names were the



Yaacov Guterman discussing the recently published English translation of ‘Leaves from fire,’ and with European & South Korean kibbutz volunteers on seminar at Kibbutz Givat Haviva

same, they were forced to take live apart. Simcha was offered a job in a convent of Mariavitian nuns who had known him from before the war and were prepared to risk their lives in sheltering Jews.

“When one of the nuns told my father she was going to the countryside to visit relatives, he begged her to take me with her as Warsaw was getting more and more dangerous. I was 9-years-old, and found myself travelling with a nun in a habit to the village of Vygoda near Lowich. There were little wooden houses, green fields, cows and horses – I was filled with joy.”

“I did not know about the Warsaw uprising, the house to house combat, the German tanks and aircraft shelling houses, but one evening the nun took me outside

and explained about it all and said it was unlikely that my parents were alive and encouraged me to become a Christian. She said it would not hurt as it would be just some water and a prayer. I choked back tears, fear and confusion, thanked her for everything she was doing for me and told her that I was born a Jew and wanted to go on being one. The following day she arranged for me to live with a family in the next village where a farmer was willing to take me in to work in his cowshed, and I agreed. They were a good family who treated me like their own son just a few years older than me. I went to church with them and fitted really well into the family.”

“One evening as she was talking to her neighbor I heard her boast how the poor orphaned mite Stashek was such a pious Catholic – little did she know,” concluded Yaacov who was later reunited with his mother.

“I was out grazing the animals one day and when I came back towards the farm I saw a lady with her back to me sitting on a rock. As I drew closer I recognized my



mother and was so happy but she also explained that my father had been killed and that was devastating.”

One of the last questions put to Yaacov by one of the kibbutz volunteers was what should be learned from his experiences both in Europe and in all the wars he had been through in Israel.

“I learned from the Holocaust to despise nationalism and racism. I should say that I simply despise hatred,” he concluded. ■

Lydia Aisenberg is a freelance journalist and informal educator in the International Department of Givat Haviva, a non-profit organization founded in 1949 by the Kibbutz Federation. She is also the photographer for this article.

THREE BOOKS, ONE THEME: CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

By René Goldman

FACE AU MIROIR SANS REFLET.

(Facing a Mirror without Reflection).

By Charles Zelwer

Preface de Marion Feldman.

L'Harmattan, Paris 2014, 243 pages

CHILD SURVIVORS: Adults Living with Childhood Trauma

By Paul Valent

William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne

1994, 288 pages

THE WORDS TO REMEMBER IT: MEMOIRS OF CHILD HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

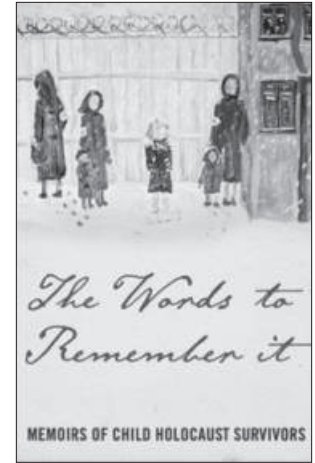
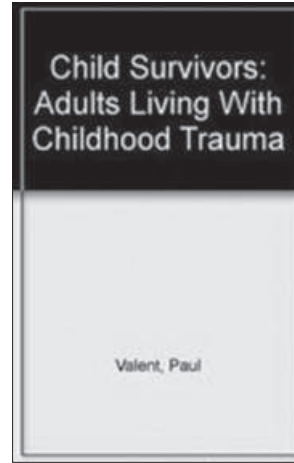
Foreword by Caroline Jones Scribe

Melbourne, 2004, 346 pages

In the torment-filled years of the Shoah, often at the risk of their own lives, heroic volunteers shouldered the rescue of Jewish children by hiding them among Gentile families or in Christian religious institutions. Their main goal was the complex, challenging task of saving children from arrest and deportation to the Nazi death camps. But they also had to protect the children from being mistreated or exploited. This was not always feasible, especially in cases of sexual violation, since such crimes were perpetrated in secrecy. And, shamed by their circumstances, the children's position vis-à-vis their rescuer/perpetrator precluded them from complaining.

Prefaced by Marion Feldman, the distinguished analyst of traumatic disorders affecting child-survivors of the Holocaust, Dr. Charles Zelwer's autobiography, *Face au Miroir sans Reflet*, reveals a rather peculiar case of sexual molestation of a child too young to comprehend a happening, which nonetheless impacted his adult life.

Born in 1940, Charles Zelwer was only 18 months old at the time of the "Grande Rafle," the massive round-up of 13,000 Jews, staged July 16-18, 1942, by the French police in Paris. Charles' parents hurriedly entrusted him to the care of a nurse, who lived with her several children in a small village. That woman's teen-age daughter at first showered him with almost maternal affection, until one day she aroused herself by pressing the uncomprehending toddler's naked body against her own unclad



body. Seized with fear at the thought of having committed a grave sin, the girl then turned hostile toward Charles, whom she accused of being an accomplice in her perverse deed. The poor child's life in the nurse's family was rendered worse by his not being allowed in the front room of the house, lest he be seen from the street by inquisitive strangers.

While children below the age of six normally forget the happenings of the first years of their lives, this troubling incident remained engraved on Charles' memory and assumed the dimensions of a veritable trauma as he grew up, a state of mind that in his adult life he came to characterize as "un fatras," a jumble of confused, incoherent emotions that produced deleterious effects on his personal as well as familial life. Alienated from both the family that hid him and from his parents, who had survived the war and with whom he returned to live, Charles erected an inner "wall" behind which he hid his identity, in order to adapt to a succession of two strange worlds. He grew up incapable of relating in a normal way to girls. Moreover, he did not have a normal relationship with his domineering mother; and he was estranged from his father, a dogmatic Communist with a closed mind.

Despite such emotional handicaps, Charles entered upon a brilliant scientific career as a researcher in molecular and structural biology. His successful professional life and political activities as a com-

munist intellectual, concealed the pall of tragedy that hung over his private life. His first marriage broke down and his schizophrenia impacted on both of his sons, one of whom became so afflicted with paranoia that he committed suicide, while the other turned his back on him. Only his daughter remained "normal." Charles eventually contracted a second marriage to a very understanding woman. With her help and thanks to a series of psychiatric tests, he became, at last, able to confront the nature of his "fatras" and to win release from a lifelong concealed nightmare.

Living with memories of traumas suffered in childhood is a common phenomenon among survivors of the Shoah. The sequels of these traumas vary in intensity, depending on whether as children they were hidden, the conditions under which they were hidden and their age at the time, or whether they had a brush with death in Nazi camps, or survived underground in forests in Ukraine. Two anthologies of child survivor memoirs published in Australia are particularly remarkable for the variety of experiences they examine. Paul Valent's book, *Child Survivors: Adults Living with Childhood Trauma*, contains interviews with ten child-survivors, while the book *The Words to Remember It* contains thirty narratives. All subjects live in Australia and most are professionally and otherwise successful adults, even if some are unable to distance themselves from the traumas

Continued on next page

of their childhood. On the other hand, others, such as “Bernadette,” have memory holes, and do not wish to remember.

Some accounts are particularly horrific, such as that of “Anne,” not much older than Charles Zelwer, hidden as a child with French peasants by whom she was subjected to beatings and mental cruelty, besides being repeatedly raped. Or Eva S., who was subjected to Mengele’s sinister medical experiments at Auschwitz. Or even Eva M., who was spared the horrors of Nazi death camps, only to end up spending six years in the Gulag in Siberia and Kazakhstan. The narratives comprised in the two Australian anthologies document the sad reality that an assault on a child is particularly cruel, because its effects last through life. The child-survivors are affected not only by what they endured during the war, but also by witnessing the powerlessness of their parents. For some, the post-war stresses were as bad as the wartime stresses; in situations in which one or both parents survived the Shoah, they were incapacitated by what they had suffered.

Dr. Paul Valent, himself a child-survivor and a native of Bratislava, did an outstanding job transcribing and compiling his interviews, each of which he follows up with a professional psycho-analytical commentary.

Contemplating our past as child-survivors, as well as the frightening situation of the world today, we might make ours the conclusion drawn by Richard Rozen, one of the interviewees of Dr. Valent, that, “*the normal and abnormal blend so much that for me it is normal that the world is abnormal.*”

René Goldman is a graduate of Columbia University and a retired professor of Chinese history at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He is a native of Luxembourg and a child-survivor of the Shoah in Belgium and France. René has published his own biography, A Child on the Move: Memoirs of a Child-Survivor of the Holocaust.

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST THE BELLS STILL RING

By Joseph Polak

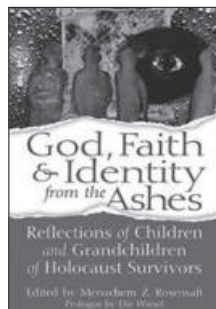
Foreword by Elie Wiesel

Urim Publications, Jerusalem, 2015, pp 141

Winner of 2015 National Jewish Book Award; Biography, Autobiography, and Memoir Available at Amazon.com

Chapter 8 of this book appears in this issue of The Hidden Child (see page 3).

After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring is the true story of a young infant boy and his mother, who miraculously survive two concentration camps, and then, after the war, battle demons of the past, societal rejection, disbelief and invalidation as they struggle to reenter the world of the living. Neither God nor man emerge unscathed from this searing work, written by a distinguished, Boston-based rabbi. Early critics



have suggested that this book constitutes a sequel to Anne Frank’s diary, the work she could have written, had she, like the author, survived Bergen-Belsen.

Merle Feld, playwright, poet, and author of *A Spiritual Life* and *Finding Words*, states: “This gem of a book, 70 years in the making, is already a classic, riveting in what it reveals, in the questions it releases... This author’s writing is extraordinary – it has the sure breathtaking tempo, evocative imagery and courage of poetry at its best. Polak has allowed us into the innermost sanctum of his life’s journey whose center is occupied by the Holocaust which demolished the world that should have been his and substituted a lifetime of questioning meaning, of running and hiding from pre-verbal memory, of searching for a way to keep living and shoulder the burden of witness.”

Blu Greenberg, poet and author of *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, writes: “Polak’s testimony begins *in utero* when his mother is forced to ‘prove’ her late-stage pregnancy to the SS to stave off immediate deportation. His witness con-

tinues as a three-year-old liberated from Bergen-Belsen, and then beyond – as he portrays with great dignity the extraordinary burdens of survival. Thus, Rabbi Polak, in his person and in this writing, bridges the universe of physical survivors to that of the psychological survivors who must now carry testimony forward into future generations. With each new, breath-taking read of this slender volume, one uncovers layer upon layer of meaning. Not the least of these is the theological struggle that grips this deeply religious man. It comes not in one diatribe or complaint but as a subtle undercurrent throughout; a powerful vignette of the absurd here, a daring question there... This is a must read for anyone not afraid of grappling with the unfathomable.”

GOD, FAITH & IDENTITY FROM THE ASHES

Reflections of Children and Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors

Edited by Menachem Z. Rosensaft

Prologue by Elie Wiesel

Jewish Lights Publishing, 2015, 352 pp, Hardcover

Almost ninety children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors—theologians, scholars, spiritual leaders, authors, artists, political and community leaders and media personalities—from sixteen countries on six continents reflect on how the memories transmitted to them have affected their lives. Profoundly personal stories explore faith, identity and legacy in the aftermath of the Holocaust as well as our role in ensuring that future genocides and similar atrocities never happen again.

There have been many books and studies about children of Holocaust survivors—the so-called second and third generations—with a psycho-social focus. This book is different. It is intended to reflect what they believe, who they are and how that informs what they have done and are doing with their lives.

From major religious or intellectual explorations to shorter commentaries on experiences, quandaries and cultural, political and personal affirmations, contributors respond to this question: how have your parents’ and grandparents’ experi-

Continued on next page

ences and examples helped shape your identity and your attitudes toward God, faith, Judaism, the Jewish people and the world as a whole?

For people of all faiths and backgrounds, these powerful and deeply moving statements will have a profound effect on the way our and future generations understand and shape their understanding of the Holocaust.

MY REVENGE

By Yaakov Wodzislowski

Contento De Semrik, Tel Aviv, 2013, pp 134
Amazon, Kindle edition

Yaakov Wodzislowski was not quite 14 when the Nazis invaded Poland. He survived ghetto life and the labor camp in his home town Czestochowa by finding shelter with Barbara Hajdas, a Pole who was later honored as a Righteous Gentile for saving 14 Jews from the Nazis. (His parents were sent to the fires of Treblinka.)

“Our ‘grave’ was a dug-out hole in the ground about 3.5 feet deep and 6 feet wide. The three of us could only sit or lie down on the straw that was under us.

There were boards above us covered by straw. It was dark twenty-four hours, seven days a week. We stayed like that for 8 months....”

When Poland was liberated, he emerged from his hideout, headed back to his native Czestochowa, and made a promise to himself: “I knew I had to do something so that the Jewish nation would never again risk annihilation. I knew that we had to build our own state so that Jews could at last defend ourselves, and I knew that we couldn’t trust our fate to anyone but

ourselves.” In 1945, Wodzislowski entered Israel as an illegal immigrant.

In January 1948, he volunteered to join the ranks of the Haganah. In 1978, he married Irena, another child survivor of the Holocaust. Together, they founded the Ariel Holocaust and Heroism Memorial House. Yaakov Wodzislowski died in 2013. This publication is dedicated to his memory.

GOD PLAYS HIDE AND SEEK

By Greta Elbogen

Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft, Vienna, Austria, 2015(theodorkramer.at)

Also available at Amazon.com and schoenbooks.com

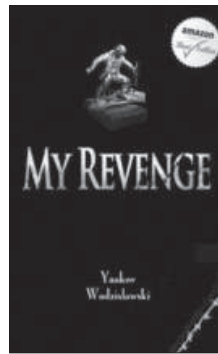
(The book includes historic photos and a detailed biography.)

God Plays Hide and Seek is a manifestation of Greta Elbogen’s lifework and a saga that focuses on how she found her way out of the deep sadness she had incurred as a result of her wartime losses. In finding beauty around her and in expressing it through poetry, Greta has overcome her life’s tribulations. And in doing so, she shows us how to transform suffering into inner peace and joy and become more loving and more forgiving. She believes that to create a happy, peaceful society, we need to focus more on self-development, self-healing. As Greta says, “It is our life’s purpose to search, to grow.”

Greta was born in Vienna, Austria, and during the Nazi persecution, her family fled to Budapest, Hungary, where she survived and grew up under communist rule. She began to look for answers to the suffering she saw around her early in her life. She says, “I see myself as a teacher who is able to help others by understanding the meaning of my own life experiences. Just as I learned over the years to transform my suffering into compassion, one day at a time, I believe that all of us, if we choose, are able to leave behind the notion of being victims and to embrace life, living it to the fullest.”

Currently Greta is an educator, an inspirational speaker, a poet, and a spiritually oriented psychotherapist residing in Manhattan. When she began seeking spiritual knowledge some 30 years ago, she realized that it was a lifelong quest that required further exploration into the world’s main religions and into multi-faith

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2016 LOS ANGELES GATHERING

November 4 – 7

Join us for a very special three-day gathering of survivors, second generation, third generation, descendants, and their families at the 28th annual conference hosted by the

WORLD FEDERATION OF JEWISH CHILD SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST & DESCENDANTS

in collaboration with

GENERATIONS OF THE SHOAH INTERNATIONAL (GSI)

and

KINDERTRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

Bring the family!

We will come together for a reunion weekend filled with inspiring presentations, group discussions, dancing, and shmoozing. We look forward to seeing you!

Visit www.holocaustchild.org for more information about the conference, including registration information, or email us at holocaustchildla2016@gmail.com

and New Age healing. She incorporates this knowledge into her own life and work. When happiness and peace seem unachievable, Greta's poems can be uplifting.

This publication, in English with German translation, was funded by the city of Vienna, Austria. She was invited by the Austrian Government to present her work at literary houses, and high schools, where it has been received with great enthusiasm.

MEMORY IS OUR HOME

Loss and Remembering: Three Generations in Poland and Russia, 1917-1960s

by Suzanna Eibuszyc

Foreword by Dennis Klein, Professor of History and Director of Jewish Studies Program, Kean University, NJ, USA

Edition Noëma, 2015, pp 250

Available at Amazon.com

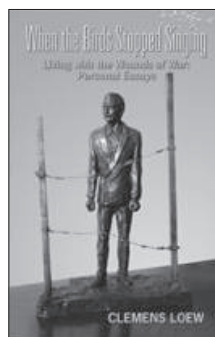
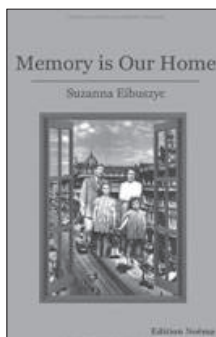
Memory Is Our Home is a powerful biographical memoir based on the diaries of Roma Talasiewicz-Eibuszyc, who was born in Warsaw before the end of World War I, and grew up during the interwar period. After escaping the atrocities of World War II, she was able to survive in the vast territories of Soviet Russia and Uzbekistan. The memoir is translated by Suzanna Eibuszyc, Roma's daughter, who was born after the war. Suzanna interweaves her own recollections of the family's postwar life in Communist Poland, where she attended a Jewish high school, Szalom Alejchem in Wrocław, before leaving for America in the late 1960s.

This 40-year recollection provides richly-textured accounts of the physical and emotional lives of Jews in Warsaw and of survival during World War II throughout Russia. It is a compelling narration through the voices of two generations.

Writing about her book Suzanna says: "My most vivid memory after the war in Poland is of my mother, always watching the door, always hopeful, never giving up that a loved one would enter, back from the dead. Later, when I grasped the magnitude of the crimes against Jews in Europe, I questioned why my parents thought it was essential to stay in 'their homeland.' With time, I accepted how important it was for them to restore their roots where their ancestors had lived for 1,000 years. My mother found courage and strength

among the ashes of her family. She brought them back to life daily. But 20 years, after the war, Jews were targeted again with an anti-Semitic campaign, sponsored by the Communist government. Between 1968 and 1969, Polish Jews were forced to disappear from Poland. It was in Elie Wiesel's classes at CCNY that I gained the courage to understand what my mother had lived through. When I told him about my mother, he said, 'Your mother must write her story. You must help her to do it.'

My mother hesitated at first, but as I persevered, she agreed. I understand now that her re-entry into a world she suppressed for so long was a great risk to her safety and sanity. For the sake of truth, she relived terror, hunger and pain. She bravely remembered the family she abandoned in Warsaw



and brought them back to life. She confronted the memory of impossible hardship, surviving in Russia, and added her voice to a generation silenced by Hitler.

My book is an illustration of a working class Jewish childhood and adolescence, my mother's, with emphasis on class, gender, politics and religion. It pencils a vibrant and bleak portrait of daily Jewish life during the interwar years in Warsaw. A difficult, impoverished upbringing after WWI in Poland gave birth to a generation of Jews who participated in Polish culture. During her youth in Warsaw, my mother joined the Bund movement, which concentrated on labor activism, promoted the use of Yiddish as a Jewish national language and strongly opposed Zionism. Its focus was culture, rather than a state or a place, as the glue of "Jewish Nationalism. She participated in improving conditions for all workers, while preserving Jewish culture. Life for Jews in

the 1930s deteriorated and life-changing disillusionment followed as Poland entered the pre-Holocaust and Holocaust periods."

Roma's doubts about Communism were confirmed during the 6 years she had lived in Stalin's Russia. Suzanna grew up knowing that joining the party was never an option.

Suzanna Eibuszyc received degrees from the City College of New York and the University of California. She lives in Los Angeles.

WHEN THE BIRDS STOPPED SINGING

Living with the Wounds of War: Personal Essays

By Clemens Loew

Paperback, available on Amazon

Clemens Loew, a psychotherapist and Co-Founder and Co-Director of the National Institute for the Psychotherapies, has written a most personal memoir that chronicles his life's adventures from childhood to the present. His memoir dramatically portrays his life as a survivor of the Holocaust, detailing his terrifying plight as a young boy hiding in Polish villages under false papers and his protected years within the walls of a Catholic convent under the sympathetic watch of his "beloved" nuns.

Following the War, Loew and his mother sailed on a troop transport to America. He colorfully recounts his boyhood adventures and romantic entanglements, finding love and hope in new relationships.

In writing this memoir, Loew struggles to give meaning to the madness he experienced early in his life. He writes, "Having lived as a child through times of Nazi violence, I am familiar with loss and terrifying uncertainty, and have witnessed gritty heroism. This is a memoir about my mother's fierce genius for survival and deep love for me. It is the story of love and hope found in new relationships, and of my struggle to give meaning to the madness I experienced and witnessed and that lingers within me as an adult. I acknowledge that along with the privilege of survival comes the obligation to live one's life to the fullest and honor those who did not survive.

In addition to his psychotherapeutic practice, Clemens Loew is an accomplished sculptor, photographer and writer.

YAAKOV, PINCHAS AND THE GERMAN GIRL

By Pinchas Zajonc

In May 1946, my good friend Yaakov and I were in Germany on our long road to Israel. I was 14, Yaakov was 12. We were studying in a school where older members of *Hashomer Hatzair* served as teachers and counsellors. Our teacher, Hedva, was teaching Hebrew, which I already knew, and I must have felt bored. It is likely that I disturbed the class and I was asked to leave. At first, I felt hurt, but when Yaakov joined me, I was happy. We set out in the direction of a German village, about 6 kilometers

looking for a football field or playground. We found one, and it even had a bicycle path. We hid in the bushes, awaiting a child that might come riding by, ready to knock him down, steal his bicycle, sell it, and with the money buy an accordion.

We didn't find our victim, but we didn't despair. The next day we returned to the same field. This time we saw a young, unaccompanied girl, maybe 11 or 12 years old, pedaling by. We decided that when she'd approach, we'd spring forward, knock her

thanked us, and in our broken German we mumbled something.

The idea of stealing a bicycle faded away. We returned home, wordlessly, somewhat shaken and depressed. But something substantive had changed in our souls, and we never had such thoughts again. In retrospect, it had been a fundamental event for me. At once, I lost my desire for revenge against Germans, despite what could have been deemed as a justified action.

About one month later, in June 1946, to Yaakov's good fortune, his father's brother, who had survived in Belgium, was able to locate his nephew with the aid of the Red Cross. He came to visit Yaakov and brought him a present, a new pair of shoes. The shoes, however, didn't fit him at all. We intended to sell them to purchase an accordion, but no store agreed to buy them. Then we found a shop that sold "antiques" and second-hand goods. The old owner told us to go up to the second floor, and there we found a small accordion with only 8 bases. After a month we both learned to play the accordion. When our group met on Friday evenings, we accompanied the singing of Yiddish and Hebrew songs, making these more cheerful.

Ever since this incident occurred, I haven't been able to hate anyone. I learned then that hatred is destructive, and I was happy to have cured myself forever of this terrible disease. I have tried to bequeath this to my three sons, my seven grandchildren and to anyone else who will listen.

Yaakov now lives in Toronto, Canada. Every once in a while he and his wife come to visit me in Israel. We reminisce about the story of the bicycle and wonder if the German girl, who is now over 80 years old, remembers the two Jewish boys who embraced her and wiped away her tears.

In 1939, in Baranow, Poland, Pinchas' hometown, there were about 2,100 Jews, of whom about 1,000 were children. Only 22 people survived: 18 immigrated to Israel and started new families. Today there are only 2 people from Baranow living in Israel: Pinchas and his friend Nathan Bury. Pinchas is looking for more descendants of Baranow survivors in other countries.



Left, Pinchas Zajonc; right, Yaakov Kuperblum (now Jack Kuper). Jordanbad, Germany, 1946.

away. As we neared, we heard some wonderful music coming from a small café. We peeked through the window and saw three musicians, one of whom was playing an accordion. Its sounds captivated us. We could not break away from such enjoyment, and each day we skipped class to return to the café. We'd sit by the window for hours, mesmerized by the joyful tunes.

One day, we decided to buy an accordion. But we had no way to achieve this. There is no denying that at the time we were filled with a terrible hatred toward Germans. "*Nemt nekume*," in Yiddish, meaning "take revenge" was the message of all the survivors we'd met in Poland after the war. Now was the time to implement our vengeance.

We returned to the village the next day,

down and snatch her bicycle. But with each round, we recoiled. In the end we decided to marshal our courage with her next advance. This time we'd do it without hesitation. Still, even then, we lacked the nerve to rob her.

Suddenly our plan was disrupted. We heard her screaming and crying. As we emerged, we were shocked by the sight, though we really didn't fathom what we were witnessing. The girl was lying on the ground; an older youth was bending over her. When he saw us, he ran away quickly.

Filled with compassion and pity, we ran to the girl. We lifted her up, calmed her down, wiped away her tears, caressed her, and asked her where her parents lived. I took her hand and Yaakov took her bicycle, and we brought her to her parents. They