



Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program

Summer 2018

Documents

Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program

Copyright © 2017 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants

PO Box 1922, New York, NY 10156

(212) 239-4230 www.hajrtp.org

July 2018



Elaine Culbertson
Program Director



Neil Garfinkle
Program Liaison



Meryl Menashe
Program Liaison

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The Content here is provided under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License** (“CCPL” or “license”). This Content is protected by copyright and/or other applicable law. Any use of the Content other than as authorized under this license or copyright law is prohibited.

By exercising any rights to the work provided here, you accept and agree to be bound by the terms of this license. To the extent this license may be considered to be a contract, the licensor grants you the rights contained here in consideration of your acceptance of such terms and conditions.

Under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License, you are invited to copy, distribute and/or modify the Content, and to use the Content here for personal, educational, and other noncommercial purpose on the following terms:

- You must cite the author and source of the Content as you would material from any printed work.
- You must also cite and link to, when possible, the website as the source of the Content.
- You may not remove any copyright, trademark, or other proprietary notices, including attribution, information, credits, and notices that are placed in or near the Content.
- You must comply with all terms or restrictions other than copyright (such as trademark, publicity, and privacy rights, or contractual restrictions) as may be specified in the metadata or as may otherwise apply to the Content.

This document was prepared by Jim Culbertson under the direction of Elaine Culbertson. Any errors or omissions in this document *are solely the responsibility of Jim Culbertson.*

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Background Reading	1
1. Definition of the Holocaust	2
2. Chronological Framework for Teaching about the Holocaust.....	3
3. The Jews of Europe before and after the Holocaust	4
4. Why Didn't They All Leave?	5
5. What Do Jews Believe?	8
6. What Is Judaism?	10
7. Hitler's World	19
8. Yehuda Bauer on Jewish Resistance	27
9. What We Value: Spiritual Resistance during The Holocaust.....	29
10. Resistance is	32
11. Jewish Resistance under Nazi Rule	33
12. Political Opposition to the Nazis	39
13. Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos	41
14. Physical Resistance	43
15. Case Study: Freddie Knoller	44
16. Chart: Jewish Resistance Groups by Location	45
17. Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance	47
18. The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking	48
19. Directory of Major Concentration Camps.....	52
20. Nazi Euphemisms.....	54
21. Germany: Virtual Jewish History Tour	56
June 30.....	72
22. Bergen-Belsen Camp Complex	73
23. Bergen-Belsen Timeline	75
24. <i>Thinking of Food—Memoir of Bergen Belsen</i> Survivor Irene Muskal.....	77
25. <i>Between Two Streams — A Diary from Bergen-Belsen</i> by Abel Herzberg	80
26. Chava Rosenfarb: <i>Bergen-Belsen Diary, 1945</i>	106
July 1	118
27. Olympic Stadium Berlin	119
28. An Interview with Margaret Lambert	120
29. The Track 17 Memorial at Grunewald Railway Station	122
30. Wannsee Conference and the “Final Solution”	124
31. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin	127
32. Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism	129
33. Homosexuals.....	130

34. Robert Oelbermann	133
35. Gad Beck	134
36. Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism	136
37. Stolpersteine — “Stumbling Blocks”	138
38. The Women’s Rosenstraße Protest in Nazi Berlin by Nathan Stoltzfus	139
39. Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule (1935-1941)	142
July 2	156
40. Ravensbrück Concentration Camp	157
41. Ravensbrück Timeline	160
42. Excerpt from Sarah Helm’s <i>Ravensbrück</i>	162
43. Spiritual Resistance at Ravensbrück	163
44. The Dawn of Hope: A Memoir of Ravensbrück	164
45. <i>Other Victims: The Hearing Impaired</i>	189
46. We Were Jehovah’s Witnesses	192
July 3	196
47. Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp	197
48. Sachsenhausen Timeline	200
49. Arrival at Sachsenhausen by Heinz Heger	202
50. <i>A Not So Average Joe’s Story: Joachim Boin in Sachsenhausen</i>	206
July 4	210
51. Map: Eastern Europe after the German-Soviet Pact, 1939–1940	211
52. A History of the Jews in Poland	212
53. Kraków (Cracow)	217
54. Kraków Timeline	222
55. Tadeusz Pankiewicz: Kraków	224
56. Amon Goeth Liquidates the Last Jews in Kraków	226
57. Justyna’s Narrative	228
58. For My Mother: Helena Tichauer Tells Her Story	232
July 5	238
59. The Auschwitz Concentration Camp Complex	239
60. Photo: Selection on the Train Platform	246
61. Auschwitz Timeline	247
62. Gisella Perl: “I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz”	250
63. Resistance in the Kinderlager: Tova Friedman	254
64. Remembering the Sinti and Roma of Auschwitz	255
65. Excerpt from “Gypsies” by Charlotte Delbo	258
66. Hugo Gryn: A 14 Year old Jewish Boy Describes his Arrival in Auschwitz	262
67. Filip Muller: Auschwitz - Birkenau Sonderkommando	263
July 6	265
68. Bełżec Todeslager	266
69. Bełżec Timeline	270
70. Chaim Hirszman: Survivor of Bełżec Death Camp	272
71. Darkness and Hope	273

72. Kurt Gersten: Belżec Testimony	277
73. Map: German Administration of Poland, 1942	280
July 7	281
74. Aktion Reinhard (Einsatz Reinhard)	282
75. Map: Aktion Reinhard in the Generalgouvernement, 1942	285
76. The History of Lublin and Lublin Jews	286
77. Lublin/Majdanek Timeline	289
78. Judith Becker: On Arriving at Majdanek.....	291
79. Physical Resistance: The Coal Mine	293
80. Reserve Police Battalion 101	295
July 8	298
81. Warsaw	299
82. Historical Sites of Jewish Warsaw	307
83. A Glimpse of Jewish Warsaw	314
84. General Government: Administrative Districts.....	316
85. Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	319
86. Miła 18	322
87. Umschlagplatz.....	323
88. Map: Warsaw Ghetto Umschlagplatz	324
89. Avraham Levin's <i>Warsaw Ghetto Diary</i>	325
90. Chaim A. Kaplan's <i>Diary Warsaw Ghetto – August 1942</i>	326
91. Mary Berg's <i>Diary</i>	327
92. From the <i>Diary of Stanislaw Adler</i>	329
93. The Smuggling of Food into the Warsaw Ghetto	331
94. From the <i>Diary of Emanuel Ringelblum</i>	332
95. The Last Letter from Mordechai Anielewicz	334
96. Janusz Korczak	336
97. Vladka's Eyewitness Remarks on Janusz Korczak	340
98. Non-Jewish Teens Who Rescued Jews	342
99. Irving Milchberg—Smuggled Guns Under Nazis' Noses in Warsaw	344
July 9	347
100. Map: Treblinka Environs, Spring 1943	348
101. Map: Treblinka Camp, Spring 1943	349
102. Treblinka Vernichtungslager	350
103. Treblinka Timeline.....	351
104. Jankiel Wiernik: Treblinka Testimony	354
105. The Revolt in Treblinka	357
107. Tykocin.....	363
108. Łopuchowo - The Place of Execution and Burial of Holocaust's Victims	365
Diaries and Memoirs	368
109. Eva Heyman.....	369
110. From: <i>Yellow Star</i>	370
111. Parallel Journeys	371
112. Polish Prisoners	373

113. Excerpts from <i>How Was It Humanly Possible?</i>	375
114. Yitskhok Rudashevski's Diary.....	377
115. The Hidden Children	380
116. Dora Golubowicz Freilich's Testimony.....	383
117. Final Letters.....	385
118. Suicide Note of Shmuel Zygelboim	387
Poetry	388
119. Everything is Forbidden to Us, and Yet We Do Everything.....	389
120. We Who Lived in Concentration Camps	393
121. I Prefer to Emphasize the Kindness	394
122. Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum	395
123. The Technical Committee of the Oneg Shabbat.....	396
124. From the Testament of Nahum Grzywacz	397
125. The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy	398
126. Voices from the Ground	399
127. Belgium, 1942.....	400
128. They Had a System: In Memory of the Girl whose Name Vanished with Her....	401
129. The Butterfly.....	402
130. Fear	403
131. Blessed is the Match.....	404
132. Riddle	406
133. A Mountain of Shoes.....	407
134. The First Ones.....	409
135. Pigtail	411
136. Posthumous Rehabilitation	412
137. I Did Not Manage to Save	413
138. Excerpts from the Poem "5.8.42 In Memory of Janusz Korczak".....	414
139. Holocaust 1944	415
140. I Keep Forgetting	416
141. Never Shall I Forget that Night.....	418
142. Shema	420
143. There Were Those	421
144. To My Wife	422
145. Deep Graves, Red Clay	424
146. 1945.....	426
147. I Must Tell the Story	427
148. The Partisans' Hymn	428
149. Mourners' Kaddish.....	430
Using Survivor Testimony.....	431
150. Using Survivor Testimony in Your Classroom.....	432
151. Survivor Testimony: What Was It Like?	433
152. Survivor Testimony Workshop	434
National Archives Artifact Analysis.....	435
153. Written Document Analysis Worksheet.....	436

154. Photo Analysis Worksheet	437
155. Cartoon Analysis Worksheet.....	438
156. Poster Analysis Worksheet	439
157. Map Analysis Worksheet	440
158. Artifact Analysis Worksheet.....	441
159. Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet.....	442
Resources.....	445

Background Reading

1.	Definition of the Holocaust	2
2.	Chronological Framework for Teaching about the Holocaust.....	3
3.	The Jews of Europe before and after the Holocaust	4
4.	Why Didn't They All Leave?	5
5.	What Do Jews Believe?	8
6.	What Is Judaism?	10
7.	Hitler's World.....	19
8.	Yehuda Bauer on Jewish Resistance	27
9.	What We Value: Spiritual Resistance during The Holocaust.....	29
10.	Resistance is	32
11.	Jewish Resistance under Nazi Rule.....	33
12.	Political Opposition to the Nazis	39
13.	Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos	41
14.	Physical Resistance	43
15.	Case Study: Freddie Knoller.....	44
16.	Chart: Jewish Resistance Groups by Location	45
17.	Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance	47
18.	The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking	48
19.	Directory of Major Concentration Camps.....	52
20.	Nazi Euphemisms.....	54
21.	Germany: Virtual Jewish History Tour	56



1. Definition of the Holocaust

The Holocaust (from the Greek ὁλόκαυστος *holókaustos*: *hólos*, “whole” and *kaustós*, “burnt”)¹ also known as **Shoah** (Hebrew: שואה, *HaShoah*, “the catastrophe”; Yiddish: חורבן, *Churban* or *Hurban*, from the Hebrew for “destruction”), was the mass murder or genocide of approximately six million Jews during World War II, a programme of systematic state-sponsored murder by Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* “National Socialist German Workers’ Party,” NSDAP), throughout Germany (*Deutsches Reich*, “German Empire”) and German-occupied territories.²

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims — six million were murdered. Roma (“Gypsies”)³, physically and mentally disabled people and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

Source: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005143&MediaId=7827

¹ Dawidowicz, Lucy (1975). *The War Against the Jews.*, p. xxxvii.

² Snyder, Timothy (2010). *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. London: The Bodley Head. 2010, p. 45. Further examples of this usage can be found in: Bauer 2002, Cesarani 2004, Dawidowicz 1981, Evans 2002, Gilbert 1986, Hilberg 1996, Longerich 2012, Phayer 2000, Zuccotti 1999.

³ The word ‘Gypsy’ refers to any itinerant person who is suspected of dishonest practices derives from traditional racist stereotypes of the Romani people.

2. Chronological Framework for Teaching about the Holocaust

1933		Nazi Dictatorship/ Expansion without War
	January	Hitler appointed Chancellor
1939		Discrimination and Segregation
	September	World War II begins
1940	February	Germans establish a ghetto in Łódź; first of many ghettos
1941		Mass Killing of Jews Begins
	June	Moblike killing units begin mass killing in Russia
	December	U.S. enters World War II
		Gassing operations begin at Chelmno
1942	January	Wansee Conference in Berlin
	Spring	Gassing operations begin at other killing centers
	July	Anne Frank goes into hiding
1943		Industrialized Killing/ Deportation of Jews to Killing Centers
		Warsaw Ghetto uprising
		Rescue of Danish Jews begins
1944	May	First Deportation of Hungarian Jews
	June	D-Day
	July	Soviets liberate Majdanek
1945		Death Marches
	January	Liberation of Auschwitz by Soviets
	May	Germany surrenders
		Displaced Persons' Camps/ Emigration
	November	Nuremberg War Crimes trial begins

3. The Jews of Europe before and after the Holocaust

Country	Estimated Pre-War Jewish population	Estimated killed	Percent killed
Baltic countries	253,000	228,000	90
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60
Bohemia and Moravia	90,000	80,000	89
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22
Byelorussian SSR	375,000	245,000	65
Denmark	8,000	52	<1
France	350,000	90,000	26
Germany and Austria	240,000	210,000	90
Greece	70,000	54,000	77
Hungary	650,000	450,000	70
Italy	40,000	8,000	20
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20
Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75
Norway	2,173	890	41
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90
Romania	600,000	300,000	50
Russian SFSR	975,000	107,000	11
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83
Ukrainian SSR	1,500,000	900,000	60
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60
Total	8,861,800	5,933,900	67

These numbers from Lucy Dawidowicz show the annihilation of the Jewish population of Europe by (pre-war) country.

Dawidowicz, Lucy. *The War Against the Jews*, Bantam, 1986.p. 403.

4. Why Didn't They All Leave?

When a student asks this question, frequently they are wondering about German Jews before the start of 1939.

- **What is involved in leaving one's homeland as well as what sacrifices must be made?**
 - German Jews were in most cases patriotic citizens. Over 10,000 died fighting for Germany in World War I, and countless others were wounded and received medals for their valor and service. Jews, whether in the lower, middle, or upper classes, had lived in Germany for centuries and were well assimilated in the early twentieth century.
 - The oppressive measures targeting Jews in the pre-war period were passed and enforced gradually. Also, these types of pre-war measures and laws had been experienced throughout the history of the Jewish people in earlier periods and in other countries as well. No one at the time could have foreseen or predicted killing squads and killing centers.
- **What event or action (without the '20-20 hindsight' that we have) should have convinced the Jews to flee?**
 - Once the difficult decision was made to try to leave the country, prospective emigrants had to find a country willing to admit them and their family. This was very difficult, considering world immigration policies, as demonstrated by the results of the Evian Conference of 1938. If a safe haven could be found, what was needed to get there?

Documentation Required for Immigration Visas to Enter the United States

In the years immediately preceding U.S. entry into World War II, potential immigrants were required to file the following documents to obtain a U.S. visa.

- Visa application (Form BC)—Five copies
- Birth certificate—Two copies (country of birth determined applicable quotas)
- Quota number, which established the person's place on the waiting list to enter the United States
- Two sponsors (close relatives of prospective immigrant were preferred). The sponsors had to be American citizens or have permanent resident status, and they had to fill out and provide the following:
- Affidavit of Support and Sponsorship (Form C)—Six copies, notarized
 - Certified copy of most recent federal tax return
 - Affidavit from a bank about accounts
 - Affidavit from any other responsible person regarding other assets (affidavit from the sponsor's employer or statement of commercial rating)
- Certificate of Good Conduct from German police authorities, including two copies of each of the following:
 - Police dossier prison record
 - Military record
 - Other government records about the individual
- Affidavits of Good Conduct (after September 1940)
- Evidence of passing a physical examination at a U.S. consulate
- Proof of permission to leave Germany (imposed September 30, 1939)
- Proof the prospective immigrant had booked passage to the Western hemisphere (imposed September 1939)

Documentation Required for Emigration from Germany

After 1937, Jews needed the following documents from German authorities to leave the country:

- A valid German passport
- Certificate from the local police noting the formal dissolution of residence in Germany
- Certificate from the Reich Ministry of Finance approving emigration, which required:
 - Payment of an emigration tax of 25 percent on total assets valued at more than 50,000 RM (Reichsmark).⁴ This tax came due upon the dissolution of German residence.
 - Submission of an itemized list of all gifts made to third parties since January 1, 1931. If their value exceeded 10,000 R M, they were included in the calculation of the emigration tax.
 - Payment of a capital transfer tax of 25 percent (levied only on Jews) of assets in addition to the emigration tax.
 - Certification from the local tax office that there were no outstanding taxes due.
 - Certification from a currency exchange office that all currency regulations had been followed. An emigrant was permitted to take 2,000 R M or less in currency out of the country. Any remaining assets would be transferred into blocked bank accounts with restricted access.
- Customs declaration, dated no earlier than three days before departure, permitting the export of itemized personal and household goods. This declaration required:
 - Submission of a list, in triplicate, of all personal and household goods accompanying the emigrant stating their value. The list had to note items acquired before January 1, 1933, those acquired since January 1, 1933, and those acquired to facilitate emigration.
 - Documents attesting to the value of personal and household goods, and written explanations for the necessity of taking them out of the country.
 - Certification from a currency exchange office permitting the export of itemized personal and household goods, dated no earlier than 14 days before departure.

With the preceding documents, emigrants could leave Germany, if and only if they had valid travel arrangements and entrance visas for another country. After the union of Germany and Austria in March 1938, emigrants from Austria holding an Austrian passport had to apply for a German exit visa before they were permitted to leave the country.

⁴ In 1937, The Reichsmark was put on the gold standard at the rate previously used by the Goldmark, with the U.S. dollar worth 4.2 *RM*. Hence, at that time 50,000 *RM* would have been about \$12,000 US.

5. What Do Jews Believe?

- Judaism does not have formal mandatory beliefs
- The most accepted summary of Jewish beliefs is Rambam's 13 principles of faith
- Even these basic principles have been debated
- Judaism focuses on the relationships between the Creator, mankind, and the land of Israel

This is a far more difficult question than you might expect. Judaism has no dogma, no formal set of beliefs that one must hold to be a Jew. In Judaism, actions are far more important than beliefs, although there is certainly a place for belief within Judaism.

13 Principles of Faith

The closest that anyone has ever come to creating a widely-accepted list of Jewish beliefs is Rambam's thirteen principles of faith. These principles, which Rambam thought were the minimum requirements of Jewish belief, are:

1. God exists
2. God is one and unique
3. God is incorporeal
4. God is eternal
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other
6. The words of the prophets are true
7. Moses' prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets
8. The Written Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses
9. There will be no other Torah
10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked
12. The Messiah will come
13. The dead will be resurrected

As you can see, these are very basic and general principles. Yet as basic as these principles are, the necessity of believing each one of these has been disputed at one time or another, and the liberal movements of Judaism dispute many of these principles.

Unlike many other religions, Judaism does not focus much on abstract cosmological concepts. Although Jews have certainly considered the nature of God, man, the universe, life and the afterlife at great length (see Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism), there is no mandated, official, definitive belief on these subjects, outside of the very general concepts discussed above. There is

substantial room for personal opinion on all of these matters, because as said before, Judaism is more concerned about actions than beliefs.

Judaism focuses on relationships: the relationship between God and mankind, between God and the Jewish people, between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and between human beings. Our scriptures tell the story of the development of these relationships, from the time of creation, through the creation of the relationship between God and Abraham, to the creation of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people, and forward. The scriptures also specify the mutual obligations created by these relationships, although various movements of Judaism disagree about the nature of these obligations. Some say they are absolute, unchanging laws from God (Orthodox); some say they are laws from God that change and evolve over time (Conservative); some say that they are guidelines that you can choose whether or not to follow (Reform, Reconstructionist). For more on these distinctions, see *Movements of Judaism*.

So, what are these actions that Judaism is so concerned about? According to Orthodox Judaism, these actions include 613 commandments given by God in the Torah as well as laws instituted by the rabbis and long-standing customs.

Suggestions for Further Reading

As said above, Judaism focuses more on actions than on beliefs, and books about Judaism tend to do the same. Most books emphasize holidays, practices and observances. The best summary of Jewish beliefs I've seen is Milton Steinberg's *Basic Judaism*. This book presents and contrasts the traditional and modern perspectives, and shows that we have more in common than many of us realize.

© Copyright 5756-5771 (1995-2011), Tracey R Rich

6. What Is Judaism?

A story is told...

A man approached the great sage Rabbi Hillel with a seemingly impossible demand. “I will convert to Judaism,” he said, “if you can teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.” Rabbi Hillel replied: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now go and study.” *Talmud* (Shabbat 31)

What is Judaism? What does it mean to be a Jew? Most people, both Jewish and gentile, would instinctively say that Judaism is a religion. And yet, there are militant atheists who insist that they are Jews! Is Judaism a race? If you were to say so, most Jews would think you were an anti-Semite! So what is Judaism?

- Judaism has been described as a religion, a race, a culture, and a nation
- All of these descriptions have some validity
- The Jewish people are best described as an extended family

Is Judaism a Religion?

Clearly, there is a religion called Judaism, a set of ideas about the world and the way we should live our lives that is called “Judaism.” It is studied in Religious Studies courses and taught to Jewish children in Hebrew schools. See *What do Jews Believe?* for details. There is a lot of flexibility about certain aspects of those beliefs, and a lot of disagreement about specifics, but that flexibility is built into the organized system of belief that is Judaism.

However, many people who call themselves Jews do not believe in that religion at all! More than half of all Jews in Israel today call themselves “secular,” and don’t believe in God or any of the religious beliefs of Judaism. Half of all Jews in the United States don’t belong to any synagogue. They may practice some of the rituals of Judaism and celebrate some of the holidays, but they don’t think of these actions as religious activities.

The most traditional Jews and the most liberal Jews and everyone in between would agree that these secular people are still Jews, regardless of their disbelief. See *Who is a Jew?* Clearly, then, there is more to being Jewish than just a religion.

Are Jews a Race?

In the 1980s, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Jews are a race, at least for purposes of certain anti-discrimination laws. Their reasoning: at the time these laws were passed, people routinely spoke of the “Jewish race” or the “Italian race” as well as the “Negro race,” so that is what the legislators intended to protect.

But many Jews were deeply offended by that decision, offended by any hint that Jews could be considered a race. The idea of Jews as a race brings to mind nightmarish visions of Nazi Germany, where Jews were declared to be not just a race, but an inferior race that had to be rounded up into ghettos and exterminated like vermin.

But setting aside the emotional issues, Jews are clearly not a race.

Race is a genetic distinction, and refers to people with shared ancestry and shared genetic traits. You can't change your race; it's in your DNA. I could never become black or Asian no matter how much I might want to.

Common ancestry is not required to be a Jew. Many Jews worldwide share common ancestry, as shown by genetic research; however, you can be a Jew without sharing this common ancestry, for example, by converting. Thus, although I could never become black or Asian, blacks and Asians have become Jews (Sammy Davis Jr. and Connie Chung).

Is It a Culture or Ethnic Group?

Most secular American Jews think of their Jewishness as a matter of culture or ethnicity. When they think of Jewish culture, they think of the food, of the Yiddish language, of some limited holiday observances, and of cultural values like the emphasis on education.

Those secular American Jews would probably be surprised to learn that much of what they think of as Jewish culture is really just Ashkenazic Jewish culture, the culture of Jews whose ancestors come from one part of the world. Jews have lived in many parts of the world and have developed many different traditions. As a Sephardic friend likes to remind me, Yiddish is not part of his culture, nor are bagels and lox, chopped liver, latkes, gefilte fish or matzah ball soup. His idea of Jewish cooking includes bourekas, phyllo dough pastries filled with cheese or spinach. His ancestors probably wouldn't know what to do with a dreidel.

There are certainly cultural traits and behaviors that are shared by many Jews that make us feel more comfortable with other Jews. Jews in many parts of the world share many of those cultural aspects. However, that culture is not shared by all Jews all over the world, and people who do not share that culture are no less Jews because of it. Thus, Judaism must be something more than a culture or an ethnic group.

Are the Jews a Nation?

The traditional explanation, and the one given in the Torah, is that the Jews are a nation. The Hebrew word, believe it or not, is "goy." The Torah and the rabbis used this term not in the modern sense meaning a territorial and political entity, but in the ancient sense meaning a group

of people with a common history, a common destiny, and a sense that we are all connected to each other.

Unfortunately, in modern times, the term “nation” has become too contaminated by ugly, jingoistic notions of a country obsessed with its own superiority and bent on world domination. Because of this notion of “nationhood,” Jews are often falsely accused of being disloyal to their own country in favor of their loyalty to the Jewish “nation,” of being more loyal to Israel than to their home country. Some have gone so far as to use this distorted interpretation of “nationhood” to prove that Jews do, or seek to, control the world. In fact, a surprising number of antisemitic websites and newsgroup postings linked to this page (in an earlier form) as proof of their antisemitic delusions that Jews are nationalistic, that Israel is a colonial power and so forth.

Because of the inaccurate connotations that have attached themselves to the term “nation,” the term can no longer be used to accurately describe the Jewish people.

The Jewish People are a Family

It is clear from the discussion above that there is a certain amount of truth in the claims that it is a religion, a race, or an ethnic group, none of these descriptions is entirely adequate to describe what connects Jews to other Jews. And yet, almost all Jews feel a sense of connectedness to each other that many find hard to explain, define, or even understand. Traditionally, this interconnectedness was understood as “nationhood” or “peoplehood,” but those terms have become so distorted over time that they are no longer accurate.

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has suggested a better analogy for the Jewish people: We are a family. See the third essay in his 2005 book, *We Jews: Who Are We and What Should We Do*. But though this is a relatively new book, it is certainly not a new concept: throughout the Bible and Jewish literature, the Jewish people are referred to as “the Children of Israel,” a reference to the fact that we are all the physical or spiritual descendants of the Patriarch Jacob, who was later called Israel. In other words, we are part of his extended family.

Like a family, we don’t always agree with each other. We often argue and criticize each other. We hold each other to the very highest standards, knowing that the shortcomings of any member of the family will be held against all of us. But when someone outside of the family unfairly criticizes a family member or the family as a whole, we are quick to join together in opposition to that unfair criticism.

When members of our “family” suffer or are persecuted, we all feel their pain. For example, in the 1980s, when Africa was suffering from droughts and famines, many Jews around the world learned for the first time about the Beta Israel, the Jews of Ethiopia. Their religion, race and culture are quite different from ours, and we had not even known that they existed before the

famine. And yet, our hearts went out to them as our fellow Jews during this period of famine, like distant cousins we had never met, and Jews from around the world helped them to immigrate to Israel.

When a member of our “family” does something illegal, immoral or shameful, we all feel the shame, and we all feel that it reflects on us. As Jews, many of us were embarrassed by the scandals of Monica Lewinsky, Jack Abramoff and Bernie Madoff, because they are Jews and their actions reflect on us all, even though we disapprove. The Madoff scandal was all the more embarrassing, because so many of his victims were Jews and Jewish charities: a Jew robbing from our own “family”! We were shocked when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin was killed by a Jew, unable to believe that one Jew would ever kill another member of the “family.”

And when a member of our “family” accomplishes something significant, we all feel proud. A perfect example of Jews (even completely secular ones) delighting in the accomplishments of our fellow Jews is the perennial popularity of Adam Sandler’s Chanukah songs, listing famous people who are Jewish. We all take pride in scientists like Albert Einstein or political leaders like Joe Lieberman (we don’t all agree with his politics or his religious views, but we were all proud to see him on a national ticket). And is there a Jew who doesn’t know (or at least feel pride upon learning) that Sandy Koufax declined to pitch in a World Series game that fell on Yom Kippur?

Movements of Judaism

- Movements are sects or denominations of Judaism
- The oldest movements were Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots
- Medieval movements included Karaites and Rabbinical Judaism
- Rabbinical Judaism split into Chasidic, Orthodox, Reform and Conservative in the US today
- Other countries have similar movements differently named

The different sects or denominations of Judaism are generally referred to as movements. The differences between Jewish movements today are not so much a matter of theology, but more a matter of how literally they take the scriptures, how much they think biblical requirements can be changed, and whether those requirements are mandatory. I’ve been told that the differences between Jewish movements are not as great as the differences between Christian denominations, but I’m not sure if that’s true: I once heard a Protestant minister trying to explain to Jews the difference between Protestant denominations, and the first distinction he thought of was the country of origin of the adherents.

In general, when I speak of “movements” in this site, I am referring to movements in the United States in the 20th century, but in fact there have been organized differences of opinion for more than 2000 years.

Movements in Ancient Times

Perhaps the oldest records we have of a formal difference of religious opinion among Jews dates back to the time of the Maccabean revolt, which is the basis for the story of Chanukah. At that time, the land of Israel was under the relatively benevolent control of Greece, and was deeply influenced by Greek culture. Hellenizing Jews were opposed by a religious traditionalist group known as the Chasideans (no direct relation to the modern movement known as Chasidism). As the Seleucid Greeks began to oppress the Jews, war broke out and the Jewish people united in their opposition to the Greeks.

The war continued for 25 years, and the Jewish people remained united in purpose. But after the war ended, the Jewish people became divided into three groups: the Essenes, the Sadducees (*Tzedukim* in Hebrew) and the Pharisees.

The Essenes were an ascetic and mystical group devoted to strict discipline. They lived in isolation from the world. The Dead Sea Scrolls are believed to be the product of an Essene sect. Some scholars believe that early Christianity was influenced by the mystical and hermetical teachings of the Essenes.

The Sadducees evolved out of the Hellenistic elements of Judaism. The movement was made up of the priests and the aristocrats of Jewish society. They were religiously conservative but socially liberal. The Sadducees believed in a strict, narrow and unchanging interpretation of the written Torah, and they did not believe in oral Torah. The Temple and its sacrificial services were at the center of their worship. Socially, they adopted the ways of the neighboring Greek culture.

The Pharisees believed that God gave the Jews both a written Torah and an oral Torah, both of which were equally binding and both of which were open to interpretation by the rabbis, people with sufficient education to make such decisions. The Pharisees were devoted to study of the Torah and education for all.

After Judea was conquered by Rome and tensions with Rome began to mount, a fourth group appeared: the Zealots. The Zealots were basically a nationalistic movement, not a religious one. They favored war against Rome, and believed that death was preferable to being under Roman control. They would commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner. The most famous example of the Zealots was the defenders of Masada, who held the mountain fortress against the Roman Tenth Legion for months and ultimately committed suicide rather than surrender.

The Pharisaic school of thought is the only one that survived the destruction of the Temple. The Zealots were killed off during the war with Rome. The Sadducees could not survive without the Temple, which was the center of their religion. The Essenes, who were never very numerous,

were apparently killed off by the Romans (they were easily recognizable in their isolated communities). Some think that the Essenes may have been absorbed into Christianity, which as I said shares some of their mystical teachings.

For many centuries after the destruction of the Temple, there was no large-scale, organized difference of opinion within Judaism. Judaism was Judaism, and it was basically the same as what we now know as Orthodox Judaism. There were some differences in practices and customs between the Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe and the Sephardic Jews of Spain and the Middle East, but these differences were not significant. See Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews.

Karaites and Rabbinical Judaism

During the 9th century C.E., a number of sects arose that denied the existence of oral Torah. These sects came to be known as Karaites (literally, People of the Scripture), and they were distinguished from the Rabbanites or Rabbinical Judaism.

The Karaites believed in strict interpretation of the literal text of the scripture, without rabbinical interpretation. They believed that rabbinical law was not part of an oral tradition that had been handed down from God, nor was it inspired by God, but was an original work of the sages. As such, rabbinical teachings are subject to the flaws of any document written by mere mortals.

The difference between Rabbanites and Karaites that is most commonly noted is in regard to Shabbat: the Karaites noted that the Bible specifically prohibits lighting a flame on Shabbat, so they kept their houses dark on Shabbat. The Rabbanites, on the other hand, relied upon rabbinical interpretation that allowed us to leave burning a flame that was ignited before Shabbat. Karaites also prohibited sexual intercourse on Shabbat, while Rabbanites considered Shabbat to be the best time for sexual intercourse. The Karaites also follow a slightly different calendar than the Rabbanites.

According to the Karaites, this movement at one time attracted as much as 40% of the Jewish people. Today, Karaites are a very small minority, and most Rabbinical Jews do not even know that they exist. For more information about the Karaites, see The Karaite Korner.

Chasidim and Mitnagdim

In the 1700s, the first of the modern movements developed in Eastern Europe. This movement, known as Chasidism, was founded by Israel ben Eliezer, more commonly known as the Baal Shem Tov or the Besht. Before Chasidism, Judaism emphasized education as the way to get closer to God. Chasidism emphasized other, more personal experiences and mysticism as alternative routes to God.

Chasidism was considered a radical movement at the time it was founded. There was strong opposition from those who held to the pre-existing view of Judaism. Those who opposed Chasidism became known as mitnagdim (opponents), and disputes between the Chasidim and the mitnagdim were often brutal. Today, the Chasidim and the mitnagdim are relatively unified in their opposition to the liberal modern movements. Orthodoxy and even the liberal movements of Judaism today have been strongly influenced by Chasidic teachings.

Chasidic sects are organized around a spiritual leader called a Rebbe or a tzaddik, a person who is considered to be more enlightened than other Jews. A Chasid consults his Rebbe about all major life decisions.

Chasidism continues to be a vital movement throughout the world. The Lubavitcher Chasidim are very vocal with a high media presence (see their website, Chabad.org), but there are many other active Chasidic sects today. For a simple, plain English introduction to Chasidism written by a modern Breslover Chasid, check out this FAQ on Hasidic Culture and Customs.

Movements in the United States Today

Approximately 5 million of the world's 13 million Jews live in the United States. There are basically three major movements in the U.S. today: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox. Some people also include a fourth movement, the Reconstructionist movement, although that movement is substantially smaller than the other three. Orthodox and sometimes Conservative are described as “traditional” movements. Reform, Reconstructionist, and sometimes Conservative are described as “liberal” or “modern” movements.

Orthodoxy is actually made up of several different groups. It includes the modern Orthodox, who have largely integrated into modern society while maintaining observance of halakhah (Jewish Law), the Chasidim, who live separately and dress distinctively (commonly, but erroneously, referred to in the media as the “ultra-Orthodox”), and the Yeshivah Orthodox, who are neither Chasidic nor modern. The Orthodox movements are all very similar in belief, and the differences are difficult for anyone who is not Orthodox to understand. They all believe that God gave Moses the whole Torah at Mount Sinai. The “whole Torah” includes both the Written Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and the Oral Torah, an oral tradition interpreting and explaining the Written Torah. They believe that the Torah is true, that it has come down to us intact and unchanged. They believe that the Torah contains 613 mitzvot binding upon Jews but not upon non-Jews. This web site is written primarily from the modern Orthodox point of view. The 2000 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) performed by the Council of Jewish Federations found that 10% of American Jews identify themselves as Orthodox, including 21% of those who belong to a synagogue.

Reform Judaism does not believe that the Torah was written by God. The movement accepts the critical theory of Biblical authorship: that the Bible was written by separate sources and redacted together. Reform Jews do not believe in observance of commandments as such, but they retain much of the values and ethics of Judaism, along with some of the practices and the culture. The original, basic tenets of American Reform Judaism were set down in the Pittsburgh Platform. Many non-observant, nominal, and/or agnostic Jews will identify themselves as Reform when pressed to specify simply because Reform is the most liberal movement, but that is not really a fair reflection on the movement as a whole. There are plenty of Reform Jews who are religious in a Reform way. The NJPS found that 35% of American Jews identify themselves as Reform, including 39% of those who belong to a synagogue. There are approximately 900 Reform synagogues in the United States and Canada. For more information about Reform Judaism, see The Union for Reform Judaism.

Conservative Judaism grew out of the tension between Orthodoxy and Reform. It was formally organized as the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism in by Dr. Solomon Schechter in 1913, although its roots in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America stretch back into the 1880s. Conservative Judaism maintains that the truths found in Jewish scriptures and other Jewish writings come from God, but were transmitted by humans and contain a human component. Conservative Judaism generally accepts the binding nature of halakhah, but believes that the Law should change and adapt, absorbing aspects of the predominant culture while remaining true to Judaism's values. In my experience, there is a great deal of variation among Conservative synagogues. Some are indistinguishable from Reform, except that they use more Hebrew; others are practically Orthodox, except that men and women sit together. Some are very traditional in substance, but not in form; others are traditional in form but not in substance. This flexibility is deeply rooted in Conservative Judaism, and can be found within their own Statement of Principles, Emet v'Emunah. The NJPS found that 26% of American Jews identify themselves as Conservative, including 33% of those who belong to a synagogue. There are approximately 750 Conservative synagogues in the world today.

Reconstructionist Judaism is theoretically an outgrowth of Conservative, but it doesn't fit neatly into the traditional/liberal, observant/non-observant continuum that most people use to classify movements of Judaism. Reconstructionists believe that Judaism is an "evolving religious civilization." They do not believe in a personified deity that is active in history, and they do not believe that God chose the Jewish people. From this, you might assume that Reconstructionism is to the left of Reform; yet Reconstructionism lays a much greater stress on Jewish observance than Reform Judaism. Reconstructionists observe the halakhah if they choose to, not because it is a binding Law from God, but because it is a valuable cultural remnant. Reconstructionism is a very small movement but seems to get a disproportionate amount of attention, probably because there are a disproportionate number of Reconstructionists serving as rabbis to Jewish college student organizations and Jewish Community Centers. Everyone I know seems to have had a Reconstructionist rabbi at college or in a community center, yet according to the NJPS, only

about 2% of the Jews in America identify themselves as Reconstructionist. Reconstructionist numbers are, in fact, so small that the NJPS advises caution in interpreting the statistics. There are about a hundred Reconstructionist synagogues world-wide. See the homepage of the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement.

Though most Jews do not have any theological objections to praying in the synagogues of other movements, liberal services are not “religious” enough or “Jewish” enough for traditional Jews, and traditional services are too long, too conservative, and often basically incomprehensible to liberal Jews (because traditional services are primarily, if not exclusively, in Hebrew). Some Orthodox will not attend liberal services because of the mixed seating arrangements and because the liberal prayer book cuts many required prayers.

I have been to services in Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogues, and I have found that while there are substantial differences in length, language, and choice of reading materials, the overall structure is surprisingly similar. See Jewish Liturgy for more information about prayer services.

Movements in Israel Today

Approximately 5 million Jews live in Israel. Orthodoxy is the only movement that is formally and legally recognized in Israel. Until very recently, only Orthodox Jews could serve on religious councils. The Orthodox rabbinate in Israel controls matters of personal status, such as marriage, conversion and divorce.

The other American movements have some degree of presence in Israel, but for the most part, Israelis do not formally identify themselves with a movement. Most Israelis describe themselves more generally in terms of their degree of observance, rather than in terms of membership in an organized movement.

More than half of all Israelis describe themselves as hiloni (secular). About 15-20 percent describe themselves as haredi (ultra-Orthodox) or dati (Orthodox). The rest describe themselves as masorti (traditionally observant, but not as dogmatic as the Orthodox). It is important to remember, however, that the masorti and hiloni of Israel tend to be more observant than their counterparts in America. For example, the hiloni of Israel often observe some traditional practices in a limited way, such as lighting Shabbat candles, limiting their activities on Shabbat, or keeping kosher to some extent, all of which are rare among American Reform Jews, and unheard of among American Jews who describe themselves as secular. It has been said that most Israelis don't belong to a synagogue, but the synagogue they don't belong to is Orthodox.

7. Hitler's World

Timothy Snyder

Nothing can be known about the future, thought Hitler, except the limits of our planet: “the surface area of a precisely measured space.” Ecology was scarcity, and existence meant a struggle for land. The immutable structure of life was the division of animals into species, condemned to “inner seclusion” and an endless fight to the death. Human races, Hitler was convinced, were like species. The highest races were still evolving from the lower, which meant that interbreeding was possible but sinful. Races should behave like species, like mating with like and seeking to kill unlike. This for Hitler was a law, the law of racial struggle, as certain as the law of gravity. The struggle could never end, and it had no certain outcome. A race could triumph and flourish and could also be starved and extinguished.

In Hitler's world, the law of the jungle was the only law. People were to suppress any inclination to be merciful and were to be as rapacious as they could. Hitler thus broke with the traditions of political thought that presented human beings as distinct from nature in their capacity to imagine and create new forms of association. Beginning from that assumption, political thinkers tried to describe not only the possible but the most just forms of society. For Hitler, however, nature was the singular, brutal, and overwhelming truth, and the whole history of attempting to think otherwise was an illusion. Carl Schmitt, a leading Nazi legal theorist, explained that politics arose not from history or concepts but from our sense of enmity. Our racial enemies were chosen by nature, and our task was to struggle and kill and die.

“Nature,” wrote Hitler, “knows no political boundaries. She places life forms on this globe and then sets them free in a play for power.” Since politics was nature, and nature was struggle, no political thought was possible. This conclusion was an extreme articulation of the nineteenth-century commonplace that human activities could be understood as biology. In the 1880s and 1890s, serious thinkers and popularizers influenced by Charles Darwin's idea of natural selection proposed that the ancient questions of political thought had been resolved by this breakthrough in zoology. When Hitler was young, an interpretation of Darwin in which competition was identified as a social good influenced all major forms of politics.



*A Nazi propaganda poster with Ukrainian text that says 'Hitler, Liberator,' circa 1941
Private Collection/Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Images*

For Herbert Spencer, the British defender of capitalism, a market was like an ecosphere where the strongest and best survived. The utility brought by unhindered competition justified its immediate evils. The opponents of capitalism, the socialists of the Second International, also embraced biological analogies. They came to see the class struggle as “scientific,” and man as one animal among many, instead of a specially creative being with a specifically human essence. Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist theorist of the day, insisted pedantically that people were animals.

Yet these liberals and socialists were constrained, whether they realized it or not, by attachments to custom and institution; mental habits that grew from social experience hindered them from reaching the most radical of conclusions. They were ethically committed to goods such as economic growth or social justice, and found it appealing or convenient to imagine that natural competition would deliver these goods. Hitler entitled his book *Mein Kampf—My Struggle*. From those two words through two long volumes and two decades of political life, he was endlessly narcissistic, pitilessly consistent, and exuberantly nihilistic where others were not. The ceaseless strife of races was not an element of life, but its essence.

To say so was not to build a theory but to observe the universe as it was. Struggle was life, not a means to some other end. It was not justified by the prosperity (capitalism) or justice (socialism) that it supposedly brought. Hitler’s point was not at all that the desirable end justified the bloody means. There was no end, only meanness. Race was real, whereas individuals and classes were fleeting and erroneous constructions. Struggle was not a metaphor or an analogy, but a tangible and total truth. The weak were to be dominated by the strong, since “the world is not there for the cowardly peoples.” And that was all that there was to be known and believed.



Hitler’s worldview dismissed religious and secular traditions, and yet relied upon both. Though he was not an original thinker, he brought a certain resolution to a crisis of both thought and faith. Like many before him he sought to bring the two together. What he meant to engineer, however, was not an elevating synthesis that would rescue both soul and mind but a seductive collision that destroyed both. Hitler’s racial struggle was supposedly sanctioned by science, but he called its object “daily bread.” With these words, he was summoning one of the best-known Christian texts, while profoundly altering its meaning. “Give us this day,” ask those who recite the Lord’s Prayer, “our daily bread.” In the universe the prayer describes, there is a metaphysics, an order beyond this planet, notions of good that proceed from one sphere to another. Those saying the Lord’s Prayer ask that God “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In Hitler’s “struggle for the riches of nature,” it was a sin not to seize everything possible, and a crime to allow others to survive. Mercy violated the order of things because it allowed the weak to propagate. Rejecting

the biblical Commandments, said Hitler, was what human beings must do. “If I can accept a divine Commandment,” he declared, “it’s this one: ‘Thou shalt preserve the species.’”

Hitler exploited images and tropes that were familiar to Christians: God, prayers, original sin, commandments, prophets, chosen people, messiahs—even the familiar Christian tripartite structure of time: first paradise, then exodus, and finally redemption. We live in filth, and we must strain to purify ourselves and the world so that we might return to paradise. To see paradise as the battle of the species rather than the concord of creation was to unite Christian longing with the apparent realism of biology. The war of all against all was not terrifyingly purposeless, but instead the only purpose to be had in the universe. Nature’s bounty was for man, as in Genesis, but only for the men who follow nature’s law and fight for nature. As in Genesis, so in *My Struggle*, nature was a resource for man: but not for all people, only for triumphant races. Eden was not a garden but a trench.

Knowledge of the body was not the problem, as in Genesis, but the solution. The triumphant should copulate. After murder, Hitler thought, the next human duty was sex and reproduction. In his scheme, the original sin that led to the fall of man was of the mind and soul, not of the body. For Hitler, our unhappy weakness was that we can think, realize that others belonging to other races can do the same, and thereby recognize them as fellow human beings. Humans left Hitler’s bloody paradise not because of carnal knowledge. Humans left paradise because of the knowledge of good and evil.

When paradise falls and humans are separated from nature, a character who is neither human nor natural, such as the serpent of Genesis, takes the blame. If humans were in fact nothing more than an element of nature, and nature was known by science to be a bloody struggle, something beyond nature must have corrupted the species. For Hitler the bringer of the knowledge of good and evil on the earth, the destroyer of Eden, was the Jew. It was the Jew who told humans that they were above other animals, and had the capacity to decide their future for themselves. It was the Jew who introduced the false distinction between politics and nature, between humanity and struggle. Hitler’s destiny, as he saw it, was to redeem the original sin of Jewish spirituality and restore the paradise of blood. Since *Homo sapiens* can survive only by unrestrained racial killing, a Jewish triumph of reason over impulse would mean the end of the species. What a race needed, thought Hitler, was a “worldview” that permitted it to triumph, which meant, in the final analysis, “faith” in its own mindless mission.

Hitler’s presentation of the Jewish threat revealed his particular amalgamation of religious and zoological ideas. If the Jew triumphs, Hitler wrote, “then his crown of victory will be the funeral wreath of the human species.” On the one hand, Hitler’s image of a universe without human beings accepted science’s verdict of an ancient planet on which humanity had evolved. After the Jewish victory, he wrote, “earth will once again wing its way through the universe entirely without humans, as was the case millions of years ago.” At the same time, as he made clear in

the very same passage of *My Struggle*, this ancient earth of races and extermination was the Creation of God. “Therefore I believe myself to be acting according to the wishes of the Creator. Insofar as I restrain the Jew, I am defending the work of the Lord.”



Hitler saw the species as divided into races, but denied that the Jews were one. Jews were not a lower or a higher race, but a nonrace, or a counterrace. Races followed nature and fought for land and food, whereas Jews followed the alien logic of “un-nature.” They resisted nature’s basic imperative by refusing to be satisfied by the conquest of a certain habitat, and they persuaded others to behave similarly. They insisted on dominating the entire planet and its peoples, and for this purpose invented general ideas that draw the races away from the natural struggle. The planet had nothing to offer except blood and soil, and yet Jews uncannily generated concepts that allowed the world to be seen less as an ecological trap and more as a human order. Ideas of political reciprocity, practices in which humans recognize other humans as such, came from Jews.

Hitler’s basic critique was not the usual one that human beings were good but had been corrupted by an overly Jewish civilization. It was rather that humans were animals and that any exercise of ethical deliberation was in itself a sign of Jewish corruption. The very attempt to set a universal ideal and strain toward it was precisely what was hateful. Heinrich Himmler, Hitler’s most important deputy, did not follow every twist of Hitler’s thinking, but he grasped its conclusion: ethics as such was the error; the only morality was fidelity to race. Participation in mass murder, Himmler maintained, was a good act, since it brought to the race an internal harmony as well as unity with nature. The difficulty of seeing, for example, thousands of Jewish corpses marked the transcendence of conventional morality. The temporary strains of murder were a worthy sacrifice to the future of the race.

Any nonracist attitude was Jewish, thought Hitler, and any universal idea a mechanism of Jewish dominion. Both capitalism and communism were Jewish. Their apparent embrace of struggle was simply cover for the Jewish desire for world domination. Any abstract idea of the state was also Jewish. “There is no such thing,” wrote Hitler, “as the state as an end in itself.” As he clarified, “the highest goal of human beings” was not “the preservation of any given state or government, but the preservation of their kind.” The frontiers of existing states would be washed away by the forces of nature in the course of racial struggle: “One must not be diverted from the borders of Eternal Right by the existence of political borders.”

If states were not impressive human achievements but fragile barriers to be overcome by nature, it followed that law was particular rather than general, an artifact of racial superiority rather than an avenue of equality. Hans Frank, Hitler’s personal lawyer and during World War II the governor-general of occupied Poland, maintained that the law was built “on the survival

elements of our German people.” Legal traditions based on anything beyond race were “bloodless abstractions.” Law had no purpose beyond the codification of a *Führer*’s momentary intuitions about the good of his race. The German concept of a *Rechtsstaat*, a state that operated under the rule of law, was without substance. As Carl Schmitt explained, law served the race, and the state served the race, and so race was the only pertinent concept. The idea of a state held to external legal standards was a sham designed to suppress the strong.

Insofar as universal ideas penetrated non-Jewish minds, claimed Hitler, they weakened racial communities to the profit of Jews. The content of various political ideas was beside the point, since all were merely traps for fools. There were no Jewish liberals and no Jewish nationalists, no Jewish messiahs and no Jewish Bolsheviks: “Bolshevism is Christianity’s illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew.” Hitler saw Jesus as an enemy of Jews whose teachings had been perverted by Paul to become one more false Jewish universalism, that of mercy to the weak. From Saint Paul to Leon Trotsky, maintained Hitler, there were only Jews who adopted various guises to seduce the naive. Ideas had no historical origins and no connection to the succession of events or to the creativity of individuals. They were simply tactical creations of the Jews, and in this sense they were all the same.

Indeed, for Hitler there was no human history as such. “All world- historical events,” he claimed, “are nothing more than the expression of the self-preservation drive of the races, for better or for worse.” What must be registered from the past was the ceaseless attempt of Jews to warp the structure of nature. This would continue so long as Jews inhabited the earth. “It is Jewry,” said Hitler, “that always destroys this order.” The strong should starve the weak, but Jews could arrange matters so that the weak starve the strong. This was not an injustice in the normal sense, but a violation of the logic of being. In a universe warped by Jewish ideas, struggle could yield unthinkable outcomes: not the survival of the fittest, but the starvation of the fittest.

From this it followed that Germans would always be victims so long as Jews existed. As the highest race, Germans deserved the most and had the most to lose. The unnatural power of Jews “murders the future.”



Though Hitler strove to define a world without history, his ideas were altered by his own experiences. World War I, the bloodiest in history, fought on a continent that thought itself civilized, undid the broad confidence among many Europeans that strife was all to the good. Some Europeans of the far right or the far left, however, drew the opposite lesson. The bloodshed, for them, had not been extensive enough, and the sacrifice incomplete. For the Bolsheviks of the Russian Empire, disciplined and voluntarist Marxists, the war and the revolutionary energies it brought were the occasion to begin the socialist reconstruction of the

world. For Hitler, as for many other Germans, the war ended before it was truly decided, the racial superiors taken from the battlefield before they had earned their due.

Of course, the sentiment that Germany should win was widespread, and not only among militarists or extremists. Thomas Mann, the greatest of the German writers and later an opponent of Hitler, spoke of Germany's "rights to domination, to participate in the administration of the planet." Edith Stein, a brilliant German philosopher who developed a theory of empathy, considered "it out of the question that we will now be defeated." After Hitler came to power she was hunted down in her convent and murdered as a Jew.

For Hitler, the conclusion of World War I demonstrated the ruin of the planet. Hitler's understanding of its outcome went beyond the nationalism of his fellow Germans, and his response to defeat only superficially resembled the general resentment about lost territories. For Hitler, the German defeat demonstrated that something was crooked in the whole structure of the world; it was the proof that Jews had mastered the methods of nature. If a few thousand German Jews had been gassed at the beginning of the war, he maintained, Germany would have won. He believed that Jews typically subjected their victims to starvation and saw the British naval blockade of Germany during (and after) World War I as an application of this method. It was an instance of a permanent condition and the proof of more suffering to come. So long as Jews starved Germans rather than Germans starving whom they pleased, the world was in disequilibrium.

From the defeat of 1918 Hitler drew conclusions about any future conflict. Germans would always triumph if Jews were not involved. Yet since Jews dominated the entire planet and had penetrated the minds of Germans with their ideas, the struggle for German power must take two forms. A war of simple conquest, no matter how devastatingly triumphant, could never suffice. In addition to starving inferior races and taking their land, Germans needed to simultaneously defeat the Jews, whose global power and insidious universalism would undermine any such healthy racial campaign. Thus Germans had the rights of the strong against the weak, and the rights of the weak against the strong. As the strong, they needed to dominate the weaker races they encountered; as the weak, they had to liberate all races from Jewish domination. Hitler thus united two great motivating forces of the world politics of his century: colonialism and anticolonialism.

Hitler saw both the struggle for land and the struggle against the Jews in drastic, exterminatory terms, and yet he saw them differently. The struggle against inferior races for territory was a matter of the control of parts of the earth's surface. The struggle against the Jews was ecological, since it concerned not a specific racial enemy or territory but the conditions of life on earth. The Jews were "a pestilence, a spiritual pestilence, worse than the Black Death." Since they fought with ideas, their power was everywhere, and anyone could be their knowing or unknowing agent. The only way to remove such a plague was to eradicate it at the source. "If Nature designed the

Jew to be the material cause of the decline and fall of the nations,” said Hitler, “it provided these nations with the possibility of a healthy reaction.” The elimination had to be complete: if one Jewish family remained in Europe, this could infect the entire continent.

The fall of man could be undone; the planet could be healed. “A people that is rid of its Jews,” said Hitler, “returns spontaneously to the natural order.”



Hitler’s views of human life and the natural order were total and circular. All questions about politics were answered as if they were questions about nature; all questions about nature were answered by reference back to politics. The circle was drawn by Hitler himself. If politics and nature were not sources of experience and perspective but empty stereotypes that existed only in relation to each other, then all power rested in the hands of those who circulated such stereotypes. Reason was replaced by references, argumentation by incantation. The “struggle,” as the title of the book gave away, was “mine”: Hitler’s. The totalistic idea of life as struggle placed all power to interpret any event in the mind of its author.

Equating nature and politics abolished not only political but also scientific thought. For Hitler, science was a completed revelation of the law of racial struggle, a finished gospel of bloodshed, not a process of hypothesis and experiment. It provided a vocabulary about zoological conflict, not a fount of concepts and procedures that allowed ever more extensive understanding. It had an answer but no questions. The task of man was to submit to this creed, rather than willfully impose specious Jewish thinking upon nature. Because Hitler’s worldview required a single circular truth that embraced everything, it was vulnerable to the simplest ideas of pluralism: for example, that humans might change their environment in ways that might, in turn, change society. If science could change the ecosystem so that human behavior was altered, then all of his claims were groundless. Hitler’s logical circle, in which society was nature because nature was society, in which men were beasts because beasts were men, would be broken.

Hitler accepted that scientists and specialists had purposes within the racial community: to manufacture weapons, to improve communications, to advance hygiene. Stronger races should have better guns, better radios, and better health, the better to dominate the weaker. He saw this as a fulfillment of nature’s command to struggle, not as a violation of its laws. Technical achievement was proof of racial superiority, not evidence of the advance of general scientific understanding. “Everything that we today admire on this earth,” wrote Hitler, “the scholarship and art, the technology and inventions, are nothing more than the creative product of a few peoples, and perhaps originally of a single race.” No race, however advanced, could change the basic structure of nature by any innovation. Nature had only two variants: the paradise in which higher races slaughter the lower, and the fallen world in which supernatural Jews deny higher races the bounty they are due and starve them when possible.

Hitler understood that agricultural science posed a specific threat to the logic of his system. If humans could intervene in nature to create more food without taking more land, his whole system collapsed. He therefore denied the importance of what was happening before his eyes, the science of what was later called the “Green Revolution”: the hybridization of grains, the distribution of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the expansion of irrigation. Even “in the best case,” he insisted, hunger must outstrip crop improvements. There was “a limit” to all scientific improvements. Indeed, all of “the scientific methods of land management” had already been tried and had failed. There was no conceivable improvement, now or in the future, that would allow Germans to be fed “from [their] own land and territory.” Food could only be safeguarded by conquest of fertile territory, not by science that would make German territory more fertile. Jews deliberately encouraged the contrary belief in order to dampen the German appetite for conquest and prepare the German people for destruction. “It is always the Jew,” wrote Hitler in this connection, “who seeks and succeeds in implanting such lethal ways of thinking.”

Hitler had to defend his system from human discovery, which was as much of a problem for him as human solidarity. Science could not save the species because, in the final analysis, all ideas were racial, nothing more than aesthetic derivatives of struggle. The contrary notion, that ideas could actually reflect nature or change it, was a “Jewish lie” and a “Jewish swindle.” Hitler maintained that “man has never conquered nature in any matter.” Universal science, like universal politics, must be seen not as human promise but as Jewish threat.

The world’s problem, as Hitler saw it, was that Jews falsely separated science and politics and made delusive promises for progress and humanity. The solution he proposed was to expose Jews to the brutal reality that nature and society were one and the same. They should be separated from other people and forced to inhabit some bleak and inhospitable territory. Jews were powerful in that their “un-nature” drew others to them. They were weak in that they could not face brutal reality. Resettled to some exotic locale, they would be unable to manipulate others with their unearthly concepts, and would succumb to the law of the jungle. Hitler’s first obsession was to expel the Jews to an extreme natural setting, “an anarchic state on an island.” Later his thoughts turned to the wastes of Siberia. It was “a matter of indifference,” he said, whether Jews were sent to one or the other.

In August 1941, about a month after Hitler made that remark, his men began to shoot Jews in massacres on the scale of tens of thousands at a time, in the middle of Europe, in a setting they had themselves made anarchic, over pits dug in the black earth of Ukraine.

8. Yehuda Bauer on Jewish Resistance

The main expression of Jewish resistance could not be armed, could not be violent. There were no arms; the nearby population was largely indifferent or hostile. Without arms, those condemned to death resisted

by maintaining morale,
by refusing to starve to death,
by observing religious and national traditions.

Armed resistance is a marginal comment on the Holocaust but it is written in very large letters indeed...

Yehuda Bauer

Yehuda Bauer (b.1926) is a Czechoslovak-born Israeli historian and scholar of the Holocaust. He is Professor Emeritus of History and Holocaust Studies at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Academic Advisor to Yad Vashem. He was the founding editor of the Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Bauer has written numerous articles and books on the Holocaust and on Genocide. In 1998, he was awarded the Israel Prize, the highest civilian award in Israel and in 2001 he was elected a member of the Israeli Academy of Science. Bauer has served as advisor to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research,



9. What We Value: Spiritual Resistance during The Holocaust

By Yael Weinstock

What was Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust?

During the years of the “Final Solution” between 1942 and 1945, Jews and several groups of non-Jews targeted by the Nazi regime were interned, enslaved, humiliated, and exterminated in ghettos, concentration camps, and death camps. Finding food, staying warm, providing a roof over their heads, and taking care of their families were difficult challenges that they had to meet on a daily basis. Nazi restrictions and modes of degradation were definitely aimed to physically destroy. However, the isolation of ghetto life was intended to incur social separation in addition to controlling and monitoring Jews. It was under these circumstances that some Jews “found within themselves the inner strength to examine their situation and to try and find meaning in the events that controlled their very existence.”⁵

Others established cultural programs in ghettos and concentration camps as they realized that physical sustenance would not be the sole route to survival. Such religious, cultural, and educational activities are termed “spiritual resistance,” for resistance is not only the struggle against, but it is also the struggle for. In ghettos and camps, Jews struggled for humanity, for culture, for normalcy, and for life.

In order to teach the values of spiritual resistance, it is important to understand specific examples of such activity. A diary is a form of spiritual resistance. Written from within the walls of a ghetto or the barbed wire of a concentration camp, a diary is testimony and reflects the desire to leave a legacy for future generations. One example of such a diary is that of David Sierakowiak, interned in the Lodz Ghetto and later deported and murdered in Auschwitz. He left a legacy of seven journals, five of which were recovered after the war. In one entry, dated September 10, 1939, David writes, “Tomorrow is the first day of school. Who knows how our dear school has been. Damn the times when I complained about getting up in the morning and tests. If only I could have them back.”⁶

The mere fact that David kept a journal is significant, though it is of course fascinating to notice what he wrote and valued. While starving and tired and even after his mother had been taken away, he longed for school and for normal life. In later entries he expresses hope for the future though realizes that it “seems just another pipe dream.” This diary provides testimony that could

⁵ *Years Wherein We Have Seen Evil*, Volume 2, p. 165.

⁶ Dawid Sierakowiak, *The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 37.

not be obtained in any other way. Furthermore, it forces one to think about the strong personal integrity that David and others had even under such degrading, humiliating circumstances.

Education is a form of resistance. In his diary, Yitzkhok Rudashevski writes about the library in the Vilna Ghetto. The Jewish community of Vilna was known for tremendous study and Jewish learning. Therefore, it is not surprising, in light of our knowledge on spiritual resistance, that when confined to the ghetto, Jews built a library and were so excited by each acquisition, that there was a celebration for the 100,000th book. Yitzkhok writes, “Hundreds of people read in the ghetto. The book unites us with the future. The book unites us with the world. The circulation of the 100,000th book is a great achievement for the ghetto, and the ghetto has a right to be proud of it.”⁷ The establishment of the library itself is an act of spiritual resistance, but Yitzchok’s diary entry also highlights the fact that he was still thinking about the future. All hope was not lost and Jews in the Vilna Ghetto wanted to maintain their dignity as human beings.

Cultural activities are a form of resistance. In the Terezin Ghetto, children performed an opera called *Brundibar*, composed before the war by a Czech Jew named Han Krasa but not performed until he and many of the original performers had been deported to Terezin. A set was designed, pieces were rewritten to include the instruments available in the ghetto, and artists in the camp designed posters to advertise the performance. Furthermore, the very subject of the opera was easy to relate to. The opera tells the story of children who sing in the marketplace to raise much-needed money for their sick mother. The organ player Brundibar chases them away, but with the help of some outsiders, the children defeat Brundibar and continue to sing in the square. All those watching and performing the opera understood that Brundibar represented Hitler and were uplifted, even if only briefly, by the fact that evil could be defeated by good.

In another example of spiritual resistance in Terezin, several teenage boys compiled a secret magazine titled *Vedem* (“In the Lead”), which printed prose, poetry, and editorials that provided an outlet for their emotions. In a touching letter, one of the teenagers wrote, “We no longer want to be an accidental group of boys, passively succumbing to the fate meted out to us. We want to create an active, mature society and through work and discipline, transform that fate into a joyful, proud reality.” This statement is an act of resistance. The boys in Home Number One were not only fighting for their right to live, but for their right to exist as educated, valued individuals.

It is usually assumed that a student who studies the Holocaust learns about the deprivation and humiliation that the Nazi regime instituted. They learn about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the ways in which Jews smuggled food, stole clothing, and tried to appear strong and able in order to avoid the gas chambers. However, one of the unique aspects of this situation is that those types of behavior were not enough for those interned in ghettos. It was not enough to keep

⁷ Yitzkhok Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto* (Israel: Ghetto Fighters House, 1973), p. 106.

one's body physically alive. In many instances, Jews in ghettos and camps continued observing religious traditions, using their creative skills, and maintaining communal life.

What Can Be Learned from Spiritual Resistance?

Aside from the necessary facts required in a lesson on the subject of “spiritual resistance,” there is a global message that should be taught and learned. These people attempted to preserve a sense of self in impossible conditions. They managed to create a personal – albeit tenuous – world in which small, day-to-day decision-making mattered, as a way of preserving internal meaning.

Source: The International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/13/main_article.asp

10. Resistance is . . .

To smuggle a loaf of bread - was to resist.
To teach in secret - was to resist.
To gather information and distribute an underground newsletter - was to resist.
To cry out warning and shatter illusions - was to resist.
To rescue a Torah scroll - was to resist.
To forge documents - was to resist.
To smuggle people across borders - was to resist.
To chronicle events and conceal the records - was to resist.
To extend a helping hand to those in need - was to resist.
To dare to speak out, at the risk of one's life - was to resist.
To stand empty-handed against the killers - was to resist.
To reach the besieged, smuggling weapons and commands - was to resist.
To take up arms in streets, mountains and forests - was to resist.
To rebel in the death camps - was to resist.
To rise up in the ghettos, amid tumbling walls,
in the most desperate revolt humanity has ever known

Haim Guri and Monia Avrahami. Faces of the Uprising (original Hebrew: P'nei ha-Mered)
<https://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/?CategoryID=61&ArticleID=73>

11. Jewish Resistance under Nazi Rule

Jewish resistance leading up to and lasting throughout the Holocaust included a multitude of different social responses by those oppressed. Due to the careful organization and overwhelming military might of the Nazi German State and its collaborators, many Jews were unable to resist the killings. There were, however, many cases of attempts at resistance in one form or another, and over one hundred armed Jewish uprisings.

Types of Resistance

In his book *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*, Martin Gilbert describes the types of resistance:

In every ghetto, in every deportation train, in every labor camp, even in the death camps, the will to resist was strong, and took many forms. Fighting with the few weapons that would be found, individual acts of defiance and protest, the courage of obtaining food and water under the threat of death, the superiority of refusing to allow the Germans their final wish to gloat over panic and despair. Even passivity was a form of resistance. To die with dignity was a form of resistance. To resist the demoralizing, brutalizing force of evil, to refuse to be reduced to the level of animals, to live through the torment, to outlive the tormentors, these too were acts of resistance. Merely to give a witness of these events in testimony was, in the end, a contribution to victory. Simply to survive was a victory of the human spirit.⁸

This view is supported by Yehuda Bauer who wrote that resistance to the Nazis comprised not only physical opposition, but any activity that gave the Jewish people dignity and humanity in the most humiliating and inhumane conditions. Bauer disputes the popular view that most Jews went to their deaths passively. He argues that, given the conditions in which the Jews of Eastern Europe had to live under and endure, what is surprising is not how little resistance there was, but rather how much.

Resistance by Jews in Ghettos

Between April and May 1943, Jewish men and women of the Warsaw Ghetto took up arms and rebelled against the Nazis after it became clear that the Germans were deporting remaining ghetto inhabitants to the Treblinka death camp. Warsaw Jews of the Jewish Combat Organization [Polish: Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa or ZOB] and the Jewish Military Union [Polish: Żydowski Związek Wojskowy or ZZW] fought the Germans with a handful of small arms and Molotov cocktails. After fierce fighting, vastly superior German forces pacified the Warsaw Ghetto and

⁸ Gilbert, Martin. *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*. London: St Edmundsbury Press 1986.

either murdered or deported all of the remaining inhabitants to the Nazi killing centers.⁹ The Germans claimed that they lost 18 dead and 85 wounded, though this figure has been disputed, with resistance leader Marek Edelman estimating 300 German casualties. Some 13,000 Jews were killed, and 56,885 were deported to concentration camps. There were other major ghetto uprisings, as well as armed struggles during the final liquidations of other ghettos.

Resistance by Jews in Concentration Camps

There were also major resistance efforts in three of the death camps. In August 1943, an uprising took place at the Treblinka death camp. The participants obtained guns and grenades after two young men used forged keys and snuck into the weapons store. The weapons were then distributed around the camp in garbage bins. However, during the distribution of arms, a Nazi guard stopped a prisoner and found contraband money on him. Fearing that the prisoner would be tortured and give away the plan, the organizers decided to launch the revolt ahead of schedule without completing the distribution of weapons, and set off a single grenade - the agreed-upon signal for the uprising. The prisoners then attacked the Nazi guards with guns and grenades. Several German and Ukrainian guards were killed, a fuel tank was set on fire, barracks and warehouses were set burned, military vehicles were disabled, and grenades were thrown at the SS headquarters. The guards replied with machine-gun fire, and 1,500 inmates were killed, though 70 inmates escaped to freedom. The guards chased those who had escaped on horseback and in cars, but some of those who escaped were armed, and returned the guards' fire. Gassing operations at the camp were interrupted for a month.¹⁰

In October 1943, an uprising took place at Sobibór death camp, led by Polish-Jewish prisoner Leon Feldhendler and Soviet-Jewish POW Alexander Pechersky. The inmates covertly killed 11 German SS officers, including the deputy commander, and a number of guards. Although the plan was to kill all of SS members and walk out of the main gate of the camp, the guards discovered the killings and opened fire. The inmates then had to then run for freedom under fire, with roughly 300 of the 600 inmates in the camp escaping alive. All but 50-70 of the inmates were killed in the surrounding minefields or recaptured and executed by the Germans. The escape forced the Nazis to close the camp.

On October 7, 1944, the Jewish *Sonderkommandos* ("Special Command Units"— those inmates kept separate from the main camp and put to work in the gas chambers and crematoria) at Auschwitz staged an uprising. Female inmates had smuggled in explosives from a weapons factory, and Crematorium IV was partly destroyed by an explosion. At this stage they were joined by the Birkenau One Kommando, which also overpowered their guards and broke out of the compound. The inmates then attempted a mass escape, but were stopped by heavy fire. Three SS guards were killed in the uprising, including one who was pushed alive into an oven. Almost

⁹ .(English) David Wdowiński (1963). *And we are not saved*. NY: Philosophical Library. p. 222. ISBN 0-8022-2486-5.

¹⁰ <http://www.jpost.com/Features/InThespotlight/Article.aspx?id=232595>

all of the 250 escapees were killed. There were also international plans for a general uprising in Auschwitz, coordinated with an Allied air raid and a Polish resistance attack from the outside.

Resistance by Jewish Partisan Groups

There were a number of Jewish partisan groups operating in many countries. These Jews were responsible for blowing up thousands of armored convoys and thwarting the Nazi war machine in countless ways. A number of Jewish partisan groups operated across Nazi-occupied Europe, some made up of a few escapees from the Jewish ghettos or concentration camps, while others, such as Bielski partisans, numbered in the hundreds and included women and children. They were most numerous in Eastern Europe, but groups also existed in occupied France and Belgium, where they worked with the local resistance. Many individual Jewish fighters also took part in the other partisan movements in other occupied countries. In all, the Jewish partisans numbered between 20,000 and 30,000.

Resistance by Palestinian Jews

The British Army trained 37 Jewish volunteers from Mandate Palestine to parachute into Europe in an attempt to organize resistance. The most famous member of this group was Hannah Szenes. The British government formed the Jewish Brigade, which comprised more than 5,000 Jewish volunteers from Palestine, organized into three infantry regiment, an artillery regiment, and supporting units. They saw action with the British Eighth Army in Italy, and in 1945 were moved to Belgium and the Netherlands. As well as participating in combat operations against German forces, the brigade assisted and protected Holocaust survivors.¹¹

The Special Interrogation Group was a British Army commando unit comprising German-speaking Jewish volunteers from Palestine. It carried out commando and sabotage raids behind Axis lines during the Western Desert Campaign, and gathered military intelligence by stopping and questioning German transports while dressed as German military police. They also assisted other British forces. Following the disastrous failure of Operation Agreement, the survivors were transferred to the Royal Pioneer Corps.

Resistance by Jews in Germany

Jewish resistance within Germany itself during the Nazi era took a variety of forms, from sabotage and disruptions to providing intelligence to Allied forces, distributing anti-Nazi propaganda, as well as participating in attempts to assist Jewish emigration out of Nazi-controlled territories. It has been argued that, for Jews during the Holocaust, given the intent of the Nazi regime to exterminate Jews, survival itself constituted an act considered a form of resistance.¹² Jewish participation in the German resistance was largely confined to the

¹¹ Beckman, Morris: *The Jewish Brigade*;
<http://www.jpost.com/LocalIsrael/TelAvivAndCenter/Article.aspx?id=170842>

¹² Ruby Rohrlach, ed. *Resisting the Holocaust*. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 1998

underground activities of left-wing Zionist groups such as Werkleute, Hashomer Hatzair and Habonim, and the German Social Democrats, Communists, and independent left-wing groups such as New Beginning. Much of the non-left wing and non-Jewish opposition to Hitler in Germany (i.e., conservative and religious forces), although often opposed to the Nazi plans for extermination of German and European Jewry, in many instances itself harbored anti-Jewish sentiments.¹³

A celebrated case involved the arrest and execution of Helmut Hirsch, a Jewish architectural student originally from Stuttgart, in connection with a plot to bomb Nazi Party headquarters in Nuremberg. Hirsch became involved in the Black Front, a breakaway faction from the Nazi Party led by Otto Strasser. After being captured by the Gestapo in December 1936, Hirsch confessed to planning to murder Julius Streicher, a leading Nazi official and editor of the virulently anti-Semitic *Der Stürmer* newspaper, on behalf of Strasser and the Black Front. Hirsch was sentenced to death on March 8, 1937, and on June 4 was beheaded with an axe.

Perhaps the most significant Jewish resistance group within Germany for which records survive was the Berlin-based Baum Group (Baum-Gruppe), which was active from 1937 to 1942. Largely young Jewish women and men, the group disseminated anti-Nazi leaflets, and organized semi-public demonstrations. Its most notable action was the bombing of an anti-Soviet exhibit organized by Joseph Goebbels in Berlin's Lustgarten. The action resulted in mass arrests, executions, and reprisals against German Jews. Because of the reprisals it provoked, the bombing led to debate within opposition circles similar to those that took place elsewhere where the Jewish resistance was active—taking action and risking murderous reprisals vs. being non-confrontational with the hopes of maximizing survival.¹⁴

Resistance by Jews in Occupied Countries

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the only pre-war group that immediately started resistance against the German occupation was the communist party. During the first two war years, it was by far the biggest resistance organization, much bigger than all other organizations put together. A major act of resistance was the organization of the February strike in 1941, in protest against anti-Jewish measures. In this resistance, many Jews participated. About 1,000 Dutch Jews took part in resisting the Germans, and of those, 500 perished in doing so. In 1988, a monument to their memory was unveiled by the then mayor of Amsterdam, Ed van Thijn.¹⁵

¹³ Theodore S. Hamerow. *On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997

¹⁴ See, e.g., Herbert Lindenberger. "Heroic Or Foolish? The 1942 Bombing of a Nazi Anti-Soviet Exhibit," *Telos*. 135 (Summer 2006): 127–154.

¹⁵ http://www.4en5mei.nl/oorlogsmonumenten/zoeken/monument-detail/_rp_main_elementId/1_11526

Among the first Jewish resisters was the German fugitive Ernst Cahn, owner of an ice cream parlor. Together with his partner, Kohn, he had an ammonia gas cylinder installed in the parlor to stave off attacks from the militant arm of the fascist NSB, the so-called “Weerafdeling” (“WA”). One day in February 1941 the German police forced their entrance into the parlor, and were gassed. Later, Cahn was caught and on March 3, 1941 he became the first civilian to be executed by a Nazi firing squad in the Netherlands.

Benny Bluhm, a boxer, organized Jewish fighting parties consisting of members of his boxing school to resist attacks. One of these brawls led to the death of a WA-member, H. Koot, and subsequently the Germans ordered the first Dutch razzia of Jews as a reprisal. That in turn led to the *Februaristaking*, the February Strike. Bluhm’s group was the only Jewish group resisting the Germans in Holland and the first active group of resistance fighters in Holland. Bluhm survived the war, and strove for a monument for the Jewish resisters that came about two years after his death in 1986.

Numerous Jews participated in resisting the Germans. The Jewish director of the assembly center in the “Hollandsche Schouwburg”, a former theatre, Walter Susskind, was instrumental in smuggling children out of his center. He was aided by his assistant Jacques van de Kar and the director of the nearby crèche, Mrs. Pimentel.¹⁶

Within the underground communist party, a militant group was formed: de Nederlandse Volksmilitie (NVM, Dutch Peoples Militia). The leader was the Jewish Sally (Samuel) Dormits, who had military experience from guerrilla warfare in Brazil and participation in the Spanish Civil War. This organization was formed in The Hague but became mainly located in Rotterdam. It counted about 200 (mainly Jewish) participants. They made several bomb attacks on German troop trains and arson attacks on cinemas, which were forbidden for Jews. Dormits was caught after stealing a handbag off a woman in order to obtain an identification card for his Jewish girlfriend, who also participated in the resistance. Dormits committed suicide in the police station by shooting himself through the head. From a ticket of a shop the police found the hiding place of Dormits and discovered bombs, arson material, illegal papers, reports about resistance actions and a list of participants. The Gestapo was warned immediately and that day two hundred people were arrested, followed by many more connected people in Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam. The Dutch police participated in torturing the Jewish communists. After a trial more than 20 were shot to death; most of the others died in concentration camps or were gassed in Auschwitz. Only a few survived. The war grave of Dormits has recently been destroyed by municipal authorities in Rotterdam.

Belgium

In Belgium, Jewish resistance started in early 1941 when Jewish communists committed many actions against Belgian collaborators. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941

¹⁶ Dr. L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Amsterdam, RIOD/Staatsuitgeverij 1975

actions of sabotage and urban warfare was initiated against German troops. The “military” branch of the main Belgian resistance movement, the “Front de l’Interieur” (F.I.) were the “Partisans Armies” (P.A.-M.O.I) build around a large nucleus of Jewish foreigners, so were 3 companies (together around 100 men) active in the larger Brussels area. They shot the Jew responsible for the transportation lists to the east, Holtzinger, and destroyed documents in the head branch of the A.J.B., the local “Judenrat” which was created on German order. On April 19, 1943, an attack was perpetrated against the 20th Transport train from Mechelen to Auschwitz, a unique feat in the Holocaust in Europe. George (Yura) Lifshitz, a young Jewish doctor with two brave Belgian students, Robert Maistriau and Jean Franklemon, acted on their own initiative, in spite the fact all three of them were members of resistance groups. 17 Jews escaped from the train, another 115 escaped due to their own efforts before the attack. The C.D.J. or “Comite de Defence des Juifs”, was created in the summer of 1942 by Gert (Hertz) Jospa, a Jewish communist together with Chaim Perelman, professor at the Free University of Brussels, and Abush Verber leader of a left Zionist organization. Their objective was to help and find hiding places for as many Jews as possible. Obtaining the assistance of Yvonne Nevejean, head of the O.N.E. (Office National de l’Enfance), more than 3000 Jewish children were hidden in orphanages, private homes and Catholic institutions, as well as many adults. Some 40,000 Jews survived the war in Belgium. 28,900 were deported to Auschwitz (nearly 26,000 from Belgian territory together with 350 Roma), of these only 1200 survived the death camps.

France

Despite amounting to only 1% of the French population, Jews comprised about 15-20% of the French Resistance. Some of the Jewish resistance members were Hungarian-Jewish refugees.

French Jews set up their own armed resistance movement: the Armee Juive (Jewish Army), a Zionist, which at its height, numbered some 2,000 fighters. Operating throughout France, it smuggled hundreds of Jews to Spain and Switzerland, launched attacks against occupying German forces, and targeted Nazi informants and Gestapo agents. Armee Juive participated in the general French uprising of August 1944, fighting in Paris, Lyon, and Toulouse.¹⁷

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_resistance_under_Nazi_rule

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.

¹⁷ http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/this_month/august/12.asp

12. Political Opposition to the Nazis

Opposition to the Nazis, or even just expressing political dissent to Hitler and his regime, was notoriously difficult. Despite this there was a good deal of opposition to the Nazis between 1933 and 1939. Most anti-government activities had to be conducted in secret because of the expansive Nazi police state and the wide-ranging power of agencies like the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, or the “Secret State Police”). The Nazi regime’s decisive leadership and economic successes also meant that it remained popular with many Germans, some of whom were willing to denounce others involved in anti-Nazi activity.

Opposition movements took several forms across several sections of society. There were several resistance groups formed from the remnants of political parties, disbanded by the Nazis in mid-1933. There was opposition among industrial workers and former trade unionists. University halls and campuses were notable sources of anti-government criticism and protest; there was also anti-Nazi activity among some urban youth groups. Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, opposed the imposition of Nazi ideology on German life; some in these churches gave shelter to those persecuted by the regime. Some in the military despised Hitler, and there were occasional plots and discussions about removing him from power.

Germany’s largest non-Nazi political group, the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) was arguably the largest source of resistance. The SPD was declared illegal in May 1933, robbed of its funds and forced to disband. The party leadership relocated to Prague, where they continued to operate in exile, calling itself *Sopade*. Many SPD members also remained in Germany and went ‘underground’, forming a resistance group called *Roter Strosstrupp* (‘Red Strike Troops’). By late 1933 this group had around 3,000 members. They produced a fortnightly newspaper highlighting Nazi abuses of power and calling on a workers’ uprising to overthrow the regime. By mid-1934 the SPD’s underground activities in Germany had been thwarted: the Gestapo located and arrested leaders of *Roter Strosstrupp*, while the Nazi regime was too popular with too many Germans to incite any kind of counter-revolution. Another SPD-led group called ‘New Beginnings’ operated through the mid-1930s, but continuous pressure from the Gestapo meant that it was largely ineffective.

Opposition also came from members of the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD). Before the rise of the Nazis, the KPD had been the largest communist party outside Soviet Russia, with more than 350,000 members. The KPD was targeted in the wake of the Reichstag fire, for which it shouldered much of the blame. Party offices were raided, equipment was destroyed and property confiscated; thousands of KPD members were arrested, hauled before Nazi courts or detained in concentration camps. Despite this relentless campaign, more than 30,000 KPD members were able to continue with underground resistance. *Die Rote Fahne* (‘The Red Flag’), the KPD’s official newspaper since 1918, continued to be printed and circulated across Germany. The KPD underground also published millions of anti-Nazi leaflets and pamphlets between 1933 and 1935, highlighting Nazi mistreatment of German workers. This literature found its way into many

factories, workplaces and beer halls. German workers who were not affiliated with political parties also organized resistance campaigns, such as strikes and go-slows. These were usually motivated by deteriorating working conditions or rising food prices, rather than against the Nazi regime. The usual Gestapo response to strikes was to arrest organizers or rabble-rousers and detain them in concentration camps or conventional prisons. Some workers took individual action by refusing to give Nazi salutes, not turning up for work or sabotaging factory machinery or equipment. In 1939 one factory worker, Georg Elser, was so incensed by the erosion of workers' rights under Hitler that he planted a bomb in a Munich beer hall where Hitler was scheduled to speak. Elser's timing was perfect; however, Hitler finished his speech several minutes early and had left the stage by the time the bomb detonated.

Source: *Alpha History* (<http://alphahistory.com/nazigermany/opposition-to-the-nazis>) is an Australian-based company. Their mission is to provide free and low-cost resources to support the teaching, learning and study of history around the world.

13. Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos

The deprivations of ghetto life and the constant fear of Nazi terror made resistance difficult and dangerous but not impossible. In addition to armed resistance, Jews engaged in various forms of unarmed defiance. These included organized attempts at escaping from the ghettos into nearby forests, non-compliance with Nazi demands on the part of certain Jewish community leaders, illegal smuggling of food into the ghettos, and spiritual resistance.

Spiritual resistance refers to attempts by individuals to maintain their humanity, personal integrity, dignity, and sense of civilization in the face of Nazi attempts to dehumanize and degrade them. Most generally, spiritual resistance may refer to the refusal to have one's spirit broken in the midst of the most horrible degradation. Cultural and educational activities, maintenance of community documentation, and clandestine religious observances are three examples of spiritual resistance.

Culture and Education

Throughout occupied Poland, hundreds of clandestine schools and classes were organized inside the ghettos. Going to and from class in various apartments and basements, students hid their books under their clothing. Jews smuggled books and manuscripts into many ghettos for safekeeping, and opened underground libraries in numerous ghettos. These underground libraries included the secret library at Czestochowa, Poland, which served more than 1,000 readers. Activists established a 60,000-volume library in the Theresienstadt ghetto, near Prague.

In the ghettos, Jews also engaged--insofar as possible--in a variety of cultural activities. Unlike the schools, these were not always forbidden by German authorities. Concerts, lectures, theatrical productions, cabarets, and art contests took place in many ghettos, despite the hardships of daily life.

Documentation of Community Life

Groups in many ghettos established secret archives and methodically wrote, collected, and stored reports, diaries, and documents about daily life in the ghettos. These efforts served to gather evidence on situation of Jews in occupied Europe and also sought to reaffirm a Jewish sense of community, history, and civilization in the face of both physical and spiritual annihilation.

The best known of these archives was that of the Warsaw ghetto, code-named Oneg Shabbat ("Joy of the Sabbath") and founded by historian Emanuel Ringelblum (1900-1944). Some of the containers holding the archives were dug up from the rubble of the Warsaw ghetto after the war. The papers found inside have provided valuable documentation of life and death inside the ghetto. In the Bialystok ghetto, activist Mordechai Tenenbaum, who had come to Bialystok from

Warsaw in November 1942 to organize the resistance movement, established ghetto archives modeled after Oneg Shabbat. An archive was also kept in the Lodz ghetto, but unlike the Warsaw and Bialystok archives, it was not entirely clandestine and therefore operated under certain limitations. These and many other smaller collections document daily life in the ghettos.

Religious Activities

The Germans forbade religious services in most ghettos, so many Jews prayed and held ceremonies in secret--in cellars, attics, and back rooms--as others stood guard. In Warsaw alone, in 1940, 600 Jewish prayer groups existed. Rabbinical authorities adjudicated religious disputes on the basis of religious law and attempted to adapt this law to the changed and difficult circumstances in which the community found itself. Prayer helped sustain morale, reaffirmed a cultural and religious identity, and supplied spiritual comfort. Many Orthodox Jews who opposed the use of physical force viewed prayer and religious observances as the truest form of resistance.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005416)

14. Physical Resistance

During World War II an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews fought bravely as partisans in resistance groups that operated under cover of the dense forests of Eastern Europe. Among them was a Polish Jew named Izik Sutin. In summer 1942, before he had joined up with partisans, Sutin was one of 800 Jews crammed into the Mirski Castle—in Polish, the Mir Zamek on the outskirts of Mir, a small Polish town near the Russian border. The Germans had moved him and their other prisoners, mostly skilled laborers, to the castle after liquidating the Mir ghetto in town. Over the course of two days, Germans had marched most of the Jewish men women, and children from the ghetto to the outskirts of town and forced them at gunpoint to dig their own mass grave. The mass killings went on for two days. Recalling what happened after he survived the massacre in which his mother, Sarah, was murdered, Sutin said:

It was during that summer in the Zamek that roughly forty of us younger persons—many of whom had gotten to know one another in the Hashomer Hatzair [the labor-oriented Zionist youth organization] — began to attempt to organize some sort of resistance. We ranged in age from roughly sixteen to thirty. The majority were men, but there were some women as well. In any ordinary sense, our situation was completely hopeless. We had no weapons except for rocks, bottles, and a few knives. We were completely outnumbered and surrounded by a trained German military force supported loyally by the local population. But then again, we had no expectation that we would live beyond the next few weeks or months. Why not resist when the alternative was death at a time and place chosen by the Nazis? Desperation was what drove us, along with the desire for revenge. Our families had been butchered and piled into nameless graves. The thought of taking at least a few German lives in return was a powerful incentive

From the Nazis' rise to power in 1933 in Germany to the end of the Third Reich in 1945, Jews like Izik Sutin, as well as other victims of Nazism, participated in many acts of resistance. Organized armed resistance was the most direct form of opposition to the Nazis. In many areas of German-occupied Europe, resistance took other forms such as aid, rescue, and spiritual resistance.

Resistance. Published by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

15. Case Study: Freddie Knoller

Crammed into a cattle wagon with more than 80 Jewish men, women and children, Freddie Knoller was imprisoned on a train heading for Eastern Europe. With not enough room to sit down and only one bucket of water between them and a second bucket for their toilet, they endured a journey that lasted for three days and three nights. Heading towards an unknown destination and an uncertain fate, some believed they were travelling to their deaths, others that they were being taken to a work camp. Everyone was frightened and there was an atmosphere of utter despair.

Freddie and some other young people saw a chance to escape. They began to tear at the wooden boards of the cattle truck so that they could jump from the train and escape.



Freddie Knoller

But others on the train begged them to stop. The SS had warned that if one person escaped, half of those still inside the wagon would be shot. Elderly people, the sick and the very young could not possibly jump from a moving train and the people in the wagon begged Freddie and the others not to break out, pleading, ‘Don’t do that, they are going to kill us!’

- What choices did Freddie Knoller face as the train travelled towards the East?
- What risk was he taking if he stayed on the train? What would happen to those left behind if he escaped?
- In a situation like this, can we say the decision is a matter of ‘right and wrong’?

People often ask why more Jews didn’t escape or fight back. In the example of Freddie Knoller they should begin to understand some of the obstacles to such action: those who escaped often had to leave others behind, even their own elderly parents or young children; the Nazis carried out the most terrible reprisals; people were constantly deceived and could not possibly know the fate that lay ahead of them. In moral terms, you could consider whether it would take greater courage for Freddie Knoller to risk his own life in trying to escape, or to remain in the cattle wagon so as not to endanger the others. As with so many of these issues, the answer is not a simple matter of right and wrong. Indeed, it is no bad thing for us to realize that for some questions there are no answers.

For more information on Freddie’s story, please also see:

Desperate Journey, by Freddie Knoller with John Landaw (Metro Books, London, 2002)

Living with the Enemy by Freddie Knoller with John Landaw (Metro Books, London, 2005)

16. Chart: Jewish Resistance Groups by Location

Area of Activity	Organization	Leadership
Algeria	José Aboulker Family	José Aboulker
Auschwitz-Birkenau	Resistance, <i>Sonderkommando</i> revolt	Battle Group Auschwitz, Jewish <i>Sonderkommandos</i>
Balkans and Austria	Jewish Parachutists	Yishuv Jews
Bedzin Ghetto	underground	Jewish Youth Groups
Bialystok Ghetto	Jewish Anti-Fascist Bloc	Mordechai Tenenbaum
France	Armée Juivee	Abraham Polonski & Lucien Lublin
France	Jewish Scout Movement	Robert Gamzon
Germany	Baum Group	Herbert & Marianne Baum
Italy	Jewish Brigades	Yishuv Jews
Kovno/Kaunas Ghetto	Jewish Fighting Organization	Young Zionists and Anti-Fascist Struggle Organization
Kraków	Resistance	Zionist Youth Movements & Jewish Fighting Organization
Lida Ghetto	Bielski partisans	Bielski Brothers
Lvov Ghetto	Resistance/underground	Tadek Drotorski
Minsk Ghetto	partisan	Hersh Smolar
Minsk Ghetto	partisan	Kazinetz a.k.a. “Slavek”
Mir Ghetto	underground & revolt	Shmuel Rufeisin
Novogradok Ghetto	Bielski partisans	Bielski brothers
Riga Ghetto	underground	“Secret Cells”
Sobibór death camp	Resistance & revolt	Aleksandr Pechersky & Leon Feldhandler
Treblinka death camp	Resistance & revolt	Dr. Julian Chorazycki, Marcelli Galewski, & Zelo Bloch
Vilna Ghetto	partisans	Yehiel Scheinbaum
Vilna Ghetto	underground/United Partisan Organization	Josef Glazman & Yitzhak Wittenberg

Area of Activity	Organization	Leadership
Warsaw Ghetto	Jewish Fighting Organization	Mordecai Anielewicz, Zivia Lubetkin, Yitzhak Zuckerman
Warsaw Ghetto	Jewish Military Union (Zionist Revisionists)	Pawel Frenkiel

Source: <http://www.holocaustchronicle.org/HolocaustAppendices.html>

17. Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance

A person can be considered for the title of “Righteous Among the Nations” when the data on hand based on survivor testimony or other documentation, clearly demonstrates that a non-Jewish person risked his or her life, freedom, and safety, in order to rescue one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation without exacting monetary compensation or other rewards. This applies equally to rescuers who have passed away. –Yad Vashem

Righteous Among the Nations - per Country & Ethnic Origin, as of January 1, 2017

Albania	75
Armenia	24
Austria	109
Belarus	641
Belgium	1,731
Bosnia	43
Brazil	2
Bulgaria	20
Chile	2
China	2
Croatia	115
Cuba	1
Czech Republic	116
Denmark*	22
Ecuador	1
Egypt	1
El Salvador	1
Estonia	3
France	3,995
Georgia	1
Germany	601
Greece	335
Hungary	844
Indonesia	2
Japan	1

Latvia	136
Lithuania	891
Luxembourg	1
Macedonia	10
Moldova	79
Montenegro	1
Netherlands	5,595
Norway	67
Peru	2
Poland	6,706
Portugal	3
Romania	60
Russia	204
Serbia	135
Slovakia	572
Slovenia	10
Spain	9
Sweden	10
Switzerland	49
Turkey	1
Ukraine	2,573
United Kingdom	22
USA	5
Vietnam	1
Total:	26,513

* The Danish Underground requested that all its members who participated in the rescue of the Jewish community not be listed individually, but commemorated as one group.

** Includes two persons originally from Indonesia, but residing in the Netherlands.

18. The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking

The New York Times



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Collection of Eugenia Hochberg Lanceter
A group of Jewish women at the entrance to the Brody ghetto in Eastern Galicia, 1942. The sign is written in German, Ukrainian and Polish.

By Eric Lichtblau

THIRTEEN years ago, researchers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum began the grim task of documenting all the ghettos, slave labor sites, concentration camps and killing factories that the Nazis set up throughout Europe.

What they have found so far has shocked even scholars steeped in the history of the Holocaust.

The researchers have cataloged some 42,500 Nazi ghettos and camps throughout Europe, spanning German-controlled areas from France to Russia and Germany itself, during Hitler's reign of brutality from 1933 to 1945.

The figure is so staggering that even fellow Holocaust scholars had to make sure they had heard it correctly when the lead researchers previewed their findings at an academic forum in late January at the German Historical Institute in Washington.

“The numbers are so much higher than what we originally thought,” Hartmut Berghoff, director of the institute, said in an interview after learning of the new data.

“We knew before how horrible life in the camps and ghettos was,” he said, “but the numbers are unbelievable.”

The documented camps include not only “killing centers” but also thousands of forced labor camps, where prisoners manufactured war supplies; prisoner-of-war camps; sites euphemistically named “care” centers, where pregnant women were forced to have abortions or their babies were killed after birth; and brothels, where women were coerced into having sex with German military personnel.

Auschwitz and a handful of other concentration camps have come to symbolize the Nazi killing machine in the public consciousness. Likewise, the Nazi system for imprisoning Jewish families in hometown ghettos has become associated with a single site — the Warsaw Ghetto, famous for the 1943 uprising. But these sites, infamous though they are, represent only a minuscule fraction of the entire German network, the new research makes painfully clear.

The maps the researchers have created to identify the camps and ghettos turn wide sections of wartime Europe into black clusters of death, torture and slavery — centered in Germany and Poland, but reaching in all directions.

The lead editors on the project, Geoffrey Megargee and Martin Dean, estimate that 15 million to 20 million people died or were imprisoned in the sites that they have identified as part of a multivolume encyclopedia. (The Holocaust museum has published the first two, with five more planned by 2025.)

The existence of many individual camps and ghettos was previously known only on a fragmented, region-by-region basis. But the researchers, using data from some 400 contributors, have been documenting the entire scale for the first time, studying where they were located, how they were run, and what their purpose was.

The brutal experience of Henry Greenbaum, an 84-year-old Holocaust survivor who lives outside Washington, typifies the wide range of Nazi sites.

When Mr. Greenbaum, a volunteer at the Holocaust museum, tells visitors today about his wartime odyssey, listeners inevitably focus on his confinement of months at Auschwitz, the most notorious of all the camps.

But the images of the other camps where the Nazis imprisoned him are ingrained in his memory as deeply as the concentration camp number — A188991 — tattooed on his left forearm.

In an interview, he ticked off the locations in rapid fire, the details still vivid.

First came the Starachowice ghetto in his hometown in Poland, where the Germans herded his family and other local Jews in 1940, when he was just 12.

Next came a slave labor camp with six-foot-high fences outside the town, where he and a sister were moved while the rest of the family was sent to die at Treblinka. After his regular work shift at a factory, the Germans would force him and other prisoners to dig trenches that were used for dumping the bodies of victims. He was sent to Auschwitz, then removed to work at a chemical manufacturing plant in Poland known as Buna Monowitz, where he and some 50 other prisoners who had been held at the main camp at Auschwitz were taken to manufacture rubber and synthetic oil. And last was another slave labor camp at Flossenbürg, near the Czech border, where food was so scarce that the weight on his 5-foot-8-inch frame fell away to less than 100 pounds.

By the age of 17, Mr. Greenbaum had been enslaved in five camps in five years, and was on his way to a sixth, when American soldiers freed him in 1945. “Nobody even knows about these places,” Mr. Greenbaum said. “Everything should be documented. That’s very important. We try to tell the youngsters so that they know, and they’ll remember.”

The research could have legal implications as well by helping a small number of survivors document their continuing claims over unpaid insurance policies, looted property, seized land and other financial matters.

“HOW many claims have been rejected because the victims were in a camp that we didn’t even know about?” asked Sam Dubbin, a Florida lawyer who represents a group of survivors who are seeking to bring claims against European insurance companies.

Dr. Megargee, the lead researcher, said the project was changing the understanding among Holocaust scholars of how the camps and ghettos evolved.

As early as 1933, at the start of Hitler’s reign, the Third Reich established about 110 camps specifically designed to imprison some 10,000 political opponents and others, the researchers found. As Germany invaded and began occupying European neighbors, the use of camps and ghettos was expanded to confine and sometimes kill not only Jews but also homosexuals, Gypsies, Poles, Russians and many other ethnic groups in Eastern Europe. The camps and ghettos varied enormously in their mission, organization and size, depending on the Nazis’ needs, the researchers have found.

The biggest site identified is the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, which held about 500,000 people at its height. But as few as a dozen prisoners worked at one of the smallest camps, the München-Schwabing site in Germany. Small groups of prisoners were sent there from the Dachau concentration camp under armed guard. They were reportedly whipped and ordered to do manual labor at the home of a fervent Nazi patron known as “Sister Pia,” cleaning her house, tending her garden and even building children’s toys for her.

When the research began in 2000, Dr. Megargee said he expected to find perhaps 7,000 Nazi camps and ghettos, based on postwar estimates. But the numbers kept climbing — first to 11,500, then 20,000, then 30,000, and now 42,500.

The numbers astound: 30,000 slave labor camps; 1,150 Jewish ghettos; 980 concentration camps; 1,000 prisoner-of-war camps; 500 brothels filled with sex slaves; and thousands of other camps used for euthanizing the elderly and infirm, performing forced abortions, “Germanizing” prisoners or transporting victims to killing centers.

In Berlin alone, researchers have documented some 3,000 camps and so-called Jew houses, while Hamburg held 1,300 sites.

Dr. Dean, a co-researcher, said the findings left no doubt in his mind that many German citizens, despite the frequent claims of ignorance after the war, must have known about the widespread existence of the Nazi camps at the time.

“You literally could not go anywhere in Germany without running into forced labor camps, P.O.W. camps, concentration camps,” he said. “They were everywhere.”

Eric Lichtblau is a reporter for The New York Times in Washington and a visiting fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Source: A version of this news analysis appeared in print on March 3, 2013, on page SR3 of the New York edition of the *New York Times* with the headline: “The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking.” © 2013 The New York Times Company

19. Directory of Major Concentration Camps

Concentration Camp	Location	Type of Camp	Operation	Closure	Present Status
Auschwitz-Birkenau	Poland	Killing Center Forced Labor	April 1940 – January 1945	Liberated by USSR	Camp Preserved
Belzec	Poland	Killing Center	March 1942 – June 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
Bergen-Belsen	Germany	Holding Center	April 1943 – April 1945	Liberated by UK	Cemetery Museum
Buchenwald	Germany	Forced Labor	July 1937 – April 1945	Liberated by UK	Camp preserved; Museum
Chelmno	Poland	Killing Center	December 1941 March 1943; June 1944 – January 1945	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
Dachau	Germany	Forced Labor	March 1933 – April 1945	Liberated by USA	Camp preserved; Museum
Dora / Mittelbau	Germany	Forced Labor	September 1943 – April 1945	Liberated by USA	Memorial Sculpture Plaza
Flossenburg	Germany	Forced Labor	May 1938 – April 1945	Liberated by USA	Buildings; Monument
Gross-Rosen	Poland	Forced Labor	August 1940 – February 1945	Liberated by USSR	Camp Preserved; Museum
Janowska	Ukraine	Forced Labor	September 1941 – November 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
Kaiserwald	Latvia	Forced Labor	March 1943 – September 1944	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
Majdanek	Poland	Killing Center	July 1941 – July 1944	Liberated by USSR	Camp Preserved; Monument
Mauthausen	Austria	Forced Labor	August 1938 – May 1945	Liberated by USA	Buildings; Monument

Concentration Camp	Location	Type of Camp	Operation	Closure	Present Status
Natzweiler / Struthof	France	Forced Labor	May 1941 – September 1944	Liquidated by Germany	Camp Preserved
Neuengamme	Germany	Forced Labor	June 1940 – May 1945	Liberated by UK	Used as Prison; Monument
Oranienburg	Germany	Holding Center	March 1933 – March 1935	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
Plaszow	Poland	Forced Labor	December 1942 – January 1945	Liquidated by Germany	Not Maintained
Ravensbruck	Germany	Forced Labor	May 1939 – April 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Monument
Sachsenhausen	Germany	Forced Labor	July 1936 – April 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Museum
Sobibor	Poland	Killing Center	May 1942 – October 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
Stutthof	Poland	Forced Labor	September 1939 – May 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Museum
Terezin (Theresienstadt)	Czech Republic	Holding Center; Transit Ghetto	November 1941 – May 1945	Liberated by USSR	Buildings; Monument
Treblinka	Poland	Killing Center	July 1942 – November 1943	Liquidated by Germany	Monument
Westerbork	Netherlands	Transit Camp	October 1939 – April 1945	Liberated by Canada	Monument

Source: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/major_camps.html

20. Nazi Euphemisms

During the twentieth century, we have learned that words need not serve the purpose of honest communications. In fact, words are often used to hide truth and become a means of deceiving people. During the Holocaust, Nazi language not only shielded reality from their victims but also softened the truth of the Nazi involvement in mass murder. This manipulation of language is still practiced in the modern world.

German Word	Literal Meaning	Real Meaning
1. <i>Ausgemerzt</i>	Exterminated (insects)	Murdered
2. <i>Liquidiert</i>	Liquidated	Murdered
3. <i>Erledigt</i>	Finished (off)	Murdered
4. <i>Aktionen</i>	Actions	Missions to seek out Jews and kill them
5. <i>Sonderaktionen</i>	Special actions	Special mission to kill Jews
6. <i>Sonderbehandlung</i>	Special treatment; special handling	Jews taken through death process in camps
7. <i>Sonderbehandelt</i>	Specially treated	Sent through death process
8. <i>Sonderkommando</i>	Special work team	Jews responsible for moving bodies from gas chambers to the crematoria.
9. <i>Sauberung</i>	Cleansing	Sent through the death process
10. <i>Ausschaltung</i>	Elimination	Murder of Jews
11. <i>Aussiedlung</i>	Evacuation	Murder of Jews
12. <i>Umsiedlung</i>	Resettlement	Murder of Jews
13. <i>Exekutivmassnahme</i>	Executive measure	Order for murder
14. <i>Entsprechend Behandelt</i>	Treated appropriately	Murdered
15. <i>De Sondermassnahme zugeführt</i>	Conveyed to special measure	Killed

German Word	Literal Meaning	Real Meaning
16. <i>Sicherheitspolizeilich durchgearbeitet</i>	Worker in security police	Murdered
17. <i>Losung der Judenfrage</i>	Solution of the Jewish question	Murder of Jewish people
18. <i>Bereinigung der Judenfrage</i>	Cleaning up the Jewish question	Murder
19. <i>Judenfrei gemacht</i>	Made free of Jews	All Jews in an area killed
20. <i>Badeanstalten</i>	Bath houses	Gas chambers
21. <i>Leichenkeller</i>	Corpse cellars	Crematorium
22. <i>Heckenholt-Stiftung</i>	Heckenholt foundation	A diesel engine located at Belzec death camp that was operated SS Underscharführer Heckenholt to gas Jews
23. <i>Durekgeschleusst</i>	Dragged through	Sent through killing process in camp
24. <i>Endlösung</i>	The Final Solution	The decision to murder all Jews
24. <i>Hilfsmittel</i>	Auxiliary equipment	Gas vans for murder

http://staff.bcc.edu/faculty_websites/jalexand/Reading-4-1-and%20Questions—Nazi_Euphemisms.htm

21. Germany: Virtual Jewish History Tour

[By: David Shyovitz]

Of all the countries in Europe, Germany is one of the richest in Jewish history and tradition. Though Germany is most famous - or rather infamous - in Jewish history for being the epicenter of the Nazi “Final Solution,” even the Holocaust was unable to bring to an end the 1,600 years of continuous habitation and cultural flourishing the Jewish community has had in Germany.

Ashkenazi Jewry has been shaped for a millennia and a half in the tumultuous, ever-changing German political, social and economic landscape. Today, Germany is home to the eighth largest Jewish community in the world - and Germany is one of Israel’s closest allies among the European nations. There are over 110 Synagogues in Germany, with over 120,000 congregation members total. The German government works hard to preserve the memories of the Holocaust.

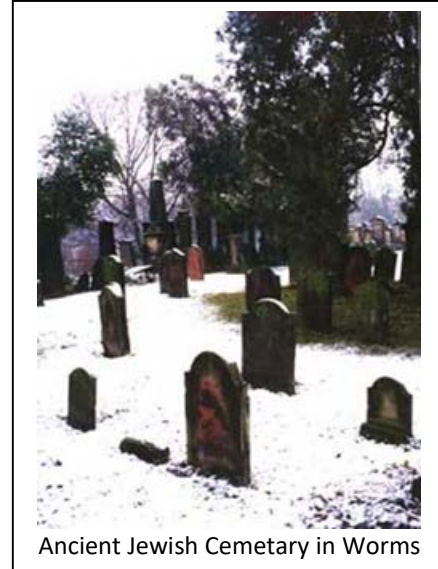
Early History (4th - 11th Century)

Evidence of Jews in the area now known as Germany dates back to the early 4th century; in the 1930s, a Jewish graveyard from that era was found in the city of Cologne. When the first Jews migrated to the “barbarian lands,” Christianity had not yet arrived in Western Europe, and the Roman Empire was still the continent’s dominant power. Little is known about the early German Jews, but by the 8th century, Jews were flourishing among the German tribes along the banks of the Rhine. The Jews, for the most part, lived in harmony with their newly Christian neighbors. Jews could hold public office, own land, and work in whatever industries they chose; they spoke the same languages and often had the same names as the Germans. Many Germans even converted to Judaism.

That is not to say that life in Germany was stable. Like all countries at this point, there was no unified German state. Early on, Germany had consisted of a number of tribes, often vying with one another for territorial control. Later the tribes joined into a loose confederation, which resulted in a semi-autonomous “Kingdom of Germany.” Nonetheless, frequent civil wars and bids for power quickly destroyed any semblance of national unity. After Charlemagne united much of western Europe in the eighth century, Germany was a part of the Holy Roman Empire, which itself fell victim to occasional civil wars and fragmentation after Charlemagne’s death. The turmoil of the frequent wars and political disputes among the Empire, Kingship and various feudal estates was compounded by the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church as a force.

The Church had, by this point, codified much of its doctrine, including the attitude that the Jews were a rejected people, who must be separated decisively from the Christians. Appeals from the Church to the Christian world to shun the Jews economically and socially date back to the Theodosian Code of the fifth century, and were periodically reissued by Church synods. In Germany, however, the Church’s efforts to prejudice the Christian rulers and people against the Jews largely failed in this era – people were too concerned about the political fluctuations, and simply surviving in the harsh frontier conditions, to heed the call to discriminate.

An additional factor that endeared the Jews to the rest of society was their economic role. While the Jews also worked as farmers and artisans, like the rest of society, they came to acquire a special reputation as merchants. Rulers and populace alike, desperate for the goods that only the Jews could provide, were unable and unwilling to obey the dictums of the church; the very fact that so many decrees were issued is evidence of the apathy of Christendom in responding to them. The emerging Jewish merchant class created a vast international network that traversed the Ashkenazi world. Jews would meet at regional fairs to learn about the fates of other communities, to network, and, of course, to trade. The economic and social connections that the Jews formed throughout the continent made them much more valuable than non-Jewish merchants, whose influence seldom reached beyond their immediate surroundings



Ancient Jewish Cemetery in Worms

The “Golden Age” that resulted for European Jews was interrupted occasionally by anti-Semitism, but, for the most part, Jews lived happily. In the tenth century, European Jewry’s most important intellectual movement began to thrive when Rabbenu Gershom ben Judah (960-1028) founded a yeshiva in Mainz, Germany. Gershom’s school attracted Jews from all over Europe, including the famous Rashi; Gershom became so renowned for his genius and prominence that he posthumously acquired the moniker “light of the exile.” Study of the Talmud increased, and the German yeshivas in Mainz and Worms came to overshadow those in Persia, the previous center of Jewish intellectualism.

The Crusades & Middle Ages

The Golden Age ended for the Jews of Western Europe on November 26, 1095. In Clermont, France, Pope Urban II made a public appeal to the Christians of Europe to liberate the city of Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks, who had closed it to pilgrims. This appeal marked the inception of the First Crusade. One result of the Crusade, whether intended or otherwise, was that the era of cooperation between Christians and



A 15th century German painting of a Jewish wedding.

Jews immediately ceased. With Christendom unified in a single purpose, the Jews were now viewed as outsiders, and were rumored to be allied with the Muslims. Crusaders would routinely massacre whole Jewish communities on their way to the Holy Land. Communities in Worms, Mainz and Cologne were devastated; in Mainz, for example, 1,100 Jews were killed in one day in 1096, and the synagogue and other community buildings were razed. It is important to note that while the Pope occasionally condemned these attacks on Jews, the condemnations were neither

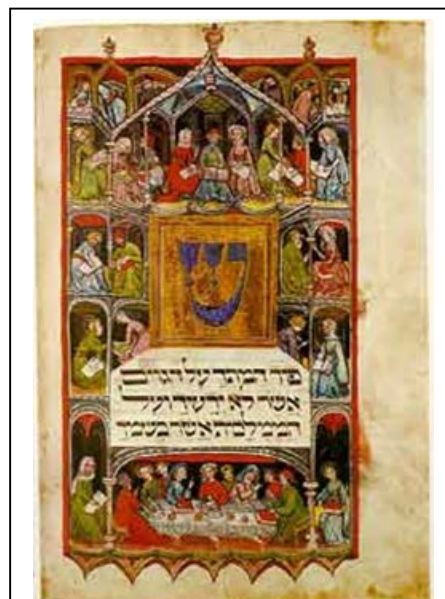
vocal nor frequent. Moreover, the lack of any punishment or reprisals against the violators of the Pope's orders gave the rioters implicit approval, and the attacks continued during the next seven crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries.

While none of these future Crusades were as devastating to the German Jews as the first, which caught them unaware, their lives and communities were nonetheless changed irrevocably. Jews ceased to be exclusively a merchant class; much of Europe was now accessible after having been traversed by Crusaders, and international trade could be performed by non-Jews. Instead, in line with the Jew's newfound subjugation at the hands of the Church, Jews became known as moneylenders. Because Christians could not lend money at interest, Jews had a niche waiting for them. Of course, such a profession did little to endear the Jews to their neighbors, some of whom would just as soon kill the moneylender as repay his loan.

Jews' community lives changed as well. No longer could Jews hold public office, or blithely interact with their Christian neighbors. Instead, the Jews of each city banded together in ghettos. While the word has in our times acquired a decisively negative connotation in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the ghettos of Medieval Germany were locked from the inside as well as from the outside. No Jew could wander around the city without risking taunts and attacks, but few Jews had a reason or desire to leave the ghetto in the first place. The Jewish community, or *kahal*, was mostly autonomous – sometimes the ruler of the surrounding city would set limits on inhabitants of the ghetto, and they would always impose a heavy tax burden, but the collecting of taxes and enforcing of population quotas was all done by the Jewish governing board, the *kehilla*. Any interaction with non-Jewish rulers, businessmen, or neighbors was handled by the *shtadlan*, a community representative

The collective isolation of the Jews also led to the rise of Yiddish. The Jews continued speaking a medieval dialect of German, even as the language was advancing and changing in the outside world. The language gradually incorporated elements of Hebrew, and eventually became a language unto itself, which was often incomprehensible to the non-Jewish Germans.

The centuries that followed the Crusades were difficult ones for the Jews of Western Europe. In the thirteenth century, the Catholic Church instituted the Inquisition.¹⁸ Secular and religious rulers alike attacked “heretics” – a category that sometimes included Jews – with savagery, subjecting them to imprisonment, forced conversion and often death. At the same time, the Jews were accused of killing children for ritual purposes (blood libels), of host desecration, and, during the Black Plague in the fourteenth century, of poisoning wells. These accusations, and the violence that followed them (*Juddenschlacht*, or “Jews slaughter”), led to the repeated expulsion of the Jews of



A German illuminated Passover Haggada, 14th century.

¹⁸ The Inquisition was a Roman Catholic tribunal for discovery and punishment of heresy, which was marked by the severity of questioning and punishment and lack of rights afforded to the accused.

Germany from their towns. The evictions continued through the Middle Ages and the Reformation, and were the result of the uncertain status of Jews as citizens of the cities they lived in. Within each German city, the ruler granted the Jews a certain number of rights in a charter. This charter set the taxes that the Jews would pay, outlined the area of the city they could live in, and guaranteed them protection; the remainder of the laws were left in the hands of the *kehilla*. In essence, the Jews agreed to become the property of whichever ruler granted them a protective charter. This agreement occurred on the largest scale in 1236, when Emperor Frederick II issued the *Servi Camerae Nostrae* (“Servants of the Treasury”), which formally made the Jews the property of the empire. Implicit in the charter agreements was the fact that the charter could be rescinded whenever the ruler of the region wished – and the regional rulers frequently did so.

Nonetheless, the Jews never fully abandoned Germany. Even when a city-state expelled the Jewish population, the disunified character of Germany ensured that another autonomous city would extend them a charter. Their reason for doing so was generally economic – the Jews could be counted on to fill the role of moneylender, and, despite the gains made by Christians in international trade, Jews were still considered excellent merchants. The Jews would thus settle in a new location; eventually, the economic role they served would become unnecessary, as Christians began to be crowded out of their industries. When this happened, violence against the Jews inevitably ensued, and expulsion followed. In this way, the Jews were constantly wandering through Europe, residing in each city only temporarily. In general, they moved east. As a result, by the late fifteenth century, the center of world Jewry had moved from Western Europe to Eastern Europe, with Jews especially concentrated in Poland.



A geniza collection stored at a museum in Worms, which stands on the spot of what was once Rashi's house.

One positive result of the Jews' new economic station was the rise of the court Jew. Because Jews controlled the loan of money, the feudal lords in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe, became dependent on the more prominent Jews for funds. Often, the Jewish advisors were single-handedly responsible for helping a Lord to raise an army, build a palace or furnish some public facility. These advisors were sometimes able to help a community escape a riot or an expulsion. For example, Joseph Oppenheimer (1699-1739), one of the most prominent court Jews in Germany, used his position to convince the duke of Wurttemberg to rescind an expulsion order that had barred Jews from living in his duchy in the south of Germany.

In general, the Jews migrated within Germany in the Middle Ages from the towns on the Rhine in the south to the east and the north. By the thirteenth century, communities were forming in Munich, Vienna and Berlin, which would become important Jewish cities in Germany in the modern era.

In the Reformation period, Jews continued to be oppressed both physically and economically – those who were not expelled shouldered a crippling tax burden. Additionally, Martin Luther, after failing to convert the Jews to Protestantism, savagely denounced them, which led to more religiously-inspired violence against them.

German Jews in the Modern World

The status of the Jews began to change in the seventeenth century, when absolutist (and later, enlightened absolutist) states became common. The rulers of these kingdoms viewed the interests of the state as supreme, and began to realize that the Jews were a valuable commodity that was wasted when expelled. The rulers of Prussia, Hamburg, Brandenburg and Pomerania, to name just a few, therefore welcomed Jews into their territories; however, the invitation came with numerous strings attached. The life of the Jews was highly regulated to ensure that the state extracted as much value as possible from them; laws were issued addressing employment, family life, residency and communal affairs. The expulsions that the Jews had become accustomed to became increasingly rare as this era progressed.

The readmission of the Jews to many German states continued in the eighteenth century, when the charters extended to them granted them rights more and more similar to those of citizens. At the same time, however, the autonomy that had been a hallmark of Jewish communal life for centuries began to decline. As the Jews became more like citizens, their independent governance was withdrawn by the rulers. For example, when Frederick II revised the charter of the Jews of Prussia in 1750, he included strict rules regarding the workings of the *kahal*.

The appearance soon afterward of the Haskalah, the Jewish reaction to the enlightenment, furthered the gradual dissolution of the Jewish semi-autonomy. Jewish thinkers and authors began to criticize the insularity of the Jewish community and to emphasize secular and worldly pursuits in place of the traditional Jewish lifestyle and religion. As a result, many Jews left the ghetto to pursue education (if and when a school would admit Jews), brought their disputes to secular as opposed to religious courts and befriended non-Jews. The most well-known example of this latter phenomena was the friendship of Moses Mendelsohn (1729-1786) and G.E. Lessing in Berlin. However, it was an atypical example, for while Mendelsohn remained scrupulously observant, most *maskilim* did not, which seriously eroded Jewish unity in Germany.



The tombstone of Moses Mendelsohn is the only one still standing in Berlin's Jewish cemetery.

The decline of the *kahal* continued in the aftermath of the French Revolution. When the leaders of the revolution declared, in 1789, that all the French would be granted "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," they included the Jews. Thus, the Jews became full citizens of France, a status that was later withdrawn, and then reinstated by Napoleon. This emancipation, along with the revolution against the British happening in the New World, set a precedent that began to be followed throughout Europe. Various cities and states granted the Jews full equality, or else instituted reforms that were meant to culminate in emancipation at a later date. In 1812, Prussia became the first German state to grant citizenship to its Jewish inhabitants, after years of lobbying by the *maskil* David Friedlander (1750-1834), Mendelsohn's protege. Soon, the *kahal* ceased to exist as an important institution; eventually, it ceased to exist at all.

The new status of the Jews, however, was not achieved without opposition. In 1819, the masses gave vent to their frustration at the Jews' rapid economic and political rise in the "Hep Hep" riots.¹⁹ Many peasants were less willing to let go of their conception of the Jews than the Jews were to let go of their conceptions of themselves.

The new open, cosmopolitan atmosphere had its impact on religion as well. Frustrated with traditional observance, which they viewed as overly restrictive and irrelevant to modern life, many Jews joined the Reform movement. The first Reform Temple was founded in Hamburg in 1817, and it marked a dramatic departure from the traditional prayer service. Soon, Reform Temples opened elsewhere too, and Berlin became the center of the movement. Reform was opposed by the "Neo-orthodox" school, the brainchild of Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) of Frankfort, which emphasized strict traditionalism combined with worldly pursuits. Meanwhile, in Breslau, Zecharias Frankel (1801-1875) laid the groundwork for the Conservative movement.

The Jews of Germany were by now an overwhelmingly urban, professional class. Many of them took part in the German revolution of 1848, and in the resulting Frankfort parliament. The "Basic Laws of the German People" advanced by the parliament reinforced that Jews were citizens in full, regardless of their religious leanings. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anti-Semitism became more visible, and even manifested itself in politics, but was dismissed by the urbane, assimilated Jews as merely a passing social phenomenon. The anti-Semitism became more pronounced in the aftermath of World War I in Weimar Germany. For the most part, however, the prosperity and legal equality of the Jews continued unabated until Hitler's rise to power in 1933, and the legal discrimination and violence that ensued.

Jewish social life in the inter-war period consisted of a struggle between Jewish nationalism and assimilationism. While many Jews tried as hard as they could to assimilate, and to distinguish themselves from their "Eastern" counterparts— i.e., the Jews in Eastern Europe who were still largely observant and traditional— others advocated a return to Jewish autonomy, either within Europe or in Palestine. The foremost proponent of Jewish autonomy was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the founder of political Zionism, who lived in Vienna, Austria. In terms of scholarship, German Jews enjoyed a "Jewish Renaissance" in the early twentieth century. Many books and



The recently renovated "New Synagogue" in East Berlin

¹⁹ For some time, sporadic anti-Jewish violence had been accompanied by the rallying call "Hep! Hep!" The origins of this phrase are unclear – while some hold that the cry was an acronym for "*Hierosolyma est perdita*," a Crusader chant meaning "Jerusalem is lost," others believe that it was simply as an exhortatory cry for sheep-herders that was borrowed by Jew-baiters. In either case, the slogan became a widespread one in 1819 when German Jews were the targets of widespread rioting.

treatises were published, the Hebrew language was resurrected as a living language and Yiddish drama and newspapers flourished.

Some Jews immigrated in this period, mostly to America or Palestine; many more did so after the rise of Nazism in 1933. The majority of Jews, however, remained in Germany, with catastrophic results.

The Holocaust

The Nazi takeover of 1933, which resulted in Adolph Hitler (1889-1945), a virulent anti-Semite, becoming chancellor, was a stunning blow to German Jews. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were adopted; these laws officially defined Judaism in terms of race, and withdrew the citizenship of all Jews. The situation escalated in 1938 when Austria was annexed by Germany. The atrocities perpetrated there against Jews soon became common in Germany proper as well. On November 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*, Jewish businesses and synagogues were razed, and Jews were hurt and killed in rioting.



A synagogue burns in Memel on Kristallnacht.

The government persecution led to an increased solidarity among German Jewry. Communities banded together to promote immigration, and to provide many of the services that had been stripped away by the government. After the war began, these communal organizations were transformed into the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (“Reich Union of Jews in Germany”), headed by Leo Baeck.

In March, 1941, Hitler officially ordered the implementation of the “Final Solution,” which resulted in Jews being forced to wear a yellow star as identification, and being transferred en masse to ghettos and camps throughout Europe. The biggest of these camps was Auschwitz, located in Poland, where Jews were put to work as slave laborers, and eventually killed in gas chambers and crematoria. The *Reichsvereinigung* was sometimes forced to assist the Germans in the implementation of the final solution.

On May 19, 1943, Germany was declared *Judenrein* (“free of Jews”), though it is estimated that as many as 19,000 Jews remained in Germany underground.

Rebuilding a Modern Community

Following the Holocaust, Jews settled in Germany once again. The Jewish population consisted of three types: Those who lived in Germany before the war and returned to their homes; displaced persons from elsewhere in Europe who took refuge in Germany; and those Germans who had never been discovered by the Nazis and had remained in Germany throughout World War II. About 1,500 Jews survived the Holocaust in hiding in Berlin.

The total number barely reached five percent of the Jewish population before the war.

This number decreased further as many German Jews immigrated to Israel in the 1950s. By the mid-1960s, communities were solidified in West Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Hamburg and Cologne consisting of about 20,000 Jews. Less than a thousand Jews lived in East Germany and those who did were concentrated in East Berlin. Other Jews unaffiliated with the established communities lived in Germany as well, but it is impossible to know precisely how many.



Memorial marking the spot where Berlin's 55,000 Jews were gathered for deportation.

For a long time, the communities were primarily elderly men and women, and opportunities for Jewish life were minimal: few communities conducted daily prayer services, only two Jewish schools existed, and the two Jewish weekly newspapers had only modest circulations. Inter-marriage became rampant. Because of reparations paid to Holocaust survivors and their descendants by the German government, however, the communities in Germany were among the richest in the world. The reunification of Germany, which repatriated Jews in East and West Germany, also went a long way to increasing Jewish opportunities and unity in the country. The Holocaust destroyed Jewish rural life in Germany, and after the war very few Jewish individuals settled anywhere but major German cities.

Beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through 2004, the long-stagnant communities began to change. Huge numbers of immigrants came from the former Soviet Union. The influx of Soviet Jews revitalized community life, kosher food and restaurants, and grass-root organizations. Germany's open door policy also created problems and tensions with Israel. Nearly 250,000 ex-Soviet Jews applied for entry to the country, and approximately 190,000 were allowed in. More than half vanished after acquiring financial aid from the government and social support from Jewish agencies. Israel became concerned in 2004 when twice as many ex-Soviet Jews immigrated to Germany as went to Israel. After Israel complained, the Germans began to tighten the criteria for Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union, insisting on an age limit of 45 and requiring the ability to speak, read, and write German.

Today, the number of Jews in Germany is estimated to exceed 200,000, a number including non-affiliated Jews and descendants of mixed marriages. While the German Jewish communities have traditionally observant members, the population has become increasingly liberal; in 1995, the founding of the Association of Conservative and Reform Jews successfully challenged the *einheitsgemeinde*, the unified, traditional communities that had existed since the 1950s. Assimilation and intermarriage remain significant social problems.

The Chancellor of Germany signed an agreement with the Central Council of Jews in Germany on January 27, 2003 that officially raised the legal status of the Jewish community to the same level as the German Catholics and Protestants. This milestone took place on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and under this agreement the German government is obligated to provide

support, services, and funding to the Jewish community and to nurture the existing German Jewish community.

On November 9, 2006, the 68th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* (or “Night of Broken Glass”), Munich’s Jewish community celebrated the rededication of Munich’s main synagogue, which was destroyed on Hitler’s orders in 1938. The new synagogue and the accompanying Jewish community center opened to the public in 2007. Funding for the synagogue, which cost about \$72 million, was provided by the city, the state of Bavaria, and Munich’s Jewish community.

The synagogue, called Ohel Jakob, is built of glass and steel, and the base is made of a white stone similar to the Jerusalem stone of the *Kotel*, symbolizing the Temple. The top of the synagogue represents the tent that housed the tabernacle during the years of wandering in the desert. The building is located in St. Jakobs Square, only a few blocks from where the original synagogue stood. The museum and community center also house an elementary school, library and function halls. Between the community center and the synagogue, there is a memorial passageway. On one side, inscribed in layers of glass are 4,500 names of some of Munich’s Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. A book accompanies the display, with photos and biographical information.



Ohel Jakob synagogue, Munich

Today, the Munich Jewish community has reached over 9,000 members, the same size as before World War II. There are four synagogues in the city, including a separate liberal congregation with around 250 members. This growth is largely due to the influx of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s.

In May 2005, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Germany’s official Holocaust memorial museum, opened in the center of Berlin. The memorial consists of a Field of Stelae covering an area of 19,000 square meters and containing 2,711 concrete blocks together with an information center. The exhibition about the persecution and extermination of the European Jews and the historical crime sites was designed by Dagmar von Wilcken and attracts nearly half a million visitors each year.

On September 15, 2006, The Adam Geiger College ordained the first rabbis trained in Germany since the country's last seminary closed in 1942. The three men were trained for four years at the Potsdam school, which is affiliated with the World Union of Progressive Judaism. While the Chabad-Lubavitch movement has ordained Orthodox rabbis in Berlin since the Holocaust, none had received their training in Germany. There are 120 Jewish congregations in Germany, but only twenty have full-time rabbis. Two of the newly ordained Reform rabbis plan to stay in Germany.



Holocaust memorial on the site of what was the Jewish cemetery in Berlin.

Throughout the post-war period, anti-Semitism has continued and neo-Nazi groups flourished throughout Germany. Recently, hate crimes and membership in neo-Nazi groups have skyrocketed, and even taken on some political forms in far-right political parties. These parties, however, have been generally unsuccessful in recruiting members from among the German populace, and several have been outlawed by the government. Hate crimes are very strictly punished by the German courts.

In 2012, however, a study published by an independent committee of experts appointed by the Bundestag, the German parliament, found that anti-Semitism is now on the rise in Germany, and not just from the neo-Nazi and Islamic fundamentalist parties. "Anti-Semitism in our society is based on widespread prejudices, clichés with deep roots and pure ignorance about everything to do with Jews and Judaism," wrote one of the report's authors, Dr. Peter Longerich. The study also criticized the way Germany deals with anti-Semitism. "There is no comprehensive strategy for fighting anti-Semitism in Germany," said another of the authors, Dr. Juliane Wetzel. But despite the grim situation in Germany, the report noted that anti-Semitism is much worse in many other European countries, including Poland, Hungary and Portugal.

In March 2012, Peter Feldmann was elected as mayor of Frankfurt and became the first Jew to hold the position since the Holocaust. Feldmann, who ran as a member of the Social Democratic Party, ran on a platform that advocated social reform but also confirmed that he is a strong advocate of Israel's security and a supporter of Frankfurt-Tel Aviv relations. Frankfurt is Tel Aviv's partner city, Feldmann said, adding "Israel and Frankfurt have good contacts," citing the "regular school exchange programs." The mayor-elect is an economist who has vast experience in the social service field, and has served as director of a senior citizen home and even volunteered in his youth on a kibbutz in Israel. Frankfurt previously had one Jewish mayor, Ludwig Landmann, who was in office for nine years until the Nazis came to power in 1933.

German officials have taken a strong stand against anti-Semitism in recent years, reminding the country of its repressed past and its obligation to the Jewish people. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been especially outspoken about her intolerance of anti-Semitism. On September 14, 2014, she attended a rally against anti-Semitism in Berlin where she said that "I do not accept any kind of anti-Semitic message or attacks at all, not least the ones that were recently seen at the pro-Palestinian demonstrations". This rally against anti-Semitism came on the heels of increased anti-

Semitic incidents in Germany, with 184 anti-Semitic incidents happening between June and July 2014, and 159 attacks between January and June.



German Stolpersteines

Throughout Germany there are large bronze plaques, artfully engraved with names and stories of individuals who perished at the hands of the Nazis. These are known as “Stolpersteine,” literally translated to “stumbling blocks”. These plaques are carved and engraved by hand by German artist Gunter Demnig who began the project in 1997. Each begins with the words “Here lived...” and they are funded by the city in which they are to be placed. They are embedded in the sidewalks outside of the last known residences of individuals and minorities who were persecuted during the Holocaust. The first small memorial, embedded in the sidewalk, appeared in

Berlin’s Kruezberg district in 1996, and there are now more than 1,400 stumbling blocks throughout the capital. Not all communities have embraced these small memorials though, and towns such as Villingen have refused to allow these privately funded memorials to be displayed on public property. The town council has rejected proposals for the installation of the Stolpersteines in 2004 and again in 2013, and the 19 Stolpersteines that were created to commemorate the citizens of the village murdered during the Holocaust collect dust in the home of a local teacher.

The Jewish Museum Berlin in the Kreuzberg district, a division of the Berlin museum, officially opened in 2001 and is notable both for its location and its contents. It is located on *Lindenstrasse*, and contains a myriad of Judaic items and artifacts, some more than 800 years old, and a stirring Holocaust exhibit. The museum also features the Libeskind Building, designed and built by architect Daniel Libeskind. His design was modeled after a deconstructed *Magen David* (Star of David), and in Fall 2007, Libeskind’s Glass Courtyard, based on a *sukkah* opened, whose roof spans the 7,000-square-foot inner courtyard of the Old Building. The Jewish Museum in Berlin stands to highlight the past and ongoing relationship between Germans and Jews in Germany. The architecture alone drew over 350,000 visitors to the building before the exhibits were even unveiled.

The “New Synagogue” on Oranienburger Strasse street in Central Berlin has been in operation since 1866. The synagogue was partially wrecked and badly damaged by fires on Kristallnacht and completely demolished by bombing planes in 1945. After the destruction of World War 2 however the German government restored the synagogue and it now serves as not only a place of worship but also a memorial and museum to German Jewish life in the pre-World War 2 period. The building is also used as the office building for the Berlin Jewish Community. Currently Berlin houses the largest concentration of Jews in Germany, with about 50,000 Jews calling the city home in 2013.

In October 2014 Germany’s top Jewish leader, Dieter Graumann, announced that he would not be seeking a second term after his current term as the President of Germany’s Central Council of Jews

comes to an end. The Council will vote for a new President on November 30, and the current Vice President Josef Schuster has announced that he will be running.

A Jewish individual was attacked in Berlin on November 25, 2014, while leaving a synagogue. He sustained a black eye and multiple fractured fingers during the attack, which was perpetrated by a man who spoke German with an Arabic accent. According to the victim there is no doubt that they were attacked because they looked like they were Jewish.

Two Berlin-born Palestinian men were charged with planning attacks on the Israeli embassy and other Jewish institutions by a public prosecutor in Berlin, in December 2015. Mohamed El-N and Ali El-I, both 21 years old, were charged with “planning a massive act of violence,” after their plans to bomb local synagogues and the Israeli embassy were reported to police. The men were arrested in July 2015, and the trial began on December 15, 2015.

During the refugee crisis of 2015 spurred by civil war in Syria, the rise of the Islamic State, and general instability in the Middle East, Germany opened its doors to refugees from the war-torn region. As Germany took in thousands upon thousands of these desperate refugees, the German Jewish community grew wary of a possible future rise in anti-Semitism in their country. The President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, stated in a newspaper interview that intolerance and distaste for Israel and Jews is innate in much of the Middle East, and the rising immigrant population may lead to a rise in anti-Semitism in Germany as a whole. Schuster called for limiting the number of refugees allowed to enter the country in November 2015.

Relations With Israel

Today, Germany is one of the most reliable allies of the State of Israel. Limited diplomatic relations were established between the two states in 1956; in 1965, relations were fully normalized, even though the move led to the severance of relations between Germany and most Arab states. In the post-World War 2 era Germany assisted the young state of Israel by providing infrastructure including roads, railways and public buildings. This also helped support German industries and helped the country bounce back after the war. When the first post-war German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer met with Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion on March 14 1960 in New York City it was an emotional and intense moment. After the meeting it was announced that Germany had authorized \$75-100 million in loans to Israel, but David Ben-Gurion was met with harsh criticism from Jews around the globe. In subsequent years, Germany has become second only to the United States in its economic relations with Israel, by importing and exporting, and providing assistance in the form of grants and loans. Additionally, Germany has played a leading role in shaping the pro-Israel attitudes of many European countries.

When the Berlin wall came down in 1989 Israelis held their breath, skeptical of the new unification and worried that a larger and more powerful Germany may not be as wary of it’s past. The unified German country has however not turned against Israel and has proven to be a valuable international ally.

Germany is Israel's largest trading partner in Europe; in 2013 Israel imported \$4.6 billion in German goods. Germany has pursued a close relationship with Israel in the post-World War 2 era in order to regain legitimacy on the international stage and attempt to reconcile with Jews around the globe. This support for Israel crosses party lines in Germany. German officials strongly oppose the BDS movement, with only 97 out of 751 members of German Parliament favoring the actions of the BDS movement. Germany was one of only 14 countries to vote against the Palestinian bid to join UNESCO in 2011.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel became the first Chancellor to address the Knesset in 2008, causing five members of the Knesset to storm out of the room. It is believed that they were protesting the fact that German was being spoken by Merkel in the Knesset building. Merkel has forged a working relationship with her Israeli counterparts, often bringing her cabinet members with her to meetings in Jerusalem in attempts to form bonds between the groups.

Political opinion polls show a divide between the government policy and the new generation of Germans coming of age currently. The German government officials base their political policy on the ties and events of the past, remembering the Holocaust vividly and basing their decisions on the strategic relationship shared with Israel and forged through this horror. The younger generation however wishes to take actions and make judgements about Israel based on the current situation and Israel's current behavior. Because of this, the special relationship that Israel shares with Germany is in danger. The best way to combat this and ensure that the current younger generation sees that the Germany-Israel relationship is crucial to the well-being of both nations is increased Holocaust education in German schools. In 2013 Yad Vashem signed an agreement with education ministers from every German state that develops new and improved Holocaust education programs.

In 2015 the Israeli and German governments are planning a year-long celebration to honor the 50th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between the two countries, which began in 1965. This celebration will include soccer matches, cultural and social events, and celebrations of scientific and economic cooperation.

German Foreign Minister Frank Walter-Steinmeier met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday November 15 2014. During the meeting they discussed establishing peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, and Walter-Steinmeier made it abundantly clear that the only way for a Palestinian state to be established is through direct bilateral negotiations with Israel, stating that there is "no alternative to negotiations". This meeting came after a number of nonbinding resolutions passed by multiple European governments pledged to unilaterally recognize the state of Palestine in an effort to move peace negotiations forward. These resolutions were passed by Britain, Ireland, Spain, and Sweden, and are symbolic, non-binding and have no legal consequences. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel was firm in her support for a 2 state solution on November 20 and rejected these unilateral recognitions of Palestine by other European nations. Merkel stated that she understands how difficult it is going to be to reach a 2 state solution and thinks that "unilateral recognition of the Palestinian state won't move us forward." Instead of passing these non-binding meaningless resolutions, Merkel said that governments should focus solely on reigniting talks between the Israelis and Palestinians (AP, November 21 2014).

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled a planned trip to Germany during October 2015, due to increasing tensions surrounding access to the Temple Mount and an uptick in violent Palestinian attacks against Israelis.

European Union nations voted in November 2015 to label all products produced on Israeli land seized following the 1967 War as “made in settlements,” a move that prompted harsh criticism from Israeli officials. , “The EU decision is hypocritical and constitutes a double standard,” said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “It singles out Israel and not the 200 other conflicts around the world. The EU has decided to label only Israel, and we are not prepared to accept the fact that Europe is labeling the side that is being attacked by terrorism. The Israeli economy is strong and will withstand this; those who will be hurt will be those Palestinians who work in Israeli factories. The EU should be ashamed.” To read the letter penned by the European Union nations expressing their support for the labelling of these goods, please [click here](#). During the week following the E.U.’s decision to label these products, the Israeli Foreign Ministry suspended all Diplomatic contacts with European Union on matters related to Israeli-Palestinian peace. A statement released by the Israeli Foreign Ministry on November 29, 2015, clarified that Israel would continue diplomatic relations with individual countries, but the ban applies to E.U. institutions and officials. A European Union spokesperson responded, stating that they would continue to work towards peace in the Middle East with the quartet and their other partners, despite being shut out by Israel. The President of German Parliament came out during the week following the EU’s decision, stating that Germany did not support the decision to label the goods, and in fact rejected the idea when it was presented. German Bundestag (Parliament) President Norbert Lammert said during a joint press conference with Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein, that “Germany can imagine a better law, if it were to apply to everyone, on principle, to all occupied land. Because it’s specifically against Israel, I repeat that it is unnecessary and not very smart.”

In January 2016 the German Defense Minister announced that the German military had entered into an agreement to lease 3-5 Heron TP drones from Israel. The German military already uses the Heron TP’s predecessor, the Heron 1, in Afghanistan. Leasing the drones was expected to cost the Germans \$650 million, with the assumption that they will be deployed in 2018. The agreement was finalized in June 2016, with the German government agreeing to lease 5 Heron TP drones from Israel, at a cost of \$644 million. Israel announced plans to double their fleet of Heron TP drones, known as the White Eagle Squadron, in mid-March 2016. The White Eagle Squadron has been active since 2010.

When German Chancellor Angela Merkel was asked during a joint press conference with Israeli PM Netanyahu about her opinion on the recent rush to do business with Iran following the implementation of the JCPOA (The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), she made her stance with Israel crystal clear. Chancellor Merkel told reporters bluntly that, “there cannot exist normal, friendly relations with Iran as long as Iran doesn’t recognize Israel’s right to exist.” Although Iran and Germany are indeed in contact with each other, Merkel clarified that, “there is a difference between being friendly, and talking to each other.”

The German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) had been spying on Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office, according to a report released on April 3, 2016, in the German publication *Der Spiegel*. The report also contained information confirming that the BND spied on the Interior

Ministries of Austria and Belgium, the UK Defense Ministry, the U.S. State Department, NASA, and others.

In November 2016 Germany's Daimler Automotive group announced plans to develop an R&D facility in Tel Aviv. The facility will join Daimler's other R&D centers in the United States, Germany, India, and China. The German auto-maker hopes that the Israel R&D facility will also stimulate "the development of a network of connections with Israeli startup companies, technology accelerators, incubators, innovation centers, and established high tech firms."

A \$32 million collaborative project was announced in November 2016 by the Israeli Innovation Authority and the German Ministry of Science, which aims to advance the field of nanotechnology. The funding will allow nanotechnology institutes and incubators in both countries to collaborate on joint projects for at least three years. The Tel Aviv University Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology hosted NanoIsrael 2016, a conference celebrating innovations and looking towards the future of nanotechnology.

June 30

22.	Bergen-Belsen Camp Complex	73
23.	Bergen-Belsen Timeline	75
24.	<i>Thinking of Food—Memoir of Bergen Belsen</i> Survivor Irene Muskal.....	77
25.	<i>Between Two Streams — A Diary from Bergen-Belsen</i> by Abel Herzberg	80
26.	Chava Rosenfarb: <i>Bergen-Belsen Diary, 1945</i>	106



22. Bergen-Belsen Camp Complex

German military authorities established the Bergen-Belsen camp in 1940, in a location south of the small towns of Bergen and Belsen, about 11 miles north of Celle, Germany. Until 1943, Bergen-Belsen was exclusively a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp. In April 1943 the SS Economic-Administration Main Office (SS *Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt*; WVHA) which administered the concentration camp system, took over a portion of Bergen-Belsen and converted it first into a civilian residence camp and, later, into a concentration camp. Thus, while the German government placed the Bergen-Belsen camp complex within the concentration camp system, the WVHA initially gave it a special designation.

The Bergen-Belsen camp complex was composed of numerous camps, established at various times during its existence. There were three main components of the camp complex: the POW camp, the “residence camp” (*Aufenthaltslager*), and the “prisoners’ camp” (*Häftlingslager*).

The prisoner-of-war camp functioned as such from 1940 until January of 1945. The “residence camp” was in operation from April 1943 until April 1945, and was composed of four subcamps: the “special camp” (*Sonderlager*), the “neutrals camp” (*Neutralenlager*), the “star camp” (*Sternlager*), and the “Hungarian camp” (*Ungarnlager*). The “prisoners’ camp,” also in operation from April 1943 until April 1945, consisted of the initial “prisoner’s camp,” the “recuperation camp” (*Erholungslager*), the “tent camp” (*Zeltlager*), the “small women’s camp” (*Kleines Frauenlager*), and the “large women’s camp” (*Grosses Frauenlager*).



One of several mass graves on the site of the former camp. The sign simply reads: Here lie 5000 dead. April 1945.

Over the course of its existence, the Bergen-Belsen camp complex held Jews, POWs, political prisoners, Roma (Gypsies), “asocials,” criminals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

As Allied and Soviet forces advanced into Germany in late 1944 and early 1945, Bergen-Belsen became a collection camp for thousands of Jewish prisoners evacuated from camps closer to the front. The arrival of thousands of new prisoners, many of them survivors of forced evacuations on foot, overwhelmed the meager resources of the camp. With an increasing number of transports of female prisoners, the SS dissolved the northern portion of the camp complex, which was still in use as a POW camp, and established the so-called “large women’s camp” (*Grosses Frauenlager*) in its place in January 1945. This camp housed women evacuated from Flossenbürg, Gross-Rosen, Ravensbrück, Neuengamme, Mauthausen, and Buchenwald concentration camps, as well as various subcamps and labor camps.

At the end of July 1944 there were around 7,300 prisoners interned in the Bergen-Belsen camp complex. At the beginning of December 1944, this number had increased to around 15,000, and in February 1945 the number of prisoners was 22,000. As prisoners evacuated from the east continued to arrive, the camp population soared to over 60,000 by April 15, 1945. From late 1944, food rations throughout Bergen-Belsen continued to shrink. By early 1945, prisoners would sometimes go without food for days; fresh water was also in short supply.

Sanitation was incredibly inadequate, with few latrines and water faucets for the tens of thousands of prisoners interned in Bergen-Belsen at this time. Overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and the lack of adequate food, water, and shelter led to an outbreak of diseases such as typhus, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and dysentery, causing an ever increasing number of deaths. In the first few months of 1945, tens of thousands of prisoners died.

On April 15, 1945, British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen. The British found around sixty thousand prisoners in the camp, most of them seriously ill. Thousands of corpses lay unburied on the camp grounds. Between May 1943 and April 15, 1945, between 36,400 and 37,600 prisoners died in Bergen-Belsen. More than 13,000 former prisoners, too ill to recover, died after liberation. After evacuating Bergen-Belsen, British forces burned down the whole camp to prevent the spread of typhus.

During its existence, approximately 50,000 persons died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp complex including Anne Frank and her sister Margot, both of whom died in the camp in March 1945. Most of the victims were Jews. After liberation, British occupation authorities established a displaced persons camp that housed more than 12,000 survivors. It was located in a German military school barracks near the original concentration camp site, and functioned until 1951.

SS Personnel

SS-Hauptsturmführer Adolf Haas became the first commandant of the Bergen-Belsen camp in the spring of 1943; SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Kramer replaced him in December 1944. The number of SS functionaries in Bergen-Belsen varied over the course of the camp's existence. The SS succeeded in destroying many of the camp's files, including those on personnel.

Postwar Trials

In autumn of 1945 a British Military Tribunal in Lüneburg tried 48 members of the Bergen-Belsen staff, including 37 SS personnel and eleven prisoner functionaries. The tribunal sentenced eleven of the defendants to death, including camp commandant Josef Kramer. Nineteen other defendants were convicted and sentenced to prison terms; the tribunal acquitted fourteen. On December 12, 1945, British military authorities executed Kramer and his co-defendants.

23. Bergen-Belsen Timeline

Autumn 1940 — German military authorities establish the Bergen-Belsen camp as a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp.

April 1943 — The SS Economic-Administration Main Office (*SS Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt-WVHA*) takes over a portion of Bergen-Belsen and establishes the “residence camp” (*Aufenthaltslager*) and “prisoners’ camp” (*Häftlingslager*). SS Captain Adolf Haas becomes the first commandant of the Bergen-Belsen camp.

July 7, 1943 — The first transport of Jewish prisoners arrives in the “special camp” (*Sonderlager*) from Poland.

August 13, 1943 — The first transport of Jewish prisoners (all citizens of neutral countries—Spain, Portugal, Argentina, and Turkey) arrives in the “neutrals camp” (*Neutralenlager*) from Greece.

September 15, 1943 — The SS establishes the “star camp” (*Sternlager*) when the first transport of Jewish prisoners arrives in this camp from the Netherlands.

October 21, 1943 — The SS and German police deport around 1,800 prisoners from the “special camp” to Auschwitz.

February 1944 — The SS closes the first section of the “prisoners’ camp,” which housed non-Jewish prisoners whom the SS authorities had brought to Bergen-Belsen to construct the “residence camp.” The SS transfers the few surviving prisoners of the camp to Sachsenhausen.

February 3–7, 1944 — The SS authorities release around 365 Jewish prisoners from the “neutrals camp,” dispatching them to the border of Spain.

March 1944

The “prisoners’ camp” begins serving as a collection camp for sick and injured prisoners from other concentration camps. This section becomes known as the “recuperation camp” (*Erholungslager*).

June 29, 1944 — The Germans permits 222 Jewish prisoners from the “star camp” to leave for Palestine in exchange for German citizens held on British territory.

July 9, 1944 — The SS establishes the “Hungarian camp” (*Ungarnlager*) when the first transport of over 1,600 Hungarian Jews arrives in Bergen-Belsen.

August 1944 — Within the “prisoners’ camp” the SS erects the “tent camp” (*Zeltlager*), to which they move sick female prisoners, after the “recuperation camp” becomes overcrowded.

August 18, 1944 — The SS permits the first transport of Hungarian Jewish prisoners (around 300) from the “Hungarian camp” to leave for Switzerland in return for cash payment.

November 1944 — After a storm destroys the “tent camp,” camp officials establish the “small women’s camp” (*Kleines Frauenlager*) within the “prisoners’ camp” and transfers the surviving prisoners of the “tent camp” to the “small women’s camp.”

December 1944 — The WVHA officially designates the Bergen-Belsen camp complex a concentration camp.

December 2, 1944 — SS Captain Josef Kramer replaces Adolf Haas as the commandant of Bergen-Belsen.

December 4, 1944 — The SS permits the second transport of Hungarian Jewish prisoners (around 1,300) to leave for Switzerland in return for cash payment. An additional 4,200 Hungarian Jews arrive in the “Hungarian camp” from Hungary shortly thereafter.

January 1945 — The German authorities dissolve the POW camp in Bergen-Belsen and establish the “large women’s camp” (*Grosses Frauenlager*) for female prisoners evacuated from other concentration camps.

January 21, 1945 — A German-American exchange allows 136 Jewish “star camp” prisoners with Central- and South- American papers to leave for Switzerland.

April 6–11, 1945 — Shortly before British forces liberate Bergen-Belsen, the SS and police authorities “evacuate” the remaining prisoners from all four sub-camps of the “residence camp” (the “special camp,” “neutrals camp,” “Hungarian camp,” and the “star camp”) in the direction of Theresienstadt.

April 15, 1945 — British forces liberate Bergen-Belsen.

September–November 1945 — A British Military Tribunal tries 48 members of the Bergen-Belsen staff, including 37 SS personnel and 11 prisoner functionaries. The tribunal sentences 11 of the defendants to death, including camp commandant Josef Kramer.

December 12, 1945 — British military authorities executes Kramer and his co-defendants.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007510>

24. *Thinking of Food—Memoir of Bergen Belsen* Survivor Irene Muskal

As far as I know, no one ever tried to escape from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp. We inmates were in a hypnotized, brainwashed, living-dead condition. In our restricted, dark world, the most we could think of was food.

A normal lifestyle? To think freely with a longing to live? At this stage of our existence none of this penetrated our minds. This was the natural outcome our being oppressed and persecuted, going about in constant starvation, in the shadow of death, adjacent to a crematorium, under the influence of the bromide drug mixed in our food.

Even the meager provision given to us by the Nazis became much less after passing through the hands of the Jewish barrack leaders, who tithed the portions! Our own Jewish leaders walked about in their tight-fitting clothes on their fleshy bodies, while the nonentity poor population, skin-to-the-bone thin, had clothing just hanging on loosely.

Breakfast? We never had any. As for our lunch, a few tiny pieces of cooked cattle beets swimming in a dirty liquid, mixed with bromide, distributed to us almost every day - but never at the same hour. In fact, any hour during a circle of one day, but never within the twenty-four period, always later. One day it may have been ten in the morning. The next day, two in the afternoon, then a day and a half later at midnight or maybe three in the morning. Very seldom we received a liquid cooked in breadcrumbs instead of “black-coffee”.

We received dark bread which also had bromide mixed in. Our bread portion came to one full slice per day, if only they would give it to us on time each day. When we received our ration, our leaders told us that it would have to last for three days. Usually, however, more than three days elapsed before we received our next ration.

Another problem with this system was that living in starvation, not everyone could control their rumbling stomach, and some would eat up their “three-day” portion the moment they received it. Then it was very terrible for them to wait till the next bread distribution.

In addition, a few people would go from one barrack to another trying to trade their meager bread-portion for a cigarette. On two different occasions, the Nazis distributed four cigarettes to inmates from the age 21 and up. Unfortunately, those desperate to smoke cigarettes found some heartless folks ready to exchange their cigarette for bread.

Some lucky inmates worked in the big kitchen premises, but were watched carefully by armed Nazi guards standing behind them. When the big gate opened, food carriers brought our “d’orge-mu’sé” lunch in huge pots. The gate remained open when the food carriers returned the empty

pots. With the Nazis keeping a watchful eye, no one “picked up” forbidden cattle-beets or any other kind of raw vegetable from the kitchen.

With hungry eyes, I watched those food carriers eating their stolen cattle-beets. So I begged my brother Bela, who was a food carrier, to bring us some cattle beets too. Sure enough, he brought us a nice fresh piece of raw cattle-beets the next day. But before I had a chance to enjoy a few bites, together with my sister and brother Bandi, my dear mother came over and yelled out of fear at my brother Bela, demanding that he get rid of the cattle-beets right away. And so he did, by putting them down inside the cement washroom floor. I was very disappointed, stiffened from anger - how could my mother do this? But she was simply that we would be shot for stealing cattle-beets from the kitchen! All the while, some lucky people around us heartily ate their stolen cattle-beets.

I then decided to handle things myself, whatever little chance there may be. I would have to look out very carefully, avoiding being noticed by the SS Nazi guards waiting for a chance to shoot me to death. For hours, I would walk outside the courtyard, waiting for a chance to get something to eat. On one occasion, I noticed some inmate girls digging out cattle-beets and throwing them to a begging multitude of people. These brave girls withstood the cruel lashes of the kapo hitting them again and again, and threw the life-saving cattle-beets over the barbed-wire fence. As the beets flew over to our side of the fence, all of us rushed to catch them. I must say, there was no fighting. Whoever was lucky enough to catch a cattle-beet took it and had to disappear, so as to give others a chance. But this soon ended too, and we had to look for other ways to appease our perpetual hunger.

Early one day, just after roll call, all of us were escorted by the Nazi guards to take a shower. They took us past block ten, by the left side of the gate - on the other side, freedom. Oh, how I longed to walk out, to be free, to escape the dark horror of Bergen-Belsen! Now my rumbling stomach demanded food. The scant food provision given to us by the German authorities served to slowly and systematically lead us to perish from starvation.

I found a trifling new source to obtain some food. I volunteered to return empty cans to the kitchen instead of my brother, Bela. But rarely did I have any luck. The SS guard, with his gun ready to shoot, always stood by. I remember two lucky occasions when I did manage to get food. Once, a girl sat beside a huge pot cleaning small carrots - provisions for the SS gang - with the guard next to her. I just stared at this girl with my hungry, begging eyes; she, too, gave an agreeable look and allowed me to grab a few small carrots from the pot. I dared not put my hand back a second time. The other time, I was lucky enough to grab a few pieces of very small red beets. Both times, I shared the treasure not only with my own family of five, but also with a “neighbor”. I remember his name - Mr. Gorog. He was a fine young man who was later sent to another barrack, and we never saw him again.

When I say a neighbor in Bergen-Belsen, that could mean either twenty centimeters away from our abode - our bunk beds - or someone separated just by a wooden plank about twenty centimeters high.

Rarely, we found in our “dorge-muse” liquid tiny pieces of white meat - some dared to say it was human meat, because it was unimaginable that the Nazis would feed us with any other, “normal”, kind of meat.

Source: *Bergen Belsen and Beyond*: <http://www.irenemuskal.org/1109.asp>

Irene Muskal, (1927-1997) *Bergen-Belsen and Beyond Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor from Hungary* Published Online, Jerusalem, Israel, 5761 (2001)

25. *Between Two Streams — A Diary from Bergen-Belsen* by Abel Herzberg

[Pages 5–10]

11 August 1944 — At half past eleven, just as the working parties were returning, a sudden announcement: general roll-call. Those who had not been assigned work are eating. Much consternation. No one knows what is in store this time, not even the *Ältestenrat*²⁰ know, or they say they do not know, People guess, and the guesses range from the composition of a transport destined for Palestine to the distribution of an extra ration of cheese. Meanwhile, people make their way, some reluctantly, dragging their feet, all with fear in their hearts, most of them driven by an irrepressible curiosity that enables them to conquer their extreme reluctance. Perhaps it will be something good after all. Lately, optimism has predominated. Perhaps, one person says to another, the war has ended the unfortunate man laughs and hopes, despite disbelief. The children, too, arrive on the muster ground, but are sent back. Suddenly a *Scharführer*²¹ shouts: ‘*Genug. Alle anderen zurück*’²² The LW (*Lagerwache*, a kind of police force established by the prisoners themselves) takes charge: ‘*Genug. Alle anderen zurück.*’ The confusion grows. Apparently, they intend to form a new working party. People start to back away. Most remain standing though. There is much curiosity. Soon it is satisfied. Solomon S. is sentenced to four weeks’ harsh punishment in the bunker.²³ He stole shoes from the warehouse to the detriment of the SS. That is what the SS are saying, at any rate. The sentence must be made public now. Hence the roll-call. However, S. has already served thirty days’ bunker for the same offence. He has only just been released, together with D. and two others. They say they did not steal. The *Scharführer* from the warehouse had allowed them to give a pair of old shoes to some poor wretch. The *Scharführer* was found out and denies it. Naturally, the Jews are not believed now, on the contrary, they are accused of insulting the SS. They served their sentence, but now they must return to the bunker. Besides them, Hans S. has to go too. He had called to order a *Kapo*²⁴ who had abused and hounded the Jews. A *Scharführer* had heard of it, or perhaps the *Kapo* himself had reported it. S. served six days. They had accused him of sabotage and had given him a confession to sign. He had refused to sign it He was released from the bunker. With a sense of relief, he returned to the hut. Now he has been re-arrested. More bunker? In the evening, they come to collect his luggage. We know better then: KZ (Konzentrationslager)²⁵ KZ means Matthesen,²⁶ Matthesen means death.

20 Council of senior prisoners

21 SS lance-sergeant.

22 Enough! Everyone else go back!

23 Solitary confinement.

24 A prisoner who is appointed to wield authority over his fellow prisoners and thereby becomes a member of the camp staff.

25 Concentration camp.

26 A concentration camp in Austria known for its hard labour in the stone quarries.

S. is a young man, aged about twenty-five. Strong, honest, sincere. One of the best *Chaluzim* (Palestine pioneers). He is married with a child who celebrated its first birthday a few weeks ago. His wife and child feel 'down'. With a sentimental look in his eyes he told me he wished he could have been present on his child's birthday. Its first one. We talked about the second birthday. It is something you must not do here. You must not make any plans. You must just carry on toiling, toiling. One day, somewhere, a glimmer will appear ...

And always there are some who delude themselves. The luggage had been collected for inspection. But then they bring his Food to the gate The *Scharführer* refuses to accept it. 'No need,' he says. 'S. is being interrogated.' Then we know there can be no further doubt

12 August — The *chasan* (cantor) of a *shul* (synagogue) in Cracow sang. People debate the quality of his voice. Albanians, Africans and Dutch pray the same prayers. Judaism is a single religion. There is hardly any difference, not even in part.

Albanians, Africans and others sing Hebrew songs under the direction of Z. and Z.'s children. East and West will meet. Modern songs. A discussion takes place about appointing a magistrate to deal with the prompt adjudication of breaches at work and of discipline. It is needed badly. Getting Jews to respect group discipline is not easy. Jews also make bad rulers. They still have to learn it. It is a difficult subject. The discussion dissolves into a personal quarrel which is settled again an hour later. Naturally, there is immediately the jurisprudential point of view, the opportunistic one. Opportunism relating to theory. Questions of prestige are at stake — questions of eligibility and disputes about them. Someone says something. Someone stands up and leaves the discussion, another supports it. A third does exactly the opposite. The supporters form a faction against the non-supporters. There is criticism. There is no magistrate.

There are parcels, though. I get sardines from Portugal. A blessing! The censor has opened a tin. We must finish it therefore. We hand it round and make friends, eat from it ourselves and finish our reserve of bread, In August it is hot on the Lüneburger Heide.²⁷

For the first time in months I have eaten my fill. There were large quantities of mussels — but many of them stink. They stink of the latrines. It is better to ignore it though. We are hungry and stinking mussels are quite tasty enough. This afternoon we also fished the potatoes out of the soup. They gave us raw onions and we made a potato salad with chopped mussels and onions. Friends had some limonsecco.²⁸ Consequently, we are having a wonderful meal. I even managed to get sated and am therefore contented and optimistic,

13 August — B., a Greek, is in charge of the food distribution. The *Scharführer* let him choose between onions and jam, Naturally, B. chose the jam. So we got the onions. The camp is teeming

²⁷ Lüneberger Heath.

²⁸ Perhaps a brand name, or dried lemon, or lemon powder?

with raw onions now and everywhere it stinks of onions and more onions. It is not pleasant, but healthy. There are still some mussels left, enough for another meal.

The food is abominable. Turnips, with I know not what kind of leaf. Everything is underdone and unpalatable. We struggle through it courageously. An hour after we have eaten, we are hungry again — hunger, hunger. So tonight the onions and mussels will taste wonderful. The mussels are fresh and do not stink.

It is Sunday today. On Sundays we work only in the morning but in view of the war situation they have revoked the free Sunday afternoon. Last week it was the same. We had to carry on working till nine then, and to keep in practice, they reputed it on Monday and Tuesday. The women who work in the shoe and clothing industries are exhausted. No rest this afternoon. And the laundry, who will do the laundry? And who will prepare some food? And who will spend an hour or so talking with the children. We live for a newspaper,

By the grace of God they allow the women to return to camp this afternoon. T., however, is working in the kitchen. Probably it will carry on till eight. She is filling herself on carrots now it is worth a day's work to her. I can see her through the barbed wire fence sitting in the hot sun.

14 August — Hut 13 is being punished. During roll-call, they had not stood orderly and still. Once again roll-call had lasted one and a half hours because someone had miscounted in hut 28. Apparently hut 13 had got tired. Now they must stand in the cold, because it is chilly today. Today we heard that D.R. and D.O. have also been sent to the KZ. No one knows why.

Two kinds of people exist. In normal society you cannot tell them apart because their characters and true differences, and no means of expressing themselves. Through the complexity of life, one gets trapped on sidetracks, and both the researcher and subject alike take these sidetracks. Sometimes you think you can get the measure of a person by observing their behavior, but you are wrong. All you are doing is observing an incidental action or an incidental inaction, a detail, a nuance. At other times you think you have formulated some incredibly significant standards by which to judge others, or have discovered a very important yardstick with which to measure their worth or worthlessness. You completely fail to notice then that you are dealing with trivia, that you have been seized by the fascination of details that are only of secondary importance. When you discover a very tiny facet of life that no one has ever discovered before, you think you have achieved something. Here, though, life is simple and problems are reduced to primary proportions. In the past - at least that is what seem to remember - the problem of eating presented itself in an infinite variety. There was the question of what to eat, with whom, when, et cetera, et cetera. How many books have not been written about eating, how many fine minds have not racked their aesthetic heads over the question of whether it is possible to draw conclusions about someone from the way they cut their bread or their meat, placed the pieces in their mouth, chewed or swallowed and similar details. How many fine minds have not thought that they could

amuse others with this, or be of service to them. I fear that once you have been here you will have the lasting impression that all this belongs merely to our 'civilization', that is to say, to the conventions that society has adopted for itself, and in fact, to lies. For why have conventions been adopted? To make life more agreeable, better, more bearable? Probably, but does it in fact mean anything other than that one wants to cover up man's true nature, that one shuns his nakedness? Our clothes, too, we wear not just because we are cold, but also to make a pretense of something that does not exist and to hide something that *does* exist. And all too often concealment itself has become a veritable art, its purpose being to draw attention to and accentuate *what* is being concealed. What sophistication man manages to display in the process.

Not here. Here civilization no longer exists and consequently, no sophistication either. As for eating, all I have to say is there is hunger on one side of our body, namely the inside, and fodder on the outside. Now the problem how to make the fodder reach the stomach. That is all. You have a fodder dish which is brown. It is a little impractical for a snout, else it could easily be used for pigs. You have a spoon, why? Bemuse if you slurped from your fodder dish you might make a mess, and that would be a pity.

Bread arrives in large hunks. Eyes stare greedily and enviously to see if one hunk is larger than another. When you are standing in a queue and notice that a smaller hunk is about to be handed out, just when it comes to your turn, you slip away and let the next man bear the loss. You join the rear of the queue, and try your hick again.

And everyone expects from the other that which lives and roars most strongly inside him. To grab more than his inadequate share, as much more as he needs to still his hunger, that hollow feeling in his stomach. Are there no restraints any more then? There are but they are not moral restraints, they are opportunistic ones. And you can see it now: everything you once learned about them and observed stemmed from wealth. When you left the largest piece of meat for another with whom you were sitting at table, you did so because you were already sated. And when you gave something away, you did so because you were unable to finish what you had. You do not believe it, do you, man of society, you incredibly wealthy man! You who have a house, and in that house a room, and in that room a table, and at that table a chair on which you sit, just sit normally on your backside. When you have no house, though, and no room and no table and no chair, but only a trough that you hoist above your bunk, because below you there are two more people sleeping in their cages, then you will *know* what people are like. People are creatures who hate you bemuse you still occupy the top bunk of a three-tier bunk bed on which you can sit, whereas they can only recline. They drag their trough somewhere to a bench where they spoon, slurp, gobble up, nice-nice, and all they have to say is: today the soup is thin and yesterday it was thicker, and the hut leader picks out the pieces for himself and his wife, and we get the liquid, and to secure the top bunk of a three-tier bunk bed you need connections and protection, and did you notice how the food distributor stirred in the container? They are all scum.

Who is scum? Scum is someone who manages to obtain a crumb

[Page 28–29]

... are all dependent on what we are given. And as this means a minimum to survive on indeed too little so live on, theft, particularly of bread or butter, is an attempt on the victim's life! We desperately need all the calories we are given, and if we do not get them, any chance of surviving this ordeal is lost. The thief's excuse of having stolen because he was hungry does not exist here. The victim is just as hungry as he is. Besides, people steal not only from hunger, but also — and not least — so that bread may be traded for cigarettes. Those who are addicted to smoking seem not to eschew any means by which they might procure cigarettes for themselves, not even theft, not even the most cowardly theft: taking bread from children. And if they can procure that bread only through burglary, they will surmount the final scruple, get up in the dead of night, sneak towards a cupboard or suitcase, and break it open. Prior so that, they will have spied on the owner to discover how much bread he has stored away

All these kinds of thefts are perpetrated by men and women of all ages, from every level of society. Hunger or a craving for cigarettes seizes its slaves without respect of persons. In the end, a kind of general depravity in circumstances such as ours seems unavoidable for numerous people who in normal circumstances would never have resorted to even the slightest dishonesty. Psychological and moral decline, indeed ruination, perplexes us anew each time.

Accordingly. I have seen laborers as well as former big capitalists and businessmen of stature steal. Once, a chief clerk of one of the largest banks was caught cutting slices from a fellow prisoner's bread. A woman of culture, taste and charm had no scruples about getting up in the night to steal butter from the cupboards. Another, whose husband had once managed a major company, had pinched jam from a baby's cot, A third, from a well-known and respected social environment, had searched the beds, for which she had the opportunity as but nurse, and had taken sugar from bags and jars. A businessman, the manager of a world-famous company, had stolen three rations of bread from one of his acquaintances. On the day of his father's cremation, the son of a very well-known Amsterdammer had appropriated a suitcase with foodstuffs and cigarettes belonging to his best friend, who had taken him into his confidence,

Age, too, made no difference. A boy of sixteen proved to be an accomplished burglar; a man approaching seventy stole whatever he could lay his hands on.

26 August — The Polish women in the tent camp next to or are quite often replaced, and whenever that happens the Jews must clean out the stable. I am referring here to an old arid tattered tent, right next to our camp, initially created as a storeroom for old shoes that we had to cut apart but which — now that the work has almost come to an end — has been converted into a stable for Polish women. The conversion consisted of placing wood shavings on the floor. The

rest is “entrusted to the care of the public,” as we once used to read on the immaculate signs that the distinguished City Fathers had placed in the well cared for little parks of the neatly painted little towns. Merciful heaven, when I think of such things as I sit here writing on top of my three-tier bed directly under the roof in a stifling heat, amidst all kinds of worn-out men suffering from diarrhea and the stench of a toilet wafting up to my nose, I have to say how good, how civil, how small-minded we used to be. Oh, oh, oh, such a tent with Polish women. And oh, oh, oh, a working party of Jews who must clean out such a tent. Not enough men had reported for work yesterday. There is other work, too, quite a few were sick, and then there are always slackers, of course. Consequently, older men between fifty-five and sixty-five also had to go. Naturally, apart from the general exhaustion that we are all struggling with some of them were also ill. Men who were suffering from a hernia, from angina pectoris, from diabetes, in short, from every illness known about to the point of boredom from behind the screens of everyday life. Clearly, such men are not the most suitable for mucking out a tattered tent that had been occupied by a thousand Polish women. Especially not at the hottest time of the day in a heat to make you faint even if you were not working, and in a dust that robs you of your breath. What does the Third Reich do in such circumstances? ...

[Pages 38-39]

... or frown half past six till ... the *Scharführer* has had enough of it — eight, nine., ten, or even eleven o’clock at night. People have stood against the fence without a coat, while it got cold, and without food. Naturally they collapsed, with pneumonia followed by death. The SS do not even grimace. They are satisfied. And why must you stand against the fence? Because you had kept your hands in your pockets, or not removed your cap.

The free Sunday afternoon offers a further opportunity for punishment. They can withdraw it and do so with pleasure. One can also make people work, and then preferably not till half past six, but for one or two hours longer, or make people do drill, ‘*Antreten, abtreten, Funferreihen, ins Gleichschritt Marsch.*’²⁹ Such punishment is meted out for all kinds of trivia. Alleged late arrival for roll-call, low productivity, alleged inadequate cleanliness, incorrect ‘*Bettenbau,*’³⁰ et cetera.

In short, usually the working week is much longer than seventy-two hours, at least, that is how it was last winter. Recently, a certain lethargy in maintaining discipline has crept in, even among the SS. They still hand out punishment in every direction, but there is not enough work any longer, or they themselves no longer feel like it.

²⁹ “Fall in. Dismiss. Form rows of five. March in step.”

³⁰ “Bed making.”

What sort of work do we do? Mainly unstitching old shoes and cutting out the usable pieces of leather. The work is indescribably moronic and above all — as can be imagined — very dirty. When the *Scharführer* in charge is asked what purpose it serves, his reply is; “*Mir Deutsche sind Habenixe and Ihr Juden sollt helfen durch Eure Arbeit uns reich zu machen.*”³¹

Naturally we take this lesson in German economics very much to heart. We are blazing with zeal “to make Germany rich” by unstitching shoes. An unrelenting and dogged struggle for productivity now develops between the Jews and the *Scharführer*. Clearly, we must be careful that we cannot be accused of sabotage. Because at the very least, sabotage means KZ, and concentration camp means being tortured to death. At least some work has to be done, therefore. The question is only how much or how little.

Some people manage to do almost nothing. A kind of bookkeeping is kept of the quantity of shoes that are collected. The bookkeepers are Jews, but naturally, they can fiddle the figures only to a limited degree. The most ingenious methods are invented with which to fool the *Scharführer*. For example, when shoes are collected, a larger quantity is booked out, and in addition all or some of the shoes already collected are returned to the large pile. Then, when one of these *Scharführer* cannot imagine why there is no productivity and why the work is not getting less, the Jews, too, have a moment of fun again.

Others, though, find the art of idleness less attractive. There are some who just cannot sit still. The work — five, six, seven hours on end — is excruciatingly dull, but to be idle is far worse. We can talk to each other, but only to a very limited extent, and only as far as the *Scharführer* allows it, but about what? The education and in-interests of the company one finds oneself in are often very diverse. The main topic of conversation is food: the soup was thick, the soup was thin, Brandon found two pieces of meat in his soup, and Flesseman never receives any. The leader of hut so-and-so distributes unfairly, or does not ladle close enough to the bottom of the container, Friends get the thick, and others the liquid. The serving ladle is not full enough. How many potatoes did you have? Four small ones. We had one large and two small ones. Again less. Naturally the leader looks after himself first. In hut X they served a heaping spoonful of jam, in hut Y a level spoonful. Yes, but that was a tablespoon and the other a dessertspoon, Naturally, every hut leader is discussed in turn, then every dishonesty that was or was not committed, that might be committed and that could be prevented ... That is the conversation, day in, day out, in the morning, in the afternoon, at 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., at 9:00 a.m. and still at six in the evening.

One must therefore try to form one’s own circle, to have at least some kind of distraction, sortie standard. Sometimes it succeeds.

³¹ “We Germans are have-nots and you Jews will help us become rich through your work.”

[Pages 55-57]

... Three people have died. Young N., a nineteen-year-old, who contracted tuberculosis in Westerbork³² and has now died here of starvation and exhaustion; E., fifty-one years old, who spent all of the last six years in camps; and a woman, named Polak, with no family or acquaintances here, about whom nobody knows anything. No one on the muster ground even knows her age.

They have come to collect the dead. The hospital hut faces the muster ground. The three coffins are loaded. Behind the cart walk a father and mother, a wife and a son. Behind the bier of the woman, said to have been called Polak, no one walks. "Rachel weeps for her children, refuses to be consoled, for they are no longer."³³ A doctor and a nurse from the hospital and a member of the *Ältestenrat* also follow. A few friends and acquaintances of the families steeped in grief want to accompany them as far as the gate. The *Judenälteste* forbids it; it is not allowed. "*Antreten zum Appell!*"³⁴

It is pouring. People turn their backs to the wind, like horses when it rains. Everyone is silent. A few cry. The raindrops pelt against the soaked clothing. If we do not keep a grip on ourselves, all the children will soon start to lament. Till now they have borne up remarkably well. They sang: 'In the name of Orange, open the gate, and: hold you dear, my Holland.' They also played and romped about; and with their natural vitality, rebelled against our somber mood. Then they began on the Hebrew songs which they had learnt in Westerbork and here. Ancient prayers to new lively tunes:

*Save us, save us
How good, how good our shire
How pleasant, how pleasant our fate
And how beautiful, how beautiful our heritage.*

Gradually, as it gets colder the children, too, become silent. Most of them press tightly against their mother's skirt or crawl under her raincoat. The people huddle together for a little protection from each other's bodies.

Across the muster ground the plaints of a grieving mother are heard: Oh my child, my child- Another tries to say a few words of comfort. She rests her head on the shoulder of her husband whose only response is to snivel a little. She had nursed her child through many months.

³² Westerbork was a World War II Nazi refugee, detention and transit camp in in the northeastern Netherlands.

³³ Jeremiah 31:15.

³⁴ "Line up for roll-call!"

The SS man, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, and without a movement in his face, climbs onto the can. “*Fort.*”³⁵

Three dead. The season has started again.

Finally, when the cart has disappeared, a whistle is blown. Roll-call has ended. The children rush through the rain towards the huts. A girl loses a shoe in the mud and starts to cry. ‘Daddy, daddy.’ With difficulty I manage to rescue the shoe from under the feet of the surging masses. We enter the already overcrowded hut. It is leaking. The previous day’s wind has torn the roofing felt loose. But below me, on the second tier, a party is in progress. The little boy, alone here in the camp with his sister, has his birthday today. Someone has given him a slice of bread and jam, and another a slice of bread and a little sugar. I still have a biscuit and a lump of sugar. Now George and his sister Ursul are celebrating a birthday, and believe it or not, the children are happy. According to the custom here, he also gets an extra portion of soup.

3 September — I have registered the estate of Miss Polak, who passed away this morning in the society’s zoo’³⁶ and was carried away for cremation two hours after her death. We have our own law of succession here. Spouses inherit from each other, parents from children, and the other way round. No one else. There was also a movement that wanted to abolish all rights of succession. But, it was argued, why have a law of property and not of succession?

Miss Polak’s estate included eight dishes, a yellow one, a blue one, a red one, et cetera. Three blankets, a pair of underpants, a shirt and two small mirrors. The rear bore a portrait of a young boy. Who is he? He is not very handsome.

They are unreal, those greetings from strangers. Recently we discovered some Hebrew letters on a bed frame that arrived here. They appear to be a letter in Yiddish from a son working in a carpenter’s shop who wrote to his parents in the hope of it finding them. I am fine, he writes. I also have food. But the letter was unsigned. In the toilet of hut 10 someone found a message in French written in pencil: ‘The Jews in Warsaw have all been murdered because they revolted against the Germans. Homage to the heroes.’

That is how we get to hear something about other groups of Jews, add two and two together, and are profoundly worried.

I have settled the matter of the overcoat. It is to be sold for eight rations of bread, payment to be at the purchaser’s discretion and title to remain with the seller who is also supplying two pairs of socks. There was serious opposition to intervening in this matter ‘on the grounds that it infringed the Freedom of the individual’. I care little for this Freedom, which is a freedom to exploit. I

³⁵ “Away.”

³⁶ Irony. The author compares Bergen-Belsen to a friendly society’s zoological garden.

would like to confiscate everything and distribute it according to need — but am glad not to be faced with having to put it into practice.

It is Sunday afternoon. It is very restless in the hut. A couple of boys are lying in bed with their girlfriends. It is pouring. It is unbelievably lugubrious. The IPA maintains that there have been landings in Holland and says Finland has capitulated. Let us set sail now to look beyond the horizon at what is happening.

What enormous giant is making ripples on the water?

Abeles asked me: ‘Would you like to give a talk in the *Altersheim*?’³⁷ Before I realized it, I had agreed, against my will. About what though?

Suddenly I thought of the unity of the Jewish people. I cannot imagine how I came to think of it. I had said it without knowing what I meant,

Here one does not find such unity, and I believe in every Jewish camp it will be just as strange a guest as here. In Westerbork, in Barneveld³⁸ it was also missing. Here, it does not exist,

Indeed, the differences are not as great as they are said to be. The contrast with German Jews in particular is much exaggerated. Malice

[Pages 63-64]

... 3 o'clock Rain and wind, rain and wind. Round up of all the men. Everyone had to fall in and everyone marched out. Everywhere it is very quiet now. Several people were beaten including Dr L. P. was thrown to the ground and kicked. Nevertheless, some of the young chaps managed to get out of it again. They took elderly and sick people with them. There are trains to be unloaded. It is rumored that there are forty-four wagons laden with huts waiting at the station, and seven with food supplies. An entire camp is said to have been transferred. Here, in the heart of Germany, we are beginning to notice that they are retreating at the front.

IPA; landings in Holland partly failed. Finland capitulated. Slovakia capitulated, Occupation of Fiume. Hesitantly: landings in Jutland.

Here they are unloading swedes, nothing but swedes. For weeks we have been eating swedes.³⁹ It is little more than boiled wood. It is unbelievable what one can still make with it. Swedes with

³⁷ “The old people’s group.”

³⁸ Barneveld is a town in eastern Netherlands. In the Second World War, Barneveld served as an internment camp for a selected group of Jewish people.

³⁹ Swede - the large yellow root of a rutabaga plant.

carrots, with potatoes, with onions. Swedes, swedes. Last winter we ate nothing but swedes for three and a half months, and each day it tasted good.

Now will return to what I wrote yesterday. I said that a common fate engenders unity, but if you use your eyes here you will see more than this opened book: a flame that radiates from within, from vast distances, from an enormous distance on high.

A very intimate relationship exists between the Jews and a central point in the ordering of the world, a very intimate mutual relationship. When you see a Jew wrapped in his prayer shawl and — as he expresses it himself — crowned with his prayer bindings, and then listen to what his soul is saying and try to understand what he means, you will learn something of the great, the entire life-dominating concept of Israel's God. Indeed, the religion that is the Jewish unity. I say it, even though I know just as well everyone else that most Jews have turned their backs on the Jewish religion, and usually ostentatiously at that, as everything that they do to disavow Judaism is done ostentatiously. This is understandable; since Judaism is put on display, its renunciation must take place at least as openly. I say it, even though I myself do not profess the ancient religion, yet still lay claim to my share of Jewish unity

To this day the Jewish religion is professed by every group of Jews according to exactly the same model. Behold! Two thousand years ago two brothers bade each other farewell. One went this way and the other that way, the one died and the other died, and also their children died and their children's children. And after endless wanderings, the descendants of the one arrived in a town on the North Sea and the descendants of the other roamed about and were beaten back to a town on the Mediterranean Sea, somewhere in the east, in Greece, in Tripoli, in Italy or Yugoslavia — it matters not where. And Adolf, the world's madman, brought them together in camps, and what transpired? They speak different languages, they are dressed differently and have different longings, but when they turn to their God they are so alike within and without that one could substitute the one for the other and not notice it. The same tallit (prayer shawl), the same tefillin (prayer bindings), the same formulas, in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening, the same summons on Friday afternoon; Come my friend, let us go to meet the bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.

The same fasts, the same Festivals, the same submissiveness. "Lord, open my lips and let my mouth utter Your prayer."

Centuries and dozens of centuries are bridged: they sing exactly the same psalms, and over this bridge passes a spirit, a single spirit; the Jewish one,

Yet even this spirit they disavow, and the God of all this worship they have abjured!

It makes no difference: all the world knows, the trees in the forest know and the stones in the street, that this was their national achievement and the throb of their heart.

5 September — In the morning at a quarter past six, in the afternoon at half past twelve, “*Arbeitsappeil*”⁴⁰ for all men below seventy. ...

[Pages 71-74]

... and the more distressing our fate, the more clearly our thousand-year national program manifests itself to us anew:

Hear O Israel: Jahveh our God, Jahveh is unity.

7 September — It is only a few days since we started to notice the meaning of conviviality. Their lordships are getting nervous and seem to want to avenge themselves on us for the *klein Frontverschiebung*.⁴¹ This morning, the commandant himself came to select the men. He sent everyone to work, Men up to eighty years of age, sick people with thirty-nine and forty degrees of temperature; he sent for the hospital soldier, generally known here as the *Herr Sanitäter*,⁴² abused the Jewish doctor, and gave himself away completely. “*Ihr glaubt wohl wegen der kleinen Frontverschiebung könnt alle sabotieren! Ich schneide euch den Hals ab!*”⁴³

From which it may be deduced that the matter was choking him. He is beginning to understand something of the situation. Goebbels’ propaganda is of no use any longer.

Except that the SS continue to cling to their job.

In the meantime, the commandant has brought a surprise along. Three SS women, National Socialist bigots, for whose virginity the camp showed great concern.

Our future looks bleak. The mood is funereal. Eight days of the kind of work that now has to be done and again the British will arrive too late for a few more, Rain and wind. Beatings. A thirteen, fourteen, fifteen hours working day. Because it does not end at half past six the evening. After the midday break we must carry on working from half past twelve till half past nine. The food is as meagre as ever. Today, instead of 1.1 liters of soup, there was only 0.6 of a liter.

The crematorium received only one victim today. A bargain. There were four roll-calls. At a quarter past six, at half past eight, at half past nine, and at half twelve. Three of these were to

⁴⁰ Duty roll-all

⁴¹ “Small shift of the front.” On September 7, 1943, Hitler permitted his German troops, badly battered by the Red Army as they attempted to hold the Ukraine, to retreat to the Dnieper River.

⁴² “Mr. Paramedic.”

⁴³ “You seem to think that because of the small shift of the front you can all start committing sabotage! I’ll cut your throats.”

report for duty. The *Judenälteste*⁴⁴ is cursed, he curses the *Ältestenrat*⁴⁵ and the latter curses, the foreman, the foreman the people, and they each other. Everyone passes on the kick that he receives. It carries on from month to month and destroys morale. There is no time for a single constructive thought, no prospect, no application for it.

The biggest consolation is the news. How long will it last? Each day, each hour is unbearable. And what did the last few days bring us? The IPA [International Press Association] says Brussels has fallen. Where is the king?

I still want to write about the hospital, the children, love — about the milk distribution.

At roll-call today, seven men collapsed. It is a lot. Usually, there are no more than two. But that is the least to be expected.

I believe that once I have written about the hospital, the children, love, and the milk distribution, I will have given quite a full picture of the world between two streams

Today I saw a youngster walking with a bowl of milk. The SS woman told him not to spill any. The youngster got nervous and spilled half the bowl of milk. We shouted: ‘What are you doing?’ He started to cry and carried on walking.

We must carry the containers now. It is very heavy work. There will be many more huts. I believe the British will get here first. I shall take the dossier of legal cases away with me. If I can. It is very interesting.”⁴⁶

Hommage à vous, you courageous little grandmother, who remains the same in the old peoples’ home, with your infinitely lovely face, your marvelous head of grey curls, your smiling mouth, your sound and still milk-white teeth, who helps wherever she can, nurses the sick, comforts the dying, kips the weak, gives this one a clean bed sheet, peels a potato for another, covers them, brings them a little warm water, offers a lump of sugar and keeps their faith alive. *Hommage* you little boy who cares for his lonely sister, combs her hair each day, and shares a little treat with her. *Hommage à toi*, you mother, who manages to look after her child, so that it stays clean and healthy as always. *Hommage* to all of you, who keep up your spirits and remain yourselves, who have not allowed things to get on top of you, who have not succumbed, who have stood your ground, in this indescribable misery.

⁴⁴ The Elder of the Jews.

⁴⁵ The name for the *Judenrat* in Bergen-Belsen. The committee of the Jewish elders who administered the camp under the Nazis.

⁴⁶ (Author’s note): Unfortunately it got lost.

A new life is on its way. It is coming. And you need that new life as human beings and as Jews.

7 September — Last night B.'s appeal hearing. S. had presided. He had leant: on his arms, had cross-examined while stooped forward as in the old days when he was a cantonal judge⁴⁷ B. is a mystery to me. A sixteen-year-old with a bright intellect, whose responses are clear and fearless, continues without hesitation to deny his guilt in the face of every piece of incriminating evidence. If I had to predict his future, L would say: Sing Sing, electric chair, as state enemy number one. Well-mannered, even engaging. A handsome youth. I ask myself a hundred times: could we be wrong? To test myself, I formulate my doubt as strongly as possible and utter it aloud. But I am unable to change my opinion. The boy has to be guilty. He had stolen a suitcase at night, having first acquainted himself with its contents, had pried it open with a knife, had removed two and a half rations of bread and a one kilo tin of butter from it, had opened the tin and had eaten the bread and an ounce of boner. He had wrapped the tin in his leggings and hidden the lot behind a bed against the wall, where someone had accidentally found it. Could someone else have stolen B.'s leggings in which to hide the butter? Yet it had all been found in a blind passage that could only be reached by B. and a few others who are beyond suspicion. Moreover, he was seen in that passage shortly after sax in the morning where, according to three eyewitnesses, he had lingered for ten to firm's minutes without being able to explain what he had been doing there for such a long time. What is true is that he had gathered his luggage and had moved it to the top of the three-tier bunk bed. Why then had he not missed his leggings, which must have been in the blind passage? Why had he not reported than missing? Besides, during the night two other witnesses had heard him eating and raiding with a knife in a tin. Finally, he is also suspected of three other serious offences.

I delivered a long plea for the prosecution. Then chi god of thieves came to B.'s aid: air-raid alert, Air-raid alert means the light is turned off. The case had to be adjourned, B. is unbelievably lucky. The crime was committed on the night of 1 and 2 July. His original sentence was on 5 July. Although as a rule the right of appeal is denied, by exception it was allowed in his case. He appealed. Immediately thereafter he falls ill and is admitted into hospital with pneumonia. One night, when he is a little better, bread is stolen on his ward, close to his bed. Everything points to B. being the perpetrator. It cannot be proved though. Meanwhile the appeal cannot take place because the commandant has forbidden the court to sit without his prior knowledge. Finally, a means is found for the appeal to take place all the same, Then B. and the Witnesses have to work overtime. When this obstacle, too, has been overcome, we have the intermezzo of the air-raid alert, B. gets another chance. When he is sentenced, the bunker will probably be full. Then the British will arrive. When are they coming? What will happen to us? Again and again these questions fill the air here, As for 8., somehow or other I have a soft spot for him, He is an adventurer who carries out stunts, who tempts danger and tries to discover how far he can go. He is getting more adept at fooling us. I think an acquittal would be very dangerous for him. A

⁴⁷ Comparable to a county court judge.

hearing of this kind is a diversion for the camp, a veritable theatrical performance. Moreover, those who work here are not actors, but professionals, and everything is for real. These professionals all have their weaknesses, their conceit, their follies. Each in his own way is ugly and ridiculous. It makes the whole into an entertaining stage play.

As a matter of fact, everything one sees here fascinates, like brilliant film direction. Sometimes one thinks it is all unreal, everything is just a dream, just shadow, show, one is asleep, or has died, or is far away, or so absorbed in a film, or a book, that one can feel the pain being suffered.

It is all so senseless, so maddeningly senseless.

This morning, for example, they again sent an additional seventy men to work, despite enormous downpours. Three minutes outdoors was enough to be soaked to the skin. These seventy men comprise first the oldest who had remained behind, then the sick who had been left behind, and finally the hut leaders. Who cares if the sick or the elderly die? And what is supposed to happen in the huts without leaders or supervision? Who will see to the cleaning, making the beds, caring for the sick? Ensuring that the roll-call tallies? It is a deliberate attempt by the SS to disorganize everything and then to use that disorganization for further measures. Because although the working day is long, between eleven and fifteen hours in fact, there is no work.

The huts are being unloaded neat to our camp. Three hundred men are involved, though there is not enough work for even thirty. Intermittently two or three truckloads arrive. They can be unloaded by no more than thirty men. Several hundred men are now jostling each other, getting in each other's way and tripping over each other's legs. From time to time the SS dive among them with a plank or a truncheon. They have beaten a hole in my bunkmate's head so that he returned pouring with blood. The *Scharführer* who had beaten him had received a slight grate on his face. One or two Jews had offered him some iodine. That is slavery for you.

But that is an exception, of course. The others know very well what they must do, and they do it. They smash everything to smithereens. The huts were dismantled in Cracow, loaded onto trucks, unloaded again, brought here in rail wagons, unloaded here, loaded onto trucks again, and again unloaded here. A seven-fold operation, seven times the load passed through Jewish hands and now it reminds one of apple sauce. Hardly a single plank has remained undamaged, there is not a door that is square, not a window that has not been pulled out or its joints, not a side-wall that has not had some of its planks kicked out not a floor from which most of the joists are not missing, not a ceiling without large holes in it. In short, a jumble of useless splinters is all our old men have to hump ...

[Page 77-79]

... certainly be no question of a collective counter-pressure. Initially each will try to pass the pressure on, to escape and to keep his individuality intact. There is no point in complaining about

it. Many a group, many a nation, many a social class owes its destruction to it, knowing that it should and could have been different. It is no use; that is how we are.

Here, too, we observe this phenomenon. The pity is that this is the phenomenon the children see before them and adopt as the correct principle of life.

They have never seen, let alone learned, that a social person should offer his seat to another when he is seated and the other is standing, especially if the other happens to be a lady or is older. For there are too few stools, and everyone is exhausted and happy with the place that he has managed to grab for himself. Whoever is seated remains seated, and the first to arrive is the first to be served, and to be first, you must run fast, push, shove and be cunning. When you go to collect your food you must not, as we were always taught, let another go first, because there is not enough room and not enough time, and anyone who lets another precede him must therefore be mad. On the contrary, you must do everything possible to be first, and the only question in this regard that might still remain open to debate is whether all means are permissible or whether there are some that are forbidden. It goes without saying that you must never leave the best of the food for another or offer him something extra, as is customary in society. Because in society there is sufficient, and even the person who receives the smallest piece of meat at table has too much, or will at least have his fill. Here, though, there is always too little of everything and everyone is hungry. So you must watch out that you get your fair share, and no one will blame you if you try to get the largest piece.

Naturally, in society there is also combat, competition between individuals, contests between nations, war between classes, but in everyday social intercourse people nevertheless show consideration for each other and when — for example in business — people compete unfairly, social revenge always follows. Life mitigates itself and in times of peace it also mitigates the struggle between groups, classes and rations. Here everyday life is reduced to its simplest forms, reel hungry and want to stuff myself I feel sleepy and want the best bed. I need a coat, give! I want to get out of here alive. So you, my dear brother, can work in my place. Those are the ethics.

Naturally, there are numerous exceptions to this. It may even be a majority who remain themselves, though a majority that no longer set the tone. Among those exceptions there is one general one: the family unit remains indissoluble. It does not disintegrate, it remains intact and shines even more brightly in the wretchedness.

There is hardly a single Jew who does not accept that his wife is depriving herself, not a wife who does not save some of her rations for her husband, not a couple who do not deprive themselves to the utmost for their children, no children who are not filled with the utmost concern for their parents.

Naturally, there are exceptions to this too, quite noticeable ones even, but for the rest it is the role.

And many times over an action may seem selfish that is carried out solely for the benefit of the family, without any personal gain, Indeed, it verges on exaggeration. Jews are sentimental, gushing, sweetly family sick. Go and sit at a table at mealtimes, it matters not which one, and you will hear veritable rows between husbands and wives over a potato or a piece of meat that the one wants to press on the other. Very indignant reproaches, because one of them took less than the other had shared out. People cheat to give the other an extra slice of bread without them noticing; one resigns oneself to one's own hunger if the other is satisfied.

And that is how parents feel about their children, children about their parents, often even brothers and sisters and other close relatives about each other.

And for this reason: everything goes to pieces here. Is the family at its strongest perhaps because family life here is reduced to a minimum? Possibly, but why do families become more united under oppression while every other community threatens to disintegrate? You should see how people fight here over a little skimmed milk....

Every day too little milk arrives in the camp for the sick, the children and the weak.

Responsibility for distributing the milk rests with the *Judenälteste*,⁴⁸ who has delegated this task to his wife, Madame la Reine.

Madame la Reine, it is alleged, does not distribute fairly, but favors her pals.

I am convinced it is not true.

Madame la Reine is not dishonest. She is primitive and vain, and uses the milk distribution to give expression to her sentimentality and to show what a good heart she has. Naturally it gives rise to the grossest injustices. Goodness of heart happens to be a social vice. All kinds of people receive milk who are not entitled to it, or much entitled than those who receive none.

The consequences will therefore be dear intrigue and flattery! on the one hand and gossip on the other, and during the daily milk distribution itself. Indescribable noise, pushing, shoving, fighting with elbows, arms and legs. A little milk

And not only adults stand in the tangles of hungry, eager, pushing humans. There are also children, who learn here what life is.

⁴⁸ Jewish elder.

Hommage à toi,⁴⁹ you little girl, who stands aside, with tears in her great brown eyes, how you would love to have a little milk. But you cannot bring yourself to push. You will not do it. No one has ever told you, but you know how undignified all this is,

But what about tomorrow, when you go to collect the milk for Siegie, your sick little brother? What do you do then? Then you bite your lips and push and shove. You will learn for always: it really is possible to dishonor people.

8 September— We have celebrated a birthday. Mrs. L. was seventy. She sat all alone and received our congratulations. ‘Naturally, I am pleased,’ she said, ‘to have reached this age in good health, but it can never be a special day for me.’ None of her children or grandchildren was with her.

And in the hut of the Albanians we celebrated a funeral. A man of eighty had died there. All the women, children and old men who

[Page 80]

... are able to cry gather together and cry, wail and lament. It is a real lamentation party. There is no way of knowing whether these people are in sorrow, or create sorrow. They cry, they cry voluptuously, shed buckets of tears. There are two-year-old children among them, and small babies, also older children. Heavy tears roll down their dirty cheeks. Women come to pay their respects and cry and wail.

The visit should be imagined as follows. On a lower bunk, bent double in a twenty-centimeter wide passage, formed by two rows of nine beds each stacked three by three, something that is probably an elderly woman is sitting in the midst of a bunch of creatures in the midst of which I recognize something resembling a child and a few more women. Sobbing and wailing rises from their midst, other women force their way to and fro along the passage, the one crying louder than the other so that we, with our European eyes, see only the grotesqueness of the performance. It is like a performance: the Balkans in the world between two streams.

I was visiting the hut of the Albanians because of a theft. I have come to investigate. It is swarming with people, though the men are all at work. It is impossible to distinguish one from the other. An old man is reclining on a bed, smoking, for which he is reprimanded. Naturally he says it is not he who is smoking but someone else who has just left. Were you to catch him with a lighted cigarette between his lips, he would swear that he has not been smoking but that you must be mistaking him for another.

⁴⁹ French, roughly, “I admire to you.”

The Albanians are far more unfortunate than we are. They find it even more difficult to cope, are treated even more roughly, have even greater hunger, suffer from malaria and receive almost no help from outside. They have nothing to wear, no shirt, no socks, no coat, no cardigan, no shoes, and must trade their last food for a few clothes. We held a collection for them which produced a great deal, but of course, not enough for five hundred half-naked men, women and children. We, too, are fast running out of supplies. Moreover, it is getting colder now and the poor people are walking about shivering. They pinch bread from each other to trade for clothes with other huts, and in the other huts people steal clothes to trade for ...

[Page 86]

... you to a country which does pro flow with milk and honey, where there is no gold to be found or any other ore and also no petroleum. Where no riches await, and perhaps not even rest. Where you must work with your hands under a hot sun for a piece of bread and a plate of vegetables!

But where, if you dig in the ground, you will find one thing that the Jew finds nowhere else in the world: that little bit of simple human dignity, without which you suffocate, without which you despise both yourself and your life, even though you may not realize it,

I do not want to make rich and great people of you, not profound and not prominent ones, but simple, natural people, without that eternal Jewish problem, that problem to which you owe the tittle of being one of God's favorites, and which in reality always brands you as the scapegoat, which causes you to hover between the pretense of having been chosen and the curse of being an outcast, and which robs you of the peace of the lad and the lass who laugh for joy and dance because the force of life inspires them thereto. Who thank and worship God with the labors of their hands and the kisses from their lips.

9 September — It is Sabbath today. A storm is blowing over the muster ground and there is intermittent rain. The men outside will return soaked and many, I fear, will fall ill. It has also become cold and bleak and we fear the coming winter.

This afternoon I read from the Torah the portion which is read in the synagogues today. Deuteronomy 28 God's great curse on the people, the repetition of Leviticus 26. I also added one of those great consoling prophecies from Isaiah.⁵⁰

“And as for them that are left of you, I will send a faintness into their heart in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a driven leaf shall chase them [Leviticus 26:36].

⁵⁰ Parashah Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 26:1–29:8). The haftarah for the parashah is Isaiah 60:1–22. The haftarah is the sixth in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after Tisha B'Av, leading up to Rosh Hashanah.

“And they shall stumble one upon another” [Leviticus 26:37 “And the land of your enemies shall eat you up” [Leviticus 26:38].

“When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat” [Leviticus 26:26]

[Page 88]

... the contrary, parcels dispatched on 1 and 2 September have arrived from Amsterdam. Various people here are disappointed, but I am not sure we need be so sad about that. There will be many fewer victims now and the NSB⁵¹ will climb down a peg or two. Here it has got very chilly now. We are already suffering from cold hands and feet. The mood is becoming more somber; we are reminded of the coming winter. What an exhilarating atmosphere there used to be in Amsterdam in autumn. How we used to love to walk in Gooi⁵² when the leaves were turning yellow. The past year has brought us nothing. No spring. No summer. No autumn. Not a flower. No blossom. No fruit.

Hopefully, it will be better next year.

We have news: Belgium liberated. Aachen under attack. Three hundred kilometers away. We are thrilled!

Here they are really trying to erect huts now. A few walls are already standing. But I still believe the British will be here before the roof is on.

For the rest it is said that the Polish women are Jews from Łódź who have come here via Auschwitz.

We hear about Bulgaria, Romania, and Zevenbruggen. Everything retaken, liberated, peace ... It is happening really fast, but our distress here is becoming greater and greater. In the past few days the beatings have been very severe.

At the appeal hearing, B. was found guilty after all. I am *Einzelrichter*⁵³ now and also carry the investigations out. We have traced two coats and a basket full of laundry. Caught a cigarette thief. Sentenced a man for throwing wood shavings from his mattress into a tub. If the Germans were to see it, the entire camp would be punished with two days' *Brotentzug* and the perpetrator

⁵¹ The initials of the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland the Dutch National Socialist movement.

⁵² The area around Hilversum in the center of the Netherlands. It is a slightly hilly area characterized by its green landscape

⁵³ Sole judge.

sent to the KZ. Now he must forfeit two rations of jam. He is a pitiful Italian alone here, who bursts into tears whenever one asks him anything....

[Page 106]

... fear from them. They promise aid, and something that makes more of an impression, cigarettes,

Hundreds of thousands of cigarettes have arrived in the camp from Vaught. Furniture, machines, also from Vittel.⁵⁴ Everything points to Germany's retreat. The SS gave us splendid clothes from Vinci; enough for at least one man and two women. Tomorrow we will get cheese from Vittel. Though, for the past two days there has been no bread. All sorts of reasons are given for this. Lack of transport, a dispute with the baker, but that is all IPA. The fact is, that we are hungry and have no bread.

On the muster ground, there are already four huts standing. Not until one looks more closely at them does one realize what they consist of gaps and holes, partly decayed and partly broken planks nailed together, where the lice make merry. Not a single pane has remained unbroken. They are unfit for people to live in. Apart from that, there is much stealing again. Now it is the ladies' turn. A slip, gloves, wool, all by people who are totally confused. A man who stole four cigarettes...

How much longer will this war last? Ought we to still prosecute? Is it still worth the effort?

There are also many thefts of bread again. Not a trace can be found of the perpetrators.

The bread has just arrived. Pieces of crust and entire chunks have been broken off fifty-eight loaves. The carriers will have to answer for that. X. got very worked up.

The Germans know about it. Naturally X. is dead scared again. 'Harsh punishment!' he sighs, 'harsh punishment.'

I acknowledge that it is a sordid business. When a search was made chunks of bread were found in the carriers' pockets. It is a serious offence against the community. Yet I can no longer get so worked up over it.

I look at the sky. Are they not coming yet ...?

The Albanian's wife and daughter-in-law, who made such . . .

⁵⁴ An internment camp in France.

[Page 166]

*Stubbenkommando*⁵⁵ is having a hard time of it. People are nervous and are frightened of joining it.

Result: commotion during duty roll-call. Today there was kicking and beating there. A man fell to the ground. The ground was flooded from the rain. They carried on kicking him but still he had to go. All this takes place in the dark of the morning. It is unbearable to watch.

Red Cross parcels are arriving. The tins are being confiscated. Yesterday, Friday, a dull day. Unmentionable somberness. Today, all-day rain. I have diarrhea. It is incredible how few people lose hope.

23 November — I am sitting in the passage of hut 14 as roll-call inspector. The bitch has just been here. She has forbidden laundry to be hung out to dry in the huts, ‘*aus hygienischen Gründen*.’⁵⁶ The women are desperate. Where is one meant to hang the nappies and the children’s laundry, now that it is winter and it pours with rain every day?

And most of them have diarrhea and keep soiling themselves. Oh, the gloom the darkness, the intolerable filth in the huts. People lying the whole day in a dark hovel where one would not leave a dog. And the clothes the blankets the sheets, have become rags, Oh, this hideous poverty, this constant hunger that gets worse and worse.

Our daily food consists of swedes boiled in water with hardly a single potato.

The butter repeatedly fails to arrive.

And punishment is meted out all round. Yesterday more than two hundred people had their bread withheld for two or three days.

Work continues. Occasionally some news trickles through. There were Red Cross parcels. Whatever could not be delivered, was divided up. It caused much dissatisfaction again for it was claimed to have been done unfairly.

Apart from that, there are more removals. Hut 21 is moving. The

⁵⁵ Tree stump work party. Prisoners had to dig up tree stumps in the surrounding woods; these were used as fuel for the cauldrons in the kitchen

⁵⁶ For reasons of hygiene.

[Page 169]

... valuable objects (especially watches) and bartering them for bread. He promises them a high price, and people believe him; but instead it is he who guzzles all the bread. His plea is always the same: trade with *Häftling*, *Arische Vorarbeiter*,⁵⁷ et cetera and the impossibility of contacting them. Sentence of sixty days' bunker, a third of his bread withheld as compensation for damages, and once every six days' bread and water. You try to live on that. No sooner had he been sentenced than he stole a coat, an overall, a pair of shoes, bread and more. What can happen to him?

Yesterday — Sunday — T. volunteered to work in the kitchen to get some food. For a cup of broth and half a cup of soup, and otherwise eating surreptitiously from the raw swedes, one spends an entire day peeling in the cold. No heating, damp, cold cellar, a blocked toilet, which may not be used ... Result: diarrhea.

We get to hear about other camps. This must be one of the worst and worst managed. The organization is miserable. The commandant does nothing for us.

The women in the tent camp next to ours have it even worse. They do not even have my underwear, not even a coat. And there is no end in sight.

What have we got from the canteen? Perfume! I dare you to say again that the world has not gone mad. Also shampoo and similar rubbish. Naturally paid for out of our own scarce resources. We are forced to buy it,

And when your canteen money is used up and you receive a parcel, the parcel is confiscated because you are unable to pay the import duty

28 November — When the Germans catch someone in the act of stealing, he has to stand against the fence with a notice in front of him saying *Ich bin ein Dieb, ich habe euch bestohlen*.⁵⁸

For criminologists: apart from whether this can be justified under criminal law, it makes not the slightest impression. The intended

[Pages 211–212]

... grass and a stretch of land again. After fifteen months we were sitting in a train again. Whatever happens, it will be a journey. My legs are swollen, my head aches and only God knows

⁵⁷ Concentration camp prisoner Aryan foremen.

⁵⁸ I am a thief, I have robbed you.

if we will reach a destination. But we are off on a journey. Right through warring Germany, together with the enemy deep into the country. No one knows when we are leaving. Perhaps tonight, perhaps tomorrow.

Even so, we are not as unhappy as in the camp. But we have not reached the start yet ...

11 April 1945 — The night is hell. We are sitting on our bench, folded double, rolled up, with pain in every muscle, and get in each other's way. Aggression — bad as it is already — is mounting. The wagons are packed now. In our coach, which has seating for forty-eight people, sixty-two must live and sleep. Last night they gave us butter, one pound per four persons for four days. It is a lot, relatively, and we are not dissatisfied. The promised sausage-for which we are longing - has not arrived yet.

The night dragged by. First we experienced a heavy bombardment at Bergen station. Then suddenly a jerk and our journey had begun. Supposedly to Theresienstadt and Switzerland. The train crept forward. The sky was filled with bombardments and combat. It thundered and cracked. The night was cold and dark. I was constantly quarrelling with the woman facing me because of our feet. We were unable to sleep. From time to time someone would doze off and after a few minutes wake up with a sigh. That was the second night. How many more will there be? We are dreading it.

The day turned into a feast, though. It became a splendid spring morning. Cool and bright. We seemed to have been shunted into a siding in Sokau. We were allowed off the train, fetched some water, stood talking to one another, and went to cook something. Everyone still has some carrots, turnips or beetroot,

Suddenly an order: *einsteigen*.⁵⁹ We drove to Soltau station and a little beyond. Again we stopped. All at once we slowly drove on again. Ten minutes later the station was heavily bombed. Had it been anticipated?

It is deathly quiet in Germany. We see nothing but soldiers and SS. It is dismal in Germany. Everyone expects the end any day now, the political catastrophe.

We travel around through forests. From time to time we stop for half an hour or an hour. We go into the woods then and lie in the sun. For a prisoner a piece of luck and a real pleasure. In consequence, we feel as happy as on an outing. Now that we see nature again and are in direct contact with it, we feel free. Although our situation is full of danger, we are hopeful and cheerful. Where are we going? Towards Hamburg, they say. Tonight, they say, we will be in Uelzen. That means twenty-five kilometers from Bergen after twenty-four hours' journey. It seems we are being sent ahead towards the enemy, and will simply have to live on the train for

⁵⁹ "All aboard!"

want of other accommodation. Apart from what we had been given, there is almost no food left, and nobody knows what we are meant to live on. No one in his senses believes the story about Theresienstadt and Switzerland.

We passed a station. A train was waiting there with the Hungarians, who had left a day earlier. They were supposed to be heading for Budapest.

Everything seems to have gone mad. A few people have remained behind in the camp.

14 April — Two hundred people are said to have remained behind in the camp, including E.M., the son of M.P., E.P. and others. We fear the worst for them. For that matter, our own future is not so bright either. There is nothing to eat. The *Zügfürher*⁶⁰ has gone to Luneburg, to forage, he is alleged to have said. The question is, what the outcome will be, assuming he had spoken the truth. We still have two beetroots. We will have to live on those for an indefinite time. I have diarrhea.

On. 12 April — we remained in one spot. A thirty-six-hour stretch. The Jewish leadership held a collection and bought potatoes. We got forty-five small ones. They were finished in two days. The leadership are trying to buy more. Things are going badly. The locals no longer accept money.

W. is ill. The normal sign of the dreaded illness. K. has just died from it. Endless air raids. Yesterday we endured an attack by machine-guns. Fourteen lightly wounded. I took the opportunity to visit a farm. I got two eggs and a little milk. Unbelievable. Yesterday we ate fried eggs. All night, I had an upset stomach and. today, diarrhea.

From Soltau to Uelzen we travelled at an average speed of three kilometers an hour. Repeatedly stopping, waiting for hours, and each time the same image. Camp fires along the track. The biggest problem is water. Sometimes we have to fetch it, at other times, like yesterday (near Uelzen) and today near Luneburg, there is a brook. Naturally, it is a relief. We wash our hands, and rinse the pans, and cook the beetroot and potatoes that we still have.

Today I was given half a rotten swede and was delighted with it. Tomorrow's breakfast. Yes, air raid upon air raid. Especially frightening at night. The women and children are getting nervous. The nights are hell, blood and mayhem. Everything seems bewitched then. The weather is wonderful. Till now, the days have been like holidays, despite all the worries, despite air raids, et cetera. Sometimes one is overcome with fear. Spotted fever. Will we make it? After six years. of war! After all we have experienced, to stumble at the threshold? For how many has there been no mercy? And will there be no mercy? All afternoon air battles, sirens, attacks.

⁶⁰ The train's conductor.

There are no trains to be seen, no people to be seen. Everything here is war, war, war.

The population, that is to say the few people we meet, are friendly enough. The farmer did not want any money for the eggs and the milk. He had had enough of that,, he said.

We have now gone to Luneburg where we are in front on the track. Theresienstadt does indeed seem to be the official destination...

Postscript

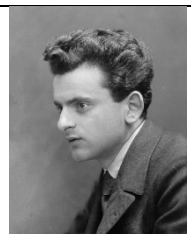
When the De Groene Amsterdam [the publisher] was preparing to publish the diary, the last few pages had gone astray. Later, they were found again. As will be seen from their contents, they were written partly in the train and partly in Tröbitz, a village located sixty kilometers east of Leipzig, where the train was intercepted by the Russian army. The Russians did what they could for the former prisoners, but they could not prevent the spotted fever [typhus] from spreading virulently and claiming hundreds and hundreds of victims.

Our stay in Tröbitz lasted two months. In the warm flowering spring, heavy with melancholy, people would walk shivering with fever, illness, sadness and longing through the few deserted village streets. There seemed no end to the dying. With help from the Russians, infirmaries were set up, and two extensive Jewish cemeteries. The mood was one of dejection.

Gradually the illness diminished and disappeared. After two months, the handful of people who had managed to survive began to be repatriated to their various countries in Europe.

Herzberg, Abel J. *Between Two Streams A Diary from Bergen-Belsen*. Translated from the Dutch by Jack Sankross. I.B.Tauris Publishers London and New York in association with The European Jewish Publication Society. 1997.

Abel Jacob Herzberg (17 September 1893 – 19 May 1989) was a Dutch Jewish lawyer, writer and poet. He wrote many plays and novels, focused mainly on Biblical characters. His works include *Tweestromenland*, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolging*, and *Om een lepel soep*. Herzberg was a prisoner in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp from 11 January 1944 to 10 April 1945.



26. Chava Rosenfarb: *Bergen-Belsen Diary, 1945*

[Chava Rosenfarb](#) (1923-2011) is the author of the novels *The Tree of Life: A Trilogy of Life in the Łódź Ghetto*, *Bociany*, and *Of Łódź and Love*, and the short story collection *Survivors*. She was a frequent contributor to the Yiddish literary journal *Di goldene keyt*. In these pages, Chava Rosenfarb records the first days after her liberation, in a stunning document of survival.



Bergen-Belsen was liberated ^[1] by the British Army on April 15, 1945. Conditions at the camp were so horrendous that the British burned it down in order to stop the spread of typhus and other diseases. They relocated the survivors to a former German Army barracks, two kilometers from the original camp. This new camp was called Bergen-Belsen Displaced Persons ^[2] camp.

This diary by Chava Rosenfarb ^[3] appears to have been written in this DP camp, when Rosenfarb was 22 years old. The following extracts were published in Yiddish in 1948 as an addendum to Rosenfarb's first collection of poems, *Di balade fun nekhtikn vald* (The Ballad of Yesterday's Forest). It is translated here by Goldie Morgentaler, Rosenfarb's daughter and a professor of English at the University of Lethbridge.

Bergen-Belsen, May 6, 1945

Father, where are you?

Today, for the first time, I hold a pencil in my hand. My fingers tremble over the white sheet of paper. Where is your warm, sure hand to cover my trembling fingers and lead them again to open the sacred doors of our Yiddish *aleph-bet*? When I was a little girl, you guided my hand over the neat white lines. We wrote the word "Tateh" (Father) and there arose such a light from those five small letters that the word itself acquired a soul, and I saw that soul reflected in your loving smile: "Tateh."

I sit near the window. The branches of the large chestnut tree outside reach up to the second floor where we are staying. Today I can see the sky and it is of the purest blue. Perhaps it is just an ordinary blue sky with nothing remarkable about it. But I see this sky as it must have looked to the first human being when he suddenly recognized God and genuflected before the beautiful blue expanse that stretched above his head. I want to write: "How beautiful you are, blue sky," but instead I see your luminous eyes. I can feel your blessings and your dreams, your smile and your longing.



Below my window I hear a commotion. It is nothing serious. Soup is being distributed. Everybody will get a portion. People are impatient, still haunted by the anxiety of yesterday that lives on in them. Although they know that no one will go away without his portion of soup—if not at this window, he will be served at the next—but still they all try to be served first. They want to be sure of that little bowl of soup, to stir it with a spoon. There is a man standing opposite my window. He emerges from the tangled crowd holding his bowl in his hand. He does not go to his room. He does not sit down at the table. Leaning against the stone wall he gulps down the soup as fast as he can. God, how hungry he is! For years he has been hungry and for years he has been frightened. He is very thin. A heavy coat hangs from his shoulders and reaches to his ankles. Between one slurp of soup and the next he wipes his face with the sleeve of his coat. He is tired but happy. I can see his eyes dance with pleasure as they glance away from his pot to embrace everything around him, from the green grass beneath the window to the tall chestnut tree. He is so happy. What is he thinking about, this man, this Jew, this tortured emaciated Jew? Most likely, he is not thinking anything at all. Even so, I know and his limbs know and his body knows that soon he will cast off his heavy black overcoat. Soon the flesh will grow on his bones. Life has arrived!

I shut my eyes. Deliberately I put out of my mind the man standing opposite. And suddenly I see you, Father. It is you. I can see how the strength is returning to your body. You are alive. Perhaps you too are standing somewhere at this very moment with your bowl of soup, leaning against another wall. Is it possible? I ask my heart, but it trembles with uncertainty.

May 7 — Wherever I look I see you. No matter what other thoughts come into my mind, you are always there. Where are you, Tateh? Will I ever be able to caress you and beg your forgiveness? I showed you so little kindness in the lost days of my feverish past. I told you very little of my innermost thoughts. You were so thirsty to know my feelings and I was so stingy in sharing them with you. Where are you now, Tateh? I want to tell you everything!

Did you hear the firing of the guns? The shots are meant to tell the world that peace has come, that the hour of freedom has arrived; those very days for which you so longed when you were shut up in the darkness of the ghetto. Have you lived to see them? The uncertainty is torturing me. My only hope is that a miracle has saved you. You were so tired after those five years in the ghetto. But then, cut off from us, how could you have survived the still more terrible atrocities of the camps? Perhaps the longing to see us again helped you to survive? Tateh, we are here. The fire is glowing, but you are missing from our joy.

May 8 — It is over. Our liberation has come, but she wears a prosaic face. No one has died of joy. No one has gone mad with excitement. When we used to dream of freedom, we bathed her with our tears. We crowned her with the garlands of our smiles and dreams. Now that she is here, she looks like a beggar, and we have nothing to give her. With what desperation did we call for her in those dark days? With what power did her far-off shimmer flesh out our thin bodies? Now

she is here and she beckons to us from every corner. She is right before our eyes, yet we cannot see her. She begs us: “Touch me ... enjoy me ...” But we are tired. Our past, like a hawk, circles overhead, fluttering its black wings, devouring our days with horrible memories. It poisons our nights with terror. Poor, sad Freedom! Will she ever have the strength to free us from those dark shadowy wings?

Bats circle outside the window. Their wings flutter in a ghostly dance. My unfinished ghetto poem torments my mind. It used to accompany me in the camp. With its words on my lips I used to drag myself through the snows in the early winter mornings to work. I penciled the verses on the ceiling above my bunk. Each day a few more lines. In my mind, I hear them constantly.

Through the open window I can hear the loudspeaker announcing that today the war is officially over. Where are you, Tateh? I want to hug you. The air trembles to the distant salvos of guns. Thin clouds of smoke waft through the air. We celebrate this festive moment with a chunk of dry bread. We have nothing better.

May 10 — At night when I open my eyes, I see Mother and Henia. They are wiping the sweat from my forehead and they constantly ask how I feel. We tremble over each other’s wellbeing. I want to comfort them. I want to tell them that we do not need to be afraid anymore. We are free now. But how can we protect ourselves from death? No, we are still very helpless.

I have a fever. Perhaps it is a cold. Or is it, perhaps, typhus?

June 13 — For four long weeks the fever boiled in my blood. It scorched my eyes and dulled my brain. From under steep mountains I saw my loved ones coming towards me. They talked to me as they used to talk in the past. They smiled at me as they used to smile in the past and pleaded for my life. They cried through my eyes and squeezed my thin, bony hands. I embraced them in the emptiness. I snuggled my hot body into their fleshless arms, pressed my swollen, living lips to their lifeless faces. I stretched my thin fingers out into the shadows of the sweaty night and thought I was caressing their hair. I felt my own burning breath scalding my face and thought that they were blowing hot air onto my cheeks. They were all there with me. I saw my friend Yakov Borenstein, just as he was on that winter day when he prepared to leave on his last journey. His eyes were burning: “Don’t be sad, my friend. We will meet again...” Suddenly, my lips started to tremble. “Come with me; come with me, my dearest friend. We will go for a long walk.” “I am coming, I am coming,” I called back. But my other friend, Kuba Litmanovitch, took hold of my hand. “Bring me an apple...” I went with him to the cemetery. All our comrades were there. From a far-off pathway there suddenly appeared Esterl and Moniek. They were holding hands and running towards us. “Wait!” Esterl shouted. Then she laughed in my face. “So now you know that I don’t have much time.” Moniek lifted her into his arms and placed her in the grave, as if he were putting her to bed for the night. Then he lay down beside her.

I inched myself closer to the wall near my hospital bed and made room for them all. But they angrily pressed me even closer to the wall. Suddenly their mood changed and they became kinder. I saw the whole ghetto street full of people coming towards us in a happy festive mood. Bunim Shayeveitch came too. Then I was left alone. My bed swayed like a swing at the end of a long chain that stretched from heaven to the abyss, from life to dream, from dream to death. Bunim was standing by the window of my hospital room, just as he used to stand in his home at 14 Lotniche Street, his hands in his pockets, his grey eyes squinting from behind the lenses of his glasses. He looked through the sky, through me and beyond. "I have perished," he said. He took hold of the edge of my bed and swung it round. The earth started rocking. The sky began to shake. My body was on fire with the flames of the setting sun. I took off the checkered jacket that I was wearing and used it to fan myself as I went back and forth on the swing. I did this for a long time—so long, so long, so endlessly long, until my hands detached themselves from my body, and, with my fingers still clinging to the jacket, they fell into the depths of the night. I wanted to look down, to see where the jacket had fallen and where my hands had fallen, but tears blinded my eyes. Next to me stood my father, crying. His lips were very white and glued together, yet I could hear his voice. "Daughter," he said. "I brought you some lovely broth. Boiled potatoes and carrots all mashed up into a *tsimmes*. Take it and eat. Open your mouth. Look how tasty it is and how good it smells."

The taste of something sweet and refreshing made me open my eyes. On my bed sat my mother. She whispered something. I could not make out what she was saying, but her words dripped like balm into my soul. The tears from her tired eyes cooled my burning body. At the foot of my bed stood my agonized sister. Her frightened eyes blinked a prayer at me, entreating me to live. Yes, I must live. Some blessed justice has preserved me for their sake and they for mine. I want to give this justice its due; and I want to pay it back for all the injustice that has been done to us, for our loneliness.

June 18 — Nearly six weeks in hospital. I have returned to life again. My body rejoices; my soul weeps. I suspect that it was not my body but my soul that was so ill. Helpless, hopeless, I feel like someone who has spent a long time in a dark cellar and has suddenly come up to the light. I am dazzled, drunk. I squint at the light, without the strength to absorb it.

It is spring. The spring of liberation. The sun breathes life into everything. And yet, beneath its blue skies there is emptiness. The sun's rays search in vain for so many faces, so many bodies that belong to those faces. They are nowhere to be found. The rays embrace a void, except when they settle, here and there, on a few solitary, half-starved individuals.

I lead a double life. One part is thin, fragile, trembling, young and yearning for joy. The other part is deeper and more painful, full of memory and sorrow. The first is full of shame and guilt; the second is stormy, tortured and full of fury. The first trembles on the edge of the second, but

never penetrates it. The second, however, often steals into my new young life, disturbing, destroying, poisoning the least glimmer of joy. It demands attention constantly.

June 20 — I am learning to walk. Today, Mother helped me down the stairs and took me into the yard. She found an old canned goods box and sat me down on top of it. A pity that there is so much dirt everywhere. Papers litter the ground; empty boxes, broken shelves and bed frames, discarded furniture soil the fresh green of the grass. Why can nothing be clean around us? Why is there no orchestra playing music to the rhythm of my heartbeat? Why is everything and everyone so indifferent? I am learning to walk! At least the sky is decorated with a sparkling sun. I look up at the sky. We are good friends again. It is good to be alive. It is delicious, a delight. I don't want to think about anything. I want my body to acquire flesh. I want my legs to recover their strength. I want to sing. I want to roll in the grass. I want to run carefree through the fields.

Henia brought me a little sprig full of blossoms. I am lying on the bed now, as pleased with myself as a young mother who has just given birth. The sprig of blossoms stands in a small bottle on the windowsill. When I turn my head I will see it, but right now I do not have the strength. Perhaps later.

June 23 —

*Bats fly across windows.
Their wings flutter in a dance of ghosts.*

Those lines haunt me. They are from [Bunim Shayevitch's poem about our fate](#). I can see him standing by the window of his room. Tomorrow he is going away. In the dark corners of the room there still linger the spirits of his loved ones, who are gone. Soon he too will be gone. The last of his family. He is taking a whole generation with him. Nobody will remember them. Nobody will remember him. A nameless end.

But deep in my subconscious, they live on. They wake me at night. They pounce unexpectedly when I am in the middle of a laugh that is too carefree, or enjoy a moment that is too pleasurable. But when I want to bring them back to life, to take them out from their hidden places, then the slightest touch of a warm breeze, or the caress of a golden sunray makes my limbs grow numb with pain and I am seized with a powerful longing to escape them, to forget them all.

I know that back in those days when I was to share their fate, they did not pain me. They were with me, not in fact, but in essence. Somewhere on the way we got separated; at some unknown moment they left me. I went on the road to life. Now when I think about them, when I remember them, something breaks inside me, as if it would destroy me. Then I pray that something more powerful than this pain should come to my rescue. I want to live with them. I must remember them. I pray that time not erase the details of their lives from my mind, that my memory of them remain forever fresh and ready to serve me. But I'm afraid that it will not be so. My longing will

remain eternally hungry, and as time goes on, more helpless. Memory will not serve longing. It will not be possible to remember all the little things, the tiny traces of individuality, which by themselves mean very little, but when put together create individuality. What will remain will be an abstract picture, a mere approximation of what once was and now exists no longer.

June 24 — Last night I had a nightmare. I woke up screaming. I dreamed that we were being chased. We ran across fields. Suddenly I lost Mother. I opened my eyes and for a long time I could not calm down. In the darkness I could make out Mother's pale face, but I could not bring myself to believe that it was really her. No, we no longer need to run anywhere. It is all over. I walk around all day as if in a fever. Every now and then a shiver passes through me without my understanding why.

June 26 — What lovely days we are having! Everything is green. Blossoms fall from the trees, gathering into white carpets under every tree trunk. Those trees which have not yet shed their blossoms look like religious Jews, slowly preparing to remove their prayer shawls. But what am I saying? These are just ordinary trees losing their blossoms. It is impossible to compare them to anything else. The sense of awe belongs to those of us who observe them. We are like children. Every day we make new discoveries. The joy of awakening makes us drunk. It is good to be able to breathe, to feel, to see, to hear. It is good to be able to eat, to be able to bite into a chunk of bread. We perform this sacred ritual with wild animal joy and a sense of religious duty.

We spend entire days doing nothing, but we are not bored. A blade of grass, trodden down under heavy boots has a hard job righting itself again and must wait until the sap in its veins starts to pulse with new life. We are that trodden grass. We are preoccupied with ourselves, with straightening our bent bodies. Nothing else is as absorbing or thrilling.

I think about Poland, the country of my childhood. I long for the familiar streets of my hometown. But what will happen if there is no one there to meet me?

I can see my father's face before me. I can feel his hand caressing my cheek, the same hand which so lovingly and presciently caressed me as we traveled on the train to our final parting in Auschwitz. Tateh, the thought of your warm hand grieves me. Where are you? Where will we meet again on the many roads of this world? Where will you look for us? Where should we look for you?

June 27 — I went into the forest today. It's good that they've brought us here to recuperate—although it seems to me that no matter where they would have brought us, we would see beauty



Left to right: Chava, her father, her sister Henia, and her mother. This is the only known photo of Chava's father. (Courtesy Goldie Morgentaler)

everywhere. From now on we will always see and feel the value of every beautiful thing that we come across. I lay down on a mound of grass and stretched out my body to its full length, with my arms thrown over my head. I had the feeling that I was covering the whole earth. Above me a thick clump of trees formed a circle, their branches entwined with clasped hands as if they were dancing beneath the blue festive sky. Nothing else happened, but this was enough. The world and life. I turned with my face to the earth and buried my head deep in the grass. The sweet smell of earth permeated my body and intoxicated my limbs. I bit off a blade of grass with my teeth and started to chew it. At this very moment, in distant towns and countries people are drinking wine. Poor fools. They will never know the taste of grass.

June 28 — Two girls from our barrack did not come back to sleep last night. They arrived in time for lunch, bringing with them cigarettes and chocolates. They are not yet twenty years old. The Englishmen with whom they spent the night are the first men to admire their fresh, newly budding femininity. They are not the only ones in the camp. The forest is full of amorous couples. One meets them strolling along all the roads and pathways. One can hear again the almost-forgotten sound of women's laughter, a laughter meant specifically for men.

Sometimes when I hear this laughter I have the impression that it will suddenly turn into a wild cry, into the painful longing wail of a woman's soul, a woman who tries to find in the eyes, hands, and smiles of a stranger some small trace of the beloved man she once knew. From all the corners of the yard, from all the rooms, I can hear the sounds of gaiety and laughter. "Look, I have forgotten!" the cheerful voices call. But it is enough to look into the women's eyes to know something different.

The eighteen- and nineteen-year old girls laugh earnestly and unaffectedly. How clever and wonderful life is! As if afraid that the nightmare they have just lived through might destroy their tender, young, newly awoken bodies, Life has taught them to forget. Easy, pleasant forgetfulness. Is it their fault that in their dreams they see the reflections of their parents' faces, or the smiles of their sisters and brothers, or shudder at the horrors they have so recently survived? During the day the girls flutter busily about singing, drawn from every barrack and courtyard to those who will teach them for the first time the language of love. The words may be strange, but they understand the gestures and the kisses. And then there is the sweetness of chocolate to bring back memories of their distant and yet not-so-distant childhoods.

Some women sell themselves to the soldiers simply and knowingly, just for the taste of a slice of white bread.

June 30 — We must record and register every detail, even the most insignificant, of what has happened. It is a duty, an obligation, a compulsion. But around me there is sunshine and beauty and the carefree freedom of summer. I do not have the strength to resist it all. This is my first summer. Is it not poisoned to begin with? I postpone the writing from day to day.

I wonder if there will ever be an all-encompassing literary masterpiece that recreates the past. I doubt it. I recall my conversations with Shayevitch in the ghetto, when he was writing his long poem. I told him that such an epic has to be written from a certain perspective. Time has to elapse. He had no way of knowing then how his long poem would end, or that it would remain unfinished. He told me: “Our lives have to be recorded as they are happening. I am letting the story of our daily lives drip off the tip of my pen. We do not need anything else.” Today I realize that it could not have been otherwise. The perspective will grow with time; it will stretch out and grow thin. Who then will bring back the terror of those ghetto days? Days like those can only be described as they are happening—with sharp, bated breath. Just as the writers and painters did in the ghetto. When one has distance, one can only remember fragments of the whole. But that memory lacks the pulse of the trembling, feverish present.

How can one construct an artistic history of the ghetto? Would such a work not mask the raw immediacy with which one must approach this topic? Is not the form of the novel too elegant, too peaceful, too comfortable, too quiet? I feel that to write such a novel would be an insult to my dear ones and also to myself.

July 1 — I again saw Bunim Shayevitch in my dream. He was radiant with the same light that used to shine so often on his face when he was happy. We communicated with each other without words, just through thoughts alone. “I am very tired,” he said. “But I’m happy.” He was standing in his wooden shack. From somewhere he produced a big parcel of manuscripts. “Did you save them?” I asked him. He answered with his radiant smile: “I saved enough. Only the long poem, *Israel Noble*.” He started to read the poem.

Suddenly he began to prepare for another journey. I told him: “We have been evacuated already, don’t you remember?”

Where are you, Bunim? Where are all our friends? Where are the writers and painters and musicians of the ghetto? We are lonely. We are all together and yet each one of us is alone. What are we going to do with this gift of life? The world is closed to us. Somewhere there is a new beginning. For us time stands still. Long days and nights take us back to the past. The world is rewriting the history of the injustice that has been done to us.

July 5 — From everywhere men flood into the camp. They are looking for their women. Every knock on the door makes us tremble with anticipation. With each knock someone new comes into our barrack. They come to ask if we have any news, if we know the whereabouts of their loved ones. They look at us with pleading eyes. “Maybe you know something about ... ? Please, try to remember. Think hard.” They describe their dear ones. Don’t they know that the picture they carry in their hearts has long ago been altered, that every day of the many that were spent in the camp changed one’s appearance beyond recognition? We too make inquiries. The men answer brusquely, absentmindedly. We tell them what we know, but they have no patience. They

jump up and run to another barrack looking for information. From an open door comes the sound of spasmodic sobbing. Bad news! An already forlorn heart has lost its last glimmer of hope. Or perhaps these are the sounds of joy, of a long-cherished dream come true? The sudden emotion has released the pent-up tears so that they gush forth in a stream of joyful relief. For whom does this person cry, for the living or the dead?

We cannot stay still for long. We run downstairs. There is commotion everywhere, as the men move from barrack to barrack. They stand before the open windows and call out long lists of women's names—wives, daughters, sisters. Then they wait to see if the miracle will happen, if from the depths of the rooms there will appear a beloved face. But they are greeted only by the eyes of strangers staring at them from the windows.

—Where do you come from?

—Perhaps you know ... ?

No, he does not know.

—And you, young lady, perhaps you remember my little daughter?

The camp trembles with expectation. We stop every man we meet. It would be so beautiful if one of these men turned out to be our father. How much strength we would need for such an encounter. When I see from the distance a man resembling my father, my knees give way.

Sometimes a couple walks past us. A man and a woman. They are holding hands, awkwardly caught between pain and joy. They are the lucky ones. We look after them with strange expressions in our eyes.

July 8 — Tateh, this very moment I am calling you with all the power of my being. If you are alive somewhere then surely you feel my anguish. Surely you hear my call. Do not lose hope. If you are alive there is no road too far for me to travel. If you are sick, do not give in. Wait. We will come. Our joy will bring you back to life. We will make you well. We are calling you, Tateh!

July 10 — We scan the lists of names of survivors of the camps. The long pages are crumpled from passing through too many impatient hands. There are finger marks on every single sheet of paper, like anonymous signatures. My fingers wander over the welter of names, my heart thumping wildly. Behind these names are actual human beings, Jews saved from death. They call to us. "Look, I am alive! I am here! Come find me, brother. Find me sister, friend ..." How many of these names will not find an echo in any heart? Strange, solitary, lonely names; hundreds of them.

I have found some familiar names, some of people I knew well, some not so well. I'm glad to know that they are alive. But my fingers do not stop at their names, but continue down the list. I

am looking for those who are still closer to me. Very often my heart skips a beat. The same name as ...! No, it is another man with the same name. I continue the search.

July 16 — We are losing our peace of mind. The uncertainty is destroying us. It is painful to catch the eye of the strange men moving about our camp. They are healthy, with strong, tanned, half-naked bodies. I see them and I cannot keep from thinking about the men dearest to me.

July 19, Wednesday — We have news of Father! By chance we stopped a man in the camp and asked him if he knew anything about Father. Yes, he knew. He was with Father until two days before the liberation.

July 20, Thursday — Henia and I are going to look for Father. We left the camp this morning.

August 28 — We are back in the camp. Why am I telling all this anyway?

For four long weeks we trudged all over Germany. We got lifts on coal wagons, hitched rides with lorries packed with horses. We walked for miles, tired, frightened, with an uneasy feeling in our hearts. We were not the only ones on the road. We met hundreds of lonely children just like us. Hundreds of wandering fathers, hundreds of solitary wives.

It was all for nothing. Somewhere, perhaps in a forest or in a field lies the mutilated body of our father. Perhaps we passed the very spot, and did not hear the mute call of his body. He did not live long enough to feel our arms around his neck; we never even had the chance to kiss his wounds.

We looked for Simkha-Buniun Shayevitch, but that too was a fruitless search. Perhaps somewhere a breeze blew past us carrying the breath of his burned body. But we did not feel it. When we returned to the camp the bad news was waiting for us, brought by a friend who has survived. We have recovered a friend—but we have lost our father. Joy and sorrow. Why does the poor heart not break in agony? Our friend found our names on the lists. He told us that Father perished a day before the liberation, killed when an American bomb landed on the train that the Germans were using to transport Dachau prisoners deeper into Germany. Shayevitch was taken on the very last transport to the gas chambers. There is nobody left any more for whom to wait.

Sept 1 — I do not read the names on the lists any more. I do not go anywhere. I know that I shall never see my father again. Actually I have known this for a long time. I felt it in Auschwitz the day we parted for the last time.

Now I must find all kinds of refined means to deaden my pain. I am going to make a lot of noise. I am going to run, laugh, busy myself with work, do everything I can to stifle the constant longing in my heart. But where does one get the strength for joy? How does one poison longing? Even Nature has lost its charm for me. I am empty of all desires.

I cannot get away from thoughts of my father's death. I experience it over and over again. I lose myself in thoughts of his lonely suffering—and yet, I am not dying of sorrow. I suppose that there must be still greater depth of pain that I cannot reach.

Last night I had a dream. I saw myself in the concentration camp with Henia. Every day fifty women were taken out of the camp to be shot. Henia and I tried every ruse we could think of to postpone being taken. When it was no longer possible to avoid our deaths, we begged the SS women guards to postpone our execution for just one day, because it was the Sabbath. We knew that we had to die, but could it not be one day later? That one extra day we pleaded for seemed to us to be more beautiful and enticing than our entire lifetimes. We pleaded with the guards and begged for that single day, but they did not want to grant it to us.

They were already preparing the execution grounds, when suddenly Father appeared with a burning staff in his hand. The SS women disappeared and Father told us that he would fight with us. It was true, he said, that we would have to die, but in fighting one does not feel one's death. We were so afraid for our father. He was talking so loudly, somebody might betray him to the guards. Later I saw us fighting. All the camps rose in one great uprising, Hamburg, Dachau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. I saw a wave of flame sweeping over all of Germany. And we, the fighters, glowed victorious in that flame. It was a night of fire and everywhere I looked I saw my father with the burning staff in his hand. That staff emitted such fierce flames that the Germans sent airplanes to bomb us and we had to run to the fields in order to escape. It was then that Father suddenly appeared next to us, saying that he wanted to die together with us.

Never before had death seemed so attractive as it was in my dream. Later I saw us all in a cellar, but Father was no longer with us. Somebody opened the door. Our eyes were blinded by a grey shaft of light and I felt a great sorrow in my heart. It was the beginning of a new day.

July 1

27.	Olympic Stadium Berlin	119
28.	An Interview with Margaret Lambert	120
29.	The Track 17 Memorial at Grunewald Railway Station	122
30.	Wannsee Conference and the “Final Solution”	124
31.	Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin	127
32.	Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism	129
33.	Homosexuals	130
34.	Robert Oelbermann	133
35.	Gad Beck	134
36.	Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism	136
37.	Stolpersteine — “Stumbling Blocks”	138
38.	The Women’s Rosenstraße Protest in Nazi Berlin by Nathan Stoltzfus	139
39.	Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule (1935-1941)	142



Berlin Olympic Stadium, East Gate, 1936

27. Olympic Stadium Berlin

When Adolf Hitler was made Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the discussions about building a new stadium were suddenly directed into a different direction. The Nazi regime quickly understood the valuable propaganda opportunity the Olympic Games presented. The government now made available six million marks for re-modeling the *National Stadion*. At the same time, the project was renamed into *Reichssportfeld* (Reich Sports Area). On December 14, 1933, Hitler himself decided to have the design by the brothers March, called “solution option B”, to be implemented. This plan called for the demolition of the old stadium on the site. The new stadium was designed to be built ten meters below and 13 meters above the ground - creating a commanding, highly visible building.

The layout of the stands for the audience was planned above and below a circular middle gallery on ground level. All of the architectural features actually built later, can already be found in this initial plan: The *Olympischer Platz*, the Olympic Stadium itself, the parade grounds with the so-called *Fuhrerloge* and the Bell Tower on the East-West Axis, the *Coubertinplatz*, as well as the swimming pool stadium on the North-South-Axis.

The 11th Olympic Summer Games officially began on August 1, 1936 at the *Olympiastadion* Berlin and closed on August 16, 1936 with a grand closing ceremony. A total of 3,956 athletes, among them 328 women, from 49 nations took part in the competitions. The most successful athlete was James Cleveland “Jesse” Owens, who won four gold medals —100m and 200m sprints, long jump and with the American 4x100m relay. The (unofficial) nations’ ranking was led by Germany with 33 gold, 26 silver and 30 bronze medals, followed by the USA (24/29/21) and Hungary (10/1/5).

During the Olympic Games, the German capital presented itself in its most beautiful appearance. Adolf Hitler had informed the German IOC member Karl Ritter von Halt as early as 1932 that the NSDAP would not present “any difficulties” during the Olympic Games of 1936 and that “he would also not oppose the participation of colored people at the competitions.” The SA was ordered to stop any antisemitic attacks between June 30 and September 1, 1936. But despite the positive reviews of the sports competitions, some foreign observers, who realized the real terror regime behind the feigned facade, voiced their criticism.

After the Olympic Games, the *Reichssportfeld* annually saw 20 to 25 large-scale events. The *Hochschule fur Leibesubungen* (Academy for Athletics), however, was ordered to cease operations, and instead a new school, the *Reichsakademie fur Leibesubungen* (State Academy for Athletics), was opened on April 15, 1936 by Hitler’s orders. Here, aspiring teachers were destined to receive a “uniform education as leaders in the field of physical education” but in reality, the school served the purposes of the paramilitary SA sports training.

28. An Interview with Margaret Lambert

Margaret Lambert: I was chosen to represent Germany in the Olympics. And I was on the Olympic team from 1934 until 1936, until they kicked me off. I was allowed to compete three times in those two years. And I beat them every time



Daniel Greene: In 1936, champion high jumper Margaret Lambert was poised to win a medal at the Berlin Olympic Games. Just one month before the games began, Lambert, known then as Gretel Bergmann, was informed by the Nazi Party that she would not be allowed to compete. Lambert, now 94 and living in Queens, recently looked through photographs and memorabilia from the 1930s.

Margaret Lambert: When I was 19 years old, I was sent to England because we saw there was no future for me in Germany. And I became a little bit of a big shot there.

And at the day of the English Championships, my father came to watch me. He had a message for me that I had to come back to Germany, or else.

First, I had said I'm not coming, and my father explained to me that there might be trouble for the family. So I decided to come back.

And I came back to Germany to horrible conditions. Jews were not allowed in restaurants, in movies, in whatever. And even though I was a member of the German Olympic Women's Team, I was not allowed in a stadium. I couldn't practice.

I think only the reason that I did so well was my anger. But it was a very very hard time because I was scared stiff, thinking: How are they gonna get rid of me? Because I knew they wouldn't let me compete. I knew that.

This was all propaganda, that I was a Jew and I was allowed to compete. How would it be, 100,000 people and a Jewish girl wins? I was convinced I was going to win this, and I'm not being conceited. It's truth. And then I thought maybe some night they come and break my legs or something. Anything was possible. Anything was possible.

And I think from the moment I got a letter that they wanted me on the German Olympic team, they figured out exactly how they were going to get rid of me. They told them that I was injured and that's why I couldn't compete. And that was all a lie of course. That was all a lie.

I was so afraid every day of my life. And at the same time I wanted to beat them so badly it was unbelievable.

Well this is the letter I got two weeks I think before the Olympics started that told me that I wasn't good enough and I wouldn't be able to compete.

They waited until the Americans were on the way to come over, and nobody thought they would turn around if this letter would arrive at my house.

I haven't looked at this stuff in a long time.

1936 Olympic high jump was won with [a jump of] a meter-sixty. This shows that I jumped a meter-sixty, the same height that the Olympics were won with. Up here they told me I wasn't good enough, and down here is a newspaper article from the 29th of June that I equalled the German record. And I pasted it there to show that they weren't exactly fair.

So that was the end of it- finished.

This is the scrapbook. These are all things I've won: one, two, three firsts, four firsts, two seconds I think.

This is stuff they wrote about me. I didn't get a swelled head. So that's where I won the championship here- two of them. See I could be so conceited if I wanted. That's me, and here you can see, the ones that ran against me you can't see yet, and it was only a hundred yards!

I used to dream a lot and it was always 100,000 people and I'm standing there waiting to high jump. And then the announcement comes: "Report to the high jump." And I can't move.

And I used to wake up and be so angry at myself. Why can't I forget about this stuff now? But it was a real nightmare for a long, long, long time.

Here is a small amount of medals that I won. There should be one with a swastika on it, which is my most favorite one. Here it is.

That's the one I won when I jumped a meter-sixty. That's the swastika, right in the middle there. And it's my most prized possession. 1936.

I figured if I give up, then they say, "See what happens to the Jews? They're not worth a damn."

Source: <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-podcast/margaret-lambert>

29. The Track 17 Memorial at Grunewald Railway Station

Deutsche Bahn AG has erected a central memorial in Berlin to commemorate the deportation of Jewish citizens by Deutsche Reichsbahn during the Nazi era. The memorial in Grunewald is open to the general public.

Research literature on the role of Deutsche Reichsbahn during the National Socialist regime comes to a unanimous conclusion: without the railway, and in particular without Deutsche Reichsbahn, the deportation of the European Jews to the extermination camps would not have been possible. For many years, both the Bundesbahn in West Germany and the Reichsbahn in East Germany were unwilling to take a critical look at the role played by Deutsche Reichsbahn in the Nazi crimes against humanity. In 1985, the year that celebrated that 150th anniversary of the railway in Germany, the management boards of the railways in both West and East Germany still found it difficult to even mention this chapter of railway history. Neither of the two German states had a central memorial to the victims of the deportations by the Reichsbahn.

Central memorial at Grunewald station

This became painfully clear when the reunified railways were merged to form Deutsche Bahn AG. No business company can whitewash its history or choose which events in its past it wishes to remember. To keep the memory of the victims of National Socialism alive, the management board decided to erect one central memorial at Grunewald station on behalf of Deutsche Bahn AG, commemorating the deportation transports handled by Deutsche Reichsbahn during the years of the Nazi regime.

Winning design came from the architect team Hirsch, Lorch and Wandel

A competition was held amongst a limited number of entrants. The members of the jury were Ignatz Bubis, Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Heinz Dürr, Chairman of the Board of Deutsche Bahn AG, Prof. Gottmann, Director of the Museum of Transport and Technology, Jerzy Kanal, Chairman of the Jewish Community in Berlin, and Dr. Salomon Korn, architect in Frankfurt am Main. The jury voted for the design submitted by the team of architects Hirsch, Lorch and Wandel in Saarbrücken and Frankfurt am Main.



The core element of the memorial is composed of 186 cast steel objects arranged in chronological order and set in the ballast next to the platform edge. Each object states the date of a transport, the number of deportees, the point of departure in Berlin and the destination. The vegetation that has developed at Platform 17 over the years has been left to grow between the rails and now forms an integral part of the memorial as a symbol that no more trains will ever depart from this platform.

Inauguration in 1998

Various measures had to be taken to create the footpath around Platform 17, such as securing the severely dilapidated platform walls and reconstructing the approx. 160-metre long platform, which had been demolished in the meantime. The memorial was inaugurated on 27 January 1998 and is closely linked with the monument designed by Karol Broniatowski and erected by the Federal Land of Berlin in 1991, which deals with the journey leading up to the deportees' arrival on the platform.

Memorial is open to the public

Deutsche Bahn AG hopes that the memorial will help to ensure that the crimes committed during the National Socialist regime will never be forgotten. The memorial commemorates the victims, is a warning to future generations, and a place of remembrance and. Platform 17 is open to the public and can be reached from Berlin Grunewald S-Bahn station.

The architects Nikolaus Hirsch, Wolfgang Lorch and Andrea Wandel have produced a book with further information about the memorial entitled "Gleis 17" (ISBN 978-1-933128 60-3; €19, published by Sternberg Verlag, in German). Amongst other things, the book contains articles by Alfred Gottwald, Diana Schulle and Harald Welzer.

Source: http://www.deutschebahn.com/en/group/history/topics/platform17_memorial.html © 2014 Deutsche Bahn AG

30. Wannsee Conference and the “Final Solution”

On January 20, 1942, 15 high-ranking Nazi Party and German government officials gathered at a villa in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee to discuss and coordinate the implementation of what they called the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question.”

Representing the SS at the meeting were:

1. SS General **Reinhard Heydrich**, the chief of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt-RSHA) and one of Reichsführer-SS (SS chief) Heinrich Himmler’s top deputies;
2. SS Major General **Heinrich Müller**, chief of RSHA Department IV (Gestapo);
3. SS Lieutenant Colonel **Adolf Eichmann**, chief of the RSHA Department IV B 4 (Jewish Affairs);
4. SS Colonel **Eberhard Schöngarth**, commander of the RSHA field office for the Government General in Kraków, Poland;
5. SS Major **Rudolf Lange**, commander of RSHA Einsatzkommando ⁶¹ 2, deployed in Latvia in the autumn of 1941; and
6. SS Major General **Otto Hofmann**, the chief of SS Race and Settlement Main Office.

Representing the agencies of the State were:

7. State Secretary **Roland Freisler** (Ministry of Justice);
8. Ministerial Director **Wilhelm Kritzinger** (Reich Cabinet);
9. State Secretary **Alfred Meyer** (Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories-German-occupied USSR);
10. Ministerial Director **Georg Leibbrandt** (Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories);
11. Undersecretary of State **Martin Luther** (Foreign Office);
12. State Secretary **Wilhelm Stuckart** (Ministry of the Interior);
13. State Secretary **Erich Naumann** (Office of Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan);
14. State Secretary **Josef Bühler** (Office of the Government of the Governor General-German-occupied Poland); and
15. Ministerial Director **Gerhard Klopfer** (Nazi Party Chancellery).

The “Final Solution” was the code name for the systematic, deliberate, physical annihilation of the European Jews. At some still undetermined time in 1941, Hitler authorized this European-wide scheme for mass murder. Heydrich convened the Wannsee Conference (1) to inform and secure support from government ministries and other interested agencies relevant to the

⁶¹ During World War II, the Nazi German Einsatzkommandos were a sub-group of five Einsatzgruppen mobile killing squads (term used by Holocaust historians) — up to 3,000 men total — usually composed of 500–1,000 functionaries of the SS and Gestapo, whose mission was to kill Jews, Polish intellectuals, Romani, communists and the NKVD collaborators in the captured territories often far behind the advancing German front.

implementation of the “Final Solution,” and (2) to disclose to the participants that Hitler himself had tasked Heydrich and the RSHA with coordinating the operation. The men at the table did not deliberate whether such a plan should be undertaken, but instead discussed the implementation of a policy decision that had already been made at the highest level of the Nazi regime.

At the time of the Wannsee Conference, most participants were already aware that the National Socialist regime had engaged in mass murder of Jews and other civilians in the German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union and in Serbia. Some had learned of the actions of the *Einsatzgruppen* and other police and military units, which were already slaughtering tens of thousands of Jews in the German-occupied Soviet Union. Others were aware that units of the German Army and the SS and police were killing Jews in Serbia. None of the officials present at the meeting objected to the Final Solution policy that Heydrich announced.



The house at 56–58 Am Grossen Wannsee, where the Wannsee Conference was held. It is now a memorial and museum

Not present at the meeting were representatives of the German Armed Forces (Wehrmacht) and the Reich Railroads (Reichsbahn) in the German Ministry of Transportation. The SS and police had already negotiated agreements with the German Army High Command on the murder of civilians, including Soviet Jews, in the spring of 1941, prior to the invasion of the Soviet Union. In late September 1941, Hitler had authorized the Reich Railroads to transport German, Austrian, and Czech Jews to locations in German-occupied Poland and the German-occupied Soviet Union, where German authorities would kill the overwhelming majority of them.

Heydrich indicated that approximately 11,000,000 Jews in Europe would fall under the provisions of the “Final Solution.” In this figure, he included not only Jews residing in Axis-controlled Europe, but also the Jewish populations of the United Kingdom, and the neutral nations (Switzerland, Ireland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, and European Turkey). For Jews residing in the Greater German Reich and holding the status of subjects of the German Reich, the Nuremberg Laws would serve as a basis for determining who was a Jew.

Heydrich announced that “during the course of the Final Solution, the Jews will be deployed under appropriate supervision at a suitable form of labor deployment in the East. In large labor columns, separated by gender, able-bodied Jews will be brought to those regions to build roads, whereby a large number will doubtlessly be lost through natural reduction. Any final remnant that survives will doubtless consist of the elements most capable of resistance. They must be dealt with appropriately, since, representing the fruit of natural selection, they are to be regarded as the core of a new Jewish revival.”

The participants discussed a number of other issues raised by the new policy, including the establishment of the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto as a destination for elderly Jews as well Jews who were disabled or decorated in World War I, the deferment until after the war of “Final Solution” measures against Jews married to non-Jews or persons of mixed descent as defined by the Nuremberg laws, prospects for inducing Germany’s Axis partners to give up their Jewish populations, and preparatory measures for the “evacuations.”

Despite the euphemisms which appeared in the protocols of the meeting, the aim of the Wannsee Conference was clear to its participants: to further the coordination of a policy aimed at the physical annihilation of the European Jews.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005477>

31. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in the center of Berlin is Germany's central Holocaust memorial site, a place for remembrance and commemoration of six million victims. The Memorial consists of the Field of Stelae designed by architect Peter Eisenman and the underground Information Centre and is maintained by a Federal Foundation.

CHRONOLOGY

1988/89 — Publicist Lea Rosh calls for a »high-profile memorial«, winning support from Willy Brandt, Gunter Grass and Christa Wolf, among others

Spring 1998—Vote by Federal Chancellor Kohl for the design by Eisenman/ Serra, but decision delayed by Federal elections

25 June 1999 — Resolution passed by the German Bundestag to build the memorial and establish a Foundation

1 April 2003 — Construction work begins

12 May 2005 — Public inauguration

Why is the memorial dedicated only to the murdered Jews? — After a long debate, the German Bundestag decided in 1999 to dedicate the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. This underlines that acknowledging the uniqueness of this crime and historic responsibility is central to the Federal Republic of Germany's self-understanding. The Foundation has the task of ensuring that all victims of National Socialism are remembered and honored appropriately. This also involves building memorials to the Sinti and Roma and to homosexual victims, which has already been decided upon by the Federal Government.



Just south of the Brandenburg Gate is Berlin's Holocaust Memorial, with its two thousand, seven hundred and eleven gray concrete slabs, or stelae.

Why was the memorial built in this location? — The location at the heart of Berlin and in the vicinity of embassies, cultural institutions, business and residential premises, as well as the Tiergarten, expresses the memorial's public character. Its integration into the historic urban

space and the parliament and government district highlights the fact that the memorial is directed towards the civil society.

Why are there 2,711 stelae and what are they made of? — The total number of 2,711 stelae results from the measurements chosen by the architect for the location. It does not have any symbolic significance or relationship to the number of victims. The stelae were produced near Berlin from very hard, grey-colored, self-compacting concrete. In order to guarantee the high quality of the stelae surface for as long as possible, the stelae were treated in a multi-stage protection process, which also enables graffiti to be easily removed.

Are there World War'' bunkers underneath the memorial? — The bunker of Goebbels' office villa is located in the northeastern corner of the memorial site; it was unchanged by the construction of the memorial. The »Führerbunker« was 200 to 300 m south of the memorial site near Vossstrasse.

Source: <http://www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/en>

32. Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism

The History of the Memorial

The homosexual victims of Nazism were not officially recognized after 1945. During the 1950s and 1960s, Paragraph 175 was still part of the German penal code. In the 1980s, these “forgotten victims” were finally discussed. In 1985, for instance, president Richard von Weizsäcker remembered homosexuals as a “victim group”. The group Der homosexuellen NS-Opfer gedenken (“Commemorate the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism”) and the organization Lesben- und Schwulenverband (“Lesbian and Gay Association”) began promoting a memorial in Berlin in 1993.[3]



On 12 December 2003, the Bundestag approved the erection of a memorial in Berlin at the boundary of Tiergarten (near the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). Then the competition for artists started.

The Design of Memorial



The Memorial was designed by artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset.

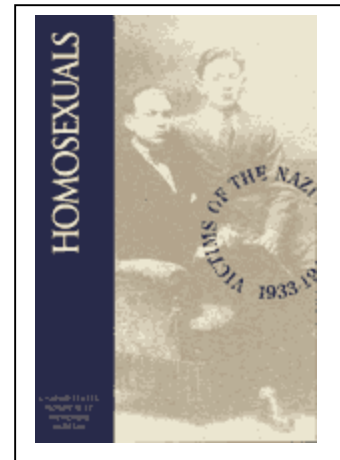
Near the memorial is a signboard, which is written in German and English. There visitors can read over persecutions during Nazism and under Paragraph 175, the law during the 1950s and 1960s that outlawed homosexuality. It was reformed in 1969, attenuated in 1973 and finally voided in 1994.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_Homosexuals_Persecuted_Under_Nazism

33. Homosexuals

The following was originally published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a pamphlet titled “Homosexuals: Victims of the Nazi Era”. It is used here with permission.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
100 Raoul Walenberg Place SW,
Washington D.C. 20024-2150.



As part of the Nazis' attempt to purify German society and propagate an "Aryan master race," they condemned homosexuals as "socially aberrant." Soon after taking office on January 30, 1933, Hitler banned all homosexual and lesbian organizations. Brownshirted storm troopers raided the institutions and gathering places of homosexuals. Greatly weakened and driven underground, this subculture had flourished in the relative freedom of the 1920s, in the pubs and cafes of Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Bremen, and other cities.

HOMOSEXUALS: VICTIMS OF THE NAZI ERA

On May 6, 1933, Nazis ransacked the "Institute for Sexual Science" in Berlin; four days later as part of large public burnings of books viewed as "un-German," thousands of books plundered from the Institute's library were thrown into a huge bonfire. The institute was founded in 1919 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (1868 - 1935). It sponsored research and discussion on marital problems, sexually transmitted diseases, and laws relating to sexual offenses, abortion, and homosexuality. The author of many works, Hirschfeld, himself a homosexual, led efforts for three decades to reform laws criminalizing homosexuality (In 1933 Hirschfeld happened to be in France, where he remained until his death.)



Auschwitz mug shot of homosexual August Pfeiffer, a servant, who was born August 8, 1895, in Weferlingen, Germany. He arrived at Auschwitz on November 1, 1941, and died there December 28, 1941.

In 1934, a special Gestapo (Secret State Police) division on homosexuals was set up. One of its first acts was to order the police "pink lists" from all over Germany. The police had been compiling these lists of suspected homosexual men since 1900. On September 1, 1935, a harsher, amended version of Paragraph 175 of the Criminal Code, originally framed in 1871, went into effect, punishing a broad range of "lewd and lascivious" behavior between men. In 1936 Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler created a Reich Central Office for the Combating of Homosexuality and Abortion: Special Office (II S), a sub department of Executive Department II of the Gestapo. The linking of homosexuality and abortion reflected the Nazi regimes population policies to promote

a higher birthrate of its “Aryan” population. On this subject Himmler spoke in Bad Tölz on February 18, 1937, before a group of high-ranking SS officers on the dangers both homosexuality and abortion posed to the German birthrate.

Under the revised Paragraph 175 and the creation of Special Office II S, the number of prosecutions increased sharply, peaking in the years 1937-1939. Half of all convictions for homosexual activity under the Nazi regime occurred during these years. The police stepped up raids on homosexual meeting places, seized address books of arrested men to find additional suspects, and created networks of informers to compile lists of names and make arrests.

An estimated 1.2 million men were homosexuals in Germany in 1928. Between 1933-45, an estimated 100,000 men were arrested as homosexuals, and of these, some 50,000 officially defined homosexuals were sentenced. Most of these men spent time in regular prisons, and an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 of the total sentenced were incarcerated in concentration camps.

How many of these 5,000 to 15,000 “17Sers” perished in the concentration camps will probably never be known. Historical research to date has been very limited. One leading scholar, Ruediger Lautmann, believes that the death rate for “175ers” in the camps may have been as high as sixty percent.

All prisoners of the camps wore marks of various colors and shapes, which allowed guards and camp functionaries to identify them by category. The uniforms of those sentenced as homosexuals bore, various identifying marks, including a large black dot and a large “175” drawn on the back of the jacket. Later a pink triangular patch (rosa Winkel) appeared. Conditions in the camps were generally harsh for all inmates, many of whom died from hunger, disease, exhaustion, exposure to the cold, and brutal treatment. Many survivors have testified that men with pink triangles were often treated particularly severely by guards and inmates alike because of widespread biases against homosexuals. As was true with other prisoner categories, some homosexuals were also victims of cruel medical experiments, including castration. At Buchenwald concentration camp, SS physician Dr. Carl Vaernet performed operations designed to convert men to heterosexuals: the surgical insertion of a capsule which released the male hormone testosterone. Such procedures reflected the desire by Himmler and others to find a medical solution to homosexuality.

The vast majority of homosexual victims were males; lesbians were not subjected to systematic persecution. While lesbian bars were closed, few women are believed to have been arrested. Paragraph 175 did not mention female homosexuality. Lesbianism was seen by many Nazi officials as alien to the nature of the Aryan woman. In some cases, the police arrested lesbians as “asocials” or “prostitutes.” One woman, Henny Schermann, was arrested in 1940 in Frankfurt and was labeled “licentious Lesbian” on her mug shot; but she was also a “stateless Jew,” sufficient cause for deportation. Among the Jewish inmates at Ravensbrück concentration camp selected for



Mug shot of Friedrich Althoff, a waiter from Düsseldorf, who was born May 16, 1899. He was arrested on charges of homosexuality. Düsseldorf,

extermination, she was gassed in the Bernburg psychiatric hospital, a “euthanasia” killing center in Germany, in 1942.

Homosexuality outside Germany (and incorporated Austria and other annexed territories) was not a subject generally addressed in Nazi ideology or policy; the concern focused on the impact of homosexuality on the strength and birthrate of the Aryan population. During the war years, 1939 to 1945, the Nazis did not generally instigate drives against homosexuality in German-occupied countries.

Consequently, the vast majority of homosexuals arrested under Paragraph 175 were Germans or Austrians. Unlike Jews, men arrested as homosexuals were not systematically deported to Nazi-established ghettos in eastern Europe. Nor were they transported in mass groups of homosexual prisoners to Nazi extermination camps in Poland.

It should be noted that Nazi authorities sometimes used the charge of homosexuality to discredit and undermine their political opponents. Charges of homosexuality among the SA (Storm trooper) leadership figured prominently among justifications for the bloody purge of SA chief Ernst Röhm in June 1934. Nazi leader Hermann Göring used trumped-up accusations of homosexual improprieties to unseat army supreme commander Von Fritsch, an opponent of Hitler’s military policy, in early 1938. Finally, a 1935 propaganda campaign and two show trials in 1936 and 1937 alleging rampant homosexuality in the priesthood, attempted to undercut the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany, an institution which many Nazi officials considered their most powerful potential enemy.

After the war, homosexual concentration camp prisoners were not acknowledged as victims of Nazi persecution, and reparations were refused. Under the Allied Military Government of Germany, some homosexuals were forced to serve out their terms of imprisonment, regardless of the time spent in concentration camps. The 1935 version of Paragraph 175 remained in effect in the Federal Republic (West Germany) until 1969, so that well after liberation, homosexuals continued to fear arrest and incarceration.

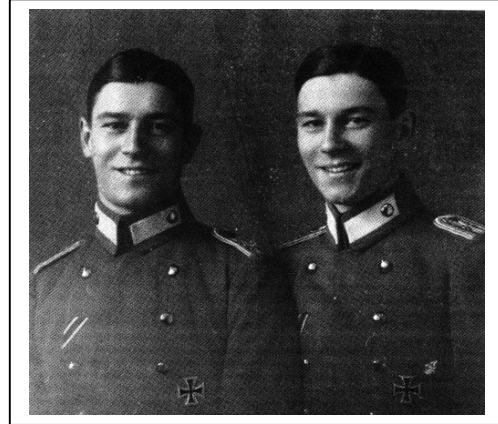
Research on Nazi persecution of homosexuals was impeded by the criminalization and social stigmatization of homosexuals in Europe and the United States in the decades following the Holocaust. Most survivors were afraid or ashamed to tell their stories. Recently, especially in Germany, new research findings on these “forgotten victims” have been published, and some survivors have broken their silence to give testimony.

Source: <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/homosexuals/>

34. Robert Oelbermann



Robert Oeldermann, born
April 24, 1896, Bonn,
Germany



In 1919 Robert and his brother Karl founded the Nerother Bund youth group in the Cologne region. Like other German youth groups, it aimed to bring youth closer to nature through camping and hiking. Homosexual relationships sometimes developed from the intense adolescent male camaraderie, and the Nerother Bund accepted these friendships, as did a number of German youth groups at the time.

1933-39: Soon after the Nazis took power in 1933, they dissolved all independent youth groups and urged the members to join the Hitler Youth movement. Robert refused and secretly continued his connection with the Nerother Bund. In 1936 he was convicted under the Nazi-revised criminal code's paragraph 175 which outlawed homosexuality. Robert was imprisoned with 13 other members of the Nerother Bund.

1940-41: Robert was one of more than 50,000 men sentenced under paragraph 175 during the Nazi regime. By 1941 he had been transferred to the Dachau concentration camp. Like many "175ers" in the camps, Robert was required to wear an identifying pink triangle. The "175ers" were commonly segregated in separate barracks, subjected to particularly harsh treatment, and often ostracized by other prisoner groups.

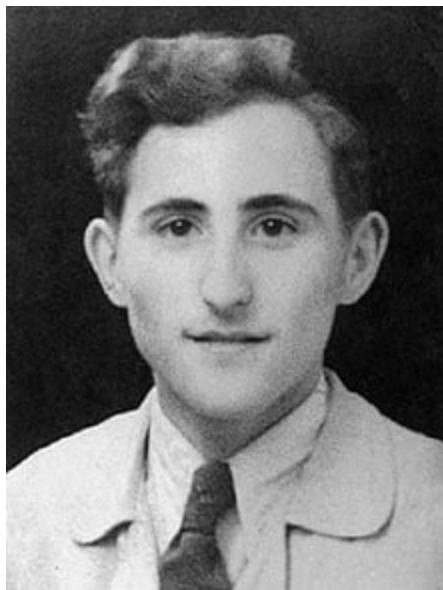
Forty-four-year-old Robert died at Dachau in 1941. Details of his death are unknown.

Source: <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/idcard.php?ModuleId=10006627>

35. Gad Beck

Just as Jews were forced by the Nazis to wear yellow Stars of David, so homosexuals were identified by pink triangles. Up to 100,000 gay men were arrested between 1933-45 and several thousands perished in camps. Understandably, Beck always regarded his Jewishness as a graver threat to his survival than his sexuality. “I was always a step away from the concentration camps not because I was gay but because I was Jewish.”

Beck spent much of the war dodging the Gestapo, sometimes taking huge risks by smuggling rations, money and clothes to fellow Jews who were in hiding. He was said to have helped some flee to safety in Switzerland by supplying forged papers. Had he been detected, he would probably have faced summary execution.



His closest call came in 1942, when his boyfriend, Manfred Lewin, was arrested and held at a detention centre in Berlin pending deportation to a concentration camp.

Clad in an ill-fitting uniform of the Hitler Youth, Beck bluffed his way inside and demanded to speak to the commandant. Having convinced him on some bogus pretext to release Lewin, albeit temporarily, Beck and his friend made their way to the exit.

But Lewin suddenly turned back, refusing to be separated from his parents. The Nazis subsequently deported the entire family to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

After the war, as Germany adopted an increasingly repressive stance on homosexuality, Beck emigrated to Israel. On his return in 1979, he was appointed director of the Jewish Adult Education Centre in Berlin, where he taught students about the Jewish culture that had once flourished in their country. “I mustered strength from the individual moments of happiness that I was always able to wring out of life,” he said, “no matter how dire the straits.” He also became a prominent gay activist.

His wartime escapades featured in a film, *The Life of Gad Beck*, and the documentary *Paragraph 175*, named after the measure in the pre-Hitler German Penal Code that outlawed homosexuality. The diminutive Beck once remarked, “The Americans in New York called me a great hero. I said no ... I’m really a little hero.”

Gerhard Beck was born in Berlin on June 30 1923. Because his father was an Austrian Jew and his mother a Jewish convert, he was categorised as *mischling* (half-breed), which afforded him at least temporary protection from the wartime Nazi regime.

When he first came out to his parents as homosexual, they were both surprised and supportive. “They said: ‘Oh my God, he’s Jewish and he’s gay. Either way, he’ll be persecuted. This cannot end well’,” Beck recalled.

Although he and his father were briefly held in wartime Berlin, Gerhard — always known as Gad — was released after widespread street protests by the non-Jewish wives of detainees. There were “thousands of women who stood for days ... my aunts demanded ‘Give us our children and men,’” he remembered.

Following his release, Beck joined Chug Chaluzi, an underground Zionist resistance group, and played a vital role in securing the survival of Jews in Berlin. According to records in Washington, he noted: “As a homosexual, I was able to turn to my trusted non-Jewish, homosexual acquaintances to help supply food and hiding places.”

But three months before the war ended in 1945, Beck and some of his fellow resistance fighters were betrayed by a Jewish spy working for the Gestapo, and he was incarcerated in a Jewish transit camp in Berlin. Eventually a Red Army soldier liberated him with the words: “Brother, you are free.”

His autobiography, *An Underground Life: Memoirs of a Gay Jew in Nazi Berlin*, written with Frank Heibert, was published in 1999.

Gad Beck is survived by his partner of 35 years, Julius Laufer.

Source: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/9412925/Gad-Beck.html

36. Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism

The Romani genocide or Romani Holocaust, also known as the *Porajmos* (“Cutting up”, “Fragmentation”, “Destruction”), or Samudaripen (“Mass killing”), was the planned and attempted effort, often described as a genocide, during World War II by the government of Nazi Germany and its allies to exterminate the Romani (Gypsy) people of Europe. Under the rule of Adolf Hitler, a supplementary decree to the Nuremberg Laws was issued on 26 November 1935, defining Gypsies as “enemies of the race-based state”, the same category as Jews. Thus, the fate of Roma in Europe in some ways paralleled that of the Jews. Historians estimate that 220,000 to 500,000 Romani were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators, or more than 25% of the slightly less than 1 million Roma in Europe at the time. Some estimates of the death toll are as high as 1.5 million. In 1982, West Germany formally recognized that genocide had been committed against the Romani. In 2011 the Polish Government passed a resolution for the official recognition of the 2nd of August as a day of commemoration of the genocide.



Romani civilians in Asperg, Germany are rounded up for deportation by German authorities on 22 May 1940. File: Bundesarchiv R 165 Bild-244-48, Asperg, Deportation von Sinti und Roma.jpg

The Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism



Photograph by Mike Peel (<http://www.mikepeel.net/>).

The Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism is a memorial in Berlin, Germany. The monument is dedicated to the memory of the 220,000 - 500,000 people murdered in the *Porajmos* – the Nazi genocide of the European Sinti and Roma peoples. It was designed by Dani Karavan and was officially opened on 24 October 2012 by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the presence of President Joachim Gauck.

The memorial is on Simsonweg in the Tiergarten in Berlin, south of the Reichstag and near the Brandenburg Gate.

The memorial was designed by the Israeli artist Dani Karavan and consists of a dark, circular pool of water at the centre of which there is a triangular stone. The triangular shape of the stone is in reference to the badges that had to be worn by concentration camp prisoners. The stone is retractable and a fresh flower is placed upon it daily. In bronze letters around the edge of the pool is the poem ‘Auschwitz’ by Roma poet Santino Spinelli, although the monument commemorates all Roma and Sinti murdered during the Porajmos:

*Gaunt face
dead eyes
cold lips
quiet
a broken heart
out of breath
without words
no tears*



“Berlin-DenkmalSintiRoma4-Asio” by Asio otus - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons -

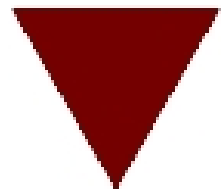
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Berlin-DenkmalSintiRoma4-Asio.JPG#/media/File:Berlin->

Information boards surround the memorial and provide a chronology of the genocide of the Sinti and Roma.

History of the Memorial

The establishment of a permanent memorial to Sinti and Roma victims of the Nazi regime was a long-standing demand of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the German Sinti Alliance. In 1992 the Federal Government agreed to build a monument but the memorial faced years of delay and disputes over its design and location. The city of Berlin initially wanted to place it in the less prominent district of Marzahn, where hundreds of Roma and Sinti were held in terrible conditions from 1936. In 2001 it was agreed to site it in the Tiergarten close to other Holocaust memorials but work did not officially commence until 19 December 2008, the commemoration day for victims of the Porajmos. The memorial was completed at a cost of 2.8 million euros and unveiled by Angela Merkel on 24 October 2012.

Romani prisoners in German concentration camps such as Auschwitz were forced to wear the brown inverted triangle on their prison uniforms to distinguish them from other inmates.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_the_Sinti_and_Roma_Victims_of_National_Socialism

37. Stolpersteine — “Stumbling Blocks”

A stolperstein from German for “stumbling block”; (plural stolpersteine) is a monument created by Gunter Demnig which commemorates a victim of the Holocaust. Stolpersteine are small, cobblestone-sized memorials for an individual victim of Nazism. They commemorate individuals — both those who died and survivors — who were consigned by the Nazis to prisons, euthanasia facilities, sterilization clinics, concentration camps, and extermination camps, as well as those who responded to persecution by emigrating or committing suicide.

While the vast majority of stolpersteine commemorate Jewish victims of the Holocaust, others have been placed for Sinti and Romani people (also called gypsies), homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, black people, Christians (both Protestants and Catholics) opposed to the Nazis, members of the Communist Party and the Resistance, military deserters, and the physically and mentally disabled.



Stolperstein in Bonn for Ida Arensberg
“Here lived Ida Arensberg. née Benjamin *1870 - deported 1942. Murdered in Theresienstadt on 18.9.1942”.



Stolpersteine in Cologne for Siegmund, Helene und Walter Klein

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolperstein>

38. The Women's Rosenstraße⁶² Protest in Nazi Berlin by Nathan Stoltzfus

Many people believe that it was impossible for the Germans to resist the Nazi dictatorship and the deportations of German Jews. However, a street protest in early 1943 indicates that resistance was possible, and indeed, successful.

Until early 1943, Nazi officials exempted Jews married to Gentiles or “Aryans” from the so-called Final Solution. In late February of that year, however, during a mass arrest of the last Jews in Berlin, the Gestapo also arrested Jews in intermarriages. This was the most brutal chapter of the expulsion of Jews in Berlin. Without warning, the SS stormed into Berlin's factories and arrested any Jews still working there. Simultaneously, all throughout the Reich capital, the Gestapo arrested Jews from their homes. Anyone on the streets wearing the “Star of David” was also abruptly carted off with the other Jews to huge provisional Collecting Centers in central Berlin, in preparation for massive deportations to Auschwitz.

The Gestapo called this action simply the “Schlußaktion der Berliner Juden” (Closing Berlin Jew Action). Hitler was offended that so many Jews still lived in Berlin, and the Nazi Party Leader for Berlin, Joseph Goebbels, had promised to make Berlin “Judenfrei” (free of Jews) for the Führer's 54th birthday in April. This “Schlußaktion” was, indeed, the beginning of the end for about 8,000 of the 10,000 Berlin Jews arrested in its course. Many who left their houses for what they thought would be a “normal” day of work, without turning back for even a last glance or hug, were to end up shortly in the ovens of Auschwitz, never again to see home or family.

About 2,000 of the arrested Jews who were related to Aryan Germans, however, experienced quite a different fate. They were locked up in a provisional collecting center at Rosenstraße 2-4, an administrative center of the Jewish Community in the heart of Berlin. The Aryan spouses of the interned Jews hurried alone or in pairs to the Rosenstrasse, where they discovered a growing crowd of other women whose loved ones had also been kidnapped and imprisoned there. A protest broke out. The women who had gathered by the hundreds at the gate of the improvised detention center began to call out together in a chorus, “Give us our husbands back.” They held their protest day and night for a week, as the crowd grew larger day by day.

On different occasions the armed guards between the women and the building imprisoning their loved ones barked a command: “Clear the street or we'll shoot!” This sent the women scrambling pell-mell into the alleys and courtyards in the area. But within minutes they began streaming out again, inexorably drawn to their loved ones. Again and again they were scattered,

⁶² The German letter **ß** is called “Eszett,” literally meaning S Z. **ß** is almost always substituted by the digraph SS rather than SZ (e.g. “strasse” rather than “strasze”).

and again and again they advanced, massed together, and called for their husbands, who heard them and took hope.

The square, according to one witness, “was crammed with people, and the demanding, accusing cries of the women rose above the noise of the traffic like passionate avowals of a love strengthened by the bitterness of life.” One woman described her feeling as a protester on the street as one of incredible solidarity with those sharing her fate. Normally people were afraid to show dissent, fearing denunciation, but on the street they knew they were among friends, because they were risking death together. A Gestapo man who no doubt would have heartlessly done his part to deport the Jews imprisoned in the Rosenstrasse was so impressed by the people on the streets that, holding up his hands in a victory clasp of solidarity with a Jew about to be released, he pronounced proudly: “You will be released, your relatives protested for you. That is German loyalty.”



“One day the situation in front of the collecting center came to a head,” a witness reported. “The SS trained machine guns on us: ‘If you don’t go now, we’ll shoot.’ But by now we couldn’t care less. We screamed ‘you murderers!’ and everything else. We bellowed. We thought that now, at

last, we would be shot. Behind the machine guns a man shouted something; maybe he gave a command. I didn't hear it, it was drowned out. But then they cleared out and the only sound was silence. That was the day it was so cold that the tears froze on my face."

The headquarters of the Jewish section of the Gestapo was just around the corner, within earshot of the protesters. A few salvos from a machine gun could have wiped the women off the square. But instead the Jews were released. Joseph Goebbels, in his role as the Nazi Party Leader for Berlin, decided that the simplest way to end the protest was to release the Jews. Goebbels chose not to forcibly tear Jews from Aryans who clearly risked their lives to stay with their Jewish family members, and rationalized that he would deport the Jews later anyway. But the Jews remained. They survived the war in Berlin, registered officially with the police, working in officially authorized jobs, and officially receiving food rations.

The implications of this protest are that mass, public and nonviolent acts of noncooperation by non-Jewish Germans on behalf of German Jews could have slowed or even stopped the Nazi genocide of German Jews. True, some six million Jews were murdered. Not many Jews were saved. Yet when the (non-Jewish) German populace protested nonviolently and en masse, the Nazis made concessions. When Germans protested for Jews, Jews were saved.

Although there were a few men in attendance, this was a protest by women; women were really the origin and the core of the protest. Women, traditionally, have felt responsible for home and family; to the women who were protesting, their families were, in some sense, their careers; to lose their families was to lose everything meaningful for them.

At the protest in the Rosenstrasse there was a flickering of a tiny torch, which might have kindled the fire of general resistance if Germans had taken note of the women on the Rosenstraße and imitated their actions of mass civil disobedience. Perhaps they did not do so because they were used to thinking that neither women, nor nonviolent actions, could be politically powerful.

Source: http://www.rosenstrasse-protest.de/texte/texte_stoltzfus.html

Nathan Stoltzfus is an American historian and associate professor of history at Florida State University noted for his work on protest during the Nazi era, particularly the Rosenstrasse Protest that has sparked debate and discussion about the possibility and impact of protest in Nazi.

39. Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule (1935-1941)

This is the story of how a brilliant and highly effective teacher used her wits to save hundreds of Jewish children during the Third Reich. Leonore Goldschmidt was an educated and beloved teacher. She was highly credentialed and had made many important contacts with influential officials in academia and in government in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In 1934, while on a visit to a small town in southern Germany, Leonore (Lore) and her husband Ernst Goldschmidt became aware of the suffering endured by local Jewish school children, who were at the mercy of a few outspoken Nazis. This was especially hurtful, when those families had known each other for some years and had been living as neighbors. The Nazi hate propaganda included baptized children of Jewish parents. By contrast, in Berlin, where Lore and Ernst resided, the situation was better as a certain amount of anonymity was possible. This awareness led Lore to contemplate opening a boarding school which would offer a good education in peaceful surroundings. As she was a teacher with a doctorate in history, Lore had the necessary qualifications to undertake such a project. But equally important was her strong and determined personality displayed since her youth.



Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt

In January 1933, Adolf Hitler gained power. Nobody was prepared for the brutal lawless behavior which immediately followed. Signs went up in Berlin to boycott Jewish shops. Ernst Goldschmidt was so enraged that he tore them down. He was arrested and taken to the Alexander Platz (Alexander Place) Police Station. Being a man of courage, who had been awarded the Iron Cross during World War I, he told the young Nazi policemen that while he was fighting for them in the trenches, they were lying in their cradles in nappies. It worked and they let him go.

On the 8th of August 1933, Lore, who had been working as a teacher, received her first dismissal notice asking her to reply within three days to confirm that she was a non-Aryan person. The notice stated that “all relevant laws” had been passed on the 7th of April. On the 29th of August came the dismissal notice followed by a final notice on the 26th of September. It was signed by the Prussian Minister for Science, the Arts and Education. It stated that her employment would be terminated on the 30th of November and that she would be on leave until then. She would not be entitled to any pension. The only reason cited for her dismissal was her non-Aryan descent. Although aware that this would happen, the dismissal came as a dreadful shock. Not only had she worked very hard to obtain the maximum qualifications for teaching in the public service, she had also enjoyed being part of that service. She had spent many hours of her own time producing plays and musicals to instill a love of learning in her pupils. Only the Headmistress of her school had the courage to send her a card with thanks for all her endeavors. Lore and Ernst

discussed emigration to England or the U.S. but the fact that Ernst was forty-eight years old, spoke no English and had a profession, the law, which could not be practiced in any English speaking country made them reluctant to take that path. Ernst also hoped that the German people would come to their senses.

On the 10th of October 1933, Lore received permission to teach individual groups of a maximum 5 persons provided that they were also of non-Aryan descent. She had to pay 3 Marks for this permission which had to be renewed yearly. It enabled her to offer her services to Frau Tony Lessler, who had been running a small private school in Berlin- Grunewald, for some years. Originally, the school was a *Waldschule* (woodland school) designed for children whose health was not strong enough to attend the public school system. The Montessori program was used in the lower school. But when Nazi regulations demanded that all Aryan children and teachers leave the school, because Tony Lessler, the headmistress, was Jewish, it became a private Jewish school. Lore taught at this school from October 1933 until the 1st of January 1935.

On the 7th of March 1934, Lore's mother, Jenny Zweig, died from a stroke. Lore inherited one half of a house which had been in the family since 1913. The other half went to her older sister. Her mother's natural death was followed by a most dreadful murder. During the night between the 30th of June and the 1st of July 1934, the "Night of the Long Knives" Lore's cousin, Dr. Alexander Zweig and his wife were arrested and subsequently murdered. At the time of the murder, Zweig had been a practicing physician who owned a sanatorium. Because the Zweigs had no children, Lore, Alexander's favorite cousin, inherited a considerable sum of money and a Cremona violin. It seemed appropriate to devote the money to the opening of a Jewish boarding school, which had been in her thoughts since her dismissal from the public service and her subsequent visit to the small town in southern Germany where she had witnessed such virulent anti-Semitism. She began serious planning while still teaching at the Lessler Schule.

The opening of Lore's school occurred in spite of receiving a letter from the Prussian Commissioner of the Capital Berlin, signed and dated the 8th of April 1935, stating clearly a) that her application to open a Jewish boarding school could not be granted and b) that she had permission to teach groups of 5 non-Aryan children only. But Lore, cleverly circumvented these teaching restrictions. By forming a group with other teachers, quite a daring undertaking, she increased the total number of students to be admitted to the boarding school, the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schülerheim, (Home for Students) in the house she had inherited from her cousin.

Surrounded by similar houses, the large gardens created a park-like atmosphere. Much thought was given to the physical and mental wellbeing of the boarders. The food was not kosher but vegetarian meals were available on request. Non-boarders, from the inner city of Berlin, could also attend the school as it was easy to reach; six tram lines and two bus lines passed within walking distance. The pupils sat with their teacher at a round table. There was no blackboard. They did not have to raise their hands to speak. It was a very friendly atmosphere and teachers

stayed even during intermission. Sonia Schweid, who enrolled in October 1935, wrote: “The greatest joy were those classes which were held out of doors under trees on pleasant days. It must have been during that period that we had botany and were encouraged to go out and gather, identify, and mount all kinds of plant material. I’m still reaping the benefits of that activity.”

Pupils ranged from 6 to 18 years. On the top floor of the house were dormitories where 2 or 3 children had to share a room. These were equipped with cupboards and washbasins. On the second floor slept the two boarding school supervisors and when necessary a nurse. Medical support came from Dr. Philip Cahn, a pediatrician and one of Ernst’s cousins by marriage. This was vital as more and more public medical help was denied to Jewish people. On the ground floor were most of the classrooms; the basement contained the kitchen and other support facilities. The house had one outside terrace and several balconies which were used for teaching or recreation when the weather was suitable.

The syllabus had to be based on that of the German elementary school with additional courses on request. In the upper classes mathematics was augmented with accounting practice. Religious education played a large part with Hebrew lessons twice weekly. Close by lay several local synagogues, where pupils could attend services on Sabbath and Jewish Holidays. Music was taught in every grade and instrumental music lessons were available. Domestic science, handicraft and horticulture were also included in the syllabus. In summer, games and athletics took place on the grounds of the Jewish Community located in the Grunewald and in winter, exercises were conducted in the gym of the Bar-Kochba Association in Halensee.

It took until the 9th of January 1936, eight months after the school had opened, for the document granting permission to open a school to arrive. The four-page document stated that the teaching of foreign languages other than Hebrew was forbidden, that only girls were permitted in the upper school and that girls and boys had to be taught separately in the lower school. The total number of children per classroom was entered on the plan, bringing the total number of pupils allowed in the school to 173. Dr. Goldschmidt was required to submit lists of pupils to the local mayor, and submit the school timetable to the Inspector of schools on every 1st of May. On no account should the school give the impression that it was a government school. By the time this document arrived, a new application was about to be lodged because more space was urgently required. The reputation of the school had spread so rapidly that more and more children had joined both as boarders and as day students, causing crowded conditions.

By Easter 1936, an additional building was ready and the senior school numbering 219 pupils moved into that space. Part of the huge garden became the playing fields for outdoor sports and athletics. One part of the basement, which was covered with a parquet floor, became the gym. Also located in the basement were a large music room together with a grand piano, a workshop for wood and metal work, a laboratory for scientific experiments and washrooms with lockers. On the first floor was a huge entrance hall, surrounded by 9 large classrooms plus a room for the

art class. On the next floor was the office, the staff room and various other rooms that could be used for teaching of smaller specialist classes. Washing facilities were also available on that floor. The facilities provided an opportunity for Jewish children to engage in sports as they had been prohibited from attending most facilities of which they had once been members. By employing close relatives, family friends and other trusted persons, the danger of incriminating information reaching Nazi ears would hopefully be avoided.

Official permission to operate the school arrived on 20th of May 1936. The school was to be called “*Jewish Private School, Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt, elementary school with further education for boys and girls.*” It was a part of the Nazi strategy to impress foreign visitors for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin that Jewish schools were allowed to exist. Certainly a concerted effort was being made by the Nazi propaganda machine to remove anti-Jewish hate publications from the streets of Berlin during that period.

With previous restrictions removed, the school could operate as a senior school teaching foreign languages, which were French, English and Latin with Hebrew part of the religious instruction. Physics, Chemistry and Biology were taught alternately, so were History and Geography. Music Appreciation and Drawing were included in the morning syllabus. Girls and boys were taught in the same class. As was customary in Germany, school started at 8.15 am and continued to 9.50 am. After a second breakfast, classes started again at 10.15. They continued until about 2pm when most children went home. Pupils who wanted to stay for lunch could eat in the neighborhood. In the afternoon, some returned for sports. Danish long ball, a cross between rounders and baseball without fielders, was a popular game; others played handball or football. Other afternoon activities were metal work and choir practice.

The harassment of Jewish students in the public school system continued. In different schools this took on different forms depending on the headmaster or teachers. As a result, many Jewish students left the public school system and joined a Jewish school. While it had been hard to leave good school friends behind, it had become inevitable, as Aryan parents were told not to allow their children to associate with their Jewish friends. Henry Eisner wrote: “In late 1936, I started an experience which, at least in retrospect, was fulfilling, exciting, enriching. Fulfilled because I could at last resume what should never have stopped. Exciting, because I was put together with a group of bright, challenging, stimulating people unlike any I had met in my home town’s *Realgymnasium*, enriching because I was blessed with a faculty which while demanding was understanding and compassionate”. Eva Posen wrote: “There are not many things in my life that I remember so well as the feeling that I had, and still have, about the Goldschmidt Schule. It was our place of refuge, our own place where we could forget the rest of the world, and I look upon it as my very own *Garden of the Finzi Continis*.⁶³ The friendships formed during that particular

⁶³ *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* is a 1970 Italian film, directed by Vittorio de Sica. It stars Lino Capolicchio, Dominique Sanda, and Helmut Berger. The film is based upon Giorgio Bassani’s novel of the same name.

period were strong and lasting to this very day, 45 years later, forged during a time of turmoil, danger, hastened awareness, and even terror. The school seemed precious and more real than anything outside. I loved it dearly and shall ever remember it as having contributed a special cared for feeling at a time of great vulnerability.”

Lore had become aware that in some international schools, pupils were being prepared for different exit examinations simultaneously. Realizing that the future of most of her pupils lay in emigration, she decided that besides the *Abitur*, or German diploma, a leaving certificate from an



Around 500 children were taught at the Berlin Goldschmidt School at Hohenzollern Damm.
“We felt free,” a former student recalls.

English University would be of great value. She approached Cambridge University, which in turn notified the Academic Exchange Program, German Pedagogic Foreign Service Registry of these negotiations. This authority, in turn, sent a sympathetic memorandum about the issue of Cambridge University examinations in Germany to the German Minister for Science in Berlin which suggested two possible public schools for the English examinations, and two Jewish schools, the Philantropin in Frankfurt-am-Main and the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt

Schule. Lore hoped the plan would go through because she had filed the original application. She had pointed out that Jewish students would be able to emigrate more quickly if they passed the exams, thus fulfilling a wish of the regime to be rid of the Jews...

The document suggested that negotiations should be concluded in the autumn of 1936. The school year opened with the Sports Festival of Jewish Schools. It was a great occasion for all Jewish children in Berlin as they had been excluded from taking part in the Olympic Games. The Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule, being a new school, sent a dozen active participants, a relatively small number but, when they entered the playing field wearing their green shorts with a green LGS badge on their white shirt, Lore Goldschmidt was very proud. The festival concluded with the singing of the *Hatikva*.⁶⁴

An examiner came to the school to file a report. He described the teaching materials as adequate and the gym and playing fields of the school as exceptional. He was impressed by the highly

⁶⁴ Hatikvah (Hebrew: הַתִּקְוָה, pronounced [ha tik'va], lit. English: The Hope) is the national anthem of Israel. Its lyrics are adapted from a poem written by Naphtali Herz Imber, a Jewish poet from Złoczów, Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1877. The romantic anthem's theme reflects the nearly 2000-year-old hope of the Jewish people to return to the Land of Israel—their ancient homeland—and to restore it and reclaim it as a sovereign nation.

qualified staff who, because of the rapid expansion of the school, were coping with great difficulties. Completing the syllabus presented problems as students with very different backgrounds - some had learned Latin and Greek first, some had started with English rather than French - had joined the school. To overcome these, 5 teachers were employed by the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule to give the required bridging courses. Attached to the report were two lists registering the number of students that were in every class on the 26th of May 1936 and on the 15th of October 1936. The lists showed that the junior school had 78 pupils in October and the senior school had 249. The report was favorable and must have helped Lore's applications for the Abitur and the English Examination Centre. However, an internal memo was issued in the Education Department suggesting that the school's application be denied.

On the same day, however, in a second internal memo, Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt's application to have her school included in the list of schools which could be used as an English Examination Centre was written about favorably. In that memo, the inspector assured the *Reichsminister* that the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt School had adequate facilities to prepare students for the English examinations but then questioned, whether in fact a Jewish school should be considered at all. On the other hand, if permission were granted it might speed emigration and help solve the Jewish question.



Students from the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt primary school in Berlin, 1937

Because the German authorities were moving so slowly, Lore went to England to gain support. The assistant secretary of the University of Cambridge, J.O. Roach, confirmed their conversation stating that Cambridge University would be willing to make arrangements to enter pupils from her school for the examination, provided it met with the approval of the German Ministry of Education. They would be willing to take advice from the Ministry of Education or the University of Berlin regarding the

safe keeping of the examination papers and supervision during the tests. Once German recognition had been received, the University of Cambridge would recognize her school as an approved school. Lore forwarded this correspondence to the State Minister for Science on the 29th of December 1936, with a request that the matter receive urgent attention. Further she pointed out that, as it would take one year to prepare students for the examination on the 6th of December 1937, permission to employ three English teachers was urgently required, especially as a separate submission for a teacher, Mr. Philip Woolley, had been lodged earlier but had not been granted.

In spite of these official delays, Philip Woolley arrived. Having completed his undergraduate education in classics at Oxford University, he decided on adventure before settling down as a classics master at an English Public School. He made several inquiries abroad. As a result, the British Consul in Berlin informed him of a possible position at the Jewish school of Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt. He decided to explore this. With only a few words of German, he caught the boat train from Victoria Station in late November 1936. The joy of Philip Woolley's arrival was enormous. Looking like the quintessential English gentleman, with tweed jacket and grey slacks, he charmed all members of the staff and students of the Goldschmidt Schule. He had a beautiful Oxford accent. He became very popular in spite of his lack of German. In fact, it may have been an asset, as it forced students to speak English. The fact that a non-Jewish person had come to join the school gave hope and encouragement to all. He earned a nickname "Mister", a sign of affection. He started work immediately, selecting the first set of students to take the "Proficiency in English" examination of Cambridge University, which would take place the following July.

On the 12th of February 1937, came a breakthrough. In an internal memo the Minister of Science ordered that, following a request by the English University of Cambridge, the Dorotheen Realgymnasium and the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule would both become examination centers for the University of Cambridge in Berlin. It was emphasized that this permission could be revoked at any time.

At the end of May 1937, the required census of school statistics for high schools was submitted. The Jüdische Privatschule Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt was listed as a *Reformrealgymnasium* with six grades plus a Primary School. 76 pupils, about 50% of them boys, were enrolled in the Primary School. 423 pupils were enrolled in the upper school which made a total of 499 pupils. Considering that the school was only two years old, this number of pupils represented an amazing achievement. As the questionnaire had a distinct racial bias, it demanded both details about religion and race. Eleven pupils were listed as Protestant, 1 pupil was Catholic and 7 pupils had no religious affiliation. 440 students were listed as Jewish. 56 pupils were listed as stateless and 3 were listed as part Jewish. Students paid fees to attend, but no one was ever turned away if the fees could not be paid.

The fact that 9 teachers with different religious beliefs were working in the school was in marked contrast to the religious intolerance of the Nazi State. It was Lore Goldschmidt's aim to provide tolerant and loving surroundings for her students. Only in this way could they grow into mentally healthy adults. In July 1937, just after the end of term, 8 students sat for the "Proficiency in English" examination of Cambridge University for the first time; 7 students passed, 5 with a mark of good and 2 with credit. This true success story ended the school's summer term on a very high note.

In 1938, Germany invaded Austria. The brutality that the Jews of Vienna had to endure left a deep, incomprehensible mark of horror and foreboding on all Jewish people, especially in

Germany. Lore's husband, Ernst, like many others, came to the conclusion that he did not want to be associated with a nation that was displaying such bestiality. Lore, very aware of the many emotional problems associated with emigration, had a vision. Perhaps, moving the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule as an entity to another country would be less traumatic than attempting solo family emigration. England was the obvious choice as she had made so many successful contacts but visa restrictions were severe. The USA was a possibility because several months earlier she had met Dr. Theodore Huebener, Assistant Director of Foreign Languages for the Board of Education of the City of New York.

Only very rarely did a private individual undertake a journey to the USA. The cost was considerable. Theodore Huebener welcomed the Goldschmidts to New York. In a very interesting letter to the Commissioner of Customs, Washington DC, he introduced Lore as the head of the largest private Jewish school in Berlin, asking him to be of maximum assistance. He suggested that she might wish to bring as many as 300 people to the USA and, citing President Roosevelt's recent statements, asked the department: "to take a sympathetic attitude toward the situation". He signed this letter with "Member, American Committee for German Christian Refugees". Lore subsequently visited the Office of the Commissioner of Customs, New York to discuss detailed regulations should a move of the school eventuate. On the 20th of June, Theodore Huebener received a very interesting reply from the New York State Education Department in which G.M Wiley stated: "that a license is not required in this State in order to conduct a private school. It should be noted, however, that any private school which enrolls children of the compulsory school age must offer educational facilities reasonably equivalent to those available in the public schools. The instruction in such a school must be in English from English texts, and must meet the statutory requirements relative to such an instructional program." This encouraging letter plus all the information from the Customs Department eased some physical problems associated with moving the school to the USA. Raising financial support was the next task.

Lore and Ernst visited Albert Einstein on Long Island. He gave her a letter of recommendation to Fiorello La Guardia, the Mayor of New York. They made contact with Mrs. Elsa Brandstroem-Ulich, who had made it her priority to help immigrant teachers find positions in the U.S. school system and in due course, even hoped to raise enough money to issue affidavits to teachers wanting to immigrate to the USA. The Joint Distribution Committee of all Jewish Funds was approached but, only after pressure from Dr.Huebener, agreed to meet them. The meeting was amicable and the Joint Distribution Committee agreed to help with \$10,000 yearly, provided no objection would be raised by the *Reichsvertretung* with whom they had some prior agreement. It was Theodore Huebener who guaranteed the support for the Affidavit of Emigration for the Goldschmidts, truly a most generous gesture. He also introduced them to Alvin Johnson, the founder of the New School for Social Research in New York. In his autobiography, Johnson recalled that after founding the New School for Social Research, he managed to bring a few, well known, Jewish scholars, working in the field of the Social Sciences, to the U.S.A. by offering

them positions in his school and thus circumvented the required Affidavits with their associated waiting times.

Johnson informed Lore and Ernst that, although now an academic, he was concerned with the drift of farmers to towns and that he was endeavoring to revert this trend. As he was the son of emigrant settlers in Nebraska, he understood the problems of small scale farming. By settling Jewish refugees from Germany on the land he hoped to break the cycle of Jews settling in New York. Further farm emigrants would be able to circumvent the Affidavit restrictions. Johnson mentioned Maryland as a possible place of settlement. Remembering her own very happy youth on her father's farms, Lore offered her help with this venture. She hoped to be able to use the farm as a basis for a school, the idea of a "farm school" fired her imagination. She felt that a possible solution had been achieved. She would look for suitable settlers in Germany and engage Herr Moch, an experienced educator in farming, to train Jewish students for three months before departure to the USA.

With the political situation rapidly deteriorating, people started to emigrate in larger numbers. By the second half of September 1938, the political situation had become dangerous. Ever since the annexation of Austria, Hitler's eye was aimed at incorporating the Sudetenlands of Czechoslovakia. His constant propaganda had reached the point of no return. With Allied forces in a weak position, representatives of the British and French governments agreed to meet him. During the 2nd meeting in Munich on the 29th of September, Chamberlain, waving his infamous piece of paper and shouting "Peace in our Time" had handed the Sudetenlands to Germany without a fight and with total disregard for the people of Czechoslovakia. Hitler, finding himself in a powerful position, ordered the removal of all Jewish citizens, who had moved to Germany from Poland since the War. He labelled them "Polish Jews". They were rounded up on the 27th and 28th of October and without any belongings transported to the Polish border and dumped inside Poland. This had its repercussion in the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule. Wolfgang Edelstein's comment was that, "One day, in early November, there were empty seats in my Goldschmidt Schule classroom." Fortunately, it did not affect the staff of the school but it had an impact on morale.

On the 10th of November 1938, Lore and Ernst's children and their cousin set off to walk to school, but were met by anxious taxi drivers, whose taxi-stand was at the next street corner. They told them that the synagogue had been set on fire and warned them to hurry to school. As they could see smoke rising from the direction of the local orthodox synagogue, they ran to school. There they found both pupils and teachers very agitated as many had seen other synagogues burning on their way to school. They tried to settle down, but, just after class started, Dr. Goldschmidt as headmistress of the school, came to the classroom to inform teacher and students that it had been decided that a large gathering of Jewish children presented a danger. They should, therefore, leave in small numbers via the back gate. The non-Jewish custodian, Herr

Voss, would supervise the departure and make sure that all dispersed quickly. Then they were to rush home.

The Goldschmidt children went back to their apartment. Not long thereafter, their parents came to the apartment with the terrible news that the Nazis were arresting all grown Jewish men. Lore had received a warning telephone call from the wife of the French teacher, Dr. Julian Hirsch, after he had been arrested. Quickly, a small bag was packed for Ernst. Then both Lore and Ernst left speedily via the kitchen door and ran down the back stairs to the inner court yard. From there, a passage led into the street where the taxis stood. The taxi drivers were loyal. Some drove Jewish clients all day around the town to stop them from being arrested. One of them took Lore and Ernst to the British Consulate because Ernst needed a visa to enter Great Britain, where he felt he could be safe. He had a valid passport, because he had visited the USA that summer.

The Goldschmidt adults had hardly disappeared when the front door bell rang. The maid, Helene, opened the door to two big men both wearing Nazi badges. "We want to speak to Herr Goldschmidt," they demanded. This came as quite a shock to the children, but the daughter quickly answered by saying that her parents were at the school. Then they wanted to know how to find the school and she gave them directions. Helene just kept saying: "*Ja, Ja*" and they left. What a relief for the moment! But the children knew that they would be back. Helene agreed that the boy children must stay out of sight. The boys were given strict instructions to hide, which fortunately both duly obeyed. Almost an hour later the Nazis returned. They were very angry and shouted that the daughter had lied to them, saying: "Your parents are not at the school". She kept her cool, denied that she had lied to them and replied: "Does your daughter know where you are?" They looked embarrassed; they had no answer to the clever question.

Rather than leave the flat, they decided to stay until Ernst might return. Helene was at her best. She showed them around the flat, politely asked them to sit down in the dining room and served coffee. But they remained suspicious, because the moment the telephone rang they demanded to take the call. Numerous telephone calls followed, all coming from parents who, having phoned the school, which did not answer, rang the Goldschmidt home to find out what was happening. As the Nazis could never answer their questions, they would hand the phone back to Helene who always replied that she did not know anything and she did not know where Dr. Goldschmidt was. After some hours Helene served lunch! The two Nazis started to relax and did not bother to answer the phone any more. This turned out to be a great blessing. Sometime later Lore rang to ask what was happening. Helene stood her ground and coolly replied that she did not know where Dr. Goldschmidt was. Lore, slow to catch on, kept on saying: "I am Dr. Goldschmidt". Helene finally replied: "I do not know where Dr. Goldschmidt is and we have visitors waiting for her here". Then Lore realized the situation and hung up. The Nazis never knew what had been said. It was late in the afternoon when Lore phoned to say that she was coming back.

“We had given my father eight hours to escape,” Lore’s daughter says, “nevertheless, I was anxious about Mother’s return. Standing at my bedroom window, I waved my arms when she appeared in the street, hoping to stop her from coming up. But she had laid her plan and there was no stopping her. She made one of her truly theatrical entrances, the grand dame had arrived!” The Nazis never found out where Ernst was.

After this event Lore went to England. She met with His Majesty’s Secretary of State for Home Affairs who spoke sympathetically about a suggestion made to him by Lord Samuel, a Jewish peer, to transfer pupils of Jewish schools to England. Therefore, Lore’s focus had to change. She would in all likelihood have to accept an offer to take her own children into St Christopher School so she applied to move some furniture to England in their name. In a letter written on the 30th of December, 1938, to Raymond Goldschmidt, Ernst’s cousin in Washington, she described the new situation and asked for his support. The University of Oxford had offered an old country house, Thyrop-House, Kingsley, Oxfordshire with 380 acres of farmland. Another farm in Ringelstone, Kent was also a possibility. She expressed high hopes for the Thyrop House venture. Some money had been raised for it by her: £2400 from Woburn House, German Jewish Aid Committee, £5000 from the Co-operative Society, £1000 from Oxford University and £6000 from guaranties by parents. Some teachers would transfer from Berlin. She went on to ask Raymond’s advice about raising money for the project in the USA. She also asked for his help in providing a support Affidavit for her U.S. visa application as the consul in Berlin had asked for evidence of family support. She included hopeful comments on Johnson’s project saying that it might be possible for herself, Ernst and Moch to visit the project. She said that Ernst hoped that they would be able to move by the end of March.

While Lore was in England, another Nazi edict was issued to embarrass the Jewish population, which demanded that from the 1st of January, 1939, all Jewish women add the name, Sara, to their name, and all men, Israel. The school had to become the Dr. Leonore Sara Goldschmidt Schule, which involved great expense in reprinting stationary and Report Cards. All adult Jewish people had to register for a “*Kennkarte*” (identification document) which carried a big “J” on the outside and a photograph and two fingerprints on the inside, making the person look like a criminal. When the winter term report cards were issued later that month, late due to all the upheaval, they were the last ones issued before the enforced name change. They were all beautifully hand written in an effort to carry on in a normal manner.

On the 22nd of March, Lore received the Affidavit, for the family via the U.S. Consul. The waiting time was about two years. This made any thought of going to the USA most unlikely and England had to be the country of immigration. On the 4th of July, just as the summer term was coming to an end, a new restrictive law against Jews was ordered. All Jews had to belong to a new organization the *Reichsvereinigung* with its government in Berlin. The *Reichsvertr tung der Juden in Deutschland*, which had been a voluntary organization, founded by Leo Baeck and administered by Dr. Otto Hirsch, was dissolved. The new organization was under control of the

Gestapo with Hirsch in charge. The organization would act as supervisor of the Jewish school system. Lore Goldschmidt's reaction was not recorded but it must have been obvious to her that her time in Germany was rapidly coming to an end. Nevertheless, a voluntary summer holiday "camp" was established by her to give her students an enjoyable vacation, while Lore went to England.

With her children settled in England, Lore embarked on the arduous task of trying to move her school to England. While all their personal goods, had arrived safely, no packages from the school had come. This meant starting from scratch and she began a huge effort to raise money to finance the beginning of a school. Her problems were so different from 1934, when she had had an adequate sum of money. In England she was almost without cash. She contacted the Movement for the Care of Children with whom she had made previous contact. Since December 1938, the Movement had registered and rescued over 8000 children. These had entered Great Britain on a "white card 222". This movement was known as the *Kindertransport* (Children's Transport). Usually, children left Berlin by train, sometimes under the guidance of Dr. Otto Hirsch, who accompanied them to London, but once they got there, each child would be billeted with his sponsor. Large sums of money had been collected in England by Jewish organizations such as B'nai Brith (Sons of the Covenant) and JRC (the Jewish Refugee Committee) which was deposited with the CBF, the Central British Fund for German Jewry. Lore Goldschmidt believed that by staying together as a group, greater emotional security would result for the children. It would also help parents, still in Germany, as they would know the surroundings of their children. She hoped that some money would be made available to sponsor her project, especially for teachers who required individual financial sponsorship for their visas.

Following the British declaration of war against Germany, Aliens had to register and obtain identification cards. They were classed as Enemy Aliens A or B. Class A were Nazis and interned forthwith. Class B, all the Jewish refugees, were not interned. Sir John Anderson, the Home Secretary, did not want to repeat the unnecessary hardship imposed on innocent aliens as had happened in WW1. The border between England and Germany was closed. As Lore had predicted, quite a few children, who had been billeted with families, some desperately unhappy, were sent by B'nai B'rith to her new school. As the news of the reopening spread, pupils appeared. Otto Fendrich wrote: "It was in the winter of 1939 that we were told that the Committee (B'nai B'rith) had decided to move us from Macaulay House School in Sussex. I had been there since I arrived by Kindertransport in June, 1939; some of the others had been a little longer, some a little less long. I suppose there must have been about 20 of us in all, because a coach was hired to take us from Cuckfield to Folkestone. It dropped us outside Athelstan School in Shorncliffe Road. My memory of the first few weeks is of liberation: we were trusted to go out by ourselves, to keep any pocket money we had and our letters were not censored- all these were freedoms we had not had at Macauley House. The accommodation and the food were also much better. The general atmosphere was very congenial, and although there certainly was discipline, it was not obtrusive or draconian. Dr. Goldschmidt, as headmistress, was clearly in

charge of every aspect of the school and more than capable of laying the law down when necessary.”

To compensate for the absence of parents, who rarely managed to send a message, the organization of birthday parties and other celebrations was taken most seriously. Every effort was made to keep the children happy. The children played Monopoly and Ping-Pong. There was lots of singing. A sewing circle was formed to mend clothes with one person reading aloud, sometimes in German, but the students usually spoke English. All of this was disrupted by the order that men and boys of 16 and over who were aliens would be interned. Ernst and the older boys in the school were taken away. Soon after, Lore and the other children in the school were evacuated to the countryside. They were considered aliens and could not be living any closer than 14 miles to any coastline, as it was feared they might give aid to the enemy. How ironic!

It took a long time for Ernst to secure his freedom. By that time, Lore was working as a teacher in another school. Many of her former pupils had found places in homes all around England and were safe until war's end. Although many of them had lost their families, the harshness of their own experiences was lightened by the determination of Lore Goldschmidt to find and maintain a safe haven for them.

Lore Goldschmidt epitomized the smart and selfless teacher who constantly made the safety and welfare of her pupils her top priority. It was through her good work that almost 500 children were able to survive the Nazi era.

By Gertrud Thompson © Gertrud H. Thompson, December 2003. All rights reserved.
Edited here by Elaine Culbertson.

July 2

40.	Ravensbrück Concentration Camp	157
41.	Ravensbrück Timeline	160
42.	Excerpt from Sarah Helm's <i>Ravensbrück</i>	162
43.	Spiritual Resistance at Ravensbrück	163
44.	The Dawn of Hope: A Memoir of Ravensbrück	164
45.	<i>Other Victims: The Hearing Impaired</i>	189
46.	We Were Jehovah's Witnesses	192



A Memorial at Ravensbrück Concentration Camp.

40. Ravensbrück Concentration Camp

The Ravensbrück concentration camp was the largest concentration camp for women in the German Reich. In the concentration camp system, Ravensbrück was second in size only to the women's camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. After the closure of the Lichtenburg camp in 1939, Ravensbrück was also the only main concentration camp, as opposed to sub-camp, designated almost exclusively for women.

German authorities began construction of the camp in November 1938, at a site near the village of Ravensbrück in northern Germany, about 50 miles north of Berlin. In April 1941, the SS authorities established a small men's camp adjacent to the main camp.

In November 1938, SS authorities transported about 500 male prisoners from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp to the proposed site to construct the Ravensbrück camp. The first prisoners interned at Ravensbrück were approximately 900 women whom the SS had transferred from the Lichtenburg women's concentration camp in Saxony in May 1939. By the end of 1942, the female inmate population of Ravensbrück had grown to about 10,000. In January 1945, the camp had more than 50,000 prisoners, mostly women.

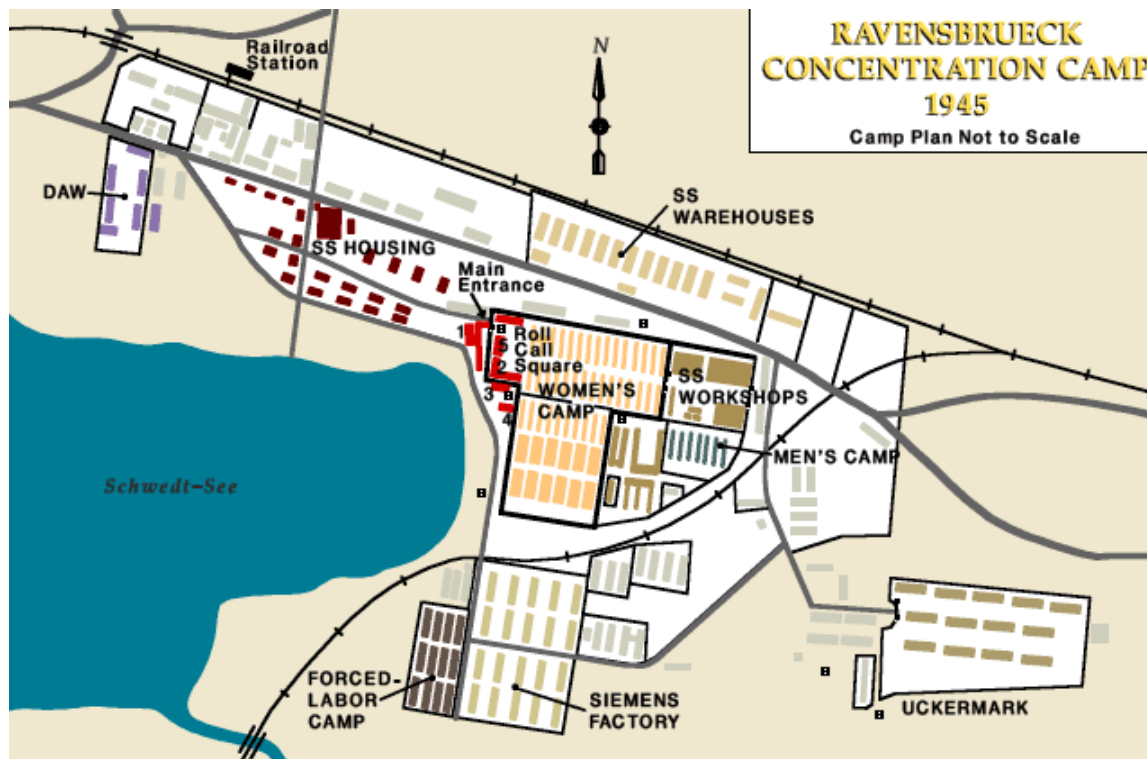
The inmates came from over 30 countries. The greatest numbers came from Poland (36%), Soviet Union (21%), the German Reich (18%, includes Austria), Hungary (8%), France (6%), Czechoslovakia (3%), the Benelux countries (2%), and Yugoslavia (2%).

SS authorities interned various types of prisoners in Ravensbrück, including political prisoners, "asocials" (among these prisoners were many Roma and Sinti), Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, "criminals," "work-shy," and "race defilers." The numbers of prisoners in each of the above groupings varied greatly throughout the camp's existence.

The camp leadership was divided into five departments: the commandant's office, political department, "protective custody" camp, administration, and camp doctor. SS Colonel Günther Tamaschke served as the commandant of Ravensbrück from December 1938 until April 31, 1939. SS Captain Max Koegel officially replaced Tamaschke as camp commandant on January 1, 1940. On August 20, 1942, SS Captain Fritz Suhren took over as camp commandant and held the position until the end of April 1945.

Aside from the male SS administrators, the camp staff included only female guards assigned to oversee the prisoners. These female guards were not members of the SS, but were members of the so-called "female civilian employees of the SS" (*Weiblichen SS-Gefolges*). Beginning in 1942, Ravensbrück also served as one of the main training camps for female SS guards.

The main camp contained 18 barracks; two of these barracks served as a prisoners' sickbay, two served as warehouses, one served as a penal block, and one functioned as the camp prison until 1939 when a separate prison was built. The remaining 12 barracks served as the prisoners' housing, in which prisoners slept in three-tiered wooden bunks. Each barrack had one washroom and toilets, but the sanitary conditions were poor and greatly deteriorated after 1943. Food rations for prisoners were meager at the outset, and the amount and quality of food the camp authorities allotted each prisoner decreased further after 1941. By January 1945 the barracks were horribly overcrowded. This overcrowding, aggravated by abominable sanitary conditions, resulted in a typhus epidemic that spread throughout the camp.



Periodically, the SS authorities subjected prisoners in the camp to “selections” in which the Germans isolated those prisoners considered too weak or injured to work and killed them. At first, “selected” prisoners were shot. Beginning in 1942, in accordance with “Operation 14f 13,” the SS transferred them to the sanitarium at Bernberg, which, equipped with gas chambers, had served as a killing center for people with physical and intellectual disabilities within the framework of the so-called “euthanasia” program of the Nazi regime. The SS sent around 1,600 female prisoners and 300 male prisoners to their deaths at Bernberg in the spring of 1942; around half of these prisoners were Jewish, at least 25 were Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), and at least 13 were Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Camp authorities initiated a second round of killings at such “euthanasia” killing centers later in 1942, continuing until 1944. During this phase, around sixty transports left Ravensbrück for the

“euthanasia” killing center at Hartheim, near Linz, Austria with between 60 and 1,000 prisoners each. The SS staff also murdered prisoners in the camp infirmary by lethal injection or by transferring them to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. In early 1945, the SS constructed a gas chamber in Ravensbrück near the camp crematorium. The Germans gassed between 5,000 and 6,000 prisoners at Ravensbrück before Soviet troops liberated the camp in April 1945.

Starting in the summer of 1942, SS medical doctors subjected prisoners at Ravensbrück to unethical medical experiments. SS doctors experimented with treating wounds with various chemical substances (such as sulfanilamide) to prevent infections. They also tested various methods of setting and transplanting bones; such experiments included amputations. The SS selected nearly 80 women, mostly Polish, for these experiments. Many of the women died as a result. The survivors often suffered permanent physical damage. SS doctors also carried out sterilization experiments on women and children, many of them Roma (Gypsies), in an attempt to develop an efficient method of sterilization.

In 1942 the SS began opening brothels in some of the concentration camps. Camp authorities sought to exploit the women forced to work in these brothels to reward male prisoners for meeting or surpassing production quotas. Most of the women forced to work in the brothels were prisoners from the Ravensbrück camp; their numbers are estimated at least 100. The camp authorities forced some prisoners to work in the brothel, while other prisoners “volunteered” after the camp authorities promised them preferential treatment or release from the concentration camp after six months. None of the women were released early from the camp as promised.

Ravensbrück Sub-Camps

The SS required Ravensbrück prisoners to perform forced labor, primarily in agricultural projects and local industry. By 1944, Germany increasingly relied on forced labor for the production of armaments. Ravensbrück became the administrative center of a system of over 40 sub-camps with over 70,000 predominantly female prisoners.

These sub camps, many of which were established adjacent to armaments factories, were located throughout the so-called Greater German Reich, from Austria in the south to the Baltic Sea in the north. Several sub-camps also provided prisoner labor for construction projects or clearing rubble in cities damaged by Allied air attacks. The SS also built several factories near Ravensbrück for the production of textiles and electrical components.

The largest sub-camps, which held over 1,000 prisoners, included Rechlin/Retzow, Malchow, Grüneberg, Neubrandenburg, Karlshagen I, Barth, Leipzig-Schönefeld, Magdeburg, Altenburg and Neustadt-Glewe.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005199>

41. Ravensbrück Timeline

November 1938 —German authorities begin construction of the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

December 1938—SS Colonel Günther Tamaschke becomes the first camp commandant at Ravensbrück.

May 1939—The SS transfers 900 women from the Lichtenburg women’s concentration camp to Ravensbrück concentration camp. They are the first women in Ravensbrück.

January 1, 1940—SS Captain Max Koegel replaces Günther Tamaschke as camp commandant.

April 1941 — SS authorities establish a small men’s camp adjacent to the Ravensbrück main camp.

Spring 1942 — SS authorities begin sending prisoners they “selected” as unfit for work at Ravensbrück to a sanitarium in Bernburg, which, equipped with gas chambers, serves as a killing center for people with physical and intellectual disabilities within the framework of the so-called “euthanasia” program of the Nazi regime. The SS authorities send nearly 2,000 Ravensbrück prisoners to their deaths in this manner during the spring of 1942.

Late 1942-1944 — Camp authorities initiate a second round of killings at such “euthanasia” killing centers. During this phase, around sixty transports leave Ravensbrück for the “euthanasia” killing center at Hartheim, near Linz, Austria, with between 60 and 1,000 prisoners each.

Summer 1942 — SS medical doctors begin subjecting prisoners at Ravensbrück to unethical medical experiments. Many of the women subjected to such experiments die as a result.

August 20, 1942 — SS Captain Fritz Suhren replaces Max Koegel as camp commandant.

Early March 1945 — The SS begins “evacuating” Ravensbrück with the transport of 2,100 male prisoners to Sachsenhausen.

Late March 1945 — The SS transports about 5,600 female prisoners from Ravensbrück to the Mauthausen and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps.

April 1945 — SS guards force about 20,000 female prisoners, as well as most of the remaining male prisoners, on a brutal and forced evacuation on foot toward northern Mecklenberg.

April 29-30, 1945 — Soviet forces liberate the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

1946-1948 — British military courts try members of the Ravensbrück concentration camp staff. The courts find ten SS authorities and camp functionaries guilty; nine are sentenced to death, while one is given a prison sentence of ten years.

1948 — Soviet military tribunals in the Soviet zone try Ravensbrück camp guards in several different trials; most are sentenced to prison.

1947 — A Polish court finds former Ravensbrück camp guard Maria Mandel guilty and sentences her to death.

1949 — Former Ravensbrück camp commandant Fritz Suhren is tried by a French military court in 1949, along with the director of forced labor at Ravensbrück, Hans Pflaum. Both are sentenced to death. Hanged 1950.

1950s and 1960s — East German courts continue to prosecute former Ravensbrück camp personnel.

1965-1966 — The last Ravensbrück trial takes place in East Germany

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007758>

42. Excerpt from Sarah Helm's *Ravensbrück*

It was the local children who first suspected something was about to be built on the northern shore of the Schwedtsee—or Lake Schwed—but when they told their parents they were ordered to say nothing. Until 1938 the children played on a piece of scrubland near the lake where the trees were thinner and the bathing was good. One day they were told the area was out of bounds. Over the next few weeks, locals in the town of Furstenberg—of which the village of Ravensbrück is a small suburb—watched as barges delivered building materials up the River Havel. The children told parents they'd seen men in striped uniforms, who chopped down trees.



A group of former German prisoners -“mothers for peace”—led moves to create a memorial to honor the memory of the dead, but the political reality of the Cold War meant that only the communist resisters were remembered: like the other camps in the DDR [*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, i.e., “East Germany”]—Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen — Ravensbrück soon became an official communist shrine. The centerpiece of the memorial was the statue called *Tragende*, inspired by Olga Benario⁶⁵ and said to represent ‘a strong woman, with knowledge, who helped her weaker comrades.’ It was a monument to ‘our heroines who fought’; in other words, the communist ideal of womanhood. The fact that Olga was also a Jew, and was murdered because she was Jewish, was not mentioned. Non-communist prisoners—as well as Gypsies, asocials and other Jews—were also largely ignored by the East German camp history.

Source: Sarah Helm. *Ravensbrück: Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women*. New York: Doubleday, 2014, p. 644.

⁶⁵ Born Olga Benario in Munich, Germany, on February 12, 1908; gassed along with other German women political prisoners at Bernburg Hospital in early February 1942; daughter of Leo Benario (a wealthy Social Democratic attorney) and Eugenie Guttmann Benario (a socialite); received extensive leadership training ranging from Marxist theory to skydiving in USSR; married Luis Carlos Prestes (unofficially); children: one daughter Anita Leocádia Prestes (b. November 1936). Joined the Young Communist League in Munich and became one of the most promising young women in the German Communist movement (1923); after engineering the rescue of Otto Braun in Berlin, fled with him to the Soviet Union (1928); traveled to France, Belgium, and England on Communist Youth International mission (1931); assigned by the Comintern [The Communist International was an international communist organization that advocated world communism] to go to Brazil with Brazilian revolutionary leader Luis Carlos Prestes to lead a revolutionary upheaval which failed (November 1935); captured with Prestes by the fascist regime of Getulio Vargas and held until shipped, seven months pregnant, to Nazi Germany, where she gave birth to her daughter in prison (1936).

43. Spiritual Resistance at Ravensbrück

Resistance at Ravensbrueck often took the form of diminishing the suffering of friends and buoying the spirit of oneself and others by creating and offering small gifts, writing poetry and recipe books, making secret drawings, and sharing information.

Despite their own suffering and the near impossibility of finding raw materials, the women in Ravensbrück made each other small gifts, wrote poems and even plays, and made drawings. They often presented tokens of affection to each other for such occasions as birthdays and holidays - a phenomenon that seems to have been much more common among women than men.

Other forms of spiritual resistance at the camp included language, history, and geography classes; improvised theater and music; drawing the reality of camp life; and sharing recipes and preparing imaginary meals. Through such activities, the women helped each other survive. While there could not have been armed resistance under the circumstances of Ravensbrück, there was sabotage during production of rocket components at the Siemens factory. There were also efforts by prisoners who worked in the offices to keep secret records of arrivals, punishments, and deaths. During the early years of the camp, there was even a secret newspaper.

Active resistance also took place by women inmates. Sabotage occurred in the Siemens factory, but also in any kind of work. Political prisoners, who had some experience in organization before they were arrested and brought to Ravensbrück, made contacts working outside the concentration camp, in factories and on farms. This type of collaboration was possible because many of the inmates were not Jews. Through this process, they sent illegal correspondence, made secret lists of arriving prisoners, lists of victims of executions and operations, memorized names of Nazi doctors and guards. Thanks to cooperation with male prisoners from a prisoner of war camp in Neubrandenburg, the world knew about crimes committed in Ravensbrueck long before the end of the war. The BBC from London read the list of the victims of medical experimentation by the Nazi doctors, and the Red Cross sent packages addresses to the “rabbits,” according to author Wanda Kiedrzynska. The “rabbits” would not have survived had it not been for the help of the international community which helped them get extra food, while fellow inmates helped them change their appearance to avoid execution. Women of different nationalities would sometimes live in the same barrack and this had a chance to celebrate holidays together, read poetry, sing, perform, exchange political views, and give foreign language lessons. This was done, of course, in secret and in small groups.

Source: Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, University of Minnesota
(www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/exhibitions/ravensbruck/spiritualResistance.html)

44. The Dawn of Hope: A Memoir of Ravensbrück

By Genevieve de Gaulle Anthonioz

The door closes heavily behind me. I am alone in the night. I can scarcely make out the bare walls of my cell. Groping blindly in the dark, I make my way to the wooden platform and its rough-textured blanket and lie back down, trying to summon up again my interrupted dream: a while ago I was walking along a moonlit road—a light so soft, so healing—and voices were calling to me. Then suddenly there was nothing but the beam of a flashlight, the frightened face of our barracks chief, the harsh order for me to get to my feet, and the shadows of two SS men. Nightmare or reality? Baty and Felicity, whose straw mattresses lay next to mine on either side, woke up as well. They gathered up my few belongings, including my tin cup and bowl, helped me down from the bunk, and hugged me in their arms. What is this all about? What does it mean for me? I know that executions take place in the dead of night.



For the time being, I am in a building inside the Ravensbrück concentration camp called the bunker. It's a prison within the prison, which also serves as a solitary confinement cell. Here there is no blanket, no straw mattress; bread is handed out every three days, soup once every five days. When you are sent to solitary, your welcome is often a flogging: twenty-five strokes, fifty strokes, seventy-five strokes, from which the prisoner rarely survives. In the camp proper, we are fully aware of that, as we are aware of the fact that in this place—in this bunker—Professor Gebhardt⁶⁶ is conducting his horrible experiments, using young women as human guinea pigs.

Since despite all my efforts I cannot fall asleep again, I start thinking about our seventy-five little “rabbits” (*kaninchen* is what we call them here). Their legs are horribly mutilated, they hop and jump about with the help of makeshift crutches. These young Polish girls (the youngest, Bacha, is fourteen) have been operated on, some as many as half a dozen times. The renowned surgeon, a Berlin University professor, has operated on both their bones and their muscles, then infected their wounds with gangrene, tetanus, and streptococcus. Through his experiments he attempted to prove that Gauleiter Heydrich,⁶⁷ whom he treated after an attempt on his life, could not have survived the infections to his wounds.

After the initial series of “operations,” the prisoners had put up some kind of resistance to avoid going under the knife again. But they were quickly trussed up and bundled off to the bunker,

⁶⁶ Karl Franz Gebhardt (1897 – 1948) was a German medical doctor. He served as SS, Chief Surgeon in the Staff of the Reich Physician SS and Police, and personal physician to Heinrich Himmler. Gebhardt was the main coordinator of a series of surgical experiments performed on inmates of the concentration camps at Ravensbrück and Auschwitz

⁶⁷ Reinhard Heydrich (1904 – 1942) was a high-ranking German Nazi official during World War II, and one of the main architects of the Holocaust.

where Dr. Gebhardt continued his surgical experiments without anesthesia and without any aseptic treatment. Now that I'm here, where it all took place, I have a better idea of what they must have gone through, how unimaginable their suffering must have been.

When I hear the first wail of the siren, I know it is half past three in the morning. In the overcrowded barracks, the daytime nightmare is again beginning. The scuffle for the distribution of "coffee," the jostling to gain access to the disgusting latrines, which are pitifully few in number, before the second siren sounds for roll call. It is October 29, and the weather is holding up reasonably well, not yet terribly cold. But how endless it seems, standing there for the camp roll calls to be over! If the numbers don't tally because during the night someone has died and they have forgotten to erase her name from the ledger (when this happens, the body has to be carried immediately out to the camp square), we sometimes stand there for hours without moving. And suddenly that makes me think that my sudden nocturnal departure for solitary confinement may not yet have been brought to the attention of the authorities. I am sure that Baty and Felicity will not yet have had time to let my friends know. They have no idea what has become of me, and here I have to confront that fate, whatever it may be, without their tenderness and compassion. And with that thought, a feeling of total solitude runs through me like an icy blade.

A few days ago we celebrated my birthday together. To make the cake, everyone contributed a handful of bread crumbs, which we kneaded together with several spoonfuls of the molasses-like substance they call "jam" or "jelly." For candles, we used twenty-four twigs, and for decoration some leaves we had furtively and hastily picked along the banks of the swamp during our work convoys there. A true moment of happiness!

Another siren, meaning roll call is over and the work columns are setting off for the day. From the depths of my night I can hear the dull thud of the wooden soles, the distant barking of dogs, and the harsh shouts of the SS guards. Here I am, far away, as if at the bottom of a deep well where, little by little, I will fade away and die. And if the door were to open, would it be for me to walk toward the corridor where the executions take place? It's not far away, just on the other side of the crematorium ovens, whose stacks send forth their wreaths of smoke into the sky.

Must I prepare myself for death? No one will be there to help or comfort me, to hold my hand as I so often have held others' during the final moments of one of my fellow prisoners. The last faces I shall see will be filled with hate and contempt. Don't think about it anymore and, obviously, put your family out of your mind or you'll lose courage. More difficult to take leave of Germaine, of Jacqueline, of Danielle, of Milena, of Greta, of so many others whose fraternal affection has enabled me to survive till now. Will they ever know how I died? A dress riddled with bullet holes, stained with blood, one more name crossed off the camp list: that is how we learned of the fate of the others who disappeared into the night.

But what about those who are still here? What will become of them? Will any of them survive? What terrible trials and tribulations will we have to face over the coming months? We know the invasion has occurred, that the Allies have landed in France; even the SS newspaper had to admit that. But since then all we know is that fierce combats are still taking place. The thought of spending another winter here is simply unbearable.

I make an effort to pray: “Our Father, Who art in heaven... .” “Hail, Mary, full of grace” fragments of the psalms. From the depths of the abyss, I too call out to God, as so many others have before me. I try to deliver myself over to the boundless mercy of the Father, to make myself one with the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. In response, it is not even a silence I hear, but the wretched and distant murmur of my own distress.

I’m ashamed to confess, but I am afraid, afraid of those moments that will mark the end of my life. But isn’t that the only way not to be alone any longer—by sharing the anguish of those who, like me, are destined to die today? Massacred by the blows of a pickax, bitten by dogs, thrown into ditches like dirt or refuse. I have seen it with my own eyes, heard the frightful moans and laments without being able to lift a finger to help. Now I belong to those who have lost all hope. Together we cry out, like Christ on the cross, “Oh, God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

From the corridor just outside my cell door, I can hear the sound of boots on concrete and the click of keys opening cell-door grates. Doubtless food is being handed out to those who have the right to receive it. But for me, nothing! Obviously, if they are planning to kill me in the near future, what’s the point of feeding me? My eyes have to some degree adjusted to the darkness. I have made a search of my cell, felt my way along the clammy walls, made a mental inventory of what it contains: a shelf, a stool chained to the wall, a toilet of sorts, above which is a spigot. I manage to find my tin cup and take a long drink of water, which gives me great pleasure, even if it turns out that it will be my last drink on earth.

Figuring there’s no point trying to remain alert, on my guard, I finally manage to fall asleep and don’t wake up until I hear the evening siren. My comrades are coming back, dead with fatigue from the day’s labors. They are made to march in rows, five abreast, in martial cadence with, if they are the building contingent, their shovels slung over their shoulders. When my convoy arrived in February, the guards ordered us to sing, so we did; but when we broke into a French military marching song they were less than appreciative! For several months I worked in the swamp, once and a while in the forest. The worst job was loading railroad cars with coal in July, when it was unbearably hot, with never any possibility of washing up. The pace of the work was extremely tough, but there was always the threat of the guards’ truncheons, not to mention the dogs, and the twelve-hour work shift went on without a break.

We did manage to find a bit of solace in nature: some sprigs of herbs and plants culled for the vitamins they contained, sometimes even a flower clandestinely brought back to the camp for someone who was bedridden or to celebrate a birthday. On our way to and from our work

stations, we walked through the SS village; the children belted us with stones as we passed. After that, we walked around the lake; the countryside was sad and beautiful: sand, birch trees, and pines.

When I was taken off the earthwork convoy and sent to work inside, at first I breathed a sigh of relief, thinking I had found a less demanding job. In the barracks workshop, our job was to take the uniforms that had been sent back from the Eastern front—taken from the bodies of the wounded and dead—and salvage from them whatever we could. The fact that the uniforms were in tatters, that they contained vestiges of human remains and were filled with lice, did not mean we could not glean something useful from them—buttons, the lining—all of which could be recycled. When we came into the barracks for the first time, we were greeted with an enormous pile of this clothing. Under the watchful eyes of the SS guards, we had to cut and snip, unstitch anything deemed salvageable while the SS urged us on: *Schnell, schnell, schnell!* [“Fast!”] Other prisoners had the job of washing whatever we had managed to salvage. The stench was unbearable, and the SS man in charge of us was one of the worst in the camp. Once I saw a poor woman in our work group who surreptitiously dared to wash a piece of her own linen. The SS happened to see what she was up to; he took out his truncheon and beat her to death on the spot. The beating seemed to go on forever before she finally succumbed.

It didn’t take me long to wish I was back with the outdoor work group, all the more so because I was assigned to the clothing-salvage barracks one week on the day shift and the following week on the night shift. And then everything began to go downhill for me: I contracted both scurvy and corneal ulcerations; I was suffering so much physically that I could never manage to keep up with my work quota. The SS guard, whose name was Syllinka, knew how to deal with me: in the course of my week on the night shift, he beat me savagely several times. Before long I would surely be killed like the woman who had tried to wash her undies. Meanwhile, my wounds were suppurating, so much so that they spilled onto the uniforms that had been shipped in from the fields of battle, some of which I had managed to slip under me on my chair to ease my pain.

But for the time being I have managed to escape any further blows from Syllinka’s ready hand. The question is: at what cost? To die here in solitary confinement, or nearby in the execution corridor? Or perhaps I’m simply fated to die of hunger. From what I understand, if you are deprived of food and only drink a bit of water, you slip, little by little, into an endless sleep. Here I have as much water as I want from my spigot, a thin stream that has a strange taste but one that has obsessed me so often during the torrid heat of summer days.

Tonight will mark my third night in this cell. At last, I’m beginning to grow accustomed to it. My eyes no longer suffer from the bright sunlight. No more pushing and shoving to get to the latrines or into the coffee line, no more truncheon blows, no more constant harassment day and night. I have a bunk to myself, I can sleep. Dreamless nights, profound as black water, pierced by the siren’s wail. Do you know, my comrades, that I am with you, close beside you? I feel your bone-weariness, I see through your eyes the pearly dawn that lightens the sky above the horizon

of the Baltic. There is no other life to dream of than yours, than ours. Beyond lies the unattainable. Limit your dream to still being alive, to sharing the tainted drinking water, the hard, gray bread, the soup in which, if you are lucky, a turnip or two might be swimming . . . and, above all, limit your dream to the comfort of a handshake, the tenderness of a loving look. When the dread hour comes to awaken to a new day, listen to Jacqueline as she breaks into song: “Awake O sleeping hearts, the Lord is calling you...” The memory of her clear soprano voice makes me sing in turn and tempts me to pray, here in my desert, here in my night.

When I was in Fresnes Prison⁶⁸ on the outskirts of Paris, and even later during the endless voyage to Ravensbrück, once in a while there was a response to my prayers, a ray of hope. But as we entered the camp, it was as though God had remained outside. By the light of the projectors, we caught a glimpse of women carrying heavy vats. I could barely make out their unsteady silhouettes, their shaven heads, but I was thunderstruck by the vision of their faces, which has remained with me ever since. Never had I seen—on the faces of those sentenced to death, those who had been or were about to be tortured—anyone so indelibly marked by inhuman distress. These human beings, though still alive, had already lost every vestige of expression. I should have felt compassion for them, but what overwhelmed me was a feeling of utter despair. “You who enter here, leave all hope behind,” wrote Dante in the *Inferno*.

As we walked, or rather staggered, bone-weary between the dark camp barracks day in and day out, across the black cinders of the ground beneath our feet, I was struck with the absolute certainty that there was indeed a fate far worse than death: the destruction of our souls, which was the purpose and goal of the concentration-camp universe.

From that point on, what did the knowledge that death was imminent matter? For nine months I struggled not to yield to despair, to maintain my own self-respect and that of my fellow prisoners. No, God was not absent, He shed His light on Emilie Tillions’s lovely face; old Maria, Sister Elizabeth, were radiant in His reflected light. Clandestinely, we stole behind one of the barracks with a Roman Orthodox nun—a former and fanatic revolutionary—to pray together; Sister Mary and she had responded to the ordeal of the camp by moving to a higher level of spiritual communion.

Here in my cell I do my humble best to follow in their wake. But in no way do I want to try to detach myself in my prayers from the most wretched among them—those who stole bread, who elbowed their fellow inmates aside to make sure they got their allotted ration of soup, or, worse yet, those who lay helpless in some corner with their vermin and filth. They are the reflection of what we came so close to becoming, and we must share their humiliation as I do our fraternity and bread.

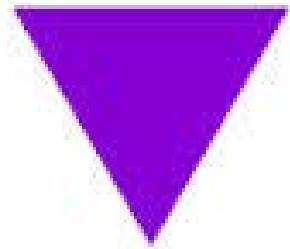
⁶⁸ Fresnes Prison is the second largest prison in France, located in the town of Fresnes, Val-de-Marne, South of Paris. During World War II, Fresnes prison was used by the Germans to house captured British SOE (Special Operations Executive) agents and members of the French Resistance.

I slip into a state of total lethargy, from which I'm awakened by the sound of my cell door being unlocked. Standing in the doorway is a female guard who looks at me in amazement.

"Who are you? What are you doing here? How long have you been here?"

My knowledge of German enables me to understand her questions and formulate a response. The woman leaves and goes off to try to find out what I'm doing here, then comes back shortly to inform me that I'm the victim of an error. I've been "overlooked" since my arrival in solitary. I'm not being punished and my failure to be given food will be rectified shortly. She also tells me that the shutters covering my window, which keeps me in almost total darkness, will be reopened.

An elderly female inmate soon arrives with some food. She is wearing the purple triangle that marks her a member of Jehovah's Witnesses, and her camp number indicates that she has been here a long time, probably one of the earliest inmates. With the shutter open, a faint light trickles in, enabling me for the first time to see my new living quarters. Though cold and damp, the cell is clean, and I see that for cellmates I have a bevy of fat cockroaches, that seem totally uninterested in me until my meager ration of bread arrives.



Since apparently I'm going to go on living, I have to get myself organized: not wolf down my food, chew slowly no matter how hungry I am. Also try to exercise a little. There's a chair that enables me to crack open the transom; behind the thick glass, which is opaque, is a grill, then a set of bars. I figure out that I'm in the underground portion of the solitary section; these barred windows must open onto a ditch that separates the prison from the barracks of the SS guards. Impossible for anyone from the camp to make contact with me. And who, I wonder, are my fellow inmates here in solitary? No one responds when I knock on my left-hand wall or cry out with my face pressed close to the stones; on the other side are probably some poor wretches from the camp being punished. I finally figure out that the cell immediately to my right is occupied by an SS soldier, which ended any attempt at communication on that side! As we learned in the camp, the solitary section was also used as a maximum security prison for men. Who could escape from it, set as it was in the center of a women's concentration camp?

It doesn't take me long to make a list of my few possessions: a fairly large piece of white cloth stolen by my friend Berengere as she was unloading the bags of clothing of those who had been exterminated at Auschwitz. To her I also owe the sweater I'm wearing beneath my striped prison dress. My only pair of thick wool stockings was knitted by Lisa, who, at her risk and peril, liberated the yarn from one of the workshops. Miraculously, my needle holder, which was given me for my birthday by Violaine and which I had hidden in my sleeve as I left the barracks, is still intact, containing three steel needles: one with white thread, another with black, and the third with red. All of this precious material was carefully kept concealed from Syllinka's watchful eye,

as was the piece of leather I have that came from the visor of a tank officer's cap. I also have a little cloth pouch for my ration of bread, and in the hem of my skirt is sequestered a tiny pencil. My other little presents have wisely been left behind in the care of my barracks mate Baty: in all likelihood, I'll never see them again.

Another interesting discovery: what serves as toilet paper (what luxury!) are little squares cut out from the newspaper. I read some news items that are fairly dated and put several aside so that I can later fill in the blanks where the news has been censored.

I duly note that today is All Saints Day. Last year at this time, at Fresnes, the German military chaplain had celebrated Mass for those prisoners not in solitary. When one of us read aloud the Beatitudes, there was so much peace and joy in the room I felt I was among the blessed of the earth. I search my memory for the divine words to no avail ... their light has been extinguished, my heart as hard as a rock inside me. In vain do I invoke the names of the saints. They have become as foreign to me as mathematical formulas.

On November 2,⁶⁹ I force myself to dwell on our family dead: my dear, darling mother, whom I was made to kiss, all cold in her coffin, in the midst of Father's tears and those of his entire family. She was so tender, so gentle, so happy—no, it was not Mother lying there beneath the taut, white sheet. I fled into the garden, where the irises had been cut, in order to bedeck her coffin. In one fell swoop, a little four-year-old girl learned the meaning of unhappiness. My sister was three, my brother, two. On each of our hats my grandmother had sewn a little white daisy with a golden heart. Mama died in the Sarre⁷⁰ department, where Papa worked as an engineer. We made a long voyage to Anjou, where she was to be buried. The funeral wagon, marked in chalk with a white cross, was hooked up to our train. Papa took us by the hand to her car so we could see her. Why did he say, "That's where your mother is?"—in this pitch black train car, completely closed, as later were the cattle cars of the deportation convoy. In 1938, just after the Munich Accords, it was my sister's turn to leave us. She was only seventeen, blond with blue eyes, a girl who loved life to the hilt. We shared a bedroom, and then, suddenly, her bed was empty. They came and removed from our closet her clothes, which were almost identical to mine.

At the Fresnes Prison, from the scraps of newspaper hidden in the hem of my underwear, I learned of the death of my grandmother. She was buried in the same grave as my mother and sister, where Grandmother's children, who had died before her, were also buried.

Many of my comrades have a hard time accepting the idea that their ashes will end up in the neighboring peat marshes. As for myself, I found the morgue, where the bodies are piled one on

⁶⁹ All Souls' Day — a solemn feast of the Catholic Church commemorating all of those who have died and now are in Purgatory. In western Christianity, All Souls' Day is celebrated on November 2nd.

⁷⁰ Sarre is the name of a department of the First French Empire which is now part of Germany and Belgium. It is named after the river Saar.

top of the other, far more repelling. Besides, death isn't the worst thing here: the worst is the hate and the violence. I tried with all my might to avoid looking at the nightmare faces. We were strictly forbidden from looking directly at the SS guards, but when one of them gave full vent to his fury, mercilessly attacking some poor wretch a mere few feet from us, it was impossible to avoid seeing the terrible look of pleasure in their faces.

All night long I am obsessed by the same vision: heads floating in a sea of blood, and on each of their faces an unspeakably ugly smile. I awake with a vision of a big magnolia tree covered with flowers. It was under such a tree that a woman friend told me that my mother was dead. Then, strangely, my cell is filled with the smell of magnolia blossoms!

The days go by amazingly quickly, whereas each moment seems interminable. In the morning, during roll call, the guard cracks open my door; I am obliged to stand at attention, without moving a muscle, as called for by the camp rules. After that, I don't see anyone, only a rare glimpse of the old lady who passes me my soup through the grill. The soup is the same as the one they gave us in camp— just as bad but slightly thicker. One day I chance upon a tiny piece of meat floating in the soup and I burst into tears, thoroughly astonished at myself for such utter lack of self-control.

One day the guard takes me for a very short walk in a tiny internal courtyard, where I get my first glimpse of the sky in a long time. It is a leaden, gray sky, which feels like snow. In fact, the first flakes begin to fall; then I hear the order for me to return to my cell, to the oppressive walls of my prison, to its darkness, its silence. When I get back inside, again I burst into tears.

My eyes close into a kind of interior vision: a big, peaceful lake in the middle of a dark forest. The shores of the lake are steep and bare. Not a reed, not a ripple, not a bird. Fascinated, I move dangerously forward. A strong hand holds me back and prevents me from falling. And suddenly a feeling of enormous peace washes over me. I only wish I could share the feeling! The chant of Hail Mary comes back to me, every last word of it; Mother of mercy, our salvation, our hope, has turned her eyes toward this poor creature who is moaning and weeping. I ask her to be merciful to those who suffer or are in despair, those for whom the specter of death looms nigh, those near and dear to me, about whom I have no news whatsoever. It's the first time since October 28 that I have felt so close to them.

I note each passing day in the margin of a newspaper page. Advent is fast approaching, which means Christmas is only a month away. To try to trick my sense of boredom, I decide to organize some cockroach races. From the whole troop, two champions emerge. Now I can tell them apart: the biggest cockroach is Victor, the other one I name Felix. For the also-rans I save a few crumbs as consolation prizes. There is a brief moment before night falls when a pale light filters through my "skylight," at least on clear days. My fellow inmates in solitary here must see the same light, if they are still alive.

One Sunday afternoon, the elderly inmate who brings me my meals opens the door of my cell and switches on a light. In a low voice she tells me that the SS are having some sort of celebration—that they’re very much in their cups—and says she’d like to take the opportunity to give me what I need to repair my poor stockings. I gratefully accept her offer, and she hands me a bit of wool yarn, a needle, and scissors. The stockings are full of holes, some of which are major, and I thank the good sisters who, when I was at boarding school, taught me how to mend and darn stockings. When the Jehovah’s Witness lady returns to collect her material, she utters a little cry of admiration... If I like, she’ll bring some more sewing supplies; which she does: on several occasions she slips me yarn and scissors and needles, which I use to mend all my clothes. The lady’s name is Anna, I learn (“Please call me Anna”), and I make up my mind to embroider a little napkin for her as a Christmas present, for Christmas is just around the corner. In preparation for this, I draw with my pencil stub a kind of picture. It’s my manger: the Christ child is leaning against a cross, one finger raised in a sign of benediction. A woman deportee in her striped camp dress and head scarf is leaning up against Him. Under a triangle marked with an “F” I write out the number 27.372: my concentration camp ID number.

In vain I try to chase from my mind all memory of Christmases past, especially the one that followed the death of my mother, when Father sang the Christmas carols that mother had written out in her own hand. We looked down at our little shoes, happy despite all that had happened, and thanked the Christ Child and Mother for all the presents that heaven had sent us. Father fled from the room in tears. For Christmas last year, at Fresnes Prison, the chaplain celebrated Mass as he had done on All Saints Day, and the chapel was adorned with pine branches. For my convoy, which reached Ravensbrück on February 3, this will be our first Christmas in the camp. Each of us will do our best not to sink into depression, make an effort to cheer one another up—even mothers whose children have been taken away from them. Hadn’t we all promised ourselves and each other a thousand times that no matter what, “We’ll surely be home by Christmas”?

Will the SS newspaper possibly let a bit of good news filter through? When I was sent down here to solitary, there were some inmates who claimed we were going to be liberated very soon.... What was “soon”? In a month, in a week, the following day? ... In fact, they were right about the dates but wrong about the information: what those dates really signified was how long most of them had left to live. And the children? What about the gypsy girls whose mothers had consented to their sterilization so that they would be allowed to live—will they celebrate Christmas in some fashion? And what will this holiday mean for the babies who by some stroke of luck have not been taken from their mothers at birth to be forcibly drowned? They have survived, but day by day Marie Jo watches them slowly waste away because their mothers have no milk to feed them. On December 25, as on every other day, mothers will trudge to the morgue bearing the bodies of the babies for whom this is not a day of birth but of death.

I have finished the handkerchief for Anna, and in one corner I embroider her camp number. Tomorrow morning I'll slip it into her hand as she passes my coffee through the grill; then I shall at least have given a present, exchanged a smile with a fellow human being.

The twenty-fourth of December is sadder and longer than any other day. It starts off with the clang of doors being opened and shut, then I hear cries and moans, after which, silence, which strikes me as even more terrifying than all the noises that went before. Then all of a sudden a woman's voice is heard singing:

*Silent Night,
Holy Night,
All is calm,
All is bright.*

Where is the voice coming from? Is it a prisoner? A female guard? No matter. Blessed be that voice, for that song has brought with it a moment of peace. Before I fall asleep, I too sing several carols: "O Holy Night," "It Came upon a Midnight Clear," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Angels We Have Heard on High"... But I refuse to sing "O Christmas Tree," for the pine trees of Mecklenburg offer us no peace.

I was dreaming that Violaine was with me when the siren for roll call woke me up. No. I'm alone, and I remember the present I made for Anna. This morning there is no roll call for work camp, and I can hear them talking and serving coffee earlier than usual. I station myself by the door, and as soon as Anna opens the grill I slip the handkerchief into her hand and in German wish her Merry Christmas. No smile, no response; all I can do is sadly drink my coffee. Once again, my eyes are filled with tears. There is no question of my feeling sorry for myself. Today we are celebrating the Word of God, He who came unto us in the form of a child and descended to live among us. Yes, even in this place of desolation, where fear and wickedness reign supreme. If from the depths of my despair I cry out to Him, perhaps will He make His voice known to me, perhaps will I be touched by the sweetness of His love. But no, there is no reply, or if there is I fail to hear it.

*Unto us a child is born,
A Son is given unto us.*

He was born to succor the most wretched among us as He was born for the cruelest of the SS guards: for Syllinka, for Ruth Neudeck, whom I have seen slit the throat of an inmate with the sharp edge of her shovel. There are no Christmas carols, even those of the angels themselves, capable of drowning out the laments, the screams, the cries of anger and hate. Nor is there any way for me to get away, to transcend myself; my manger is here in this solitary cell that separates me from the camp but that, little by little, is filled with frightful images and terrible rumors.

The following day the cell door opens, and, to my amazement, who do I see come in but Anna. Her face is wreathed in a broad smile, and she walks over and puts a small box on my straw mattress.

“From your friends,” she says. “A Christmas present from your friends. I couldn’t bring it to you any sooner, because we were being watched by the SS guards even more closely than usual. But now they are sleeping off their long night of heavy drinking and debauchery. I managed to get hold of the key. Take everything out of the box. I’ll stop by a little later to pick it

Wonder of wonders! There is a little branch of a pine tree, a French Christmas carol, four cookies cut in the form of a star, a shiny red apple, a tiny piece of pork fat, two squares of sugar. And then there is a doll, a marquise, all dressed up in a pink shirt and lace scarf, with curly white hair. Beneath her skirt is embroidered a “J” and an “A”. Jacqueline d’Alincourt, of course, my sister prisoner, who is sending me this present. And as for the French Christmas carol — “Away in a Manger”—that is from Anicka, with the help of Vlasta. Their friendship is so strong they were able to accomplish the miracle of reaching out to me in my solitude and despair. And last but not least, at the very bottom of the box, is a neatly folded light brown shawl made of soft wool, which I immediately wrap around myself as if I were folding myself in their warm and gentle friendship.

Anna returns to pick up the empty box.

“It wasn’t a very Merry Christmas! Last night was so sad, the air filled as it was with all the screamings and moanings because of the floggings. Here in the solitary section you were spared, but your neighbors in the camp were not. For Christmas Eve, beatings were the order of the day.” When the cell door closes behind her I am no longer all alone. My comrades have reminded me of this chain of fraternity that links us all together in a common bond. Night falls, and I wrap myself up in the Christmas shawl. It’s the first time in two months that I haven’t been cold, and in my dream I’m walking through a huge field of white daisies in full bloom, then in a wood of scattered pine trees whose slender trunks shine brightly. It’s summertime, and I’m nine or ten years old. My uncle, who is only eleven years older than I and who is also my godfather, weaves me a crown of leaves.

“You’re the queen of the flowers, Genevieve...” Filled with happiness, I laugh wholeheartedly; my brother and sister look at me with admiration. When I wake up, I remember that my sister is dead, and I have no idea whether my brother is still alive or not. All I know is that he managed to make it across the Spanish border and volunteered for the Free French Forces. Together, on June 17, 1940, he and I had listened with a mixture of indignation and complete amazement to Marshal Petain’s radio address to the nation. How in the world could one accept this cowardly defeat suffered virtually without putting up any resistance?

Roger was seventeen; I was nineteen. The following day we were part of the mass exodus from Paris, on the roads of Brittany with so many other refugees. We had seen the first German soldiers: a motorcycle contingent with their black jackets and black helmets. How humiliating. My father was beside himself with anger, as were several reserve officers, some of whom were well along in years and none of whom was equipped with any weapon whatsoever. My grandmother was with us, she who as a little girl had wept bitter tears over the French defeat in 1870 at Sedan at the hands of the Prussians. From the far end of a little square in a village through which we passed, a priest came running to tell us an important piece of news: he had just heard over Radio London about a young French general who had made it to that city and was calling on the French to keep on fighting.

“His name,” the priest said, “is General de Gaulle.”

Grandmother, who was very frail, drew herself up to her full height—which still didn’t make her very tall—and tugged the sleeve of the priest. “Father,” she said, “that’s my son you’re talking about. That’s my son, Father!”

One month later she was dead, but not before she had heard General de Gaulle’s voice several times coming to us via the BBC. She was so proud of him and believed his every word with all her heart and soul.

In the depths of my dark dungeon, I can see again her flower-bedecked grave: day in and day out people we don’t even know lay flowers on her tomb. Honor, which meant joining the Resistance. During her final hours, she had said to me, “I suffer for my son.” She had three other sons and a daughter, and she had no idea what had become of any of them. But Charles, whose mission it was to take up the sword and hold it high, was always in the forefront of her thoughts. Now, in the Ravensbrück bunker, my role is the offering of my life, another way of rejoining the battle.

For me, the new year-1945—began marked by the echoes of another round of hard drinking on the part of our SS guards. How was the war progressing? In the camp, no matter how hard they tried to keep news from us, we somehow always managed to get wind of what was happening. For instance, I knew about the liberation of Paris the same evening of the day Allied troops marched down the Champs-Élysées. How did I learn so quickly? A Czech friend of mine, Vlasty, who worked in one of the SS offices, had taken advantage of a momentary lapse in the officers’ close surveillance to slip over to the office radio—which was always kept on at a very low volume as a precaution, in order to keep the SS constantly informed about possible air raids—and turn up the volume. For a brief second she heard the immense uproar of the people of Paris celebrating their liberation. After work she managed to find me and pass on the news, after which I went to several barracks where the French women were housed and told them that Paris had been liberated.

In remembering these glorious moments, I am far away from my cell. But some disturbing noises in the corridor bring me back to harsh reality. Several days before, my heavy cell door was literally torn asunder from top to bottom by a sudden burst of gunfire. I glued my eye to the crack in the door and saw several men in white blouses scurrying to and fro. I scarcely had time to leave my observation post when the bolts of my cell door were drawn back and I had the unexpected visit of one of those men in white, who entered my cell with a syringe in his hand. He motioned for me to open my dress and gave me an injection directly into the chest. What could it be? A lethal injection such as they administer to those in the camp they judge to be insane or who are suffering from tuberculosis? Or was it an injection in preparation for some medical experiment they intended to perform on me, the way they have on their little rabbits? I had no choice but to wait, and the wait seemed endless. Must I get ready to die? Suddenly, death seemed to me imminent. What pained me most was that no one would know how I met my end not my father, my family, my friends. I remained standing as long as I could, thinking that I might as well be standing in front of a firing squad. Finally, when I could stand up no longer, I collapsed onto my straw mattress and immediately fell asleep, waking up only when I heard the wail of the siren. It was not the wakeup call but the siren announcing an air raid. The sound of bombs bursting not very far off. Was it possible the war was getting closer? Come now, I thought, you have to try and stay alive: it takes very little to rekindle a taste for living. Thanks to the daring of some of our fellow inmates who clandestinely went through the luggage of the arriving prisoners and managed, despite the tight security, to bring an occasional book or two back to the barracks. For several hours I had in my possession a German edition of Moby Dick; on another occasion I had an anthology of French poetry, and later a copy of Flaubert's *Salambo*. And there I was, suddenly transported to Africa, basking in the African sun at the foot of the walls of Carthage. Hamilcar's war seemed to me as actual as the one being fought that day. Time ceased to exist, the border between dream and reality, nightmare and reality, disappeared. I could walk out of my cell, cover vast distances of space, travel through centuries of time. Sometimes my mind brought flooding back terrible memories, those I lived scarcely a few weeks before, and then again I was completely consumed by imaginary concerns, such as those brought on by the huge octopus in *72,000 Leagues under the Sea*. I fought by trying to recite full stanzas of poems, but more often than not I couldn't remember all the words, and I would end up with fragments of several poems all jumbled together:

*The heron rubs shoulders with the strand ...
 Beneath the Mirabeau Bridge flows the Seine,
 and our love ...
 Or is it the Gallic Loire,
 the Latin Tiber from afar?
 The vast ocean stretch out before me ...
 O sea, O endless sea ...*

I am carried away by the flood of words: the beam of a lighthouse sweeps across the crest of the waves; the sky is strewn with stars—some I can recognize, but I can't find Altair, in the

constellation Aquila.... I am stretched out on my back and can feel the warm summer earth beneath me. Suddenly a thick fog moves in and covers everything until it lifts, revealing a huge snow-covered forest. My grandmother and I are in a big sled, drawn by two large horses. The sleigh bells are jingling cheerfully, unless it's the sound of the crystal trees. We're huddled close together under a red shag blanket.

Despite these escapes into fantasy, the days are interminable. I keep a sharp lookout for the little evening light that shines through my air hole, but in vain; nothing comes to lighten my darkness. But that same darkness must be good for my eyes, for the violent pain caused by my corneal ulcerations has almost vanished. On the other hand, I have more and more trouble swallowing any food, and as a result I increase my cockroaches' bread rations. Speaking of which, they are becoming more and more friendly: at one point I discover Felix lodged in the hollow of my arm. Impossible to finish my soup, and I end up throwing it down into the stinking toilet hole. If only I could share it with those women whom I have seen down on their knees, licking up the remains of a turnip soup that spilled onto the floor when a mob of famished women who had been fighting to fill their bowls overturned one of the pots. Compared to what my comrades have to go through every day, I feel privileged. I'm not being beaten, I don't have to work till I drop, I don't have to push and shove for everything I need. I have a straw mattress that is mine and mine alone, as much water as I want, and I can drink to my heart's content and wash up whenever I feel like it.

One morning when it's time for roll call, I don't get to my feet as the rules require each inmate must: stand at attention in front of her bunk. All night long I've been shaking with cold and fever, and there's no way I can drag myself to my feet. The guard who checks me through the peephole sees that I'm still lying there on my mattress and opens the cell door. I cringe for the blows that I know will follow, but instead she simply asks me if I'm not feeling well. A few hours later, much to my surprise, I receive a visit from one of the SS doctors whom I've never seen before. Without setting foot in the cell, he begins to question me. I describe, as briefly as possible, how I'm feeling fever, an excruciating pain in my right lung—and I venture it guess that I'm probably suffering from another bout of pleurisy, which I had suffered when I first arrived at Ravensbrück. I can't get over the fact that anyone cares! As a result of his visit, for the next two days I'm given four pills and allowed to remain lying down on my mattress.

Roughly three months earlier, on October 3 of the preceding year, my fate had already taken a surprising turn. That day, as I returned exhausted from my work detail, a woman guard had appeared at the door to our wretched and overcrowded barracks and called out my name. After having verified my camp registration number, she ordered me to follow her, but not with the usual brutishness of such commands. The camp commander wanted to see me, she said. We walked through the main gate of the camp, beyond which lay the buildings housing the SS offices, the nearest of which was that of the Kommandant himself. The only times I had ever

seen the camp commander, whose name was Suhren,⁷¹ were from afar. He was a formidable personage greatly to be feared. In his presence I had to lower my head and identify myself in German, not with my name—for I was no longer a person—but my inmate number: 27.372. He was standing in front of his desk, in a long room lighted by three windows. His surprising first question was: “How are you feeling?”

What in the world could have prompted this all-powerful camp master to inquire about the health of such a miserable person as myself, who could be of no possible interest to him? I responded:

“Very poorly, thank you. As you can. This unreal dialogue went on. “Yes, I can see. And you don’t look at all well. What is your work detail?”

I told him I worked in the Syllinka Kommando, which was still my official posting. In fact, I had been saved by Milena Seborova, a Czech forewoman, with the help and complicity of Herr Schmidt. The latter had in civilian life been the proprietor of a major ready-to-wear clothing factory in Berlin. Mobilized shortly before the war, Schmidt found himself posted in the SS without anyone ever asking him whether he wanted to be or not. Milena had insinuated herself into his good graces and now had a great deal of influence with him. She kept him posted on the Allied victory and kept dangling before him what his fate would be once the war was over. Half out of fear and half because he wasn’t really such a bad egg, he agreed to take into his Kommando those inmates who were at the end of their ropes, those in grave danger of dying or being eliminated, which was the case with me. Milena, armed with a notice signed by Herr Schmidt, had the audacity to come and request that Syllinka turn over to her the inmate bearing registration number 27.372. To be sure, Syllinka had no idea which of the prisoners Milena was asking for, but she was still running a real risk not only for herself but for Schmidt as well. I spent several weeks among the piles of rabbit skins that were destined to serve as lining for the fur coats the SS troops would wear on the Eastern front against the Soviets. Then I was turned over by the heads of the camp resistance movement to one of the oldest German political prisoners in Ravensbrück, Maria Wittemeyer, who had the enormous responsibility of being in charge of the camp equipment and provisions. She was the one you had to go to if you wanted a few feet of cloth or a spool or two of cotton or wool thread. Thus she had the female guards—in fact, the entire camp hierarchy—in the palm of her hand, for they all had to go through her for anything they wanted on the camp black market. Maria received me without wasting any time on amenities.

“Up till now the only people I’ve taken on have been Communists,” she said. “But the international committee has asked me to help save your life, so I’m making an exception. You can stay.”

⁷¹ Fritz Suhren (1908 - 1950) was a German SS officer. In 1942, he became commandant of the women’s camp at Ravensbrück concentration camp. His policy upon taking command was to murder the prisoners through working them as hard as possible and feeding them as little as possible.

To be sure, Suhren had no notion of all these goings-on when he asked me where I worked, and I could see him wince when I told him I had been assigned to Syllinka's clothing workshop. For I had instinctively lifted my head and looked squarely at him. A redhead, he had a crafty air about him; he reminded me of a fox, which is not exactly flattering to that poor animal. He sat down on the edge of his desk and questioned me further.

"Which barracks are you in?" "Block Thirty-one."

Another wince, even more obvious this time. "Starting immediately, you're being assigned to the infirmary, and you'll be transferred to Block Two. I think you'll find it less arduous."

I took my courage in my hands and replied, "But I have no experience taking care of sick people." "It doesn't matter. You'll be assigned to the record-keeping sector, since you know German."

The Kommandant picked up the telephone and called the head nurse, Frau Marschal, telling her that I would be joining the infirmary staff. Then he called the chief guard to inform her that I would be moving to a new barracks. I tried to protest that I preferred remaining with my French comrades in Block Thirty-one, but he would have none of it.

"That's an order," Suhren replied curtly.

Then, just as I was on the point of being escorted out of his office, he asked me again whether there was anything else I needed or wanted.

"Maybe some fresh underclothing? A warm jacket or sweater?"

"No, thank you, Kommandant, but as you well know the French women are among the most ill-treated in the camp. Their situation would be less impossible if they were all quartered in the same barracks. They're all in dire need of medicines and warm clothing to get through the winter."

"That's none of your business," he barked. "But if you personally are in need of anything else, let me know."

As I made my way back to my block, I rejoiced inwardly, not because of my changed situation, which was going to mean I'd be separated from my friends, but because I strongly suspected what their sudden interest in this poor, humble person, myself, had to mean: I was sure that the Kommandant's attention for prisoner number 27.372 was linked to the success of the Allied advance. Until then, no one among the SS personnel had the slightest inkling what my name was. If I had not yet succumbed to the beatings or the lack of food or hygiene, or died of exhaustion—

not to mention perished in the “black convoy” that marched prisoners to their deaths—it was by pure chance.

That same evening, I was transferred to Block Two, where there was only one other Frenchwoman, Baty, whose head had been entirely shorn of all its hair. Despite that, she had been assigned as the SS guards’ hairdresser. In Block Two there was also a Belgian woman, a technician whose background and training had led her to be assigned to those workers whose job it was to repair the various camp equipment. In any concentration camp, there was an amazing inequality among the inmates’ situations. Completely stripped of all their goods and possessions when they arrived—having nothing, being nothing—occasionally one of them managed to acquire possessions or power, sometimes both. Each of the privileged prisoners in Block Two had her own straw mattress covered with a generously-filled eiderdown blanket with blue-and-white patchwork squares. Each of them also had her own little washcloth hung on her own hook in a closet, beside her metal mess tin and cup, and, to boot, even a spoon! They could—in fact were obliged to—keep themselves impeccably clean and completely free of lice, for their work put them in contact with the SS camp personnel. Moreover, Block Two was the showcase section of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, the place to which very special visitors or international inspection teams could be brought to show how life “really was” there.

The following day I received a clean camp dress, a jacket, a shawl, and a pair of panties, a kind of wooden shoe that was almost new. Clearly, I was no longer a part of the camp’s *subproletariat*, the lowest of the low, the ragged and tattered, those who were beaten at the drop of a hat, made to work overtime in one of the forced-labor battalions for some presumed infraction of the rules. And I was obliged to report to the head nurse of the infirmary, an ill-tempered woman who had been ordered to treat me equitably and had no choice but to comply with the Kommandant’s orders. I shared a room with several other inmates—all of whom had been in the camp for a long time—a room that housed the camp archives. It was our job to update the deportees’ records: the names and numbers of the living and dead. I didn’t last very long at the job; after two days I fainted during roll call, and instead of being beaten till I struggled to my feet, which would normally have been my fate, I was taken just after the camp siren had ceased wailing to the main infirmary, not as a worker but as a patient. My scurvy sores were disinfected, I was given some vitamin pills, and I was exempted from roll call and allowed to remain in bed for several days. Then, on October 25, I was able to visit Jacqueline and a few friends in Block Thirty-one, in time to celebrate my twenty-fourth birthday. My new outfit was like a badge, the visible sign of my new status, which enabled me to move about the camp freely. Their clothing would never have permitted them to visit me in the “noble” part of the camp. Three days later when I was back in Block Two came the middle-of-the night SS visit, and I was trundled off to the bunker and my solitary confinement cell, where I was to remain for I knew not how long.

In any case, I took comfort in the fact that the Kommandant himself had taken a personal interest in my case, which had to be a good sign. Now all I can do is wait. My fever is down, the pain in

my side is less acute. Once again I glue my eye to the bullet-riddled crack in my cell door. Some soldiers are carting in some furniture; in the cell across the corridor from mine but one floor above, they bring in a man who is in uniform but without SS insignia. He is not wearing a cap, but I have a feeling he's an officer of some kind. In the past I've been allowed one walk a day, but now they have upped it to two, and since my new neighbor's cell door has been left open, I note that the food they are serving him is not the normal camp rations.

When I get back from my walk, his cell door is closed. As I enter my cell, the woman guard hands me a letter. Joy, tears of joy: I can see that it's in my father's handwriting. Therefore he's alive and knows where I am. I read and reread the address on the envelope:

To Prisoner De Gaulle Geneviève
No. 27.372 Block 26
F. K. L. Ravensbrück (near Furstenberg)
Mecklenberg, Germany

Then I turn the envelope over and read the return address:

Xavier de Gaulle
27 rue Plantamour
Geneva, Switzerland

When my fingers stop shaking so badly, I carefully open the letter, which is the first one I've received since my arrest. My father has written in German. What foresight to have learned the language of Goethe! His sentences are short and simple, and he has given me the rundown on each member of the family, including my brother Roger, who is fighting with the Free French Forces. To celebrate the event, I give my cockroaches some extra rations, an oversized chunk of bread, but I also make an extra effort to down a bit of soup, to try to build up my strength at least a bit. My arms and my legs are still emaciated, even more than before; my open sores still refuse to heal. But that doesn't keep me from having a wonderful dream. I'm lying on my stomach on a flat-bottomed boat on very dark water. The stream is narrow, bounded on both sides by steep black rocks that descend sharply to the river's edge. The current bears me along through an endless tunnel that is so low I can't even lift my head. And then suddenly, at the very end, there is a light, ever so faint, and I wake up, my heart filled with renewed hope. A long day, just like so many others, but somehow different. I sing the Lieder that Father taught me, he at the piano as my accompanist: "The Trout," "The Lore," "The Old Linden Tree," "The King of Aulnes." I also say a prayer, harking back to the one he included in his letter when he talked to me about my dear sweet mother and my sister Jacqueline.

A woman guard has just come into my cell. She looks at me with neither hostility nor disdain. Have I perhaps become in her eyes a human being? Without a word of explanation, she sets on my little table some Calcium D Redoxon tablets and three boxes of C Phosphate. The medicines are from Switzerland, and the boxes they come in strike me as positively luxurious. It's as

though a dream has come true. I begin taking the calcium pills immediately, but decide to hold off a bit for the vitamins. Anna has brought me some mending work to do and a pair of scissors. I take the scissors and, from the ice-cold cardboard box in which the medicines were packed, cut out a tiny set of playing cards for myself, marking them with my pencil stub so that I can have a game of solitaire now and then.

Today marks the first anniversary of our departure from Fresnes Prison. At the clerk's office one year ago, they returned to us some of the objects that were confiscated upon our arrival. They gave me my red-and-black purse, which contained a bit of tobacco and my pipe; my glasses; and some photographs that turned out not to be mine. What they failed to return were my gold watch, which my godmother had given me; my pretty ring, with a topaz set in a crown of little pearls, which had been a gift from my aunt Madeleine on my twenty-first birthday; and the small amount of cash I had on me the day I was arrested. On the eve of our departure, in the ground-floor cells to which we had all been transferred, we had been delighted—despite the uncertainty of our fate—to discover at long last the faces of our fellow prisoners, whom to that point we had known only by the sound of their voices.

Transferred from Fresnes to the Royallieu Camp⁷² near Compiègne, we found upon our arrival hundreds and hundreds of other women prisoners from every corner of France. The barracks, which had been hastily constructed, were, to say the least, rudimentary. We each had a bowl and were given half a liter of water a day to drink and wash with as we saw fit. The latrines were a long way away, a ditch dug into the ground right next to the metal fence that separated the women's section from that of the men. But within the confines of our own area we were free to move about at will, to speak with whomever we wanted. I was amazed to discover the range and diversity of my fellow prisoners: young and old, from very different backgrounds and geographic locations. Virtually all of them had been arrested for their involvement in the Resistance, but their reasons for joining the Underground were many and varied: their common bond was their unanimous refusal to accept the defeat of their country at the hands of the Nazis. Some belonged to the intelligence units, others had housed and hidden Allied aviators who were shot down over France, still others had given refuge to those clandestinely sent by the Free French Forces from London into France to reconnoiter and report back. Pauline, whom I had liked the moment I met her, was a worker and a Communist who had actively participated in sabotages and attempted assassinations. Bella, who was the daughter of a family of diplomats, had just been released from several months of solitary confinement. Shaking her beautiful head of black hair, she recited to us the poems she had written in her cell in the depths of Fresnes. Claire, a professor and, politically, a Socialist, had been involved with the Underground hero Pierre Brossolette and had met the legendary Jean Moulin. Odette told us about the tortures to which her sixteen year-old son had been subjected. Between two painful moans, he had cried out, "Don't talk, Mother, don't

⁷² The Royallieu-Compiègne was an internment and deportation camp in Compiègne, France where French resistance fighters and Jews, among others were imprisoned. About 40,000 people were deported from the Royallieu-Compiègne camp to Auschwitz and other camps in German territory.

tell them anything!” Yvonne was a doctor; Annie was the wife of the permanent secretary of the French Institute. Lola, who was a monarchist, owned the bookstore on the rue Bonaparte in Paris called *Le Vœu de Louis XIII*, which also served as the drop for the Resistance movement known as “Defense of France,” where I, among several others, had been arrested on July 20, 1943.

How can I cite only these few, when all their faces press in upon me? They invaded my cell, they called out, they applauded when my name was called out to leave for the waiting train. The Germans were furious at the women’s reaction, which they did not understand (we were not yet dealing with the SS), but they reacted by pushing and shoving us and by siccing several dogs on us, trying to scare us to death. But we felt, before we were pushed and locked into the waiting cattle cars, both very strong and, yes, oh so fragile!

The trip lasted three days and three nights. Not a drop of water to drink; as toilet, an oil drum that was supposed to serve the eighty women in the car, who could neither stretch out nor even sit down except a few at a time. None of them will ever be able to forget the night the cattle-car train came to a halt in the dark of night: it was the night of February 2 and 3. At long last the train door slid open; we were all in a state of total exhaustion, barely cognizant, but we were brought quickly back to our senses by the angry shouts of the SS and the barking of their dogs. We had to jump down out of the cars; fortunately, the ground beneath was sandy, but that was more than offset by the truncheon blows that greeted us.

“Hurry up, hurry it up, by rows of five, you dirty bitches!” they shouted.

“What are they saying?” some of my neighbors, who spoke no German, wanted to know. I translated the gist of their words, stressing the need to line up in rows of five.

For better or worse, the long column set off through pine woods whose trees were dusted with a light layer of snow. After what seemed like an interminable lapse of time, we finally marched through the main gate of the camp. Where were we? How was this unreal trek through the night going to end?

Now we know the answer to that question, but who from our convoy will remain alive to tell the tale? How many of my comrades have died since I was sent down here to the bunker? And what has happened to those who were shipped off to the various work Kommandos?

Right now, sometime before the morning siren for roll call sounds, I hear some movement to and fro in the corridor. Once again I glue my eye to the crack in my cell door and see my neighbor, the man in the cell upstairs directly opposite mine, being led from his cell flanked by two SS guards. For a fleeting moment I see his stoic face, his short-clipped salt and-pepper hair, and I am overcome by a feeling that he is heading toward death, that he will never come back to the bunker again. However that may be, I bid him adieu.

In the course of the day, one of the woman guards comes to tell me that I should gather up my belongings.

“They’re transferring you to another cell,” she says.

I cast a last look around my somber lodging, at my cockroaches, with not a tinge of nostalgia or regret. The woman guard returns and, noticing Felix crouching next to me, raises her shoe and crushes him with a look of utter disgust on her face. We go up a staircase at the far end of a corridor. The new cell to which I’ve been assigned is directly across from my old one, one flight up: the cell of my unknown neighbor whose departure I had witnessed just a few hours before.

The bright light of the declining sun suddenly blinds me, burning my eyes. The window of the cell looks directly onto the wall that separates the camp from the crematorium ovens. The horrible odor fills my lungs and, depending on which way the wind is blowing, invades my entire domain. The meager furnishings of my new cell are exactly as same as those downstairs. Whatever extras they may have installed for the previous guest must have been removed. I notice, just beyond the little cell window, a piece of wrapping paper sticking out. Feeling a trifle stronger than before, I manage to drag my little wooden stool, which luckily is not chained to the wall, over to the window. Climbing up on it, I can see in the distance, far beyond the camp wall, the tops of some pine trees. And indeed, between the window pane and the outside cell bars, there is a straw case, the kind they use to protect wine bottles, and inside is a piece of paper all wrinkled up. With great difficulty I manage to fish the paper from its straw container and climb down off my stool to read the name of the person for whom it was intended: General von Will I ever learn the reasons that led to this man’s being incarcerated in a women’s concentration camp and what ever became of him?

Without question, I am feeling better, thanks to the calcium and the light—even if my eyes are starting to hurt again—and for the third time today I am taken out into the courtyard for a walk. But this time the sky is blue, with a slightly pearly luster to it; the air is bracing, and I have the feeling that I am emerging from a deep, dark cave. Now I don’t feel indifferent about whether I live or die. I want to see my loved ones again, another spring, the trees all in bloom. When I get back to Paris, I’m going to the Musée de l’Orangerie to gaze again at Monet’s Water Lilies. Just by forcing myself to think about it, the flowers have filled my dreams; their luminously bright corollas have completely covered my silent lake.

The odor of the crematoriums is becoming intolerable. Pungent smoke fills my cell. I point it out to Anna, and she responds succinctly by informing me that one of the two ovens, which were impossibly jam-packed with bodies, caught on fire. So you see, I had fantasized my escape from the camp a trifle too soon. The truth is, the number of corpses is increasing with every passing day. Even before I was taken down to the bunker, they had constructed a second crematorium oven right next to the first. We had watched as the chimney rose higher and higher above the wall of the camp. And even a second oven, it would appear, did not suffice.

“They’re all going to die,” Anna said with a deep sigh as she handed me my coffee through the grill of the cell door.

Why am I not with the others? This willful separation is becoming more and more unbearable for me, and my thoughts forever take me back inside the camp. For several nights running I have had the same obsessive dream: They come to fetch me from my cell and put me into a car that keeps driving on and on through the shadows of night. Then, suddenly, I am in a blinding light: I am being arraigned before some kind of tribunal. The judges, all dressed in dark robes, are wearing magistrates’ caps, their faces completely expressionless. I am told that I am to describe life in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. It is very important; that I know. But as I start to tell them what it’s like, I see that my deposition is rife with all sorts of gaps and memory blanks. Each time I wake up from that dream, my throat is constricted and I have the terrible feeling that I’m simply not up to the task. Powerless. Now my days are spent carefully completing my indictment. I only want to testify to what I saw with my own eyes, what I personally experienced . . . and that is atrocious. Little by little, my memory reconstitutes what until now I have done my best to forget simply in order to survive. My accusation becomes more and more precise, laid out in my mind in a logical sequence. In my dream, I go on facing my impassive judges.

Suddenly, my cell door opens and Suhren himself materializes before me. I have seen him only one other time since my meeting at the Kommandantur on October 3, the night of my arrival at the bunker. No, I am not dreaming; he is speaking to me, and I have the feeling he is less arrogant, a trifle less haughty than before.

“You are about to receive a visit,” he tells me. “Two gentlemen. They will ask you a number of questions, all of which you should answer accurately and candidly.”

Scarcely has he finished speaking when two men appear. Suhren has chairs brought in for them. One of the men is a civilian, rather coarse looking, very self-assured. He is wearing a black felt hat, has a fat blue emerald ring on his finger, an emerald en cabochon, and I note that his elegant shoes are impeccably polished. The other is a fairly young soldier with no SS insignia; he immediately removes his cap and looks at me attentively. I somehow get the impression he’s a doctor. After having made a sign for me to sit down on my bed, Suhren perches on my stool and repeats to me that I’m to answer all the questions that are asked of me with complete candor, after which he does not open his mouth again, obviously very impressed by the two others.

The interview begins with questions about how I was arrested, the circumstances surrounding my arrest, whether I had any complaints to make with regard to my interrogation at the hands of the Gestapo, how I was treated during my incarceration at Fresnes Prison. I specify that while I had not been personally tortured, I had been knocked to the ground, where I had been kicked and beaten, which seems to shock the note-taking officer. Then I bring up the terrible voyage in the cattle cars, the arrival at Ravensbrück, the anguish at being stripped naked, the dogs, the beatings, and the terror. After which, trying to follow a strict chronological order, I describe the

progressive destruction of what constitutes a human being: depriving her of her dignity, her relations with her fellow creatures, her most basic rights. We are stick-pieces. Even our fellow inmates—some of whom have positions as guards, policewomen, barrack chiefs—can with impunity insult and revile us, beat us, trample us under foot, kill us. As far as anyone in the camp hierarchy is concerned, it's good riddance: one vermin less to deal with. I have seen, I have experienced, this willful oppression, this grinding down of a fellow human being who is in such a state of exhaustion she can barely move. At the end of her rope. Hunger, cold, forced labor all are ordeals we have to endure, but they are far from the worst.

What do my visitors make of all this? Are they able to grasp what I'm saying? Every once in a while one of them starts from his seat and asks me to clarify one point or another, especially when the abuses I'm describing affect me personally. Perhaps Suhren realizes that this inmate is still capable of testifying and even of passing judgment. If Nazi Germany is defeated, many among those in charge will doubtless be held accountable. Unless all those who might testify against these leaders are eliminated, down to the very last one. Is this deposition meant to test me, to ascertain how forceful and convincing my accusation might be later if I ever get out of Ravensbrück alive?

I have no idea how long this strange interrogation lasts. Later we leave my cell and repair to the SS infirmary, hard by the Kommandantur. Now the young doctor is leading the inquest, in the presence of the camp's Dr. Trommer, whom I had seen once before when I had an attack of pleurisy. The young doctor asks for my medical record... What a joke! He waxes indignant when he notes that after I was given an X-ray that found my lungs in terrible shape, nothing whatsoever was done about it. He is also shocked at the visible signs of scurvy I'm displaying—*anemia*, bleeding from the mucous membranes—as he is by how emaciated I am and how weak. Clearly I am not a model reference for the Ravensbrück Camp! The medical examination is interrupted by an air-raid alert, and I am hustled back to my cell; this whole thing strikes me as completely surreal. Not any more surreal, however, than my interrogation by one of the high-ranking members of the Gestapo whose offices are located beyond the confines of the camp proper. I am received there by a man who is pointedly courteous and who without further ado begins talking to me about Paris, where he has spent several months. "I have such fond memories of your city," he tells me.

He quickly learns, however, that I don't exactly share his enthusiasm for the members of the Gestapo with whom I came into contact in Paris, and he moves quickly on to a rundown of my activities in the French Resistance movement. I do my best to minimize my role, and though he keeps pressing, I steadfastly refuse to reveal any of my comrades' names. We're a long way from Paris, but you never know! There still may be members of the Underground who have not yet been captured, whose files are still open. A secretary who is wearing very thick makeup and who tends to smile a great deal is typing up this strange interrogatory, which I quickly understand is more a formality than anything else. When she is finished, the gentleman from the Gestapo

hands me my deposition, asks me to read it over and verify that it is correct, and then departs, leaving me and the secretary alone for a few minutes.

As soon as he leaves, the secretary begins speaking to me in French—it turns out that she, too, adores Paris.

“Would you mind very much inscribing something in French in my album?” she asks. “Just a few lines, in remembrance of our meeting.”

Since I’m clearly perplexed by her request, the young woman suggests: “For instance, the beginning of a song by Lucienne Boyer, whom I adore!” And so I write, as though it were someone else performing the task:

“Parlez-moi d’amour, dices-moi ks choses tendres... to me of love, whisper me sweet nothings’ Lucienne Boyer.”

And under Lucienne Boyer’s name I add my own: “Genevieve de Gaulle.”

When the Gestapo officer comes back into the room, the secretary falls silent again, then hands me the report of my “confession” for another signature. By the time I’m returned to my normal abode, night is falling.

I don’t dream anymore, however; I find it almost impossible to sleep. Smoke is still pouring from the crematorium smokestacks; the ritual sounds of the camp are muted by the time they reach my ears. Outside my window, fat, lazy snowflakes are falling. To try to keep myself busy, I decide to arrange the few personal objects I’ve been able to retain: my Christmas souvenirs; my little pouch where my needles are stored, a present from Jacqueline; my little deck of playing cards; a few thin sheets of writing paper; the pouch where I keep my meager ration of bread; the three green, triangular boxes in which I keep my vitamin C pills. And it’s a good thing I put everything in order. The very next day the female guard will burst into my cell and switch on the light, yelling, “On your feet! Get yourself dressed! And be quick about it!”

She has brought me a navy-blue dress with white painted stripes, some linen sandals, and—miracle of miracles!—my very own coat. Yes, the same coat my friends had somehow managed to have delivered to me when I was still in Fresnes Prison, in anticipation of my upcoming voyage to Germany—the coat I had been obliged to turn in to the authorities when we arrived at the camp. I slip on the coarse wool stockings that Lisa knitted, which fit snugly into the summer sandals, and wrap myself in the soft brown shawl—the gift from my fellow prisoners—before slipping on my coat. I cannot tell you the pleasure I felt when I put on that coat! I take the little piece of cloth I have been using as a napkin, place on it the few possessions I am taking with me, fold it, and knot it shut. My mess kit and cup will have to remain behind, as will my prison dress. A few moments later I leave my cell—perhaps forever? I have the feeling that I’ve spent entire

years there, lived several lives within its walls. Anna is standing silently in the corridor. In her hand she is holding the little handkerchief I gave her at Christmas, which she waves discreetly as a way of bidding me good-bye.

In the bunker office, two SS officers await me, as well as a younger female guard and another, terribly emaciated woman who looks absolutely ancient. On her shaven skull, a rare tuft of hair has regrown here and there. She looks like Gandhi at the end of his life. We exchange glances for a brief moment but don't dare exchange words; I take her hand as we descend the three steps of the bunker. Together, surrounded by the SS officers and the young female guard, we pass through the camp gate. It is still snowing, and the wind is like ice. I try to look back, and from afar I can see the silhouettes of several women, all stooped over, carrying heavy vats of coffee. Dawn is just breaking. Could it perchance be the dawn of hope?

Source: Anthonioz, Genevieve de Gaulle. *The Dawn of Hope A Memoir of Ravensbrück*. Translated from the French by Richard Seaver. English-language translation copyright © 1999 by Arcade Publishing, Inc.

45. *Other Victims: The Hearing Impaired*

Ina R. Friedman

Ina R. Friedman writes books for young people exploring the themes of cultural understanding, and about the impact of the Nazi regime on the lives of young people.

In this selection, Friedman relates the experience of a young hearing-impaired girl, Franziska Schwarz, who faced sterilization because of her deafness.

I never saw anything wrong with being deaf. My younger sister, Theresa, and most of my friends were deaf. Though my parents were hard of hearing, my younger brother, Theo, had normal hearing. My father was one of six brothers. Four of them were hearing. When they came to visit, every hand was busy sharing news of the deaf community or giving advice. Our eyes were glued to the hands and faces of the signers. Everyone had so much to say.

In deaf school, the teachers got mad if I signed. They wanted me to read lips. But I grew tired of watching the teacher's lips. I couldn't look at her face and understand how to pronounce the letters correctly. The teacher put a strip of paper in front of my lips. "To make the B sound, purse your lips and blow just enough to make the paper quiver. To make a P, blow a little harder and make the paper shake." Day after day, the teacher drilled me.

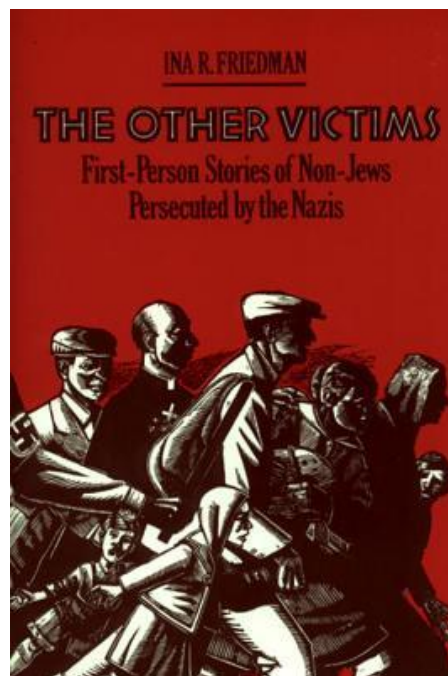
I felt like a bellows. I liked it better after school when the teachers weren't around.

My friends and I would make signs and chat with our fingers.

When I was fourteen, Hitler took over Germany, Theo, my eleven-year-old hearing brother, liked to go to the Munch Stadium to the rallies. Once Theo came home all excited because he had shaken Hitler's hand. My favorite uncle, Karl, who could hear, got mad.

He shouted at my brother and signed at the same time. "Hitler is a disgrace to Germany. Don't waste your time and hearing listening to him."

My father put his fingers on my brother's lips. "Don't ever repeat what you have just heard. Swear by the Holy Father."



Theo looked scared. “But in school, they tell us to report anything bad people say about Hitler.”

“If you don’t repeat it, no one will know your uncle said it.”

I couldn’t hear the radio so I never got excited about Hitler. The year 1933 was hard for me. I had just begun my apprenticeship at the convent. The sisters were teaching me how to sew, and I found it hard to understand them. On Saturdays I enjoyed going to a special Catholic club for deaf girls. We went hiking, and once we went on a camping trip to Koenigsburg. That was enjoyable.

The rest of Hitler was horrible. For me, the trouble started in 1935. I came home from the convent and found Mother crying. “What’s the matter?” I signed.

She handed me the letter that read, “Frau Schwarz and her daughter, Franziska, are to come to the health office to arrange for their sterilization. Heil Hitler.” I couldn’t make out the signature at the bottom.

The whole family got upset. Uncle Karl started to sputter, as he always did when he was excited. “We’ll protest. The Nazis can’t do this to Franziska. She’s perfectly healthy. I’ll appeal to the administrative court and ask them to overturn the order.”

The day of the hearing, my mother, my father, and all my uncles accompanied me to court. “She’s only sixteen years.” Uncle Karl talked and signed at the same time so I could understand. “Deafness is not always inherited. I’m her uncle, and I can hear perfectly well. As for her mother, she is going through menopause. Though she is a good Catholic, she promises not to have any more children.”

The two men on the judges’ bench whispered to each other. They frowned and shook their heads. After a few minutes, the one with the big nose and bald head stood up. “Petition denied for the minor, Franziska Schwarz. Since the mother cannot have children, petition granted.”

I started to cry. The previous year I had met a boy I liked, Christian Mikus. As a child, he had had scarlet fever and lost his hearing in one ear. Christian and I liked to walk in the park. We’d sign for hours. Whenever he saw children playing, he’d smile and sign, “One day, we will have children, too.” Of course we couldn’t get married then. He didn’t make much money working in a clothing factory. Whatever deaf people made, it was always less than other people. We used to get angry. We’d do just as good work as others, but the employers would always give us less. If I were sterilized, I didn’t think Christian would want to go with me anymore.

When my uncle walked out of the courtroom, his face was almost purple.

“Franziska, Germany is no place for either of us. We’ll run away to Switzerland. I won’t let them sterilize you.”

Before we could run off, he was arrested by the Gestapo. He had shouted at his secretary, “Turn off the radio whenever Hitler talks. It’s not healthy to listen to a madman.” The secretary’s father was a storm trooper. She reported Uncle Karl to the Gestapo. The Gestapo sentenced him to death for “spreading slander.”

I don’t know how, but his brothers got him released. “For God’s sake. Keep your opinions to yourself. Hitler can’t last,” my father said. “Why take chances?”

At the same time my uncle was in prison, a letter came from the department of health. “Franziska Schwarz is to report to the Women’s Hospital in Munich for the sterilization.”

“I won’t go,” I cried. “I want to be able to have babies.”

Father looked sad. “If you don’t go, the police will drag you to the hospital.”

I screamed all the way to the hospital. The nurse locked me in a room with two other deaf teenagers. The three of us cried all night. When the nurse came to give us tranquilizers, I tried to fight her off. She held me down and gave me the injection. In the morning, I woke up in a room full of beds. My stomach hurt. I touched the bandages and started to cry. The nurse who brought me water was crying too. “I’m sorry, there’s nothing I could do to help you. With Hitler, you have to be quiet.” Her finger pointed to the portrait of Hitler hanging over the bed. She tapped her temple with her finger to indicate, “He’s crazy.”

I had so much pain. I couldn’t go to the convent. I asked the public health insurance officer for the standard sick pay.

“Why should you get sick pay?” the social worker sneered. “You can have all the fun you want. You don’t have to worry about getting pregnant.”

When Christian came to the house, I started to cry. “The doctors sterilized me. I guess you won’t want to be my boyfriend anymore.”

Christian made the sign for love. “Whatever happens, we’ll be together. As soon as you’re twenty-one, we’ll get married.”

By Ina R. Friedman, *The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis*. Sandpiper Publishing, 1995

46. We Were Jehovah's Witnesses

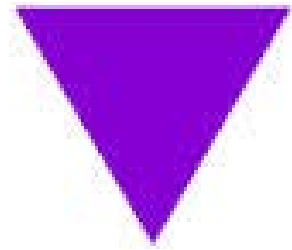
In this selection, Ina Friedman recounts the story of discrimination against the family of Franz and Hilda Kusserow, whose only crime was their devotion to their faith as Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Quick, Elisabeth," Annemarie shouted, "The Gestapo!" In Paderborn, very few people besides the Gestapo had cars. The clouds of dust raised by a car coming down the road signaled danger.

Before the Mercedes stopped, I scooped up the Watchtower pamphlets and put them in my knapsack. Magdalena stuffed the books into hers. We ran outside and hid the literature behind the bushes. At eight, I knew to walk over to the coops and feed the chickens. Magdalena, who was nine, picked up a bottle to feed the baby lamb.

We were Jehovah's Witnesses. Our parents, Franz and Hilda Kusserow, had taught their eleven children to hide the books and pamphlets of the International Society of Bible Students if anyone spotted the men from the Gestapo coming toward the house. Anyone found with literature from our Watchtower Society could be arrested.

What a happy family we were before Hitler. Our parents had been sent by the Watchtower Society from Bochum, Germany to Paderborn to set up a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. The house sat on three acres of land. Father organized our daily chores. One week the boys took care of the chickens and ducks and lambs. That week, the girls worked in the garden. Then the following week we switched chores. When the apple and pear trees were ripe, everyone helped pick the fruit.



The purple triangle badge worn by prisoners who were Jehovah's Witnesses.

But it wasn't all work. Before we went to school in the morning, and in the evening, we sat around the table talking about the Bible and what the passage meant. Mother had graduated from teachers' school, and Father made time for her to teach us music and painting. The house was filled with musical instruments: five violins, a piano, a reed organ, two accordions, a guitar, and several flutes. What joyful music we made as we played from the book Hymns to Jehovah's Praise.

My father sensed that some of the faithful would be persecuted by Hitler. He talked to us about what it meant to be a Jehovah's Witness. Sometimes he quoted from Matthew and Revelations. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

In 1936, the Nazis tried to get Jehovah's Witnesses to renounce their faith. When the Gestapo knocked on our door, one of them waved a piece of paper in Father's face and shouted, "Franz

Kusserow, you must sign this document promising never to have anything to do with the International Society of Bible Students. If you don't, you will be sent to prison."

The whole family stood dumbfounded. Promise not to be a Jehovah's Witness?

Hitler was truly Satan.

Father read aloud the first paragraph. "I have recognized that the International Society of Bible Students spreads false doctrine and pursues goals entirely hostile to the state under the cover of religious activity." Father shook his head. "This is ridiculous. I can't sign."

The S.S. man, who was about the same age as my oldest brother, became angry.

"Stubborn fool!"

I was shocked; no one had ever talked to Father that way. He was one of the most respected people in Paderborn.

The S.S. man turned to Mother. "And you? If you don't, your children will be without parents."

Mother removed her apron and placed it over the chair. "No, I cannot sign.

Annemarie" - Mother turned to my oldest sister - "Take care of the children."

The agent shoved my parents outside and into the car.

Paul-Gerhard, who was five, began to cry. Hans-Werner, who was six, put his arms around his little brother. Fifi, our dachshund, began to growl. I bent down to calm her and to hide my tears.

After a few days the Nazis released Mother from prison. They kept Father. Why was it a crime to be a Jehovah's Witness? Mother couldn't understand why they released her, because she refused to sign the paper. Mother and my oldest brother, Wilhelm, made sure we followed Father's schedule and always did our chores. But how we missed Father and his talks about the Bible! What a joyful reunion we had when he was released a year later. All thirteen of us took up our instruments, and the house resounded with hymns of praise. A few months later, our family was shattered. Our brother, Siegfried, who was 21, was killed in an accident.

It was difficult enough losing a brother, but as the years passed, the situation in school became more and more painful. Every day, the teacher reprimanded me for not saluting the Nazi flag. The big black swastika on the red banner flew over the schoolhouse and hung on a pole in every classroom. My stomach churned as I tried to think of how I could avoid saluting it or saying "Heil Hitler." My parents had taught me to salute only Jehovah God. To salute a flag or a person

was the same as worshipping idols. I wouldn't sing the horrible Nazi songs, either. I kept my lips together.

The teacher always watched me. "So, Elisabeth, you do not want to join in praise of our leader. Come to the front of the classroom." She turned to the others. "Children, Elisabeth thinks it is all right to insult our leader. Tell us why, Elisabeth."

"Acts 4:12 of the New Testament says, 'There is no salvation in anyone else except Jesus Christ.'"

"Imagine. Elisabeth Kusserow believes in that ridiculous New Testament."

The children laughed. I couldn't understand why. All of them went to church. On the way home from school, they pushed me and threw my books to the ground. It got worse when Hans-Werner and then Paul-Gerhard were old enough to go to school. Now I had to worry about the children tormenting them.

Our troubles grew. It wasn't just the terror of going to school. The Nazis cut off Father's pension from World War I because he still refused to say, "Heil Hitler." It was hard doing without the money, even though my older brothers and sisters had jobs. We planted more vegetables and canned as much as we could. In 1938, the Gestapo arrested Father for a second time. What could be wrong in obeying Jehovah God?

In the spring of 1939, the principal came into my class. "Elisabeth, since you refuse to salute our flag and say 'Heil Hitler,' it is obvious that your parents are neglecting your spiritual and moral development. I have taken it upon myself to obtain a court order to remove you and your younger brothers from your home. The three of you will be sent to a place where you will get proper instruction." He pulled me into his office. Paul-Gerhard, who was then eight, and Hans-Werner, who was nine, stood there trembling.

At thirteen, the words made no sense to me. "Our parents raised us according to the teachings of Jehovah God," I protested.

"Quiet! This policeman will take you to your new home."

I was so upset; I hadn't noticed the policeman standing next to the window.

"Please, please let me call my mother," I begged. "She'll be frantic when we don't come home."

"Traitors are not to know what happens to their children."

For several months Mother tried to find out where we were. She went to the police, called orphanages, hospitals, and prisons. Finally, she reached the clerk at the reform school in Dorsten who admitted that we were there. Secretly, Mother sent us letters. “Always know that we love you. Be steadfast in your faith to Jehovah God. One day we will be together in heaven or on earth.”

The director of the reform school couldn’t understand why we were there. “You are the best behaved children I have ever seen. It’s ridiculous to have you here with these delinquents.” He sent a letter to Mother, “Your children will be arriving in Paderborn on Friday at two p.m.”

As we started to climb the steps of the train, two men stopped us. “The director was guilty of misconduct. You are coming with us.” They drove us to Nettelstadt, a Nazi training school.

“Don’t cry,” I told the boys. “Jehovah God will one day rule the earth. We will see our family, either here or in heaven.” I didn’t feel as brave as I sounded.

At the training school, the teachers became furious when we still refused to salute the flag or say “Heil Hitler.” In punishment, the three of us were sent to different places. I kept worrying about Paul-Gerhard and Hans-Werner. They were just little boys.

For six years I remained in the custody of the Nazis, praying that all of my family would survive the war.

Source: *The Other Victims* by Ina R. Friedman. Sandpiper Publishing, 1995

July 3

47. Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp	197
48. Sachsenhausen Timeline.....	200
49. Arrival at Sachsenhausen by Heinz Heger.....	202
50. <i>A Not So Average Joe's Story: Joachim Boin in Sachsenhausen</i>	206



The *Appellplatz* just inside the main gate at the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. The barracks were on either side to the *Appellplatz*. They fell apart a long time ago. The Memorial Obelisk can be seen in the distance.

47. Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp

The SS established the Sachsenhausen concentration camp as the principal concentration camp for the Berlin area. Located near Oranienburg, north of Berlin, the Sachsenhausen camp opened on July 12, 1936, when the SS transferred 50 prisoners from the Esterwegen concentration camp to begin construction of the camp.

Prisoners in the Camp

In the early stage of the camp's existence the SS and police incarcerated mainly political opponents and real or perceived criminal offenders in Sachsenhausen. By the end of 1936, the camp held 1,600 prisoners. Between 1936 and 1945, however, Sachsenhausen also held Jews, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, "asocials" (among these prisoners were Roma and Sinti), and, later, Soviet civilians. Prominent figures interned in Sachsenhausen included Pastor Martin Niemöller, former Austrian chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg, Georg Elser, Herschel Grynszpan, and Joseph Stalin's son, Iakov Dzhugashvili.

The number of Jewish prisoners in Sachsenhausen varied over the course of the camp's existence, but ranged from 21 at the beginning of 1937 to 11,100 at the beginning of 1945. During the nationwide *Kristallnacht* ("Night of Broken Glass") pogrom of November 1938, *Reichsführer SS* (SS chief) and Chief of German Police Heinrich Himmler ordered the arrest of up to 30,000 Jews. The SS transported those arrested to Sachsenhausen, Dachau, and Buchenwald concentration camps. Almost 6,000 Jews arrived in Sachsenhausen in the days following the *Kristallnacht* riots.



The front gate at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

In the following months, the number of Jews at Sachsenhausen steadily decreased, as SS authorities released Jewish prisoners, often in exchange for a stated intent to emigrate. By the end of 1938, Sachsenhausen held 1,345 Jews.

There was another marked increase in the number of Jewish prisoners when, in mid-September 1939, shortly after World War II began, German authorities arrested Jews holding Polish citizenship and stateless Jews, most of whom were living in the greater Berlin area, and incarcerated them in Sachsenhausen. Thereafter, the number of Jewish prisoners decreased again, as SS authorities deported them from Sachsenhausen to other concentration camps in occupied

Poland, most often Auschwitz, in an effort to make the so-called German Reich “free of Jews” (*judenfrei*).

By autumn of 1942 there were few Jewish prisoners still in Sachsenhausen, and their numbers remained low until 1944. In the spring of 1944, SS authorities began to bring thousands of Hungarian and Polish Jews from ghettos and other concentration camps to Sachsenhausen as the need for forced laborers in Sachsenhausen and its sub-camps increased. Many of these new Jewish prisoners were women. By the beginning of 1945 the number of Jewish prisoners had risen to 11,100.

Following anti-German demonstrations in Prague in November 1939, German authorities incarcerated some 1,200 Czech university students in Sachsenhausen. In total, German authorities deported over 6,000 people from the annexed Czech provinces to Sachsenhausen.

German forces in Poland shot or deported to concentration camps thousands of Poles, especially teachers, priests, government officials, and other national and community leaders, in an attempt to eliminate the Polish educated elite and thereby prevent organized resistance to German rule in Poland. The German authorities sent some of these Poles to Sachsenhausen. On May 3, 1940, for example, 1,200 Polish prisoners arrived in Sachsenhausen from the Pawiak prison in Warsaw. The prisoners included many juveniles, Catholic priests, army officers, professors, teachers, doctors, and minor government officials.

The first group of Soviet prisoners of war arrived in Sachsenhausen at the end of August 1941. By the end of October 1941, the SS had deported about 12,000 Soviet prisoners of war to Sachsenhausen. Camp authorities shot thousands of the Soviet POWs shortly after they arrived in the camp. Estimates of Soviet POWs killed at Sachsenhausen range from 11,000-18,000.

In retaliation for the August 1944 Polish Home Army uprising in Warsaw, the German authorities expelled most of the Polish population from the city. The Germans deported 60,000-80,000 Polish civilians to concentration camps. By early October 1944, the Germans had deported about 6,000 Poles to Sachsenhausen.

SS Personnel

In November 1936, the camp headquarters' staff of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp consisted of 70 SS personnel; by 1944 this number had reached 277. SS guard personnel at Sachsenhausen numbered around 1,400 in 1941, and by January 1945, this number had risen to 3,356. In mid-1936, SS Lieutenant Colonel Michael Johann Lippert oversaw the construction of the camp. SS Major Karl Otto Koch replaced Lippert as camp commandant in October, and held the post until the summer of 1937.

During the years 1938-1939 Sachsenhausen experienced frequent changes in camp leadership. At the beginning of 1940, *SS-Oberführer* [an SS rank between colonel and brigadier general, for which there is no English equivalent] Hans Loritz took over as camp commandant. SS Lieutenant Colonel Anton Kaindl replaced Loritz in 1942 and held the position of camp commandant until 1945. The guards of Sachsenhausen in the early years of the camp were men from the SS Death's Head units (*SS-Totenkopfverbände*); later, members of the Waffen-SS were transferred to the SS Death's Head Battalion and deployed as guards.

Towards the end of the war, 13,000 Red Army POWs arrived at Sachsenhausen. Over 10,000 were executed in the camp by being shot in the back of the neck through a hidden hole in a wall while being measured for a uniform. Their bodies were then burnt in a crematorium.

With the advance of the Red Army in the spring of 1945, Sachsenhausen was prepared for evacuation. On April 20–21, the camp's SS staff ordered 33,000 inmates on a forced march northeast. Most of the prisoners were physically exhausted and thousands did not survive this death march; those who collapsed en route were shot by the SS. On April 22, 1945, the camp's remaining 3,000 inmates, including 1,400 women were liberated by the Red Army and the Polish Army's 2nd Infantry Division.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005538>

Note: Sachsenhausen After the War

The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (the NKVD) was a law enforcement agency of the Soviet Union that was closely associated with the Soviet secret police. The NKVD operated a *special camp* in Weesow. In August 1945, that special camp was moved to the former Nazi Sachsenhausen concentration camp and operated there until the spring of 1950. It was used by the Stalinist Soviet occupying forces to detain political prisoners, Nazi functionaries, and inmates sentenced by the Soviet Military Tribunal.

By 1948, Sachsenhausen, now renamed Special Camp No. 1, was the largest of three special camps in the Soviet occupation zone. The 60,000 people interned over five years included 6,000 German officers transferred from Western Allied camps. Others were Nazi functionaries, anti-Communists and Russians, including Nazi collaborators. By the time the camp was closed in the spring of 1950, at least 12,000 had died of malnutrition and disease.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NKVD_special_camp_Nr._7

48. Sachsenhausen Timeline

July 12, 1936 — German authorities transfer 50 prisoners to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp site to begin construction of the camp. By the end of 1936, Sachsenhausen will hold 1,600 prisoners. SS Lieutenant Colonel Michael Johann Lippert oversees construction of the camp.

October 1936— SS Major Karl Otto Koch replaces Lippert as camp commandant.

November 9-10, 1938 — During the nationwide *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”) pogrom the SS and police arrest up to 30,000 Jews, deporting almost 6,000 to Sachsenhausen.

September 1939 — German authorities begin arresting Jewish citizens of Poland and stateless Jews living in the greater Berlin area and incarcerate them in Sachsenhausen.

November 1939 — Following anti-German demonstrations in Prague in November 1939, German authorities incarcerate around 1,200 Czech students at Sachsenhausen.

Early 1940 — *SS-Oberführer* [an SS rank between colonel and brigadier general, for which there is no English equivalent] Hans Loritz replaces Koch as camp commandant. [Standartenführer (Colonel) Koch was reassigned to be Commandant of Buchenwald Concentration Camp, and in 1941 to Majdanek concentration camp. In 1945, Koch was tried by Nazi court and found guilty of murdering a prisoner and embezzlement. Koch was executed by an SS firing squad on 5 April 1945.]

May 3, 1940 — German authorities deport 1,200 Polish prisoners from the Pawiak prison in Warsaw to Sachsenhausen.

April 1940 — A commission of SS doctors begins conducting a “selection” among the prisoners at Sachsenhausen.

June 1941 — Camp authorities transport 269 prisoners whom SS doctors selected as unfit to work to the “euthanasia” killing center Sonnenstein to be gassed.

August 1941 — Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) begin arriving in Sachsenhausen. Between August and October 1941, German authorities deport about 12,000 Soviet POWs to Sachsenhausen. The camp SS shoots most of them shortly after arrival.

1942 — SS Lieutenant Colonel Anton Kaindl replaces Loritz as camp commandant.

October 1942 — Camp authorities select prisoners they deemed unfit to work and send them to the Dachau concentration camp.

1944 — Camp authorities select prisoners they deem unfit to work and send them to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

August 1944 — In response to the Warsaw uprising, German authorities deport 60,000-80,000 Polish civilians to concentration camps, 6,000 of them to Sachsenhausen.

April 21, 1945 — SS camp guards begin the forced evacuation of 33,000 prisoners from Sachsenhausen.

April 22, 1945 — Soviet forces liberate the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

October-November 1945 — A Soviet Military Tribunal tries 16 Sachsenhausen camp functionaries; all are convicted.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007774>



The ramp down to Station Z (a euphemism for the “the final stop”) at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

49. Arrival at Sachsenhausen by Heinz Heger

By January 1940 the complement for the transport was made up, and we were to be taken to a camp. One night we were loaded thirty to forty at a time into the police wagons, and driven to a freight station where a prison train was already waiting. This train consisted mainly of cattle trucks with heavily barred open windows, as well as so-called cell wagons. These were also cattle trucks, but divided up into five or six cells, similarly barred, and set aside for the worst criminals.

I was placed in one of these cells, together with two young men of about my age. We remained together the whole journey. This lasted thirteen days, and proceeded via Salzburg, Munich, Frankfurt, and Leipzig to Berlin-Oranienburg. Each evening we were put off the train and taken to a prison to spend the night, sometimes by truck, but other times on foot. If we went on foot, we had to march in long heavy chains. These gave a ghostly rattle, like a slave caravan in the depths of the Middle Ages, and passersby would stare fixedly at us in terror.

The cells in the cell wagon only had proper room for one person, with a wooden table and bench. That was the entire furniture, not even a water jug or chamber pot. We were fed only in the evening, at the prisons where we stopped overnight, also being given there a large piece of bread to take on the train the next day. If the train was to stay clean, then we could only attend to the wants of nature at night [... .]



When we reached the Oranienburg station, we were again loaded up a ramp onto trucks and driven to Sachsenhausen camp [... .] As soon as we were unloaded on the large, open parade ground, some SS NCOs came along and attacked us with sticks. We had to form up in rows of five, and it took quite a while, and many blows and insults, before our terrified ranks were assembled. Then we had a roll call, having to step forward and repeat our name and offense,

whereupon we were immediately handed over to our particular block leader.

When my name was called I stepped forward, gave my name, and mentioned Paragraph 175. With the words. “You filthy queer, get over there...” I received several kicks from behind and was kicked over to an SS sergeant who had charge of my block. The first thing I got from him was a violent blow on my face that threw me to the ground. I pulled myself up and respectfully stood before him, whereupon he brought his knee up hard into my groin so that I doubled up with pain on the ground. Some prisoners who were on duty immediately called out to me. “Stand

up quick, otherwise he'll kick you to bits!" My face still twisted, I stood up again in front of my block sergeant, who grinned at me and said: "That was your entrance fee, you filthy Viennese swine, so that you know who your block leader is."

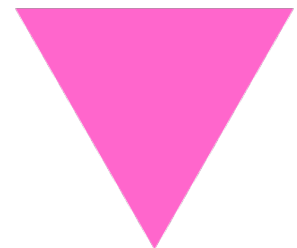
When the whole transport was finally divided up, there were about twenty men in our category. We were driven to our block at the double, interrupted by the commands: "Lie down! Stand up! Lie down, stand up!" and so on, from the block leader and some of his men, then having once



again to form up in ranks of three. We then had to strip completely naked, lay our clothes on the ground in front of us, with shoes and socks on top, and wait - wait - wait. It was January and a few degrees below zero, with an icy wind blowing through the camp, yet we were left naked and barefoot on the snow-covered ground, to stand and wait. An SS corporal

in winter coat with fur collar strode through our ranks and struck now one of us, now another, with a horsewhip, crying. "This is so you don't make me feel cold, you filthy queers." He also trod deliberately on the prisoners' toes with his heavy boots, making them cry out in pain. Anyone who made a sound, however, was immediately punched in the stomach with the butt end of his whip with a force that took his breath away. Almost sweating from dealing out blows up and down, the SS corporal said, "You queers are going to remain here until you cool off." *

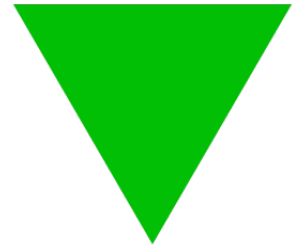
Finally, after a terribly long time, we were allowed to march to the showers - still naked and barefoot. Our clothes, which had already had nametags put in, remained behind, and had vanished when we returned. We had to wash ourselves in cold water, and some of the new arrivals collapsed with cold and exhaustion. Only then did the camp doctor have the warm water turned on, so that we could thaw ourselves out. After the shower we were taken to the next room, where we had to cut our hair, pubic hair included. Finally, we were taken, still naked - to the clothing stores, where we were given underwear and were "fitted" with prison clothing. This was distributed quite irrespective of size. The trousers I received were far too short, and came only just below my calves; the jacket was much too narrow and had too-short sleeves. Only the coat fitted tolerably well, but by mere accident. The shoes were a little too big and smelled strongly of sweat, but they had leather soles, which made walking a lot easier than the wooden soled shoes that many new arrivals received. As far as clothing went, at least, I didn't do too badly. Then we had to form up again outside our block and have its organization explained to us by the camp commander. Our block was occupied only by homosexuals, with about 250 men in each wing. We could only sleep in our nightshirts, and had to keep our hands outside the blankets... The windows had a centimeter of ice on them. Anyone found with his underclothes on in bed or his hands under his blanket — there were checks almost every night — was taken outside and had several bowls of water poured over him before being left standing outside for a good hour. Only a few people survived this treatment. The least result was



The pink triangle badge worn by homosexual prisoners.

bronchitis, and it was rare for any gay person taken into the sick bay to come out alive. We who wore the pink triangle were prioritized for medical experiments, and these generally ended in death. For my part, therefore, I took every care I could not to offend against the regulations.

Our block senior and his aides were “greens” - that is, criminals. They looked it, and behaved like it too. Brutal and merciless toward us “queers,” and concerned only with their own privilege and advantage, they were as much feared by us as the SS. In Sachsenhausen, at least, a homosexual was never permitted to have any position of responsibility. Nor could we even speak with prisoners from other blocks, with a different-colored badge; we were told we might try to seduce them. And yet homosexuality was much more rife in the other blocks, where there were no men with the pink triangle, than it was in our own. We were also forbidden to approach nearer than five meters of the other blocks. Anyone caught doing so was whipped on the “horse,” and was sure of at least fifteen to twenty strokes. Other categories of prisoner were similarly forbidden to enter our block. We were to remain isolated as the damndest of the damned, the camp’s “queers,” condemned to liquidation and helpless prey to all the torments inflicted by the SS and the Kapos.



The green triangle badge worn by criminal prisoners.

The day regularly began at 6 a.m., or 5 a.m. in summer, and in just half an hour we had to be washed, dressed, and have our beds made in the military style. If you still had time, you could have breakfast, which meant hurriedly slurping down the thin flour soup, hot or lukewarm, and eating your piece of bread. Then we had to form up in eights on the parade ground for morning roll call. Work followed, in winter from 7-30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and in summer from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., with a half-hour break at the workplace. After work, straight back to the camp and immediate parade for evening roll call. Each block marched in formation to the parade ground and had its permanent position there. The morning parade was not so drawn out as the much-feared evening roll call, for only the block numbers were counted, which took about an hour, and then the command was given for work detachments to form up.

At every parade, those who had just died had also to be present; that is, they were laid out at the end of each block and counted as well. Only after the parade, having been tallied by the report officer, were they taken to the mortuary and subsequently burned. Disabled prisoners had also to be present for parade. Time and again we helped or carried comrades to the parade ground who had been beaten by the SS only hours before. Or we had to bring along fellow prisoners who were half-frozen or feverish, so as to have our numbers complete. Any man missing from our block meant many blows and thus further deaths. We new arrivals were now assigned to our work, which was to keep the area around the block clean. That at least is what we were told by the NCO in charge. In reality, the purpose was to break the very last spark of independent spirit that might possibly remain in the new prisoners, by senseless yet very heavy labor, and to destroy the little human dignity that we still retained. This work continued until a new batch of

pink-triangle prisoners were delivered to our block and we were replaced. Our work, then, was as follows: in the morning we had to cart the snow outside our block from the left side of the road to the right side. In the afternoon we had to cart the same snow back from the right side to the left. We didn't have barrows and shovels to perform this work either - that would have been far too simple for us "queers." No, our SS masters had thought up something much better. We had to put on our coats with the buttoned side backward, and take the snow away in the container this provided. We had to shovel up the snow with our hands - our bare hands, as we didn't have any gloves. We worked in teams of two. Twenty turns at shoveling up the snow with our hands, then twenty turns at carrying it away. And so right through to the evening, and all at the double! This mental and bodily torment lasted six days, until at last new pink-triangle prisoners were delivered to our block and took over from us. Our hands were cracked all over and half frozen off, and we had become dumb and indifferent slaves of the SS. I learned from prisoners who had already been in our block a good while that in summer similar work was done with earth and sand. Above the gate of the prison camp, however, the "meaningful" Nazi slogan was written in big capitals. "Freedom through work!"

Source : *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, Heinz Heger (alias), translated by David Fernbach, Alyson Books, 1980

50. *A Not So Average Joe's Story: Joachim Boin in Sachsenhausen*

Born Joachim Boin, Joe was the only son of Arthur and Bianca Boin, an educated Orthodox Jewish couple whose roots were in Germany and Poland, respectively. Joe's father was a World War I veteran who fought in the German Army. He had his own accounting firm. Joe's younger sisters, Ruth and Gisela, soon followed.

The family lived in a mixed district of Berlin where Jews and Christians lived and did business together. Next door was a Christian family, the Kruegers, who were old friends. They took an active hand in helping the Boins once the Nazi's anti-Jewish laws took effect. They even ended up hiding Gisela during the war.

Growing up in Berlin, Joe witnessed the fascist fervor in its huge rallies and parades that kindled the worst kind of nationalism. The mass public displays included virulent anti-Semitic screeds, all meant to sway the Aryan citizenry, to inflame hatred, to intimidate Jews and other supposed enemies of the state. The Nazi regime tapped the fears of a shaken people by offering security and scapegoats.

A strapping, athletic young man, Joe competed as an elite Maccabi club tennis player, boxer and gymnast, yet Jews like him were ostracized from German national teams and games by the Nazi regime's racial policies. This exclusion was a bitter pill to swallow for Jewish athletes when Berlin hosted the 1936 Olympics.

"It was pretty painful, I'll tell you that."

Until the fall of 1938 things were tolerable. Jews couldn't go where and when they pleased as easily as they once could, owing to growing restrictions on their movements and activities, but they didn't fear for their safety. Clearly, though, life was far from normal and things were getting more tense. Roving gangs of Nazi Brown Shirts were becoming a menace and the mere fact of being a Jew, identified by a Yellow Star, made you a target of these thugs.



The Kruegers, the Christian family who lived next door to the Boins, became a lifeline. "Our neighbors were very nice people and they supplied us with some food and so on, sometimes without taking payment, so that we could live a little," said Joe.

When he was 15 he and his family moved to a town, Cottbus, where Joe's father felt they would be more insulated from the Nazi grip. They did find there some kind Christians who lent aid just as the Kruegers had.

“Like everywhere else there were wonderful people that were kind to Jews, that tried to help,” said Joe.

But there ultimately was no escaping the threat. Things took a turn for the worse on Kristallnacht, Nov. 9, 1938. Nazi goons came to the Boin home to take Joe and his father away to the town square where other Jewish residents had been rounded up and their homes and businesses vandalized.

“They took us to a marketplace where they had us surrounded by Nazis and by private citizens and they put dogs on one side and they gave us a spoon and we had to pick up the crap. We got beaten pretty badly. A lot of people got killed there, too. They put bodies in the synagogue and afterwards they burned it.” For Joe, the nightmarish incident marked the end of his boyhood innocence and the start of a cruel new reality based on instinct, chance and survival.

“My life as a child (ended). I had two years of high school before Hitler kicked us out.” From then on out, life was a harrowing affair. “We were treated like animals, not as human beings, we had to walk on the street, we couldn’t walk on the sidewalks, we couldn’t go into certain stores.”

More and more, Jews found themselves targeted, isolated, marginalized. Then, in 1939, the year Germany invaded Poland and Czechoslovakia and instigated World War II, the family was forcibly split up. A band of Nazis came to the Boin home, this time demanding only Joe come with them. He described what happened:

“At midnight they knocked on our door, shouting, ‘We want your boy Joachim.’ I came to the door and asked, ‘What do you want?’ ‘We have come for you,’ they said, and they grabbed me and hit me and put me on a truck. ‘Where are we going; do I have to take something?’ ‘No, where we’re going you don’t need nothing.’”

The ominous reply presaged the unfolding horror of the next six years, a black time when he and his family were separated from everything they knew, including each other, as each endured his or her own survival odyssey. Joe, his father, his mother and his sister Ruth all ended up in either labor or death camps.

Only his baby sister Gisela was spared. She was hidden by the Kruegers in the Christian family’s Berlin home, where for three-and-a-half years she passed a secreted-away life that if discovered would have meant certain death for her and her benefactors.

“My dad always said to them (the Kruegers), ‘You know, if the authorities find out they’re going to kill you too,’ and they said, ‘We are responsible to God, not to him (Hitler), and we feel if there’s any way to help somebody and to do something that prevents anybody from getting killed, we do it.’”

This courageous attitude struck a chord in Joe, who has tried living up to the kindnesses people bestowed on him and his family.

“It’s amazing in a situation like this that you find people that have a different way of thinking and they feel it’s immoral for others to be killed or whatever just because they’re Jewish. People helped even though they knew if they got caught they would get shot. Despite the risk, they said, ‘No, we have a responsibility to God, but not to Mr. Hitler, and whatever happens, happens,’ and that’s why quite a few Jewish people had a chance to live.”

From the time Joe was taken away in the middle of the night to the war’s end, six years passed before he was reunited with his family. He would survive six camps in four countries, counting the displaced persons and refugee camps he ended up in after the war, before the ordeal was over.

“The first camp I was in was Sachsenhausen — it was a concentration camp close to Berlin where all kinds of political prisoners, religious people were together, gypsies too. Just a very, very interesting group of people, and then from there they distributed them to the other camps.”

He didn’t know anyone at Sachsenhausen.

“I didn’t want to know anybody because in a situation like this it’s very difficult to trust people you don’t know. Sometimes you had to, but unfortunately you had a lot of Jewish people who tried to inform the Nazis of what was going on, hoping they might have a better life, which didn’t happen.”

Upon his arrival, Joe was consumed with anger over the injustice of it all.

“I was 17-years-old and the only crime I’d committed was I was born to a Jewish mother. That’s why I could never understand why I had to go through all this. I wasn’t thinking about anything else but why I’m here. I didn’t steal anything, I didn’t murder anyone — why am I here, what’s the reason? Why couldn’t I get my education so I could become somebody and get further on in life later? Why? — Because I was Jewish. I could not get over that.”

Then some things happened those first 24 hours in camp to change his outlook.

“I was so mad that when we came in the barracks in the evening I said, ‘I think if I ever by any chance come out of this place I will kill every German that comes in my way.’ Somebody tapped me on my shoulder and said, ‘No my son, if you do this you’re not any better than the Nazis.’” It started him thinking.

“The next morning we had to stand in a roll call and an elderly man fell down and, of course, I bent down trying to help him and one soldier came and shoved this rifle in my back and so I fell

down, too. We were carried into the barracks and the older prisoners told me, ‘If you want to stay alive you don’t see anything around you.’ Well I was a person that wanted to see what life was all about and I was trying to live a little longer if I could, and so I followed this advice.”

Joe was also befriended by an elderly Catholic priest whose selfless example made a big impact on him. When the meager bread ration was given out, Joe said, the old priest gave away his portion to Joe and other young people. “He told us, ‘You need it more than I do, I have nothing to look forward to, and it’s God’s will.’ It taught me there are people who really care for other people.”

From the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha, Nebraska: *A Not So Average Joe: Story of Survival: Experience in Sachsenhausen*
<http://ihene.org/nebraska-survivor-stories/a-not-so-average-joe-tells-his-holocaust-story-of-survival.html>

July 4

51.	Map: Eastern Europe after the German-Soviet Pact, 1939–1940	211
52.	A History of the Jews in Poland.....	212
53.	Kraków (Cracow)	217
54.	Kraków Timeline	222
55.	Tadeusz Pankiewicz: Kraków	224
56.	Amon Goeth Liquidates the Last Jews in Kraków	226
57.	Justyna's Narrative.....	228
58.	For My Mother: Helena Tichauer Tells Her Story	232



Empty Chairs Memorial, Cracow

This memorial monument for the murdered Jews of the Podgorze Ghetto is located at Plac Bohaterów Getta (the Ghetto Heroes' Square) in Kraków.

51. Map: Eastern Europe after the German-Soviet Pact, 1939–1940



Source: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005156&MediaId=1506

52. A History of the Jews in Poland

Poland was home to the largest Jewish population in Europe and served as the center for Jewish culture. Before the outbreak of World War II, more than 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland, the second largest Jewish community in the world. Barely 11% — 369,000 people — of Poland's Jews survived the war.

Early History through the Middle Ages

There is no specific date that marks Jewish immigration to Poland. A journal account of Ibrahim ibn Jakub, a Jewish traveler, merchant and diplomat from Spain mentions Cracow and the First Duke of Poland, Mieszko I. More Jews arrived during the period of the first Crusade in 1098, while leaving persecution in Bohemia, according to the Chronicler of Prague. There is also archeological evidence, coins from the period with inscriptions in Hebrew, revealing that other Jewish merchants traveled to Poland in the 12th century.

While persecution took place across Europe during the Crusades, in the 13th century, Poland served as a haven for European Jewry because of its relative tolerance. During this period, Poland began its colonization process. It suffered great losses from Mongol invasions in 1241 and therefore encouraged Jewish immigrants to settle the towns and villages. Immigrants flocked to Poland from Bohemia-Moravia, Germany, Italy, Spain and colonies in the Crimea. Refugees from Germany brought with them German and Hebrew dialects that eventually became Yiddish

Jews were treated well under the rule of Duke Boleslaw Pobozny (1221–1279) and King Casimir the Great (1310–1370) because the now-decentralized nature of Polish polity saw the nobles forced to run their own areas and therefore the Jews- a group with commercial and administrative experience - were fought over to attract to the various townships.

In 1264, Duke Boleslaw issued the “Statute of Kalisz,” guaranteeing protection of the Jews and granting generous legal and professional rights, including the ability to become moneylenders and businessman. King Kasimierz ratified the charter and extended it to include specific points of protection from Christians, including guaranteed prosecution against those who “commit a depredation in a Jewish cemetery” and banning people from “accusing the Jews of drinking human blood.”

In the 14th century, opposition arose to the system in which Jews owned land that would be used as collateral for loans. By the mid-1300's, hatred of the Jews existed among the nobility. According to the *Chronica Olivska*, Jews throughout Poland were massacred because they were blamed for the Black Death. There were anti-Jewish riots in 1348–49 and again in 1407 and 1494 and Jews were expelled from the city of Cracow in 1495.

From the 16th to the 18th century, Jews enjoyed a measure of self-government — the Council of Four Lands (*Va'ad Arba Artsot*) — which served as a Jewish Parliament. Ordinances of the Council of the Lands revealed the ideals of widespread Torah study. Jews were active at all levels of society and politics. Almost every Polish magnate had a Jewish counselor, who kept the books, wrote letters, and managed economic affairs.

At the end of the 1600's, Poland-Lithuania was involved in a war against Sweden and another war against Moscow. The wars weakened Poland's food-exporting industries and strained the Polish nobility, who then put pressure on the Jews and raised tariffs. In turn, the Jews put pressure on the local peasants.

Chmielnicki Revolt & Rise of Hasidism

In 1648, a Ukrainian officer Bogdan Chmielnicki roused the local peasants to fight with him and the Russian Orthodox Cossacks against the Jews. The first wave of violence in 1648 destroyed Jewish communities east of the Dnieper River. Following the violence, thousands of Jews fled west, across the river, to the major cities. The Cossacks and the peasants followed them; the first large-scale massacre took place at Nemirov (a small town, which is part of present-day Ukraine). It is estimated that 100,000–200,000 Jews died in the Chmielnicki revolt that lasted from 1648–1649. This wave of destruction is considered the first modern pogrom.

The revolts left much of the Jewish population impoverished. In the 1660's, many Polish Jews became caught up in the fervor and excitement of messianic movement of Shabbetai Zevi and, a century later, Jacob Frank. According to Hasidic tradition, in southeast Poland, in the region of Podolia, Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (otherwise known as the Ba'al Shem Tov) was born in 1699. It was said that he was a miracle worker, curing Jews with amulets and charms. The Ba'al Shem Tov reached out to the masses and peasant Jewry. Hasidism flourished after his death.

Rise of the *Haskalah*

There were three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and in 1795. Poland was divided among Russia, Prussia and Austria. The majority of Poland's Jews became part of the Russian empire. In 1772, Catherine the Great discriminated against the Jews by forcing them to stay in their *shtetls* and barring their return to the towns they occupied before the partition. This area was called the Pale of Settlement. By 1885, more than four million Jews lived in the Pale.

During this period, the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) spread throughout Poland. Supporters of the *Haskalah* movement wanted to reform Jewish life and end special institutions and customs. A belief existed that if the Jews assimilated with the Poles, then they would prosper and would not be persecuted. The *Haskalah* was popular among wealthy Jews, while the shopkeepers and artisans chose to keep speaking Yiddish and continue practicing traditional Judaism.

In 1897, fourteen percent of Polish citizens were Jewish. Jews developed many political parties and associations, ranging in ideologies from Zionist to socialist to Anti-Zionist. The Bund, a socialist party, spread throughout Poland in the early 20th century. Many Jewish workers in Warsaw and Łódź joined the Bund.

Zionism also became popular among Polish Jews. The Polish Mizrahi, a Zionist orthodox political party, had a large following.

After World War I

In 1918, Poland again became a sovereign state. Following Poland's rebirth, a reign of terror against the Jews began. Jews were massacred in pogroms by Poles who associated Trotsky and the Bolshevik revolution with Jews.

The situation was mixed for Polish Jews in the inter-war period. They were recognized as a nationality and their legal rights were supposed to be protected under the Treaty of Versailles; however, their legal rights were not honored by Poland. The government intervened in the elections and controlled its budget. On the other hand, Jews received funding from the state for their schools.

Economic conditions declined for Polish Jews during the inter-war years. Jews were not allowed to work in the civil service, few were public school teachers, almost no Jews were railroad workers and no Jews worked in state-controlled banks or state-run monopolies (i.e. the tobacco industry). Legislation was enacted forcing citizens to rest on Sunday, ruining Jewish commerce that was closed on Saturday. Their economic downfall was accompanied by a rise of anti-Semitism. In the late 1930's a new wave of pogroms befell the community and anti-Jewish boycotts were enacted.

Before the outbreak of World War II, there was a thriving social and cultural life of Jews in Poland. A well-developed Jewish press circulated newspapers in Polish, Hebrew and Yiddish. There were more than 30 dailies and more than 130 Jewish periodicals. More than fifty percent of all physicians and lawyers in private practice in Poland were Jewish because of the discriminatory laws against civil service. The Jewish population stood at 3.3 million, the second largest Jewish community in the world.

Post-World War II & the Communist Era

Following the war, many Jewish survivors fled to Romania and Germany in hope of reaching Palestine. Those who remained attempted to rebuild Jewish life. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and ORT opened schools and hospitals for the Jewish communities in Poland.

Jews were still subject to anti-Semitism and pogroms. The Kielce Pogrom in July 1946, in which 40 Jews were killed, was the impetus for another mass emigration. At the end of 1947, only 100,000 Jews remained in Poland.

The Soviet Union's secret police essentially governed the country and Stalin's antisemitic regime stifled Jewish cultural and religious activities. Jewish schools were nationalized in 1948-49 and Yiddish was no longer used as the language of instruction.

Stalin's death in 1953 eased the situation for the Jews, who then were allowed to reestablish connections with Jewish organizations abroad and began producing Jewish literature. In this 1958-59 period, 50,000 Jews emigrated to Israel, which was the only country Jews were able to immigrate to under Polish law.

The last mass migration of Jews from Poland took place in 1968-69, after the Six Day War, because of the anti-Jewish policy adopted by Polish communist parties, which closed down Jewish youth camps, schools and clubs. Following the 1967 war, Poland broke off diplomatic relations with Israel.

In 1977, Poland began to try to improve its image regarding Jewish matters. Partial diplomatic relations were restored in 1986 - the first of the communistic block countries to take this step - full diplomatic relations were not restored until 1990, a year after Poland ended its communist rule.

Present Day Poland

There is no exact information on the number of Jews in Poland today. The Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in the Polish Republic (KKOZRP) coordinates the activities of the different Jewish organizations in Poland. The Lauder Foundation has established a number of clubs and events for Jewish youth as well as a primary school in Warsaw. The Social and Cultural Society of Jews in Poland helps with the renewal of Jewish life and culture; it has branches in all major cities of Poland.

In April 2013, the Museum of the History of Polish Jewry in Warsaw - built on hallowed ground of the Warsaw Ghetto - opened to visitors interested in learning more about the Jewish community of the city. The museum itself is housed in a structure of green glass and stone, symbolic of transparency and the main entrance faces a plaza dominated by the Nathan Rapoport memorial, which commemorates the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The plot of land for the museum and an additional \$13 million were donated by the city of Warsaw to the project.

Chief Curator of the Warsaw Museum and New York University Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett said that the 1,000-year history of Polish Jews, 3 million of whom were killed during

the Holocaust, was an “integral part” of the Poland’s history in general. “Jews are not a footnote to Polish history,” Kirshenblatt-Gimblett said.

Source: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Poland.html>

Selection edited by Stephen Feinberg

53. Kraków (Cracow)

Jewish Population of Kraków

Founded before the end of the first millennium, the city of Kraków (Cracow), located today in southern Poland, served as the seat of the Piast Dynasty and eventually as the capital of the Polish Kingdom until the early 17th century. After the third partition of Poland in 1795, Kraków became the seat of Galicia province in the Austrian Empire. In 1918, with the reestablishment of the Polish state, Kraków became and remains one of its most important cities.

The first recorded presence of Jews residing in Kraków dates from the early 13th century. 55,515 Kraków residents identified themselves as Jews in the Polish census of 1931; on the eve of the war some 56,000 Jews resided in Kraków, almost one-quarter of a total population of about 250,000.

By November 1939, the Jewish population of Kraków had grown to approximately 70,000. This increase reflected the concentration of Jews who fled or were driven from the countryside into the city and its suburbs, and the arrival of Jews deported east from the District Wartheland (a part of German-occupied Poland that was directly annexed to the so-called Greater German Reich).



The Cloth Hall in Kraków dates to the Renaissance and is one of the city's most recognizable icons. It is the central feature of the main market square in the Kraków Old Town.

German Occupation of Kraków

Upon the German invasion of Poland, the German army occupied Kraków in the first week of September 1939. The German military authorities initiated immediate measures aimed at isolating, exploiting and persecuting the Jews of the city. On October 26, 1939, that part of German-occupied Poland which the Germans did not annex directly came under rule of civilian occupation authorities under the leadership of Hans Frank, the former legal counsel to the Nazi Party. Appointed Governor General by Adolf Hitler, Frank established his headquarters in the Wawel Castle in Kraków, which the Germans designated as the capital of the Generalgouvernement. On Frank's staff was SS General Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger who as Higher SS and Police Leader commanded all SS and police personnel stationed in the Generalgouvernement.

Kraków was also the capital of Kraków District in the Government General. The first District Governor was SS Major General Otto Wächter. When Wächter took over Galicia District in 1942, SS Major General Richard Wendler, SS chief Heinrich Himmler's brother-in-law, was the District Governor until his reassignment to District Lublin in July 1943. The SS and Police Leaders for District Kraków were: SS Lieutenant General Karl Zech until 1940, SS Colonel Julian Scherner from 1941 until February 1944, and SS General Theobald Thier from February 1944 until the German evacuation in January 1945. The Commander of Security Police and SD for District Kraków was SS-Lieutenant Colonel Max Grosskopf. The German Security Police established their headquarters near the Montelupich Prison.

Like elsewhere in the Generalgouvernement, the German occupation authorities required Jews in Kraków city and the surrounding areas to report for forced labor (October 1939), form a Jewish Council (November 1939) identify themselves by means of a white armband with a blue Star of David to be worn on the outer clothing (December 1939), register their property (January 1940-March 1940), and to be concentrated in ghettos (September 1940-March 1941).

Kraków Ghetto

In May 1940, the Germans began to expel Jews from Kraków to the neighboring countryside. By March 1941, the SS and police had expelled more than 55,000 Jews, including refugees from the German-annexed District Wartheland; about 15,000 Jews remained in Kraków.

In early March 1941, the Germans ordered the establishment of a ghetto, to be situated in Podgorze, located in the south of Kraków, rather than in Kazimierz, the traditional Jewish quarter of the city. By March 21, 1941, the Germans had concentrated the remaining Jews of Kraków and thousands of Jews from other towns in the ghetto. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews lived within the ghetto boundaries, which were enclosed by barbed-wire fences and, in places, by a stone wall. Streetcars traveled through the ghetto but made no stops within its boundary. In March 1942, the Germans arrested 50 intellectuals in the ghetto and deported them to Auschwitz concentration camp, where the camp authorities registered all of them as prisoners on March 24.

The Germans established several factories inside the ghetto, among them the Optima and the Madritsch textile factories, where they deployed Jews at forced labor. Several hundred Jews were also employed in factories and forced-labor projects outside the ghetto. Among the businesses utilizing Jewish forced laborers was the firm German Enamel Products (*Deutsche Emalwarenfabrik*), owned by Oskar Schindler, located in Podgorze, and later moved to Plaszow.

In June 1941, Kraków SS and Police Leader Scherner authorized the establishment of two forced-labor camps for Jews on the Jerozolimska Street in the Plaszow suburb of Kraków, one for men and one for women. By February 1943, the SS had established seven other forced labor camps in Plaszow. Inside or adjacent to the camps were several textile factories; the SS deployed

Jews with the Siemens firm and in a brickworks factory and a stone quarry. The Germans deployed Jewish forced laborers on construction projects as well, building or repairing bridges, rail track, and an indoor sports complex. By February 1943, the Jerozolimska Street camp housed approximately 2,000 Jewish men and women.

Operatives of Operation Reinhard, within the framework of which the SS and police planned to murder the Jewish residents of the *Generalgouvernement*, arrived in Kraków in spring 1942. The Germans claimed to be deporting some 1,500 Kraków Jews to the forced-labor camp in Plaszow; in reality the transport was directed to the Bełżec killing center. On June 1 and 6, 1942, the German SS and police deported up to 7,000 Jews via Plaszow, where the camp authorities assisted in the murder of approximately 1,000, to Bełżec. On October 28, 1942, the Germans deported nearly half of the remaining Jews in the ghetto, approximately 6,000, to Bełżec. During the deportation operations, Plac Zgody and the Optima factory were the major assembly points. During the operation the SS and police shot approximately 600 Jews, half of them children, in the ghetto.

Liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto

The SS and police planned the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto for mid-March 1943, in accordance with the Himmler's order in October 1942 to complete the murder of the Jews residing in the *Generalgouvernement*, incarcerating those few whose labor was still required in forced-labor camps.

On March 13-14, 1943, the SS and police carried out the operation, shooting some 2,000 Jews in the ghetto. The SS transferred another 2,000 Jews — those capable of work and the surviving members of the Jewish Council and the Jewish police force (*Ordnungsdienst*) — to the Plaszow forced-labor camp, and the rest of the Jews, approximately 3,000, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in two transports, arriving on March 13 and March 16. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, the camp authorities selected 549 persons from the two transports (499 men and 50 women) to be registered as prisoners and murdered the others, approximately 2,450, in the gas chambers.

After the revolts of Jewish prisoners in the Warsaw ghetto (April-May 1943), Treblinka (August 1943), the Bialystok ghetto (August 1943), and Sobibor (October 1943), the SS guards and their Trawniki-trained auxiliaries murdered virtually all of the remaining prisoners in the Plaszow forced-labor camp between September and December 1943 in several mass shooting operations. The number of Jews murdered by the SS in these shootings is unknown; it may have been up to 9,000. SS and police officials deported the survivors to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Plaszów Concentration Camp

In January 1944, the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office took over the Plaszów forced-labor camp and converted it into a concentration camp. The SS filled the now virtually empty camp

with incarcerated Jewish forced laborers from various smaller forced labor camps in Kraków and Radom Districts and, later in the spring, with Jews deported from Hungary. Among the Jews brought to Płaszów at this time were those forced laborers living near and deployed at Oskar Schindler's German Enamel Products factory.

Since Płaszów also served as a transit camp for the movement of Jewish prisoners from surviving forced labor camps in Poland to camps further west, exact data on the number of Jews whom the SS incarcerated and killed there is not available. In September 1944, there were still 2,200 Jews in Płaszów. The SS evacuated at least 1,500 of them to Gross-Rosen concentration camp on October 15. As of the beginning of 1945, 636 prisoners remained at Płaszów; on January 14, 1945, two days after the Soviet offensive pushed the Germans out of their positions on the west bank of the Vistula River, the SS evacuated these last prisoners on foot to Auschwitz.



What remains of the fence that once surrounded the Płaszów concentration camp.

Resistance in the Kraków Ghetto

A Jewish resistance movement existed in the Kraków ghetto from the time the ghetto was established in 1941. Its leaders focused underground operations initially on supporting education and welfare organizations. In anticipation of the deportation operations that the SS carried out at the end of October 1942, some leaders in the more radical wing of the underground, two existing resistance groups, the Zionist-oriented Bnei Akiva, led by Laban Leibowicz, Shimon Draenger, and Dolek Liebeskind, and the Socialist Ha-Shomer ha-Za'ir group, led by Heshek Bauminger and Benjamin Halbrajch, merged into one organization, the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*; ZOB). Independent of the ZOB in Warsaw, this merged group prepared to fight the Germans.

Ultimately the ZOB decided not to fight within the limited confines of the ghetto, but instead to use the ghetto as a base from which to attack targets throughout the city of Kraków. The most important ZOB attack took place in cooperation with Communist partisans on December 23, 1942, at the Cyganeria cafe, in the center of Kraków, which was frequented by German officers. The ZOB killed 12 Germans in this attack.

Kraków ghetto fighters also attempted to join partisan groups active in the Kraków region. In successive skirmishes with the Germans, the Jewish underground fighters suffered heavy losses.

In the fall of 1944 the remnants of the resistance escaped from Poland, crossing into neighboring Slovakia and then into Hungary, where they joined with Jewish resistance groups in Budapest.

Liberation and Aftermath

Kraków remained the administrative seat of the *Generalgouvernement* until the Germans evacuated the city on January 17, 1945. Soviet forces entered Kraków two days later, on January 19, 1945.

After the war, some 4,282 Jews resurfaced in Kraków. By early 1946, Polish Jews returning from the Soviet Union swelled the Jewish population of the city to approximately 10,000. Pogroms in August 1945 and throughout 1946 as well as number of murders of individual Jews led to the emigration of many of the surviving Kraków Jews. By the early 1990s, only a few hundred Jews remained.



Empty Chairs Memorial, Cracow

This memorial monument for the murdered Jews of the Podgorze Ghetto in Kraków is located at Plac Bohaterów Getta (the Ghetto Heroes' Square).

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005169>

54. Kraków Timeline

September 1939 — The German army occupies Kraków.

October 26, 1939 — German-occupied Poland, with the exception of the provinces directly annexed to the so-called Greater German Reich, is placed under civilian rule and becomes known as the Generalgouvernement. Hans Frank becomes Governor General. Kraków becomes both the administrative capital of the Generalgouvernement and of District Kraków within the Generalgouvernement. German authorities issue a decree requiring Jews and Poles residing in the Generalgouvernement to perform forced labor.

December 1, 1939 — German authorities require Jews residing in the Generalgouvernement to wear white armbands with blue Stars of David for purposes of identification.

January-March 1940 — German authorities require Jews residing in the Generalgouvernement to register all property and assets.

May, December 1940 — German authorities expel some 55,000 Kraków Jews out of the city into the surrounding countryside.

March 21, 1941 — German authorities establish a ghetto in which they require the remaining Jews living in the city to reside. Located in the Podgorze section of Kraków, the ghetto houses between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews.

June 1941 — The SS and Police Leader for Kraków establishes a forced-labor camp for Jews in Kraków-Plaszow. During the next year, the SS and police establish eight other forced-labor camps for Jews in Plaszow, with the central camp on Jerozolimska Street. Among these camps is the forced-labor camp for Jews deployed in the German Enamel Products firm owned by Oskar Schindler.

March 23-24, 1942 — The Gestapo (German secret state police) arrests 50 Jewish intellectuals residing in the Kraków ghetto and deports them to Auschwitz, where all of them are registered as prisoners.

March 1942 — The SS and police deport 1,500 Jews from the Kraków ghetto via Plaszow to the Bełżec killing center.

June 1 and 6, 1942 — The SS and Police deport up to 7,000 Jews from the Kraków ghetto via Plaszow to the Bełżec killing center. The Plaszow camp staff kills nearly 1,000 of these Jews before the train resumes its journey to Bełżec.

October 28, 1942 — The SS and Police deport approximately 6,000 Jews to Plaszow. They kill at least 600 during the operation in the ghetto, 300 of them children. After a selection to determine individuals suited for labor, the SS sends the overwhelming majority of Jews on this transport to the Belżec killing center.

December 23, 1942 — Members of the Jewish Fighting Organization, the underground resistance group in the ghetto, and partisans from the Communist People's Army attack the Café Cyganeria, an establishment catering to German military personnel, and kill several Germans.

March 13–16, 1943 — SS and police authorities liquidate the Kraków ghetto. During the operation the SS kill approximately 2,000 Jews in the ghetto and transfer another 2,000 Jews, the members and families of the Jewish council, and the Kraków ghetto police force to Plaszow. The SS and Police transport approximately 3,000 more Kraków Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the camp authorities select 499 men and 50 women for forced labor. The rest, approximately 2,450 people, are murdered in the gas chambers.

September-December 1943 — The camp authorities and guards at the Plaszow forced-labor camp for Jews murder virtually all of the Jewish prisoners in a series of mass shootings.

January 1944 — The SS Economic and Administration Main Office takes over the Plaszow camp and converts it into the Kraków-Plaszow concentration camp. The SS liquidates the remaining forced-labor camps for Jews in the Kraków and Radom Districts of the Generalgouvernement and concentrates the Jewish forced laborers in Kraków-Plaszow. In spring 1944, the SS also transports Hungarian Jews to Kraków-Plaszow.

January 14, 1945 — The SS guards evacuate the last 636 Jews from Kraków-Plaszow in the direction of Auschwitz.

January 17, 1945 — Hans Frank and his administration flee Kraków.

January 19, 1945 — Soviet troops enter Kraków.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007458>

55. Tadeusz Pankiewicz: Kraków

Eagle Pharmacy, Harmony Square Kraków 6 June 1942

“The scorching sun is merciless; the heat makes for unbearable thirst, dries out the throats. The crowd was standing and sitting; all wait frozen with fright and uncertainty. Armed Germans arrived, shooting at random into the crowd. Then the deportees were driven out of the square, amid constant screaming of the Germans, merciless beating, kicking and shooting.

Old people, women and children pass by the pharmacy windows like ghosts. I see an old woman of around seventy years, her hair loose, walking alone, a few steps away from a larger group of deportees. Her eyes have a glazed look; immobile, wide open, filled with horror, they stare straight ahead. She walks slowly, quietly, only in her dress and slippers, without even a bundle, or handbag.

She holds in her hands something small, something black, which she caresses fondly and keeps close to her old breast, it is a small puppy – her most precious possession, all that she saved and would not leave behind.



Tadeusz Pankiewicz

Laughing, inarticulately gesturing with her hands, walks a young deranged girl of about fourteen, so familiar to all inhabitants of the ghetto. She walks barefoot, in a crumpled nightgown. One shuddered watching the girl laughing, having a good time. Old and young pass by, some dressed, some only in their underwear, hauled out of their beds and driven out. People after major operations and people with chronic diseases went by.

Across the street from the pharmacy, out of the building at 2 Harmony Square, walks a blind old man, well known to the inhabitants of the ghetto, he is about seventy years old, wears dark goggles over his blind eyes, which he lost in the battles on the Italian front in 1915 fighting side by side with the Germans.

He wears a yellow armband with three black circles on his left arm to signify his blindness. His head high, he walks erect, guided by his son on one side, by his wife on the other. He should be that he cannot see, it will be easier for him to die, says a hospital nurse to us. Pinned on his chest is the medal he won during the war. It may, perhaps, have some significance for the Germans. Such were the illusions in the beginning.

Immediately after him, another elderly person appears, a cripple with one leg, on crutches. The Germans close in on them; slowly, in dance step, one of them runs toward the blind man and

yells with all his power: Schnell! Hurry! This encourages the other Germans to start a peculiar game.

Two of the SS men approach the old man without the leg and shout the order for him to run. Another one comes from behind and with the butt of his rifle hits the crutch. The old man falls down. The German scream savagely, threatens to shoot.

All this takes place right in the back of the blind man who is unable to see, but hears the beastly voices of the Germans, interspersed with cascades of their laughter. A German soldier approaches the cripple who is lying on the ground and helps him to rise. This help will show on the snapshot of a German officer who is eagerly taking pictures of all scenes that will prove 'German help in the humane resettlement of the Jews.'

For a moment we think that perhaps there will be at least one human being among them unable to stand torturing people one hour before their death.

Alas, there was no such person in the annals of the Cracow ghetto. No sooner were they saturated with torturing the cripple than they decided to try the same with the blind invalid. They chased away his son and wife, tripped him, and rejoiced at his falling to the ground. This time they even did not pretend to help him and he had to rise by himself, rushed on by horrifying screaming of the SS men hovering over him.

They repeated this game several times, a truly shattering experience of cruelty. One could not tell from what they derived more pleasure, the physical pain of the fallen invalid or the despair of his wife and son standing aside watching helplessly."

Source: <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org>

56. Amon Goeth Liquidates the Last Jews in Kraków

Testimony by Samuel Stoeger: March 13, 1943

Samuel Stoeger was one of the survivors who gave evidence against Goeth in the post war trials. He was separated from his wife and children when the Kraków ghetto was closed and sent to the notorious Plaszow labour camp, where he waited to see if his family could have survived:

[O]n a Saturday, the 13th of March, the final liquidation of the ghetto commenced. The order to vacate the Ghetto was as follows, “All Jews in employment are to assemble at the exit of Wegierska Street, obviously only those who were in possession of the letter W- Z-R or markings, in addition to the Judenpass.”

All those not in employment were to proceed to the previously fenced off area of Ghetto “B,” from where they were told, they would be directed to work on the “Ostbahn” (German Railways in Poland) as from the next day. This was the order as issued from Obersturmbannführer Scherner, who was then in overall command in Kraków.



A German police officer examines the identification papers of Jews in the Kraków ghetto

All those in work assembled duly where directed, and in groups they were being marched out into the camp in Plaszow, under heavy escort of guards, SS men and Ukrainians in SS uniforms.

Some mothers with small children also assembled in these columns, placing the children in rucksacks or suitcases. Some held their children on their sides in the centre of the column, so as to conceal them that way. The accused roamed all around each column, tearing the children from their mother’s arms, beating mercilessly, with a whip across the eyes. Such an incident occurred right next to me.

The accused Goeth, tore our child from my wife’s arms. She, refusing to let the child go, left the column and followed the child, so she was severely beaten by him. I never saw my wife or my child again.

Three or four days later, the clothing of all those that were murdered was brought into the camp, among which I recognised my wife’s overcoat and the outfit our child wore on that day.

Even before the last column moved off towards the camp, I witnessed Police in navy blue uniforms, probably Ukrainians bringing into the Ghetto, a friend of mine whose name was Landsberg, his wife and their two children, they attempted to escape from the Ghetto through the sewers.

They were caught somewhere in the vicinity of the 3rd bridge, and brought back into the Ghetto onto the Wegierska Street and handed over to Goeth himself. He in turn immediately marched them off towards Jozefinska Street towards the vicinity of the Jewish baths, and ordered the Security Police to shoot them there in the street.

The accused was present as they proceeded to carry out the order. The husband was shot first, at this the children, a five and a two-year old girl started to run off, they were shot at, and after the shooting they had their heads smashed, there in the street.

Chairman: Who did the shooting?

Witness: Goeth and the Security Policemen

Chairman: Did you see the accused shooting?

Witness: Certainly the accused was present, he held a revolver in his hand, as well as the Security men that were with him.

We were then marched off, under heavy escort of SS men and Ukrainians, in the direction of the camp. We were beaten with rifle butts all the way. Whoever, had a decent looking suitcase, had it duly taken from them by the Ukrainians. Anyone who was older, or could not keep the pace of the march, was severely beaten.

Having arrived at the camp, the next day, I waited for the arrival of my wife and child, unfortunately without success. I stood by the main gate, as some people said there is a possibility they survived and maybe will appear. My wife had the right of entry into the camp, as she had the required letter "R" marking.

The firm she worked for by the name of "Madritsch" promised us that everyone employed by them, even with children, will be transferred into the camp in Plaszow. I hoped for miracles. I stood there waiting a whole Sunday, but instead of seeing the arrival of living people, what I was seeing was the arrival of rubber covered platforms, they were bringing in huge heaps of dead, naked corpses. These heaps were in some cases very high, I tried to identify anyone, this was in vain, as the corpses were massacred into an unrecognisable terrible state.

57. Justyna's Narrative

“From this prison cell that we will never leave alive, we young fighters who are about to die salute you. We offer our lives willingly for our holy cause, asking only that our deeds be inscribed in the book of eternal memory. May the memories preserved on these scattered bits of paper be gathered together to compose a picture of our unwavering resolve in the face of death.” “Justyna” [Gusta Davidson Draenger. January, 1943, Montelupich Prison].

Justyna's Narrative, Gusta Davidson Draenger's account of the activities of the Kraków Jewish Resistance, especially the Akiba youth group to which she belonged was first published in 1946, in Polish. Gusta only uses Polish code names for the Akiba group members in her diary, so as not to endanger them. Her code name, “Justyna,” is used throughout the narrative.

Justyna wrote her account while sitting in prison and waiting to be executed, in the first months of 1943. These circumstances make her account all the more remarkable. She wrote her diary secretly, on pieces of toilet paper, and later on pieces of paper smuggled into the prison. Prison wardens were known to barge into the cell unexpectedly, so Justyna sat by the barbed wire window, writing, whilst her cell mates huddled around her. She knew her days were numbered – at any time she could be taken out of the cell and murdered. She wanted the world to know about the activities of the Akiba movement, and other youth organizations in Kraków, Poland, during World War II. When her fingers were too tired to write, she dictated to her cell mates. In order to make sure that her narrative would be preserved, four copies of it were written out by hand. Jewish auto mechanics who worked for the Gestapo and were housed in the prison at night smuggled writing material to the women in the cell and were able to smuggle out some of the notes. Two complete sets of notes were hidden in the prison, and another two were smuggled out, of which one survived.



Gusta “Justyna” Davidson Draenger

In the prison, Justyna became a role model and spiritual influence. For example, she convinced her fellow inmates to wash and brush their hair, and to keep the cell clean. Here below is an example of spiritual resistance even in the most dire of circumstances. Genia Meltzer who settled in Israel, describes Justyna's influence on her cell mates:

“I couldn't eat. I couldn't drink. I couldn't communicate at all with the others. I just sat along in the corner of the cell, trying to regain my bearings ... the natural tendency was to surrender yourself to the place, to give up your humanity. But Gusta's leadership prevented us from succumbing. Although she firmly believed that we could expect nothing but an early and violent death, she didn't let us neglect ourselves. She made us wash and brush our hair every day, as long as the water lasted and she made certain that the table was cleaned every day... she never believed that we would survive the place. But she felt that whilst we were alive, we should behave as human beings....”

Justyna's diary covers four stages (about four months), of the Akiba movement's history.

In the first part she describes how a delegation from the Jewish Self-Help Society in Nowy Wisniz sent a letter to the chief of the Gestapo requesting approval for a series of courses to be offered for the purpose of training the Jewish youth to do farm work, and permission to establish a farm in Kopaliny. In December 1941, having received permission, ten of the most trusted students, including Justyna and her husband Szymek Draenger, were assigned to Kopaliny. During the day they undertook agricultural training in preparation for immigration to the land of Israel, but at night they mailed out bulletins disseminating information about what was really happening to the Jews, and they would also discuss how and whether to organize active resistance against the Nazis. In August 1942, the group had to close down its activities in Kopaliny after rumors of their activities spread. Despite the ever-present danger, Justyna had more pleasant memories of that time.

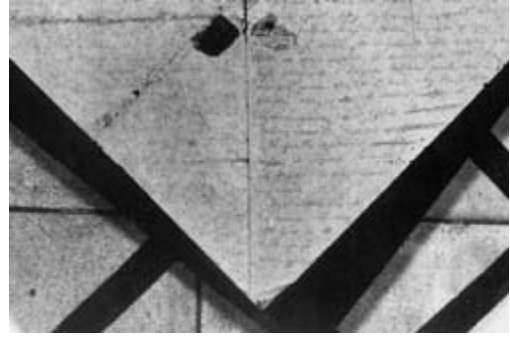
Like the other Jews of Kraków who remained in the city at the beginning of 1941, Justyna was forced to move into the Kraków Ghetto, which she calls "the quarter". She was happy to be living amongst her friends again, and describes the attempts of the group to organize themselves into a fighting unit. In an entry that shows the change among the youth of Akiba, who had once been involved only with education and issues of social welfare, Justyna writes,

"They truly had no idea how to function as a military organization. They were a youth movement through and through ... Nearly all of them had lost home and family, and this young group had become their last refuge, the only haven for the feelings they now clung to with great devotion. The more their faith in humanity diminished as they witnessed constant scenes of evil and barbarism, the stronger their faith grew in each other, to the exclusion of all else. They loved one another with a strange devotion, constantly seeking each other out, and would meet frequently, seemingly by chance, but always in groups. Their gay laughter and strange sense of freedom made it unlikely they would go unnoticed."

"History will never forgive us for not having thought about it. What normal, thinking person would suffer all this in silence? Future generations will want to know what overwhelming motive could have restrained us from acting heroically. If we don't act now, history will condemn us forever. Whatever we do we're doomed, but we can still save our souls. The least we can do now is leave a legacy of human dignity that will be honored by someone, some day."

From this and other entries, it is clear that Akiba was metamorphosing into a movement that would take active, armed resistance against the Germans. Justyna writes about the trials and errors of the new fledgling fighters and how many of them lost their lives purely through lack of experience and equipment. They tried to gather weapons, and make bases in the forest, and a first group of six brave Akiba members were sent into the forest. Unfortunately, the inexperienced fighters were soon seen and reported to the German police. Eventually, only one fighter, Zygmund Mahler, returned. The group of six did not have enough weapons to defend themselves, and from this tragic experience, they had to learn by their mistakes. This is the second stage of the diary.

“You would reveal your Jewishness in a thousand small ways; every anxiety-filled move; every step taken with a back hunched over from the yoke of slavery; every glance that bespoke the terror of a hunted animal; the entire form, the face on which the ghetto had left its indelible mark. You were nothing more than a Jew, not only because of the color of your eyes, hair, skin, the shape of your nose, the many telltale signs of your race. You were simply and unmistakably a Jew because of your lack of self-assurance, your way of expressing yourself, your behavior, and God knows what else. You were simply and conspicuously a Jew because everybody outside the ghetto strained to detect your Jewishness, all those people eager to do you harm, who couldn’t abide the thought that you might be cheating death. At your every step they would look straight into your eyes – impudently, suspiciously, challengingly – until you would become entirely confused, turn beet red, lower your eyes – and thus show yourself to be undeniably a Jew.”



Pages from the manuscript of “Justyna’s Narrative,” written by Gusta Davidson Draenger, a member of the group Akiba and the Jewish underground in Kraków, during her prison term.

In the third stage, Justyna depicts the actual armed struggle. Operating in Kraków, the Jewish resistance succeeded in carrying out several attacks on the Germans, including throwing grenades into the Cyganeria coffee shop, but after this successful resistance operation, members of the group were tracked down and arrested by the Gestapo.

“It is not easy to describe all the obstacles that had to be overcome in order to organize a Jewish resistance under Nazi occupation. Our work was a hundred times more difficult than the work of any other resistance group, because we had to conceal not only our underground activity but also, and even more urgently, our Jewish identities. Hence it may be said that the first thing the leaders had to do was to deny even to themselves the impossibility of the task before them, and to act in spite of the overwhelmingly unfavorable odds.”

It was the custom of the Akiba Youth Movement in post-World War I Poland to assemble on Friday nights to celebrate the onset of Shabbat. In 1941, these gatherings took place inside the Kraków Ghetto. As the friends sat together on the Friday night of November 20, 1942, Aharon Liebeskind (Dolek), the spiritual leader of Akiba, who was later killed, had a premonition and uttered the words, “This is the Last Supper.” He felt that this would be the last time they would greet the Shabbat together. This indeed was the last evening at the Akiba meeting place at Jozefinska Street, remembered as “The Last Supper.”

“It’s as if he (Dolek) can feel death approaching, because he talks about it at length. He no longer believes they will survive, and he doesn’t want anyone harboring false hopes. He doesn’t want them deluding themselves. He wants those going out on assignments to realize that death is near. He hurls his hard words into the heart of the festive atmosphere.

“We’re on a journey of no return. The road we’ve chosen is the road to death. Remember that. Whoever hopes to survive must not seek survival among us or in our work. We’ve reached the road’s end, but it’s not an end that will plunge us into darkness. We’re going out to face the

angel of death, but we'll face him as bold idealists. I have a feeling this is the last time we'll greet the Sabbath together. We have to leave the quarter, because our whereabouts and activities are too well known. This week we'll start to liquidate this oasis we've established at Number 13. One more phase of our lives is about to close, but we can't afford to second-guess ourselves, to regret anything we've done. It couldn't have been any other way."

As the Last Supper drew to a close, a gray dawn peeped in the window.

The following Sunday, Dolek took five new people out on a sortie – Tosca, Marta, Henek, Rena and Giza. (#1) Each was assigned a different spot. Dolek gave final instructions and a sort of fatherly blessing for the road. No, it wasn't exactly a blessing he gave them, but words of encouragement, words to sustain them and serve as a reservoir of strength to draw on for a long time to come. He gave them a pep talk, though one thought kept running through his mind the whole time: "We're going to certain death".

The last part of the diary describes the collapse of the movement, and the hunting down of its fighters.

Miraculously, Justyna and her husband Szymek each managed to escape from the Montelupich prison convoys as they were separately being led away to be shot, on the very same day in April, 1943. They were reunited in the town of Bochnia, where they and other Akiba youth members continued their resistance against the Nazis.

It is not clear exactly how Justyna and Szymek met their deaths; this part of the story is cloaked in mystery. We know that they resumed publishing an underground newsletter from the town of Bochnia urging the Poles not to cooperate with the Germans and trying to convince the Jews to resist and not submit to their deaths passively. However, at the beginning of November, 1943, both were captured by the Germans. Their capture and apparent deaths spelled the end of the great Jewish fighting organization in Kraków.

Gusta Davidson Draenger, *Justyna's Narrative*, Eli Pfefferkorn, David H. Hirsch, eds., Roslyn Hirsch, David H. Hirsch, trans. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), p. 33.

58. For My Mother: Helena Tichauer Tells Her Story

Wednesday, October 13, 2010 at 10:54AM

Institute for Holocaust Education

Helena Tichauer was tempted to give up more than once. If she had, no one would have blamed her. For persecuted Jews like her and her family, reasons for despair were everywhere in Nazi-occupied Poland. Her family's pleasant, comfortable life in Krakow had been wrenched away in the looming darkness of the Holocaust.

She'd already lost her little brother, Nathan, when he was seized by the Gestapo from the clutches of their mother in the Krakow Ghetto and sent to his death at Auschwitz. No sooner did her remaining family arrive in Plaszow, the forced labor camp and eventual concentration camp depicted in Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, then her paternal grandmother fell victim to Nazi atrocities.

"She was pulled out of line with many others and ordered to dig graves. Then, they had to go into the graves. She took her bible with her. She was a very religious person. She said to us, 'The upstairs is calling.' And she was shot with the others."

After seeing this, Helena, who's lived in Omaha since 1963, said she thought, "This is our end. I prayed to the Lord that maybe I don't get up the next day." In Plaszow, she watched as her mother wasted away. She knew she must do something before it was too late. "I was the one that looked after her," said Helena, who had to fight through her own malaise. "I didn't have any spirit. I vegetated. But I had my mother, and I had to live for her."

The eldest of Karol and Karolina Schulkind's three children, Helena took charge of her mother's well-being because someone had to. Her mom was a rather fragile woman, whose delicate sensibility and privileged background ill-prepared her for the rigors of enforced manual labor and starvation rations. "She never did work before the war. She was spoiled," is how Helena described her pampered mother, whose stately Krakow home was run by servants. Helena's younger sister, Lola Reinglas, was at Plaszow, too, but in a different barracks. Eventually, Lola was shipped out of Plaszow altogether. Their father was in another section of the compound reserved for males. Occasionally, the family was able to visit each other before curfew, but otherwise Helena and Karolina were on their own.

As her smart, self-sufficient mother's favorite, Helena was well-suited to be her mother's caregiver. Except for one short interval, the two remained together throughout the entire Shoah nightmare and even for years after its conclusion. Their time together at Plaszow and, later, at the death camps of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen forged a mother-daughter survivor's bond of unusual depth.

This symbiosis began at Plaszow. It was 1942. Helena was 19. Her mother 41. Officially a forced labor camp then, Plaszow was — for all intents and purposes — already the concentration camp it would later be designated as. Escape was useless. An electrified fence ran around the perimeter. The commandant, Amon Goeth, ruled like the despot and sadist he was. People were executed for the slightest infractions or no reason at all. Prisoners were ill, overworked, underfed.

Amid such conditions, Helena's own survival is amazing enough, but that she pulled her mother through the ordeal with her is even more remarkable. The fortitude and fate that brought Helena and her late mother out alive is shared, too, by Lola, a fellow survivor who was not reunited with her sister and mother until many years later. Lola was the first of the sisters to come to Omaha and she still lives here.

Much of their strength came from the sisters' father, an educated man who, despite their unimaginable plight, they recall as never losing hope. Through it all, he remained "always" optimistic. "He said every day, 'The war is over tomorrow.' I wanted to believe him," Helena said. She recalls he somehow managed secreting a radio inside the camp that he kept hidden and listened to for news of the Allies' advance on Axis Germany. "He'd come and cheer us up, telling us the war would be over soon. Sure that helped. Wouldn't that help you if you were down in the dumps? He lifted our spirits and the spirits of others, too. It's true." He survived the Holocaust, tragically dying two days after liberation.

She said her father also willed himself to stay alive in order to keep an oft-repeated vow he made — that he would live to see the day the Germans were "beaten. Yes, he had strong will power," she said. His daughters did, too. "If I didn't have, then I would be six feet under a long time ago," said Helena.

Still, there were times, she said, when "I was thinking to give up. I could have. I could have thrown myself in the electrified wires and been finished with my life. But I couldn't, because I had to live for my mother."

Weakened by disease and malnutrition, Karolina was a pale shell of herself. If she were unable to work or if even she appeared unfit, Helena knew her mom would soon be disposable and, thus, a sure target for extermination.

"My mother was very sick. She had thrombosis in both legs. She had terrible bronchitis and TB (tuberculosis)," said Helena. "I forced my mother to work. There was not any other way. I pushed her and she pushed herself, even though it was very hard for her. I said, 'If you're not going to work, they're going to kill you.' She knew if she was not going to do it, it was going to be the end. She wanted to live."

To fool the guards into thinking her mother stronger and ruddier than she really was, Helena used a ruse that, if discovered, could have meant death for both of them. “Everything was taken from me. Everything,” she said, except for one item she hid from the humiliating strip searches conducted in camp — a tube of lipstick.

“I carried the lipstick here,” she said, indicating between her bosoms. “Mother was very white, like no blood was left in her face. She was very frail. Each morning, I tried to put on my mother’s cheeks the lipstick, so that she would look healthy for the Germans. Every day...I made her look healthy. I saved my mother this way.”

It was not the only time she saved her mother’s life. Once, she said, her mother left the barracks to use the latrine, which wasn’t much more than a hole in the ground. “She fell down the hole and she was drowning in shit up to here,” Helena said, gesturing to her neck. “Somebody called me, and I had to pull her out and wash her off. It was a terrible thing.”

How different things were only a few years before — before the German invasion and occupation of Poland began in 1939 and, with it, the ethnic cleansing campaign the Nazis called The Final Solution.

The Schulkind family were a family of prestige in the largely Gentile district of Krakow they resided in. Their history in Krakow went back more than a century. Karol, the father, was a highly respected and successful electrical engineer and the owner of his own company employing several people. A World War I veteran, he attended university in Austria. He was, Helena said, “a brilliant, eminent, handsome man.”

Karolina, the mother, was a pretty, porcelain doll of a woman who was the picture of refinement in the house she decorated and in the artistic pursuits she favored.

The family vacationed together, with swimming and hiking-filled summers in the country and winter skiing treks in the mountains.

Helena was a smart, lively 16 year-old with two years of “gymnasium” (high school) under her belt and a dream of becoming a physician. “I wanted to study medicine,” she said, but her fondest “desire was shattered” by the outbreak of hostilities.

September 1939 is when it all changed. An eerie quiet fell over Krakow the first few days after war was declared. “Nothing was happening, but then the Germans began bombing Krakow”, she said, using the blitzkrieg strategy that overwhelmed Polish defenses, if not Polish resistance. “We spent most of the time in the basement bunker in our house. I was terribly afraid something might happen to my mother and father.” The Schulkind family and their house survived the attack unscathed, but neighbors were not so lucky. Then, the German Army marched in and life as the Schulkind family knew it stopped. No more work. No more school. No more freedom.

Everything the family once took for granted was stripped from them, including their possessions, as Jews were made official outcasts in their own land. In March 1941, the city's Jewish population was ordered to gather up no more than five pounds of belongings per person and marched across the river into an abandoned Gentile district that became their ghetto prison. The stone wall and barbed wire enclosed Krakow Ghetto would be their grim dwelling place the next several months.

The Schulkind shared a two-room flat with another family of five. Fear ruled the ghetto occupants' lives. Beatings and killings were widespread. Once, the inhabitants were gathered in a public square and those ordered out of the ranks, some 1,500 men, women and children, were machine gunned. Enforced labor, which was mandatory for all able-bodied persons, regardless of age, provided some relief. Each Schulkind worked except for Nathan, who was too frail. Karolina, the mother, repaired military uniforms. Karol, the father, plied his trade as an electrical engineer inside and outside the ghetto. Lola was transported by truck each morning to clean at a Krakow hospital. Helena swept dirt from the street and sidewalk in the summer and cleaned snow in the winter.

Food was in chronic short supply and the only way to get more was to barter or trade. In a bold and dangerous move, Helena's father defied authorities and held onto the family's jewelry and silver, which he kept hidden. Helena said she used these valuables for procuring food on scavenging missions outside the ghetto that she planned and executed herself.

"I tried many times to get out from the ghetto," she said. "Not to escape, but to organize food supplies. And I did. My mother said, 'You know, if you're going to go, you'll be killed.' I said, 'I'm going to take my chances.' I was frightened. But, you know, in a situation like that I took the chance."

She said that while the ghetto was barricaded by heavily guarded wall and wire, there were entrance-exit points where one could dare sneak past or bribe the guards, who were often directing traffic in and out of the ghetto. Her preferred method was to position herself near the passage way and bide her time for a guard to turn away or occupy himself talking with someone, and then, when "the opportunity" presented itself, she "slipped out. I went where I could get food. I can't remember where, but I bought it somewhere" with the forbidden treasures she carried. Then, food in hand — "a loaf of bread maybe or whatever I could get" — she had to repeat the process and "slip back in. I thanked God nobody ever caught me. I would probably have been shot."

Months later, at Plaszow, Helena said she employed a similar artful dodger routine. "There was some kind of opening there, and I looked for the opportunity and I went out," she said. This time, however, she had nothing to barter with. "I went to some homes where Gentiles were living and I begged them for food."

Helena's family was severed the first time when the ghetto was emptied and its occupants assembled in preparation for marching to the nearby Plaszow camp. The Gestapo began pulling the old, the young and the sick out of line, including her brother Nathan. Her mother pulled him back. That's when the Gestapo told Karolina she and her son would be killed right then unless she let him go. He was taken away, never to be seen again by his family. He died at Auschwitz.

She soon lost another member of her family, when her grandmother was shot before her very eyes at Plaszow. The misery of Plaszow ground prisoners down. Degradation and torture were all they could expect. Death, their only release. Once, Helena was picked at random and beaten. "They chose me — I don't know why — and they put me on a table and gave me 25 lashes on my bottom with a leather crop," she said. "No reason at all."

Camp commandant Amon Goeth would "shoot people, line the bodies up" and force prisoners like Helena to "look at them. This was Goeth. He was terrible." At the opposite end of the spectrum was Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist well known among prisoners for doing "business with the Nazis" in the camp, where "his Jews" were protected and where he operated a pot and pan factory. Helena's sister, Lola, believes a fateful encounter with him saved her life. Caught bringing food to their father after curfew, Lola said a man she now recognizes as Schindler beat her unconscious rather than let her be shot by the SS.

The only relief from all this despair was in the scattered moments Helena and her family stole with each other. Their work — pounding rocks into gravel at a quarry — was pure drudgery. What passed for meals — a slice of bread and cup of coffee in the morning and a rutabaga broth at night — offered no satisfaction. The starvation diet forced prisoners to make awful choices. "I asked my mother — What should I do? Should I eat bread now or keep for tomorrow? I kept for breakfast."

In 1944, Lola was shipped out of Plaszow to work in the first of two munitions factories. Then, Karol was transported to another camp. This left Helena to fend for herself and for her mother. "My sister was gone. My father was taken away. And I had to care for my mom. It was very hard. I was just a young person. I didn't know from life." Then, Helena's worst fears were realized when she was separated from her mother and shipped to the Tarnow Ghetto. Strangely, she said, she was sent back to Plaszow, where she was gratefully reunited with her ailing mom. She believes her father played a role in getting her returned. "My father was still alive, and people told me he had some influence with higher officials."

Helena, her mother and others were taken by train, on cattle cars, to Auschwitz. They knew evil was there. "I was terribly sad when I heard the word Auschwitz. I was afraid they took us to die," Helena said. However, they were spared in the short time they were there and, later, at Bergen-Belsen. As the war neared its end, the Nazi killing machine was disrupted. She and her mother were among those liberated by American soldiers at Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945.

“When the war ended, people cried from happiness” at having survived, she said, “and from sadness, too. The first words were, ‘I don’t know what happened to my father’ and ‘I don’t know what happened to my brother.’ It was very emotional.”

Liberation found Helena and her mother drawn down to maybe 65 pounds each. Her mother was quite sick. Their recovery began in Germany and continued in Sweden, where the International Red Cross found them passage. Helena’s mother recuperated in a sanatorium. “The care was excellent,” Helena said.

It was in Sweden Helena learned Lola was alive. By the time they exchanged letters, Helena and her mother were bound for Uruguay, where relatives lived. Meanwhile, Lola married Irving Reinglas and settled in Munich, Germany before coming to America with their first born child in 1949. It was in Uruguay Helena met and married Walter Tichauer, a gifted glazer who fled Germany after Kristallnacht. Their two sons were born there. He did glazing work and she was a nurse’s aide.

Years later, Lola prevailed on her mother and Helena and her family to relocate from Uruguay to America. They came to the U.S. in 1963. Just as Lola and Irving made a good life here, so too did Helena and Walter. Helena had her own hardware store in north Omaha, where she survived being held-up at knife-point, and, later, she had a gift shop in the Westroads. Walter applied his craftsmanship to new building projects. In 1967, Helena and her sister lost their mother. She was only 63.

Today, these survivor sisters are longtime volunteers at Methodist Hospital. They love America and appreciate the way the country has embraced them.

A grandmother of five and great-grandmother of two, Helena rarely talks about the Shoah. When she does, she says, “I don’t wish on my worst enemy” what occurred. “That’s why we have to remember. Not because it just happened to Jews. Because it’s happened to many nationalities and religions. They’re humans. They are people. They have a soul. They have feelings. And this is what counts.” Now writing her biography, she’s proud of how she’s carried on and started over, first in Sweden, then in Uruguay and then in America. “That’s the story of my life. I’m still alive. I still go on. Maybe this was destiny for me. I believe in destiny.”

Source: <http://ihene.org/nebraska-survivor-stories/for-my-mother-helena-tichauer-tells-her-story.html>

Article originally appeared on Institute for Holocaust Education (<http://ihene.org/>).

See website for complete article licensing information.

July 5

59.	The Auschwitz Concentration Camp Complex	239
60.	Photo: Selection on the Train Platform	246
61.	Auschwitz Timeline	247
62.	Gisella Perl: “I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz”	250
63.	Resistance in the Kinderlager: Tova Friedman	254
64.	Remembering the Sinti and Roma of Auschwitz.....	255
65.	Excerpt from “Gypsies” by Charlotte Delbo.....	258
66.	Hugo Gryn: A 14 Year old Jewish Boy Describes his Arrival in Auschwitz	262
67.	Filip Muller: Auschwitz - Birkenau Sonderkommando	263



The electrified fence and barracks at Auschwitz I.

59. The Auschwitz Concentration Camp Complex

The Auschwitz concentration camp complex was the largest of its kind established by the Nazi regime. It included three main camps, all of which deployed incarcerated prisoners at forced labor. One of them also functioned for an extended period as a killing center. The camps were located approximately 37 miles west of Kraków, near the prewar German-Polish border in Upper Silesia, an area that Nazi Germany annexed in 1939 after invading and conquering Poland. The SS authorities established three main camps near the Polish city of Oswiecim: Auschwitz I in May 1940; Auschwitz II (also called Auschwitz-Birkenau) in early 1942; and Auschwitz III (also called Auschwitz-Monowitz) in October 1942.



The railroad head at Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau).
More than 1,100,000 men, women and children entered here only to lose their lives.

The Auschwitz concentration camp complex was subordinate to the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps. Until March 1942, the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps was an agency of the SS Main Office, and, from 1941, of the SS Operations Main Office. From March 1942 until the liberation of Auschwitz, the Inspectorate was subordinate to the SS Economic-Administrative Main Office.

In November 1943, the SS decreed that Auschwitz-Birkenau and Auschwitz-Monowitz would become independent concentration camps. The commandant of Auschwitz I remained the SS

garrison commander of all SS units assigned to Auschwitz and was considered the senior officer of the three commandants. SS offices for maintaining prisoner records and managing prisoner labor deployment continued to be located and centrally run from Auschwitz I. In November 1944, Auschwitz II was reunified with Auschwitz I. Auschwitz III was renamed Monowitz concentration camp.

Commanders of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex were: SS Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Hoess from May 1940 until November 1943; SS Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Liebehenschel from November 1943 until mid-May 1944; and SS Major Richard Baer from mid-May 1944 until January 27, 1945. Commanders of Auschwitz-Birkenau while it was independent (November 1943 until November 1944) were SS Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Hartjenstein from November 1943 until mid-May 1944 and SS Captain Josef Kremer from mid-May to November 1944. Commandant of Monowitz concentration camp from November 1943 until January 1945 was SS Captain Heinrich Schwarz.

Auschwitz I

Auschwitz I, the main camp, was the first camp established near Oswiecim. Construction began in May 1940 in an abandoned Polish army artillery barracks, located in a suburb of the city. The SS authorities continuously deployed prisoners at forced labor to expand the physical contours of the camp. During the first year of the camp's existence, the SS and police cleared a zone of approximately 40 square kilometers (15.44 square miles) as a "development zone" reserved for the exclusive use of the camp. The first prisoners at Auschwitz included German prisoners transferred from Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany, where they had been incarcerated as repeat criminal offenders, and Polish political prisoners from Łódź via Dachau concentration camp and from Tarnow in Kraków District of the Generalgouvernement (that part of German occupied-Poland not annexed to Nazi Germany, linked administratively to German East Prussia, or incorporated into the German-occupied Soviet Union).



The main gate of Auschwitz I camp with its infamous "Work Makes Free" sign.

Similar to most German concentration camps, Auschwitz I was constructed to serve three purposes: 1) to incarcerate real and perceived enemies of the Nazi regime and the German occupation authorities in Poland for an indefinite period of time; 2) to have available a supply of forced laborers for deployment in SS-owned, construction-related enterprises (and, later, armaments and other war-related production); and 3) to serve as a site to physically eliminate small, targeted groups of the population whose death was determined by the SS and police authorities to be essential to the security of Nazi Germany. Like many concentration camps, Auschwitz I had a gas chamber and crematorium. Initially, SS engineers constructed an improvised gas chamber in the basement of the prison block, Block 11. Later a larger, permanent

gas chamber was constructed as part of the original crematorium in a separate building outside the prisoner compound.

At Auschwitz I, SS physicians carried out medical experiments in the hospital, Barrack (Block) 10. They conducted pseudoscientific research on infants, twins, and dwarfs, and performed forced sterilizations, castrations, and hypothermia experiments on adults. The best-known of these physicians was SS Captain Dr. Josef Mengele.

Between the crematorium and the medical-experiments barrack stood the “Black Wall,” where SS guards executed thousands of prisoners.

Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau)

Construction of Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, began in the vicinity of Brzezinka in October 1941. Of the three camps established near Oswiecim, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp had the largest total prisoner population. It was divided into more than a dozen sections separated by electrified barbed-wire fences and, like Auschwitz I, was patrolled by SS guards, including—after 1942—SS dog handlers. The camp included sections for women, men, a family camp for Roma (Gypsies) deported from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and a family camp for Jewish families deported from the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Auschwitz-Birkenau also contained the facilities for a killing center. It played a central role in the German plan to kill the Jews of Europe. During the summer and autumn of 1941, Zyklon B gas was introduced into the German concentration camp system as a means for murder. At Auschwitz I, in September, the SS first tested Zyklon B as an instrument of mass murder. The “success” of these experiments led to the adoption of Zyklon B for all the gas chambers at the Auschwitz complex. Near Birkenau, the SS initially converted two farmhouses for use as gas chambers. “Provisional” gas chamber I went into operation in January 1942 and was later dismantled. Provisional gas chamber II operated from June 1942 through the fall of 1944. The SS judged these facilities to be inadequate for the scale of gassing they planned at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Four large crematorium buildings were constructed between March and June 1943. Each had three components: a disrobing area, a large gas chamber, and crematorium ovens. The SS continued gassing operations at Auschwitz-Birkenau until November 1944.

Deportations to Auschwitz

Trains arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau frequently with transports of Jews from virtually every country in Europe occupied by or allied to Germany. These transports arrived from 1942 to the end of summer 1944. The breakdown of deportations from individual countries, given in approximate figures, is: Hungary: 426,000; Poland: 300,000; France: 69,000; Netherlands: 60,000; Greece: 55,000; Bohemia and Moravia: 46,000; Slovakia: 27,000; Belgium: 25,000; Yugoslavia: 10,000; Italy: 7,500; Norway: 690; other (including concentration camps): 34,000.

With the deportations from Hungary, the role of Auschwitz-Birkenau as an instrument in the German plan to murder the Jews of Europe achieved its highest effectiveness. Between late April and early July 1944, approximately 440,000 Hungarian Jews were deported, around 426,000 of them to Auschwitz. The SS sent approximately 320,000 of them directly to the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau and deployed approximately 110,000 at forced labor in the Auschwitz concentration camp complex. The SS authorities transferred many of these Hungarian Jewish forced laborers within weeks of their arrival in Auschwitz to other concentration camps in Germany and Austria.

In total, approximately 1.1 million Jews were deported to Auschwitz. SS and police authorities deported approximately 200,000 other victims to Auschwitz, including 140,000-150,000 non-Jewish Poles, 23,000 Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war, and 25,000 others (Soviet civilians, Lithuanians, Czechs, French, Yugoslavs, Germans, Austrians, and Italians).

New arrivals at Auschwitz-Birkenau underwent selection. The SS staff determined the majority to be unfit for forced labor and sent them immediately to the gas chambers, which were disguised as shower installations to mislead the victims. The belongings of those gassed were confiscated and sorted in the “Kanada” (Canada) warehouse for shipment back to Germany. Canada symbolized wealth to the prisoners.

At least 960,000 Jews were killed in Auschwitz. Other victims included approximately 74,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma (Gypsies), and 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war; and 10,000-15,000 members of other nationalities (Soviet civilians, Czechs, Yugoslavs, French, Germans, and Austrians).



New arrivals at Auschwitz-Birkenau underwent selection. The SS staff determined the majority to be unfit for forced labor and sent them immediately to the gas chambers, which were disguised as shower installations to mislead the victims. The belongings of those gassed were confiscated and sorted in the “Kanada” (Canada) warehouse for shipment back to Germany. Canada symbolized wealth to the prisoners.

At least 960,000 Jews were killed in Auschwitz. Other victims included approximately 74,000 Poles, 21,000 Roma (Gypsies), and 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war; and 10,000-15,000 members of other nationalities (Soviet civilians, Czechs, Yugoslavs, French, Germans, and Austrians).

On October 7, 1944, several hundred prisoners assigned to Crematorium IV at Auschwitz-Birkenau rebelled after learning that they were going to be killed. During the uprising, the prisoners killed three guards and blew up the crematorium and adjacent gas chamber. The prisoners used explosives smuggled into the camp by Jewish women who had been assigned to forced labor in a nearby armaments factory. The Germans crushed the revolt and killed almost all of the prisoners involved in the rebellion. The Jewish women who had smuggled the explosives into the camp were publicly hanged in early January 1945.

Gassing operations continued, however, until November 1944, at which time the SS, on orders from Himmler, disabled the gas chambers that still functioned. The SS destroyed the remaining gassing installations as Soviet forces approached in January 1945.

Auschwitz III (Monowitz-Buna)

Auschwitz III, also called Buna or Monowitz, was established in October 1942 to house prisoners assigned to work at the Buna synthetic rubber works, located on the outskirts of the Polish town of Monowice. In the spring of 1941, the German conglomerate I.G. Farben established a factory in which its executives intended to exploit concentration camp labor for their plans to manufacture synthetic rubber and fuels. I.G. Farben invested more than 700 million Reichsmarks (about 1.4 million US dollars in 1942 terms) in Auschwitz III. From May 1941 until October 1942, the SS had transported prisoners from Auschwitz I to the “Buna Detachment,” at first on foot and later by rail. With the construction of Auschwitz III in the autumn of 1942, prisoners deployed at Buna lived in Auschwitz III.



The vast industrial complex that employed the slave labor of the Auschwitz III (Monowitz-Buna) Concentration Camp.

Auschwitz III also had a so-called Labor Education Camp for non-Jewish prisoners who were perceived to have violated German-imposed labor discipline.

Auschwitz Sub-camps

Between 1942 and 1944, the SS authorities at Auschwitz established 39 sub-camps. Some of them were established within the officially designated “development” zone, including Budy, Rajsko, Tschechowitz, Harmense, and Babitz. Others, such as Blechhammer, Gleiwitz, Althammer, Fürstengrube, Laurahuette, and Eintrachthuette were located in Upper Silesia north and west of the Vistula River. Some sub-camps were located in Moravia, such as Freudental and Bruenn (Brno). In general, sub-camps that produced or processed agricultural goods were administratively subordinate to Auschwitz-Birkenau; while sub-camps whose prisoners were deployed at industrial and armaments production or in extractive industries (e.g., coal mining, quarry work) were administratively subordinate to Auschwitz-Monowitz. After November 1943, this division of administrative responsibility was formalized.

Auschwitz inmates were employed on huge farms, including the experimental agricultural station at Rajsko. They were also forced to work in coal mines, in stone quarries, in fisheries, and especially in armaments industries such as the SS-owned German Equipment Works (established in 1941). Periodically, prisoners underwent selection. If the SS judged them too weak or sick to continue working, they were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and killed.

Prisoners selected for forced labor were registered and tattooed with identification numbers on their left arms in Auschwitz I. They were then assigned to forced labor at the main camp or elsewhere in the complex, including the sub-camps.

[A list of Auschwitz’ sub-camps can be found at http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_subcamps_of_Auschwitz. Information on each of Auschwitz’ sub-camps, in some cases with pictures, is available on the Internet at <http://tiergartenstrasse4.org/Introduction4.html>.]

The Liberation of Auschwitz

In mid-January 1945, as Soviet forces approached the Auschwitz concentration camp complex, the SS began evacuating Auschwitz and its sub-camps. SS units forced nearly 60,000 prisoners to march west from the Auschwitz camp system. Thousands had been killed in the camps in the days before these death marches began. Tens of thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews, were forced to march either northwest for 55 kilometers (approximately 30 miles) to Gliwice (Gleiwitz), joined by prisoners from sub-camps in East Upper Silesia, such as Bismarckhuette, Althammer, and Hindenburg, or due west for 63 kilometers (approximately 35 miles) to Wodzislaw (Loslau) in the western part of Upper Silesia, joined by inmates from the sub-camps to the south of Auschwitz, such as Jawischowitz, Tschechowitz, and Golleschau. SS guards shot anyone who fell behind or could not continue. Prisoners also suffered from the cold weather,

starvation, and exposure on these marches. At least 3,000 prisoners died on route to Gliwice alone; possibly as many as 15,000 prisoners died during the evacuation marches from Auschwitz and the sub-camps.

Upon arrival in Gliwice and Wodzislaw, the prisoners were put on unheated freight trains and transported to concentration camps in Germany, particularly to Flossenbürg, Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald, Dachau, and also to Mauthausen in Austria. The rail journey lasted for days. Without food, water, shelter, or blankets, many prisoners did not survive the transport.

In late January 1945, SS and police officials forced 4,000 prisoners to evacuate Blechhammer, a sub-camp of Auschwitz-Monowitz, on foot. The SS murdered about 800 prisoners during the march to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. SS officials also killed as many as 200 prisoners left behind in Blechhammer as a result of illness or successful attempts to hide. After a brief delay, the SS transported around 3,000 Blechhammer prisoners from Gross-Rosen to Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany.

On January 27, 1945, the Soviet army entered Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Monowitz and liberated around 7,000 prisoners, most of whom were ill and dying. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people to Auschwitz complex between 1940 and 1945. Of these, the camp authorities murdered 1.1 million.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005189>

60. Photo: Selection on the Train Platform



A Selection on the Train Platform at Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp, Poland, May 27, 1944,

61. Auschwitz Timeline

January 25, 1940 — The SS decides to construct a concentration camp near Oswiecim (Auschwitz).

May 20, 1940 — The first concentration camp prisoners—30 recidivist criminals from Sachsenhausen—arrive at Auschwitz concentration camp.

March 1, 1941 — Reichsfuehrer SS and Chief of German Police Heinrich Himmler inspects Oswiecim (Auschwitz). Because nearby factories use prisoners for forced labor, Himmler is concerned about the prisoner capacity of the camp. On this visit, he orders both the expansion of Auschwitz I camp facilities to hold 30,000 prisoners and the building of a camp near Birkenau for an expected influx of 100,000 Soviet prisoners of war. Himmler also orders that the camp supply 10,000 prisoners for forced labor to construct an I.G. Farben factory complex at Dwory, about a mile away. Himmler will make additional visits to Auschwitz in 1942, when he will witness the killing of prisoners in the gas chambers.

September 3, 1941 — The first gassings of prisoners occur in Auschwitz I. The SS tests Zyklon B gas by killing 600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 other ill or weak prisoners. Testing takes place in a makeshift gas chamber in the cellar of Block 11 in Auschwitz I. Zyklon B was the commercial name for crystalline hydrogen cyanide gas, manufactured by I.G. Farben and normally used as an insecticide. The “success” of these experiments will lead to the adoption of Zyklon B as the killing agent for the yet-to-be-constructed Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center.

January 25, 1942 — SS chief Heinrich Himmler informs Richard Gluecks, the Inspector of Concentration Camps, that 100,000 Jewish men and 50,000 Jewish women would be deported from Germany to Auschwitz as forced laborers.

February 15, 1942

The first transport of Jews from Bytom (Beuthen) in German-annexed Upper Silesia arrives in Auschwitz I. The SS camp authorities kill all those on the transport immediately upon arrival with Zyklon B gas.

December 31, 1942 — German SS and police authorities deported approximately 175,000 Jews to Auschwitz in 1942.

January 1 - March 31, 1943 — German SS and police authorities deport approximately 105,000 Jews to Auschwitz.



A label from a canister of Zyklon B, the trade name of a cyanide-based pesticide invented in the early 1920s by Degesch GmbH.

January 29, 1943 — The Reich Central Office for Security orders all designated Roma (Gypsies) residing in Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to be deported to Auschwitz.

February 26, 1943 — The first transport of Roma (Gypsies) from Germany arrives at Auschwitz. The SS authorities house them in Section B-IIe of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which becomes known as the “Gypsy family camp.” By the end of 1943 more than 18,000 Roma (Gypsies) will have been incarcerated in the so-called family camp and as many as 23,000 Gypsies deported to the Auschwitz camp complex.

April 1, 1943 - March 1944 — German SS and police authorities deport approximately 160,000 Jews to Auschwitz.

May 2, 1944 — The first two transports of Hungarian Jews arrive in Auschwitz.

July 6, 1944 — The deportation of Hungarian Jews is halted by order of Regent Miklos Horthy. The last transport from Hungary arrives on July 11.

August 2, 1944 — SS camp authorities murder the last residents—just under 3,000—of the so-called Gypsy family camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The SS murders an estimated total of 20,000 Roma (Gypsies) in the Auschwitz concentration camp complex.

April 1944 - November 1944 — SS and Police authorities deport more than 585,000 Jews to Auschwitz.

October 7, 1944 — Members of the Jewish prisoner “special detachment” (*Sonderkommando*) that was forced to remove bodies from the gas chambers and operate the crematoria stage an uprising. They successfully blow up Crematorium IV and kill several guards. Women prisoners had smuggled gunpowder out of nearby factories to members of the *Sonderkommando*. The SS quickly suppresses the revolt and kills all the *Sonderkommando* members. On January 6, 1945, just weeks before Soviet forces liberate the camp, the SS will also hang four women who smuggled gunpowder into the camp.

November 25, 1944 — As Soviet forces continue to approach, SS chief Heinrich Himmler orders the destruction of the Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers and crematoria. During this SS attempt to destroy the evidence of mass killings, prisoners will be forced to dismantle and dynamite the structures.

January 12, 1945 — A Soviet offensive breaches the German defenses on the Vistula; Soviet troops take Warsaw and advance rapidly on Kraków and Oswiecim.

January 18 - 27, 1945 — As Soviet units approach, the SS evacuates to the west the prisoners of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex. Tens of thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews, are forced to march to the cities of Wodzislaw and Gliwice in the western part of Upper Silesia. During the march, SS guards shoot anyone who cannot continue. In Wodzislaw and Gliwice, the prisoners will be put on unheated freight trains and deported to concentration camps in Germany, particularly to Flossenbürg, Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald, and Dachau, and to Mauthausen in Austria. In all, nearly 60,000 prisoners are forced on death marches from the Auschwitz camp system. As many as 15,000 die during the forced marches. Thousands more were killed in the days before the evacuation.

January 27, 1945 — Soviet troops enter the Auschwitz camp complex and liberate approximately 7,000 prisoners remaining in the camp. During the existence of Auschwitz, the SS camp authorities killed nearly one million Jews from across Europe. Other victims included approximately 74,000 Poles, approximately 21,000 Roma (Gypsies), and approximately 15,000 Soviet prisoners of war.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007259>

Gisella Perl: “I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz”

Childbirth in Camp C

The poor, young women who were brought to Auschwitz from the various ghettos of Hungary did not know that they would have to pay with their lives and the lives of their unborn children for the last, tender night spent in the arms of their husbands.



A few days after the arrival of a new transport, one of the SS chiefs would address the women, encouraging the pregnant ones to step forward, because they would be taken to another camp where living conditions were better. He also promised them double bread rations so as to be strong and healthy when the hour of delivery came. Group after group of pregnant women left Camp C. Even I was naive enough, at that time, to believe the Germans, until one day that I happened to have an errand near the crematories and saw with my own eyes what was done to these women.

They were surrounded by a group of SS men and women, who amused themselves by giving these helpless creatures a taste of hell, after which death was a welcome friend. They were beaten with clubs and whips, torn by dogs, dragged around by the hair and kicked in the stomach with heavy German boots. Then, when they collapsed, they were thrown into the crematory-alive. I stood, rooted to the ground, unable to move, to scream, to run away. But, gradually the horror turned into revolt and this revolt shook me out of my lethargy and gave me a new incentive to live. I had to remain alive. It was up to me to save all the pregnant women in Camp C from this infernal fate. It was up to me to save the life of the mothers, if there was no other way, then by destroying the life of their unborn children. I ran back to camp and going from block to block told the women what I had seen. Never again was anyone to betray their condition. It was to be denied to our last breath, hidden from the SS, the guards and even Blockova, on whose good will our life depended.

On dark nights, when everyone else was sleeping in dark corners of the camp, in the toilet, on the floor, without a drop of water, I delivered their babies. First I took the ninth-month pregnancies. I accelerated the birth by the rupture of membranes, and usually within one or two days spontaneous birth took place without further intervention. Or I produced dilatation with my fingers, inverted the embryo and thus brought it to life. In the dark, always hurried, in the midst of filth and dirt. After the child had been delivered, I quickly bandaged the mother's abdomen and sent her back to work. When possible, I placed her in my hospital, which was in reality a grim joke. She usually went there with the diagnosis of pneumonia, which was a safe diagnosis, not one that would send her to the crematory. I delivered women pregnant in the eighth, seventh,

sixth, fifth month, always in a hurry, always with my five fingers, in the dark, under terrible conditions.

No one will ever know what it meant to me to destroy these babies. After years and years of medical practice, childbirth was still to me the most beautiful, the greatest miracle of nature. I loved those newborn babies not as a doctor but as a mother and it was again and again my child whom I killed to save the life of a woman. Every time when kneeling down in the mud, dirt and human excrement which covered the floor of the barracks to perform a delivery without instruments, without water, without the most elementary requirements of hygiene, I prayed to God to help me save the mother or I would never touch a pregnant woman again. And in had not done it, both mother and child would have been cruelly murdered. God was good to me. By a miracle, which to every doctor must sound like a fairy tale, every one of these women recovered and was able to work, which, at least for a while, saved her life.

My first such case was the delivery of a young woman called Yolanda. Yolanda came from my hometown. She was the child of an impoverished family and made a living by doing fine embroidery on expensive underwear, handkerchiefs and baby clothes. To make beautiful baby clothes was the greatest pleasure in her life and, while working on them until late into the night, she would dream about the baby she, herself, would one day have. Then she got married. Month after month she waited and prayed, but Nature refused to grant her most ardent wish. This is when she began coming to me. I treated her for a long time until finally my treatment showed results and Yolanda became pregnant. She was radiant. "I shall give you the most beautiful present in the world when my baby arrives" she would then tell me every time we met.

In the end it was I who gave her a present-the present of her life-by destroying her passionately desired little boy two days after his birth. Day after day I watched her condition develop, fearing the moment when it would be hidden no longer. I bandaged her abdomen, hid her with my body at roll call and hoped for a miracle which would save her and her baby.

The miracle never came, but one horribly dark, stormy night Yolanda began having birth pains. I was beside her, waiting for the moment when I could take a hand in the delivery, when I saw to my horror that she fell into convulsive seizures. For two days and nights the spasms shook her poor, emaciated little body and I had to stand by, without drugs, without instruments to help her, listening to her moans, helpless. Around us, in the light of a few small candles I could see the thirteen-hundred women of her barracks look down upon us from their cages, thirteen-hundred death-masks with still enough life left in them to feel pity for Yolanda and to breathe the silent but ever-present question: Why?

The third day Yolanda's little boy was born. I put her into the hospital, saying that she had pneumonia-an illness not punishable by death-and hid her child for two days, unable to destroy him. Then I could hide him no longer. I knew that if he were discovered, it would mean death to

Yolanda, to myself and to all these pregnant women whom my skill could still save. I took the warm little body in my hands, kissed the smooth face, caressed the long hair-then strangled him and buried his body under a mountain of corpses waiting to be cremated.

Then one day, Dr. Mengele came to the hospital and gave a new order. From now on Jewish women could have their children. They were not going to be killed because of their pregnancy. The children, of course, had to be taken to the crematory by me, personally, but the women would be allowed to live. I was jubilant. Women, who delivered in our so-called hospital, on its clean floor, with the help of a few primitive instruments that had been given to me, had a better chance to come out of this death camp not only alive but in a condition to have other children later.

I had two hundred ninety-two expectant mothers in my ward when Dr. Mengele changed his mind. He came roaring into the hospital, whip and revolver in hand, and had all the two hundred ninety-two women loaded on a single truck and tossed alive into the flames of the crematory.

In September 1944, Camp C was liquidated to make place for new arrivals. I shall tell, later, what this liquidation meant. All I want to say here is that out of thirty thousand women only ten thousand remained alive to be put into other blocks or taken to Germany to work.

As soon as we were installed in Camps F, K and L, a new order came from Berlin. From now on, not only could Jewish mothers have their children in the “maternity ward” of the hospital but the children were permitted to live.

Eva Benedek was eighteen years old. She was a violinist from Budapest, a beautiful, talented young woman who was separated from her husband only a few days after her wedding. Eva Benedek believed with an unconquerable faith that her life and the life of her child would be saved. The child, growing in her womb, was her only comfort, her only pleasure, her only concern. When the SS organized an orchestra among the prisoners Eva became the violinist of that orchestra. I bandaged her abdomen and in her formless rags, amidst women whose stomachs were constantly bloated with undernourishment, her condition went unnoticed.

Then the “liquidation” of Camp C and Eva Benedek came with me to Camps F, K and L. When the order for the conservation of Jewish children came, nobody was happier than she. Her delivery was only a day or two off and we both believed that the miracle had happened, a miracle of God for the sake of Eva Benedek. She smiled all day and in the evening, in our barracks, she whistled Mozart concertos and Chopin waltzes for us to bring a little beauty into our terror-filled, hopeless lives. Two days later she had her baby, a little boy, in the “maternity ward.” But when the baby was born, she turned her back on it, wouldn’t look at it, and wouldn’t hold it in her arms. Tears were streaming down her cheeks incessantly, terrible, silent tears, but she wouldn’t speak to me. Finally, I succeeded in making her tell what was on her mind.

“I dare not take my son in my arms, Doctor,” she said. “I dare not look at him, I dare not kiss him, I dare not get attached to him. I feel it, I know it, that somehow they are going to take him away from me” And she was right. Twenty-four hours after Eva Benedek had her son, a new order came, depriving Jewish mothers of the additional food, a thin, milky soup mixed with flour, which swelled their breasts and enabled them to feed their babies. For eight days Eva Benedek had to look on while her son starved slowly to death.

His fine, white skin turned yellow and blotched, his smooth face got wrinkled and shriveled and on the eighth day I had to take him out and throw him on a heap of rotting corpses.

Gisella Perl. *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*. International Universities Press (June 1948).

Out of the Ashes (2003 TV Movie). Based on a true story, this film follows the journey of Gisella Perl (played by Christine Lahti), a Jewish-Hungarian doctor who manages to survive Auschwitz. Decades later, she's applying for U.S. citizenship when she becomes accused of colluding with the Nazis.

63. Resistance in the Kinderlager: Tova Friedman

For me, the real test was at the Kinderlager. I wasn't yet six and I was completely on my own. I no longer had Mama to protect me. How I missed her - and Papa too. Most of the children brought to the Kinderlager were teenagers. A few like Rutka and me were much younger than the other children, but I was the youngest, at least the smallest.

The teenagers talked about horrible things a doctor named Mengele was doing to twins in the camp next to ours, things like dipping one twin in boiling water and the other in ice water and seeing how they reacted. They called him The Angel of Death. One night some SS men came into the barracks and walked up and down the aisle looking at the sleeping children. Petrified, I lay in my bunk; afraid they would hear my pounding heart and take me away.

Children all around me were dying of starvation. You could always tell when they were dying. The Germans called these people *Musulmanner* - an expression, I found out later, that derived from praying Muslims. That's how they looked; bent over as if they were praying. Their bodies were as thin as skeletons, and their eyes looked like saucers.

The girl I shared the bunk with was one of those *Musulmanner*. She was only twelve, but to me she seemed an adult. Every day I expected her to die. Then one morning I woke up and she was dead, right beside me. What do I do now? I thought. I knew the guards would be calling out numbers again, and she wouldn't be there for the count. Then we'd have to start all over again, and that meant we'd be there for hours. So I dragged her out by the feet for the *Appell* [roll call]. At least I know she would be accounted for.

Although we had been bunk mates for months, I didn't mourn the girl's death. I felt only two things; hunger and fear. I no longer had the extra piece of bread my mother had been giving me, and every day I thought Mengele would come into my block and select me for one of his experiments.

I didn't know it was my sixth birthday until a woman came to the Kinderlager and handed me a cloth bag that was sewn shut. When I opened the bag I found a piece of bread wrapped in a note: "Tola," it said "tomorrow is your birthday. I love you, Mama."

That night I hid the treasured food under my dress. I would eat it the next day, on my birthday. In the middle of the night, I woke up to the sound of squeaks. Rats were crawling all over me. Terrified, I lay frozen until they finished nibbling the bread. After they crawled away, I looked at my dress; it was torn. But my visitors left me without a scratch ...or a spare crumb.

From *Kinderlager: An Oral History of Young Holocaust Survivors*, edited by Milton J. Nieuwsma; Holiday House, NY. 1998

64. Remembering the Sinti and Roma of Auschwitz

On August 2, 1944, Nazis liquidated the concentration camp's Gypsy section

By Toby Sonneman



German police guard a group of Roma who have been rounded up for deportation to Poland. Germany, 1940-1945. (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Lydia Chagoll)

At twilight on the evening of Aug. 2, 1944, big, wood-sided trucks arrived at the Gypsy family camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The prisoners were given sausage and a piece of bread and told that they were being taken to another camp. At first, the trucks drove off in a different direction from the gas chambers and crematoria, but as they doubled back toward the killing factories, the Gypsies began to struggle and fight the guards. “Betrayal!” they screamed. “Murder!”

A Hungarian Jew who heard the clamor from a nearby barrack later said that the memory made her blood run cold. “We heard yelling, German orders, the ever, ever-present German Shepherd dogs barking,” she recalled. “And then, screaming. I never, ever forget that screaming. Terrible screams. They must have known.”

On that August night, Nazis liquidated the Gypsy camp, killing nearly 3,000 Roma and Sinti—the two major groups of European Gypsies—in the gas chambers of Birkenau. They were women and men, elderly people and children, many of whom had been victims of Nazi medical experiments and forced sterilization. Their deaths were among the 20,000 Roma and Sinti who perished at

Auschwitz—but a fraction of the hundreds of thousands murdered by the Nazis in mass killings and concentration camps.

The Nazi genocide of Roma and Sinti, which in the Romani language is known as *Porajmos*, or the Great Devouring, has also, until recently, been called “the forgotten Holocaust.” When I set out 20 years ago to record the memories of an extended family of Sinti survivors in Germany, I found that characterization to be sadly true. In 1985, Gabrielle Tyrnauer, a pioneer in recording oral testimonies of Gypsy survivors, issued a call for more of such “urgent research,” as the survivors were dying off. Yet the body of recorded and archived testimonies from Roma and Sinti remains sparse, and still today the experience of Gypsies under the Nazi regime is often neglected or underacknowledged.

As German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in 2012 at the opening of Berlin’s memorial for Roma and Sinti victims of the Holocaust, “far too little attention has been paid for far too long.”

Why is this so? Ignorance, misunderstanding, prejudice, and even denial have all contributed to the problem. Romantic stereotypes portray Gypsies as colorful free-spirited wanderers; discriminatory stereotypes label them as criminals and thieves. Especially in the United States, where ethnic Gypsies often hide their identity to prevent discrimination, many people are still unaware that Gypsies are a true ethnic group with a distinct language and culture and a long history of persecution in Europe.

The Sinti Gypsies I met in Germany dispelled such stereotypes. Their families had been settled in Germany and Austria for hundreds of years. They lived in houses, worked as antique dealers or musicians, and sent their children to school. There was no legitimate reason to label them or their children as criminals.

Yet some historians still maintain that Nazis did not target Gypsies for racial reasons, as they did the Jews, but rather because they were “asocials” or criminals. In fact, German courts used this argument for decades to deny reparations to Gypsy victims of the Nazis.

But Nazis applied this “asocial” classification to all Sinti and Roma after 1942, even to infants and children, who certainly had committed no crime. The childhood memories of the Sinti I met in Germany, whose families had been labeled “asocial,” recalled the horrors of Auschwitz and Mauthausen, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, and Bergen-Belsen.

Although debates still rage among Holocaust historians, and words such as “genocide” and “Holocaust” when applied to Gypsy victims can set off an academic conflagration, a clear statement by German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in 1982 signaled a welcome and long awaited change in attitude.

“The Nazi dictatorship inflicted a grave injustice on the Sinti and Roma,” Schmidt said. “They were persecuted for reasons of race. These crimes constituted an act of genocide.”

Inevitably, a discussion of Roma and Sinti Holocaust victims provokes comparison to Jewish victims and brings up the question of numbers. Nazi policy toward Gypsies was inconsistent before 1942, and there were anomalies, such as the Zigeunerlager or Gypsy camp in Auschwitz, where

Gypsies were allowed to stay in family units for some time—until the camp was liquidated. The number of Gypsies who perished is not known, but most estimates range from 220,000 to 500,000.

It's important to know that before World War II, the Roma and Sinti in Europe represented a far smaller segment of the population than the Jews. In Germany, for example, with a prewar population of 67 million, there were 500,000 Jews and only 30,000 Gypsies. Yet only 5,000 Gypsies survived—a proportion similar to that of the Jewish population. And surely we should reject the notion that only the group with the highest number of victims deserves acknowledgement for their suffering.

What matters most, in any case, is not the anomalies or the differences in the numbers, but the fact that both Jews and Gypsies were deemed “parasitic alien races” and targeted for racial extermination.

“The fates of the two communities were inextricably linked,” said Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg, comparing the Nazi treatment of the Jews and the Gypsies at a symposium on Roma and Sinti victims. “It’s not a matter of whether one wants to talk about both—one has to. During the years 1933 to 1945, the parallels between what happened to the two communities, in my view, predominate over the differences.”

Even if some can’t agree on the “parallels,” or whether to call it Porajmos, Holocaust, or Roma Genocide, it is certainly time for full recognition of the Roma and Sinti victims of the Nazis.

Just as Jews have Yom HaShoah, the Roma and Sinti have the Aug. 2 commemoration to fully recognize Gypsy victims of the Holocaust. Roma and Sinti organizations such as the International Roma Youth Network, ternYpe, have called for the Memorial Day of the Roma Genocide to be observed annually on Aug. 2, and will gather at Auschwitz and other sites for education and remembrance. The Polish government in 2011 officially recognized the date as a day to honor the Roma and Sinti victims of the Holocaust.

Seventy years after the Gypsy camp at Auschwitz was liquidated, it’s time.

<http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/180784/remembering-the-sinti-and-roma-of-auschwitz>

Copyright © 2017 Nextbook Inc. All rights reserved.

65. Excerpt from “Gypsies” by Charlotte Delbo

Charlotte Delbo (August 10, 1913 – March 1, 1985), was a French non-Jew, who was imprisoned in Auschwitz in January 1943 as a political dissident and spent the remainder of the war in concentration camps. Delbo managed to survive. She chose a less comfortable way of relating her experience than the more straightforward narratives of Levi and Wiesel. Her guiding principle was, as she regularly described it, *Essayez de regarder. Essayez pour voir*, or roughly translated when it occurs as a refrain in her work, “Try to look. Just try and see.”



At last they're all in place, lined up for the roll-call, on each side of the road running down the middle of the camp.

They shall have to wait hours and hours before daybreak, before the counting.

The SS do not arrive until it is light.

First you stamp your feet. The cold pierces to the marrow. You no longer feel your body, you no longer feel anything of yourself. First you stamp your feet. But it's tiring to stamp your feet. Then you huddle over, arms crossed over your chest, shoulders hunched, and all squeeze close to one another

but keeping in rank because the club-wielding furies are there and watching. Even the strength to raise one's eyes, to look to see if there are stars in the sky there's a chilling effect to stars to cast a glance about

even the strength that takes must be saved and no one looks up. And to see what in that darkness?

The women from the other barracks, also reeling and falling, trying to form their ranks? all these ranks stretching from one end of the camp to the other, on each side of the road, that makes how many women, how many thousands of women, all these ranks? these ranks bobbing up and down because the women are stamping their feet and then they halt because to stamp one's feet is exhausting

You see nothing, each one is enclosed in the shroud of her own skin, you feel nothing, neither the person next to you, huddling against you, nor that other who has fallen and is being helped up.

You don't speak because the cold would freeze your saliva.

Each feels she is dying, crumbling into confused images, dead to herself already, without a past, any reality, without anything,

the sky must have grown light without anyone noticing. And now, in the pallid light of the night drawing to a close,

the ranks across the way suddenly emerge, the ranks of the Gypsy women like ourselves all blue from cold.

How would you know a Gypsy if not by her tattered dress? The Jewish women do not have striped uniforms either, they have grotesque clothing, coats too long or too tight, mud-

spattered, torn, with a high red cross painted on the back.

The gypsy women have tatters, what's left of their full skirts and their scarves. And suddenly there she is, you can make her out, the one in the front row holding, clutched to her breast, a bundle of rags.

In her gaunt face, eyes gleaming so bright that you must look away not to be pierced by them

her eyes gleaming with fever, with hatred, a burning, unbearable hatred.

And what else but hatred is holding together these rags this spectre of woman is made of, with her bundle pressed against her chest by hands purple from cold?

She holds the bundle of rags to her, in the crook of her arm, the way a baby is held, the baby's head against its mother's breast.

Daylight.

The Gypsy stands straight, so tense that it is visible through her tatters, her left hand placed upon the baby's face. It is an infant, that bundle of rags she is clutching. It became obvious when she shifted the upper part of the bundle, turning it outward a little, to help it breathe perhaps, now that daylight has come.

Quickly she shelters the baby's face again and hugs it tighter

then she shifts the bundle of rags to her other arm, and we see the infant's head lolling, bluish, almost black.

With a gentle movement she raises the baby's head, props it in the hollow between her arm and her breast,

and again she lifts her eyes, and again the impression she gives is of tension and fierceness, with her unbearable stare.

The SS arrive. All the women stiffen as they move down the ranks, counting. That lasts a long time. A long time. Finally, one side is done. You can put your hands back in the sleeves of your jacket, you can hunch up your shoulders, as if it were possible to make yourself a smaller target for the cold.

I look at the Gypsy holding her baby pressed against her. It's dead, isn't it?

Yes, it's dead. Its purplish head, almost black, falls back when not supported by the Gypsy's hand.

For how long has it been dead, cradled in its mother's arms, this rag-swaddled infant?

For hours, perhaps for days.

The SS move past. Counting the ranks of the Gypsies. They do not see the woman with the dead baby and the frightening eyes.

A whistle blows. The roll-call is over. We break formation. Again we slide and fall on the sheet of ice, now spotted here and there with diarrhea.

The Gypsies' formation breaks up too. The woman with the baby runs off. Where is she heading for shelter?

The Gypsies are not marched out of the camp for work. Men, women, children are mixed together in a separate enclosed area. The camp for families. And why are there Gypsy women over here, in our camp? Nobody knows.

When the roll was called that evening she was there, with her dead baby in her arms.
Standing in the front row. Standing straight.

The following morning at roll-call she was there, hugging her bundle of rags, her eyes
still brighter, still wilder.

Then she stopped coming to roll-call.

Someone saw the bundle of rags, the dead baby, on the garbage heap by the kitchen. The
Gypsy has been clubbed to death by a policewoman who'd tried to pull the dead
baby away from her.

This woman, hugging her baby to her, had fought, butting her head, kicking, protecting
herself and then striking with her free hand ... a struggle in which she had been crushed despite
the hate that gave her the strength of a lioness defending her brood.

The Gypsy had fallen dead in the snow. The corpse collection squad had picked up her
body and carried it to where the corpses are stacked before being loaded on the truck which
dumps them at the crematorium.

The mother killed, the policewoman has torn the baby from her arms and tossed it on the
garbage heap in front of which the struggle had taken place. The Gypsy woman had raced to the
edge of the camp, tightly cradling the baby in her crossed arms, had run till she was out of
breath and it was when she was blocked by the garbage pile that she turned to face the fury and
her club.

The corpse collection squad picked up the mother. The baby, in its rags, remained on the
garbage head, mixed with the refuse.

All the Gypsies disappeared very fast. All gassed. Thousands of them. The family camp
was emptied out, that made room for the next arrivals. Not Gypsies. We saw nothing more of
Gypsies at Birkenau. Gypsies are less numerous than Jews, it didn't take much time to dispose
of them.

Source: Charlotte Delbo, From *Days and Memory*, trans. Rosette Lamont (Marlboro Press, 1990). Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois. Used with permission.

The first transport of Roma arrived in Auschwitz on Feb 26, 1943. The men, women and children are housed in the B-Ile section of Birkenau, which is then named the "Gypsy Family Camp." A total of some 23,000 Roma, Sinti and Lalleri were deported to Auschwitz. Conditions in the Gypsy compound at Auschwitz-Birkenau were contributed to the spread of infectious disease and epidemics--typhus, smallpox, and dysentery—which severely reduced the camp population.

While exact figures or percentages cannot be ascertained, historians estimate that the Germans and their allies killed around 25 percent of all European Roma. Of slightly less than one million Roma believed to have been living in Europe before the war, the Germans and their Axis partners killed up to 220,000.



66. **Hugo Gryn: A 14 Year old Jewish Boy Describes his Arrival in Auschwitz**

May 1944

“We were exhausted, thoroughly demoralised and frightened and the train stood for some time. We could only hear the shunting of engines, crunch of people walking outside, and eventually, well into daylight, the door pulled open and people now being herded out, and an amazing scene.



Hugo Gryn

It reminded me of what I imagined a lunatic asylum would be like, because in addition to the SS who were moving up and down and pushing people around towards the head of the platform, the other people there wore this striped uniform, with a very curious-shaped hat, and they were just moving up and down taking so-called luggage out of the train.

One of them I would say saved my life, because he went around muttering in Yiddish, “You’re eighteen, you have a trade,” which I took to be the mutterings of a lunatic because it was such a curious thing to say – that’s all he kept saying to people – particularly to young people.

My father was there and took it seriously, and by the time we in fact came to the head of this platform where the selection was taking place I had already been rehearsed, so that when the SS man says, “How old are you?” I said I was nineteen; and “Do you have a trade?” “Yes, I am a carpenter and a joiner.”

My brother who was there was younger, he couldn’t say he was nineteen, and so he was sent with the old people the wrong way and my mother went after him. The SS man quite crudely and violently pulled my mother back.

She said, “Well, I want to be with my little boy, he’s frightened.” “Don’t worry he said, “You will meet him later.” Well, that of course was in fact the last time I saw my brother.”

Source: Hugo Gryn with Naomi Gryn. *Chasing Shadows*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. (Out of print.)
http://books.google.com/books?id=VStyR3QYkDgC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Note: Hugo Gryn and his father survived Auschwitz. Gryn trained as a rabbi in America. In 1965, he moved to the United Kingdom and served as rabbi in one of the largest congregations in Europe, the West London Synagogue.

67. Filip Muller: Auschwitz - Birkenau Sonderkommando

A Jewish member of the Auschwitz - Birkenau Sonderkommando

8 March 1944

“That night I was in Crematorium II. As soon as the people got out the vans, they were blinded by floodlights and forced through a corridor to the stairs leading to the “undressing room.”

They were blinded, made to run. Blows were rained on them. Those who didn’t run fast enough were beaten to death by the SS. The violence used against them was extraordinary. And sudden, not a word....

As soon as they left the vans, the beatings began. When they entered the “undressing room” I was standing near the rear door, and from there I witnessed the frightful scene. The people were bloodied. They knew then where they were. They stared at the pillars of the so-called International Information Centre I’ve mentioned, and that terrified them. What they read didn’t re-assure them.

On the contrary, it panicked the m. They knew the score. They’d learned at Camp B2B what went on there. They were in despair. Children clung to each other. Their mothers, their parents, the old people, all cried, overcome with misery.



Filip Muller

Suddenly some SS officers appeared on the steps, including the camp commandant Schwarzhuber. He’d given them his word as an SS officer that they’d be transferred to Heidebreck. So they all began to cry out to beg, shouting “Heidebreck was a trick! We were lied to! We want to work! We want to live!”

They looked their SS executioners in the eye, but the SS men remained impassive, just staring at them. There was a movement in the crowd. They probably wanted to rush to the SS men and tell them how they’d been lied to, but then some guards surged forward, wielding clubs, and more people were injured.

The violence climaxed when they tried to force the people to undress. A few obeyed, only a handful. Most of them refused to follow the order. Suddenly, like a chorus, they all began to sing. The whole “undressing room” rang with the Czech national anthem, and the Hatikvah. That moved me terribly, that.... That was happening to my countrymen, and I realised that my life had become meaningless. Why go on living? For what? So I went into the gas chamber with them, resolved to die. With them.

Suddenly, some who recognised me came up to me. For my locksmith friends and I had sometimes gone into the family camp. A small group of women approached. They looked at me and said, right there in the gas chamber.

One of them said: “So you want to die. But that’s senseless. Your death won’t give us back our lives. That’s no way. You must get out of here alive, you must bear witness to our suffering, and to the injustice done to us.”

Filip Muller. Translated by Susan Flataeur. *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1979.

Note: Since Muller offers the only eye-witness account by a Jew of the operation of the killing factory at Auschwitz–Birkenau, Holocaust deniers have worked hard to discredit his testimony.

July 6

68.	Belzec Todeslager	266
69.	Belzec Timeline	270
70.	Chaim Hirszman: Survivor of Belzec Death Camp	272
71.	Darkness and Hope.....	273
72.	Kurt Gersten: Belzec Testimony	277
73.	Map: German Administration of Poland, 1942	280



The Belzec Death Camp Memorial

68. Belżec Todeslager

The small town of Belżec was located in southeastern Poland between the cities of Zamosc and Lvov (L'viv). During the German occupation of Poland in World War II, this area was located in the Lublin District of the Generalgouvernement (that part of German-occupied Poland not directly annexed to Germany, attached to German East Prussia or incorporated into the German-occupied Soviet Union).

In 1940, the Germans established a string of labor camps along the Bug (Buh) River, which, until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, formed the demarcation line between German- and Soviet-occupied Poland. The headquarters of this complex was a labor camp established on the outskirts of Belżec. SS officials forced Jews deported from Lublin District and other parts of the Generalgouvernement to the Belżec labor camp and its subsidiary camps to build fortifications and antitank ditches along the Bug River. The Belżec labor camp and its subsidiaries were dismantled at the end of 1940.

In November 1941, SS and police authorities in Lublin District began construction of a killing center on the site of the former Belżec labor camp. The choice of location was dictated by good rail connections and proximity to significant Jewish populations in the Lvov, Kraków, and Lublin districts of the Generalgouvernement. The facility was finished in the late winter of 1942 as part of what later would be called Operation Reinhard (also called Aktion Reinhard), the plan implemented by the SS and Police Leader in Lublin to murder the Jews of the Generalgouvernement. Belżec began operations on March 17, 1942; the first Jewish communities deported to Belżec were those of Lublin and Lvov. Belżec was the second German killing center, and the first of the Operation Reinhard killing centers, to begin operation.

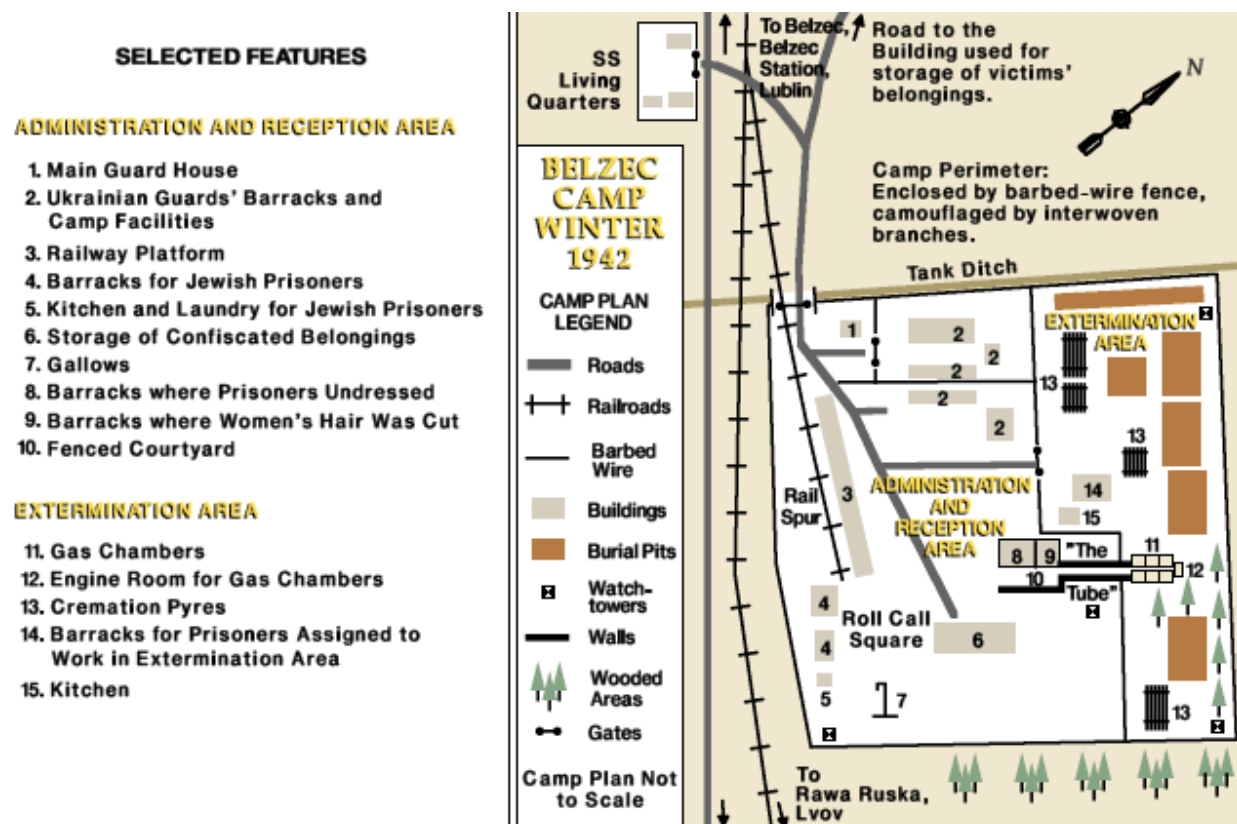
The Nazis distinguished between concentration camps and extermination camps. The term concentration camp (Konzentrationslager) refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy. Examples of concentration camps are Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück and Matthausen concentration camps.

The terms "extermination camp" (Vernichtungslager) and death camp (Todeslager) are interchangeable usages, each referring to camps whose primary function was genocide, not for punishing crime or containing political prisoners, but for the systematic killing of the prisoners delivered there. The Nazis did not expect the majority of prisoners taken to the Belżec, Sobibor or Treblinka death camps to survive more than a few hours beyond arrival.]

Located along the Lublin-Lvov railway line, the killing center was only 1,620 feet from the Belżec railway station. A small rail siding connected the camp and the station. The SS staff and auxiliary police guards assigned to the camp were housed in a separate compound near the railroad station.

The authorities at Belżec killing center consisted of a small staff of German SS and police officials (between 20 and 30) and a police auxiliary guard unit of between 90 and 120 men, all of whom were either former Soviet prisoners of war of various nationalities or Ukrainian and Polish civilians selected or recruited for this purpose. All members of the guard unit were trained at a special facility of the SS and Police Leader in Lublin, the Trawniki training camp. Commandants of the Belżec camp were SS Major Christian Wirth until June 1942 and then SS First Lieutenant Gottlieb Hering from June 1942 until June 1943.

The Germans divided Belżec into a combined administration-reception area and a separate area, in which the SS and police could carry out the mass murder hidden from view of victims waiting in the reception area. A narrow enclosed path called the “tube” connected the two sections of the killing center. The reception area held the railway siding and a ramp. The area where the mass murder took place included the gas chambers and mass graves. Rail tracks ran from the gas chambers to the burial pits. Each side of the camp measured 886 feet. Fine boughs woven into the barbed-wire fence and trees planted around the perimeter served as camouflage to prevent curious outsiders from seeing operations inside the camp.



<http://www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/map/lc/image/bez22010.gif>

Gassing operations at Belżec began in mid-March 1942. Trains of 40 to 60 freight cars, with 80 to 100 people crowded into each car, arrived at the Belżec railway station. Twenty freight cars at a time were detached and brought from the station into the camp. The arriving Jews were then ordered to disembark at the platform of the reception area. German SS and police personnel announced that the Jewish deportees had arrived at a transit camp and were to hand over all valuables in their possession. Initially, men were separated from women and children, though in later months, as transport arrivals became more chaotic due to increased awareness of the victims of what would happen, the Germans and the Trawniki—trained auxiliaries could not always implement this segregation. The Jews were forced to undress and run through the “tube,” which led directly into gas chambers deceptively labeled as showers. Once the chamber doors were sealed, auxiliary police guards started an engine located outside the building housing the gas chambers. Carbon monoxide was funneled into the gas chambers, killing all those inside. The process was then repeated with deportees in the next 20 freight cars.

Members of the *Sonderkommandos* (special detachments)—groups of prisoners selected to remain alive as forced laborers—worked in the killing area. They removed bodies from the gas chambers and buried the victims in mass graves. Other prisoners selected for temporary survival worked in the administration-reception area, facilitating detraining, disrobing, relinquishment of valuables, and movement into the “tube” of new arrivals. They also sorted the possessions of the murdered victims in preparation for transport to Germany, and were responsible for cleaning out freight cars for the next deportation. German SS and police personnel and the Trawniki-trained guards periodically murdered the members of these detachments of Jewish laborers, and replaced them with persons selected from newly arriving transports.

In October 1942, on orders from Lublin, German SS and police personnel, using groups of Jewish forced laborers rounded up from various locations in Lublin District, began to exhume the mass graves at Belżec and burn the bodies on open-air “ovens” made from rail track. The Germans also utilized a machine to crush bone fragments into powder.

Deportations to Belżec

Between March and December 1942, the Germans deported approximately 434,500 Jews and an undetermined number of Poles and Roma (Gypsies) to Belżec, where they were killed. Most of the victims were Jews from the ghettos of southern and southeastern Poland. The Germans also deported German, Austrian, and Czech Jews previously sent to transit camp-ghettos in Izbica, Piaski, and elsewhere to Belżec.

Dismantlement of Belżec

By late spring 1943, Jewish forced laborers, guarded by the SS and police and their auxiliaries, had completed the task of exhuming the bodies and burning them and had dismantled the camp.

During June 1943, the job was completed and the Jewish forced laborers were either shot in Bełżec or deported to the Sobibor killing center to be gassed.

After the Bełżec camp was dismantled, the Germans ploughed over the site, built a manor house and planted trees and crops to disguise the area as a farm. A former auxiliary police guard at the camp ostensibly farmed the land. Soviet forces overran the region in July 1944.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005191>

69. Belżec Timeline

1939–1941 — Globocnik Heads Lublin SS and Police. Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer-SS (Reich Leader of the SS) and Chief of German Police, appoints SS General Odilo Globocnik as Lublin District SS and Police Leader on November 1, 1939. On July 17, 1941, Himmler appoints Globocnik Commissioner for the Establishment of SS and Police Bases in the Occupied Eastern Territories. In early autumn of that year, Himmler tasks Globocnik with organizing the mass murder of Jews residing in the Generalgouvernement (that part of German-occupied Poland not annexed directly to Germany, attached to German East Prussia, or incorporated within the German-occupied USSR). This operation later became known as Operation Reinhard (also called Aktion Reinhard); it was named after Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office. Three killing centers—Belżec, Sobibor, and Treblinka II—will be constructed for the sole purpose of killing Jews. During the course of Operation Reinhard, the Germans kill approximately 1.7 million Jews between March 1942 and November 1943.

November 1, 1941 — Construction of Belżec. Under supervision of SS and police personnel and Trawniki-trained auxiliary police guards, Polish civilian workers begin construction of a killing center on the outskirts of Belżec, which is located in southeastern Poland, along a major rail line that connects the large Jewish population centers in and around Lvov, Kraków, and Lublin. The Belżec killing center is the first Aktion Reinhard killing center to become operative. The gas chambers are constructed in a wooden building and will operate with carbon monoxide gas. The camp will be ready for mass killing operations by March 1942. In February 1942, SS and police personnel and Trawniki-trained guards murder small groups of Jews deported from towns near Belżec to test efficiency and capacity in the gas chambers.

March 17, 1942 — Gassing Operations Begin. The systematic mass murder of Jews begins in Belżec with the deportation of Jews from Lublin. This deportation was the first carried out within the framework of what became known as Operation Reinhard. By April 14, 1942, the SS and police will have killed nearly 30,000 of the 37,000 Jews of Lublin and about 15,000 Jews from Lvov (Lwow, L'viv). During the summer of 1942, the SS and police will deport over 120,000 Jews from the Kraków district to Belżec. Between March and June 1942, the Germans kill an estimated 85,000 Jews in Belżec.

June 19, 1942 — Gassing Operations Temporarily Halt. The first phase of gassing operations ends at Belżec after the arrival of over 11,000 Jews from Tarnow. Operation Reinhard authorities in Lublin halt deportations in order to replace the wooden building housing the gas chambers with a more substantial building. SS and police authorities construct a larger building with six gas chambers, capable of killing 1,500 people at one time. The six gas chambers begin operations in July and, like the original chamber, use carbon monoxide gas from the exhaust fumes of a motor vehicle engine.

July 7, 1942 — Deportations to Belżec Resume Deportations to Belżec resume. During this phase of deportations, the SS and police deport around 350,000 Jews from Kraków, Lublin, and Lvov Districts to Belżec.

July 10, 1942 — Polish Underground Reports on Belżec Polish underground officials in occupied Poland send a report to the Polish government-in-exile in London detailing the extermination process in the Belżec camp. Polish underground organizations also send reports about all Aktion Reinhard camps to Jewish organizations, the Polish government-in-exile in London, the British government, and other Allied organizations in western Europe. Many of the reports are met with doubt and distrust; thus, little or no action is taken to warn Jews still in ghettos about the camps.

August 19, 1942 — SS Official Inspects Belżec SS official Kurt Gerstein inspects Belżec. Gerstein, as an official of the Institute of Hygiene of the Waffen SS in the SS Operations Main Office, checks the efficiency of carbon monoxide as a gassing agent in the three Aktion Reinhard camps.

December 1942 — Operations Cease at Belżec. The Operation Reinhard authorities halt deportations to Belżec. In total German authorities killed approximately 434,500 Jews in the Belżec killing center.

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007206>

70. Chaim Hirszman: Survivor of Belzec Death Camp

Chaim Hirszman was deported to Belzec Death Camp from the city of Zaklikow in November of 1942. Chaim Hirszman and [Rudolf Reder](#) were the only two Jews known to have survived the Belzec death camp. Hirszman gave the following testimony to the Jewish Historical District Commission Lublin on March 19, 1946. The evening after he gave his testimony, he was murdered by Polish antisemites.

We were entrained and taken to Belzec. The train entered a small forest. Then, the entire crew of the train was changed. SS men from the death camps replaced the railroad employees. We were not aware of this at the time.

The train entered the camp. Other SS men took us off the train. They led us all together — men, women, children — in a barrack. We were told to undress before going to the bath. I understood immediately what that meant.

After undressing, we were told to form two groups, one for men and another for women and children. An SS man, with strokes of a horse whip, sent men to the left or right, to death—to work.

I was selected to death, I did not know it then. Anyway, I believed both sides meant the same — death. But, when I jumped in the indicated direction, an SS man called me and said: “*Du bist ein Militarmensch, dich können wir brauchen.*” [“You you a military bearing, we could use you “].

We, who were selected for work, were told to dress. I and some other men were appointed to take the people to the kiln. I was assigned to the women. The Ukrainian Schmidt⁷³, an ethnic German, was standing at the entrance to the gas chamber and struck with a knout [a whip nodosa] all women who entered. Before the door was closed, he fired a few shots with his revolver and then the door closed automatically and forty minutes after we entered and carried the bodies out to special ramp. We shaved the hair off the bodies, which afterward was packed into sacks and taken away by the Germans.

The children were thrown into the chamber simply on the women’s heads. I found the body of my wife and I had to shave her hair.

The bodies were not buried on the spot. The Germans waited until more bodies were gathered. So, that day we did not bury...

Source: Instytut Żydowski Historyczny [Jewish Historical Institute] Warsaw, Report No. 1476. Quoted in: Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: a History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War...* New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 1985, p. 304.

⁷³ Actually, Heinz Schmidt, was a Volksdeutscher from Latvia. He was in charge of the Belzec Sonderkommando. <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/Trawniki/TRAWNIKI%20STAFF.html>

71. Darkness and Hope

By Sam Halpern, A Survivor

Upon learning that his wife and children had been taken from their hiding place into the transport, one member of the Judenrat, Shmuel Weissbrod, decided to join his family. He could not know then that, instead of transporting these thousand Jews to Kamionka, the SS planned to take them to Belzec, a death camp about 50 miles outside Lvov.

There they were not to be put to work. Before the Germans packed every cattle car with about 120 Jews, squeezing them one against the other like herring, they lined the floors in the train with three inches of caustic quicklime. Normally used in construction, this lime burns the flesh on contact. Therefore, most of the Jews died before the transport ever arrived in Belzec. Those who managed to survive this horrible ordeal were shot once the doors of the cattle cars were opened. All the bodies were then burned in the crematoria, and the ashes were buried in the surrounding forest.

... My father's death was the first tragic loss for our family. When I found out the terrible way in which my father lost his life, I could not eat or sleep. I cried constantly. Even though death was all around me, I still could not accept this loss. My father, such a gentle and giving man, was only 54 years old. He had written to me in camp to keep up my morale. I would work all day on the road, thinking of him and crying.

I have visited Belzec many times since the 1970s. The death camp is right next to the small city of Belzec and is completely surrounded by dense forests. A block of granite near the entrance of the fenced-off site reads, in Polish: "Here in Belzec, from the beginning of 1942 until the end of 1942, 600,000 Jews and 1,500 Gentiles who helped Jews, were killed."

My father was one of these 600,000. My uncles, aunts, and cousins were also among the murdered. Our entire section of eastern Galicia, with many towns and cities like Chortkow, Chorostkow, Tarnopol, Lvov and Zolkiew, was made Judenrein, with Belzec serving as the Jews' final destination. Since there is no actual grave over which to pray in Belzec, when I visit, I say Kaddish near another memorial on the site, the statue of a skeletal figure supporting another, which bears the Polish inscription: "In memory of the victims of Hitler's terror murdered from 1942 to 1943."

The story of how Jews were murdered and burned at Belzec is known primarily because of Jan Karski, currently a professor at Georgetown University. In 1942 he wrote a book, *The Story of the Secret State*, in which he recounted what he had personally witnessed both in the Warsaw Ghetto and the Belzec death camp. Karski was a recent graduate of the Lvov law school and was also a member of the Polish underground. A Catholic, he responded to a request by the Warsaw

Judenrat by volunteering to risk his life to tell the world what the Nazis were doing to Polish Jewry. He was smuggled into Belzec dressed in an Estonian guard's uniform, and for two weeks he made a mental record of all the he saw. In his book he writes:

“Alternately swinging and firing with their rifles, the policemen forced still more people into the two cars, which were already over-full. The shots continued to ring out in the rear, the driven mob surged forward, exerting an irresistible pressure against those nearest the train... .

“These were helpless since they had the weight of the entire advancing throng against them and responded with howls of anguish to those who, clutching their hair and clothes for support, trampling on necks, faces and shoulders, breaking bones and shouting with insensate fure, attempted to clamber over them. After the cars had already been filled beyond normal capacity, more than a score of human beings, men, women and children, gained admittance in this fashion. Then the policemen slammed the doors across the hastily withdrawn limbs that still protruded and pushed the iron bars in place... .

“The floors of the cars had been covered with a thick, white powder. It was quicklime.

“The moist flesh coming into contact with the lime is rapidly dehydrated and burned. The occupants of the cars would be literally burned to death before long, the flesh eaten away from the bones. Secondly, the lime would prevent decomposing bodies from spreading disease.

“It was twilight when the 46 (I counted them) cars were packed. From one end to the other, the train, its quivering cargo of flesh, seemed to throb, vibrate, rock, and jump as if bewitched. Inside the camp a few score dead bodies remained and a few in the final throes of death. German policemen walked around at leisure with smoking guns, pumping bullets into anything that by a moan or motion betrayed an excess of vitality. Soon, not a single one was left alive.”

Jan Karski published his book in London so that the English-speakers, most importantly in the United States – the only country with the power to stop the German slaughter of innocents – could learn what was taking place in Europe. When American Jews say they had no idea about the killings, I always think of Karski's book and wonder how intelligent people could have ignored the atrocities. Why didn't they read everything they could about Europe's Jews once there was a hint of persecution? Not only did American Jewry fail to learn what has happening to their brothers and sisters in Europe, Americans did not press their government to act even when news of the atrocities was confirmed.

Karski did not solely rely on his book to inform leaders in London and the United States about the mass murders being committed by the Nazis. In November, Karski met with the British undersecretary for foreign affairs, Lord Selborne, and personally recounted what he had

witnessed. In the United States, Karski briefed President Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover and Stephen Wise, among other leaders. Tragically, nothing came out of these meetings.

When my son David was still a small boy, he came into my room one Shabbat afternoon and found me reading Karski's book. I was crying. I had just finished the section on the murderous rampages at Belzec and could not contain my emotion. David, who was accustomed to seeing his father smiling, became distressed.

"What's wrong, Dad?" he asked.

I was not sure how to respond to the innocent inquiry. Unlike other survivors, I often spoke about the Holocaust with my children, knowing it was too important to ignore. My children had a right to know what had happened to their family, to their people. But Karski's book was so graphic, and David was so young. I decided to let him read a couple of pages, and then we'd talk about them.

"Here," I said handing David the open book. "This is what happened to your grandfather."

David read the pages quietly and then cried. I held him in my arms and answered as best I could his questions about how the world could let this happen. I did not have very good answers, for I had been asking myself the very same questions. Where was the world? Where was America? Where were America's Jews as 6 million were slaughtered?

In 1990, at the International Leadership Reunion of the United States Jewish Appeal held in Geneva, people gave generously and spoke devotedly of commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. Before I pledged my donation, I stood up to say a few words. Rather than give the usual speech about how special Israel was and how important it was to contribute, however, I decided to turn back the clock and ask some questions that had been lying quietly, for many years, deep in my heart.

"Distinguished ladies and gentlemen," I said to the caucus of major givers. "First, I want to thank you for all you do on behalf of the country of Israel and your fellow Jews. I am always impressed by your generosity, your commitment. You give your money and of yourselves so freely that it's truly wonderful to see. But I have to ask you something, a painful question, which I have lived with for decades now: Where were you, as a community of American Jews, during the Holocaust?" My voice became louder as my emotions grew stronger.

"Europe's Jews were desperate for your help. You had means, you had power. As we dropped off, one by one in the labor and concentration camps, or hid in haylofts, behind false walls, in cellars and attics, starving, frightened almost beyond hope, as we survived on forged Gentile

papers, we waited daily, even hourly, in the ghettos and camps, for our brethren in America to do all they could to help liberate us. But where were you?... .. “

The audience was taken aback by my speech and the strong emotion I apparently displayed. There I was, with my Polish accent and the images of the Holocaust in my mind and the imprint of the blows on my body, a living witness among distinguished company, almost all of whom had been old enough during the war to be involved. Gladys, sitting beside me, was self-conscious and upset, for she felt that my statement may have been too strong. But I had not been able to contain myself. I was compelled to speak by what I recognized at that moment, by a room full of wealthy and powerful Jews who once did so little to help those desperately in need.

From: *Darkness and Hope*, pp. 51-57, by Sam Halpern, Shengold Publishers, Inc., New York, 1996
<http://www.aish.com/ho/p/Belzec-A-Survivor.html>

As a young man, Sam Halpern (1920-2013), his family, and thousands of other Jews were imprisoned at the Kamionka labor camp, one of several locations throughout Europe where more than 6 million Jews were slaughtered as part of Adolph Hitler's "Final Solution." Less than 24 hours after they escaped, all of the Jews at Kamionka were killed. His parents and his oldest brother were among the dead in the Holocaust.

He and his younger brother, Arie, made it back to their hometown, where they were hidden for eight months—until the end of the war—by a Catholic family they had known since childhood. For decades after the war, Halpern continued to send money to the family who hid him in a barn. "They're really heroes," he said.

After the war, Sam Halpern moved to New Jersey where he was known as one of the "Refugee Builders," a group of Holocaust survivors that also included the Wilfs, Kushners and Kaplans, all of whom had come to New Jersey to resurrect their lives after World War II.

By some accounts, Halpern went on to become the most prolific builder in New Jersey history. Though the exact scope of his real estate empire was never truly known, his company, Atlantic Realty Development Corp., oversaw the construction of thousands of homes, townhouses, apartments and stores.



72. Kurt Gersten: Belzec Testimony

There are many survivors of Auschwitz, some from Treblinka and Sobibor, but only two known Jewish survivors of Belzec. The only information available about the operations of those camps are coming from Kurt Gerstein a German chemical engineer, an Anti-Nazi who joined the SS with the hope of sabotaging the Nazi extermination operations from within. As a chemical expert he visited the Belzec Camp. He tried to alert the world about the atrocities; he sent notes to the Swedish Government, tried to contact the Papal Nuncio in Berlin, to no avail, nobody wanted to get involved. After the war, while imprisoned by the French, he furnished the following eyewitness account:

In January 1942 I was named chief of the Waffen -SS technical disinfection services, including section for the extremely toxic gases. On June 8, 1942, SS Sturmfuhrer [Lieutenant] Gunther of the RSHA came to see me. He was dressed in civilian clothing. I had never met him before. He ordered me to get him prussic acid and to bring for him immediately 100 kilograms of prussic acid and to bring it to a place known only to the truck driver. He said he needed the acid for a top secret mission . . . As soon as the truck was loaded we left for Lublin. There, SS Gruppenfuhrer



Kurt Gerstein

(Globocnik) was waiting for us . . . ‘This is one of the top secret matters there are, even the most secret. Anyone who talks will be shot immediately. Only yesterday two who talked were shot,’ Globocnik explained to us.

‘You will have to disinfect large piles of clothing coming from the Jews, Poles Czechs, etc. Your other duty will be to improve the workings of our gas chambers, which operate on the exhaust from a Diesel engine. We need a more toxic and faster working gas, something like the prussic acid. The Fuhrer and Himmler—they were here the day before yesterday, August 15— and ordered me to accompany anybody who has to see the installation.’

Professor Pfannenstiel asked him,” but what does the Fuhrer say? Globocnik answered, ‘Fuhrer has ordered more speed.’ Dr. Herbert Lidner, who was here yesterday, asked him, ‘Wouldn’t it be more prudent to burn the bodies instead of burying them? Another generation may take a different view of these things.’ I answered: ‘Gentlemen, if there is ever a generation after us so cowardly, so soft, that it would not understand our work as good and necessary, then gentlemen, National Socialism will have been for nothing. On the contrary, we should bury bronze tablets saying that it was we, who had the courage to carry out this gigantic task!’ Then the Fuhrer said: ‘Yes, my brave Globocnik, you are quite right.’

The next day we left for Belzec. Globocnik introduced me to the SS man who took me around the plant. We saw no dead bodies that day, but a pestilential odor hung over the whole area. Alongside the station there was a “dressing hut” with window for “valuables.” Further on, a room with a hundred chairs- the Barber room. Then a corridor 150 meters long in the open air,

barbed wire on both sides, with signs: “To the baths and inhalants.” In front of us a building like a bath house; to the left and right, large concrete pots of geraniums or other flowers. On the roof, the Star of David. On the building a sign: “Hechenholt’s Foundation.”

The following morning, a little before seven there was announcement: “The first train will arrive in ten minutes!” A few minutes later a train arrived from Lemberg (Lwow): 45 cars with more than 6,000 people. Two hundred Ukrainians assigned to this work flung open the doors and drove the Jews out of the cars with leather whips. A loud speaker gave instructions: “Strip, even artificial limbs and glasses. Hand all money and valuables in at the “valuables window.” Women and young girls are to have their hair cut in the “barbers hut.”

Then the march began. Barbed wire on both sides, in the rear two dozen Ukrainians with riffles. They drew near, Wirth and I found ourselves in front of the death chambers. Stark naked men, women, children, and cripples passed by. A tall SS man in the corner called to the unfortunates in a loud minister’s voice: “Nothing is going to hurt you! Just breathe deep and it will strengthen your lungs. It’s a way to prevent contagious diseases. It’s a good disinfectant!”

They asked him. “What was going to happen?” He answered, “The men will have to work, build houses and streets. The women won’t have to do that, they will be busy with the housework and the kitchen.”

This was the last hope for some of these poor people, enough to make them march toward the death chambers without resistance. The majority knew everything; the smell betrayed it! They climbed the little wooden stairs and entered the gas chambers, most of them silently, pushed by those behind them. A Jewess of about forty with eyes like fire cursed the murderer’s; she disappeared into the gas chamber after being struck several times by Captain Wirth’s whip. Many prayed . . . SS men pushed the men into the chambers. “Fill it up,” Wirth ordered; 700-800 people in 93 square meters. The door closed.

Then I understood the reason for the “Hechenholt” sign. Heckenholt was the driver of the Diesel, whose exhaust was to kill these poor unfortunates. SS Underscharfuhrer [Sargent] Heckenholt tried to start the motor. It wouldn’t start! . . . My stopwatch clocked it all: 50 minutes, 70 minutes and the Diesel still would not start. The men were waiting in the gas chambers. You could hear them weeping “as though in a synagogue,” said Professor Pfannenstiel, his eyes glued to the window in the wooden door. Captain Whirt, furious, struck with his whip the Ukrainian who helped Heckenholt. The Diesel started after two hours and 49 minutes, by my stopwatch. Twenty minutes later passed. You could see through the window that many were already dead after thirty minutes! Jewish workers on the other side opened the wooden doors. They had been promised their lives in return for doing this horrible job, plus as small percentage of the money and valuables collected. The men were still standing, like columns of stones, with no room to fall or to lean. Even in the death you could tell the families, all holding hands. It was difficult to

separate them while emptying the rooms for the next batch. The bodies were tossed out, blue, wet with sweat and urine, the legs smeared with excrement and menstrual blood. Two dozen workers were busy checking mouths which they opened with iron hooks. “Gold to the left, no gold to the right.” Others checked anus and genitals, looking for money, diamonds, gold, etc. Dentists knocked out gold teeth, bridges, and crowns, with hammers.

Captain Wirth stood in the middle of them. He was in his element, and showing me a big gem box filled with teeth, said. “See the weight of the gold? Just from yesterday and the day before! You can’t imagine what we find every day, dollars, diamonds, gold! You’ll see!” He took me over to a jeweler responsible for the all the valuables. They also pointed to me one of the heads of the big Berlin store Kaufhaus des Westen, and the little man whom they forced to play the violin, the chief of the Jewish workers’ commandos. “He is a captain of the Imperial Austrian Army, Chevalier of the German Iron cross,” Wirth told me.

The bodies were thrown into big ditches near the gas chamber, about 100 by 20 by 12 meters. After a few days the bodies swelled and the whole mass rose up 2-3 yards because of the gas in the bodies. When the swelling went down several days later, the bodies matted down again. They told me that later they poured Diesel oil over the bodies and burned them on railroad ties to make them disappear.

But even the improved version of gas chamber could not kill the millions of victims, in the short time allotted, and the Germans built Auschwitz.

Source: Testimony of Kurt Gersten, Nuremberg Tribunal PS 1553

73. Map: German Administration of Poland, 1942



https://ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?MediaId=426

July 7

74.	Aktion Reinhard (Einsatz Reinhard)	282
75.	Map: Aktion Reinhard in the Generalgouvernement, 1942	285
76.	The History of Lublin and Lublin Jews	286
77.	Lublin/Majdanek Timeline	289
78.	Judith Becker: On Arriving at Majdanek.....	291
79.	Physical Resistance: The Coal Mine	293
80.	Reserve Police Battalion 101	295



Gas Chamber at Majdanek

74. Aktion Reinhard (Einsatz Reinhard)

Operation Reinhard (*Einsatz Reinhard*) became the code name for the German plan to murder the approximately two million Jews residing in the so-called Generalgouvernement (Government General). The Generalgouvernement was that part of German-occupied Poland not directly annexed to Germany, attached to German East Prussia, or incorporated into the German-occupied Soviet Union.



The Mercedes Benz convertible in which Reinhard Heydrich was riding when attacked by Czech partisans.

Though initiated in the autumn of 1941, the operation was later named after SS General Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), who died in June 1942 from injuries sustained during an assassination attempt by Czech partisans. The RSHA was the agency responsible for coordinating the deportation of European Jews to killing centers in German-occupied Poland. In January 1939, December 1940, and July 1941, Adolf Hitler and Hermann Goering had tasked Heydrich personally with drafting plans for a solution of the “Jewish question.”

SS General Odilo Globocnik, SS and police leader in the Lublin District of the Generalgouvernement, directed Operation Reinhard between autumn 1941 and late summer 1943. He established two departments on his staff for this purpose. The first was a deportation coordination team under SS Major Hermann Hoefle, who was responsible for arranging personnel and transport for the planned deportations. Hoefle also coordinated deportation operations, which were usually placed under the command of the regional SS and police commander, with regional SS and police and civilian occupation authorities. The second department was the Inspectorate of SS Special Detachments under Criminal Police captain Christian Wirth, who was responsible for the construction and management of the three Operation Reinhard killing centers (Bełżec, Sobibor, and Treblinka II). The Operation Reinhard killing centers were managed by small detachments of German SS and Police and guarded by detachments of police auxiliaries trained at the Trawniki training camp.

As Globocnik listed them in January 1944, the aims of Operation Reinhard were: (1) to “resettle” (i.e., to kill) the Polish Jews, (2) to exploit the skilled or manual labor of some Polish Jews before killing them, (3) to secure the personal property of the Jews (clothing, currency, jewelry, and other possessions), and (4) to identify and secure alleged hidden and immovable assets such as factories, apartments, and land.

Construction of Bełżec, Sobibor, and Treblinka II began in autumn 1941. Wirth, who had played a significant role in the murder of institutionalized persons with disabilities in Germany between 1939 and 1941, applied his experience of killing with carbon monoxide exhaust fumes to the construction of the Operation Reinhard killing centers. In all three camps, Trawniki-trained guards, supervised by Operation Reinhard staff, murdered their victims by using carbon monoxide gas generated by stationary engines and pumped into gas chambers. After a few test gassings using Polish prisoners and Soviet prisoners of war, killing operations at Bełżec began in March 1942. They continued until December 1942. Sobibor began operating in May 1942 and remained functional until October 1943. Treblinka II opened in July 1942 and was closed in August 1943.

German staff and their auxiliaries (most of them trained at the Trawniki training camp) murdered at least 434,508 Jews and an undetermined number of Poles, Roma (Gypsies), and Soviet prisoners of war in Bełżec; at least 167,000 Jews and an undetermined number of Poles, Roma, and Soviet prisoners of war in Sobibor; and approximately 925,000 Jews and an unknown number of Poles, Roma, and Soviet prisoners of war in Treblinka II. Property belonging to the victims of the Operation Reinhard camps was stored in depots in Lublin city, at the Lublin-Majdanek concentration camp, and at the forced-labor camps Trawniki and Poniatowa.

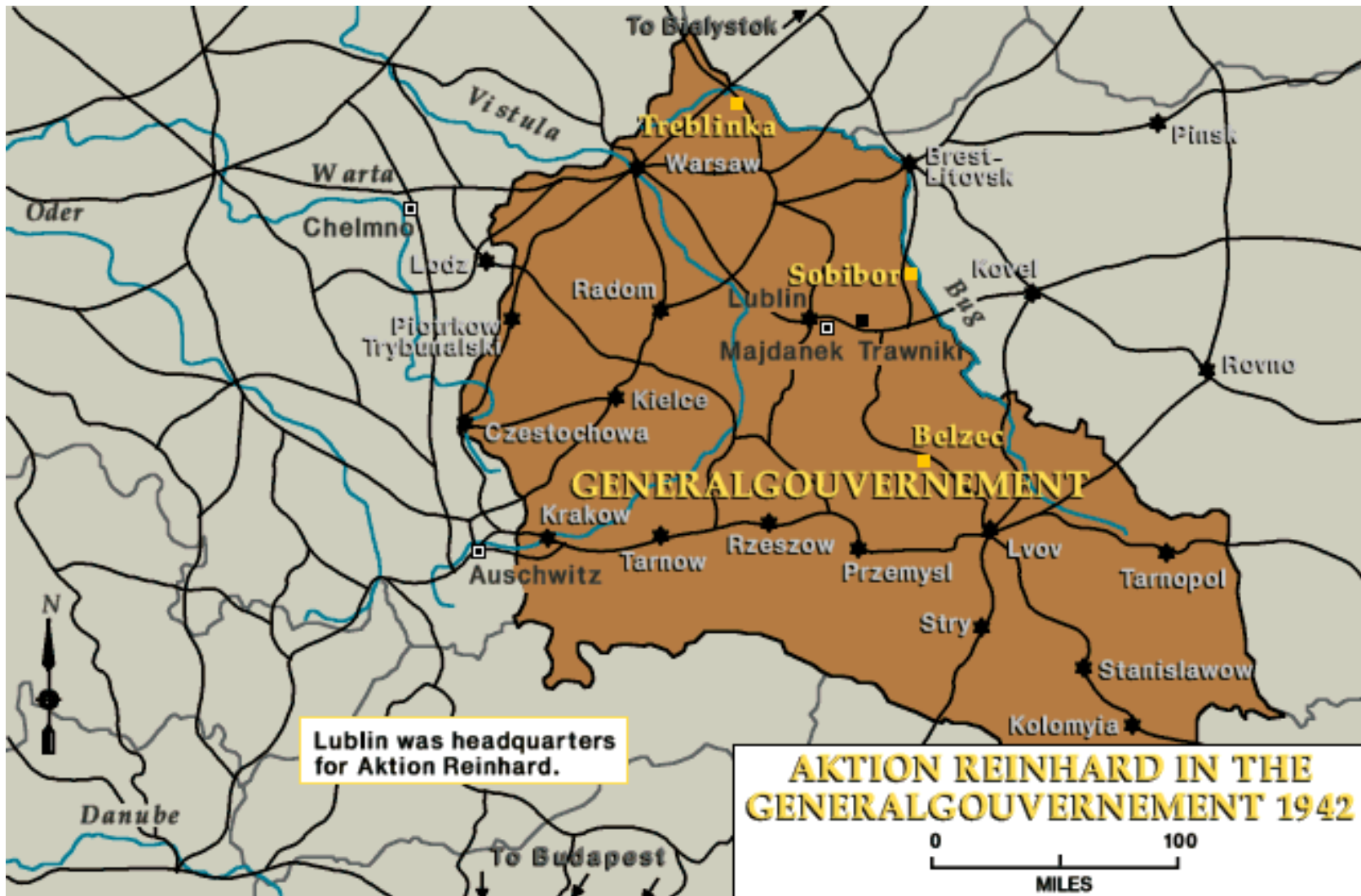
The overwhelming majority of victims in the Operation Reinhard killing centers were Jews deported from ghettos in Poland. Once the killing centers were operational, German SS and police forces liquidated the ghettos and deported Jews by rail to those killing centers. The victims of Bełżec were mainly Jews from the ghettos of southern Poland, and included German, Austrian, and Czech Jews held in the Piaski and Izbica transit ghettos in Lublin District. Jews deported to Sobibor came mainly from the Lublin area and other ghettos of the eastern Generalgouvernement; this killing center also received transports from France and the Netherlands. Deportations to Treblinka originated mainly from central Poland, primarily from the Warsaw ghetto, but also from the Districts Radom and Kraków in the Generalgouvernement, from District Białystok, as well as from Bulgarian-occupied Thrace and Macedonia.

Also part of Operation Reinhard were several forced-labor camps for Jews in District Lublin, including Poniatowa, the Trawniki forced-labor camp, Budzyn, Krasnik, and the Lublin/Majdanek camp before its formal conversion into a concentration camp in February 1943. For a time, Majdanek also served as a killing site for Jews whom the SS could no longer kill at Bełżec in the late autumn of 1942. In November 1943, after the Sobibor uprising, SS and police units shot the Jewish labor forces still incarcerated at Trawniki, Poniatowa, and Majdanek, 42,000 in all, within the framework of Operation “Harvest Festival.” With the completion of “Harvest Festival,” Operation Reinhard came to a conclusion, with Globocnik submitting to Himmler a final report in January 1944.

In all, the SS and police killed approximately 1.7 million Jews as part of Operation Reinhard. The victims of the Operation Reinhard camps also included an unknown number of Poles, Roma, and Soviet prisoners of war.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005195>

75. Map: Aktion Reinhard in the Generalgouvernement, 1942



http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?MediaId=368

76. The History of Lublin and Lublin Jews

The oldest settlements in the present area of Lublin date back to the 6th century AD. In the 9th century there was an important trade colony on the route between Western and Eastern Europe. In 1317 Lublin obtained Magdeburg civic rights. The city constituted royal property. In 1474 Lublin became the capital of the *voivodeship* which belonged to Malopolska. The 16th century and the first half of the 17th century were the times of the greatest cultural and economic development of the city. The union between Poland and Lithuania (the so-called Lublin union, 1569), concluded on the premises of the royal castle, and also the choice of Lublin as the seat of the Royal Tribunal for the Malopolska region strongly manifest the significance of the city at that time.

Due to its location and importance, the city constituted a national, religious and cultural mixture. Besides the Polish population there also lived Ruthenians, Jews, Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, Scots, Hungarians, and Armenians. In the middle of the 17th century, during wars with Cossacks, Russia and Sweden, the city was seriously destroyed and lost its previous meaning. After Poland had lost its independence and got partitioned (1795), Lublin became a part of the Austrian empire and in 1815 a part of the Russian territory. After the First World War, in reborn Poland, Lublina — city of middle size—was chosen as the capital of the voivodeship.



The Old City in Lublin

The oldest mention of the Jews settled in Lublin dates from the year 1330. In 1336 King Kazimierz Wielki granted them the privilege to settle down in the Podzamcze area. This fact was recalled by the seniors of the community in 1558. The 16th century and the first half of 17th century were times when the splendor of Lublin and Lublin community reached its peak. In the first half of the 16th century the Lublin community was the third largest in the Kingdom of Poland (others were Cracow and Lvov) as for the number of inhabitants (350 families) and held the leading position with respect to cultural and economic development.

The townspeople of Lublin, afraid of Jewish merchants' competition, following the example of other royal towns, obtained from the King the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* which forbade Jews to live freely within the borders of the city walls. Only a few Jews remaining in the king's service had the right to own houses. As a result, a separate Jewish colony emerged outside the city walls— in Podzamcze, on the northern slope of the castle hill. During the 16th century the

community obtained numerous privileges to run trade, to buy new lands and to enlarge communal buildings (butcher's stalls, the hospital, the brick synagogue). In 1518 Shalom Shachna founded a yeshiva there which was famous all over Europe. According to the king's privilege from 1567 sages of the Lublin yeshiva obtained the title of rector and rights equal with those at other Polish universities. In 1547 the wandering printer Hayyim Schwartz was granted the privilege to establish a Hebrew printing house which was the first in Lublin. Like many other publishing houses it issued numerous works which played a significant role in the development of Jewish printing in Poland. In 1581 the Jewish Council of the Four Lands emerged (*Va'ad Arba Aratsot*) which existed until 1764. The main places of its conventions were Lublin and Jaroslaw. Lublin Jews performed many important functions there, including the post of the Speaker.

During the invasion of Cossack and Muscovite armies (October 1655) the whole Podzamcze was almost completely burned down and approximately 2,000 Jews lost their lives. After that tragedy Jews started renting numerous estates within the boundaries of the Christian town, establishing shops and warehouses, which raised townsmen's protests. Jews' protectors taking advantage of the lease were the clergy and gentry. The Jewish town in Podzamcze was gradually being rebuilt. In 1787 it had the population of about 3.5 thousand people.

At the end of the 18th century, Lublin became a center of Hasidism. At first the famous tzaddik, Ya'akov Yitskhok Hurvits, was active there; then his role was taken over by the dynasty of Eigers until the Holocaust.

In the towns of the Russian partition Jews were allowed to live only in the quarters assigned by the authorities. In Lublin it was the so-called sector II which also covered the area of Lubartowska St.—demarcated in the beginning of the 19th century where a new Jewish district was slowly turning up. Only thanks to Wielopolski's reform (1862) the Jews gained the freedom to purchase civic real estates. Taking advantage of that right Jews soon bought out almost all houses within the borders of the Old Town. Some rich assimilated families also settled in the representative area of Krakówskie Przedmiescie St.

During the 19th century Jews constituted half of Lublin's inhabitants. They participated considerably in industry and trade. In the second half of the 19th century, the first Jewish schools were created. The languages of instruction were Russian, Polish and Hebrew. Printing was coming back to life.

In 1917 the community in Wieniawa got attached to Lublin's community (until 1916 it was a separate town). The census from 1921 recorded 94,412 inhabitants in Lublin including 37,337 Jews (39.5%). By 1939 the number of Jews slightly increased.

Many Jewish political organizations, modern educational institutions (including two secondary grammar schools), public libraries, drama clubs and sports teams emerged after the First World War. There were numerous printing houses which issued Jewish books and magazines.

During the Second World War the Nazis annihilated not only the Jewish population of Lublin but also objects connected with it. By 1943 Jewish districts in Podzamcze, Kalinowszczyzna, Piaski and Wieniawa were destroyed. The concentration camp in Majdanek is a symbol of those times. Almost 360,000 people including about 100,000 Jews were murdered there. After the war the State Museum of Majdanek was established on the premises of the former concentration camp.

Source: Landmarks and Traces of Jewish Culture in Lublin. <http://www.mdk2.lublin.pl/var/folder/>

77. Lublin/Majdanek Timeline

July 21, 1941 — Himmler Orders Construction of A Concentration Camp In Lublin On a visit to Lublin in July 1941, SS chief Heinrich Himmler orders the SS and Police Leader in Lublin, SS Major General Odilo Globocnik to construct a concentration camp in Lublin. The camp is intended to provide a reservoir of forced labor to produce construction materials and carry out construction projects for future permanent German settlements in occupied Poland and the occupied Soviet Union.

Early October 1941 — Construction on Majdanek Begins Following the choice of a site on the east/southeast side of town, near the suburb of Majdan-Tatarski (from which the nickname “Majdanek,” or little Majdan is derived), construction on the camp begins in early October with the arrival of around 2,000 Soviet POWs.

Mid-October 1941 — Himmler entrusts Globocnik with implementing Operation Reinhard, which has four purposes: 1) Mass murder of Jews residing in the Generalgouvernement; 2) Exploitation of labor of a minority of Jews permitted to survive temporarily; 3) Seizure, evaluation, and recycling for use all personal property taken from the murdered Jews; and 4) Identification and securing of all so-called hidden assets of the Jewish population.

December 1941-February 1942 — Majdanek Becomes a Forced-Labor Camp for Jews within the Framework of Operation Reinhard On December 12, 1941, 150 Jews, seized off the streets of Lublin, become the first Jewish forced laborers in Majdanek. In February 1942, the first non-Jewish Polish prisoners arrive, along with more Jews selected from the Lublin ghetto.

March 29, 1942-June 15, 1942— Central European Jews Sent to Majdanek On March 24, 1942, the SS Main Office in Oranienburg, Germany, informed Majdanek commandant Karl Otto Koch that Jews from Slovakia would arrive there in three days. Between March 29 and June 15, 1942, the SS diverts around 7,000 Slovak Jews bound for Auschwitz and Bełżec to Majdanek. The SS also selects German and Austrian Jews off trains bound for the camp-ghettos Piaski and Izbica and sends them to Majdanek as forced laborers. Between March and June 1942 about 14,000 Jews from Bohemia and Moravia arrive in Lublin District in 14 transports. The SS sends most of them to Izbica and Piaski and, after it begins operations in May 1942, directly to the Sobibor killing center. At least 2,000 are selected off the train transports in Lublin and diverted as workers to Majdanek.

October 1942-September 1943 — Gas Chambers Built in Majdanek The SS constructs two, possibly three gas chambers at Majdanek to eliminate those prisoners no longer capable of work. Reportedly, both Zyklon B and carbon monoxide gas are used to kill human beings. In one, possibly two cases, large numbers of Jews are sent to Majdanek to be killed upon arrival, though

available records are insufficient to estimate how many were killed upon arrival. In November and December 1942, as Bełżec closes down, around 25,000 Jews are diverted to Majdanek: at least some, possibly all, were killed upon arrival. In April-May 1943, the SS and Police deport between 18,000 and 22,000 Warsaw Jews to Majdanek; it is possible that thousands were killed upon arrival.

Summer 1943 — Poles Deported to Majdanek German SS and police units remove about 16,000 Poles from Zamosc county, located southeast of Lublin in Lublin District of the Generalgouvernement, and hold them temporarily in Majdanek. Himmler had ordered the “cleansing” of Polish villages from Zamosc county as the first step in the so-called Germanization of Poland. The Germans expel about 110,000 Poles from the region. Thousands will be deported to Auschwitz and Majdanek and thousands of others to forced labor in Germany.

November 3, 1943 — Operation “Erntefest” (Harvest Festival) SS and police units carry out orders from Himmler to murder the surviving Jews in Lublin District, including the remaining Jewish prisoners at Majdanek. They concentrate 18,000 Jews from various camps and prisons in Lublin, including at least 8,000 Jewish prisoners in Majdanek, and then shoot them in large prepared ditches outside the camp fence near the crematorium. The killing at Majdanek on November 3, 1943, was the largest single-day, single-location massacre during the Holocaust.

Also as part of “Harvest Festival,” the SS and police kill between 11,000 and 16,000 Jews at Poniatowa and between 4,000 and 6,000 Jews at Trawniki. Himmler ordered the implementation of Operation “Harvest Festival” because he feared more incidents of armed Jewish resistance after the prisoner uprising at the Sobibor killing center. The SS and police kill about 42,000 Jews during Operation “Harvest Festival.”

January-May 1944 — Evacuation of Prisoners from Majdanek As Soviet troops approach the prewar Polish border from the east, the SS authorities begin to evacuate prisoners from Majdanek to the west. In five months, thousands of prisoners are transferred west from Majdanek to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Gross-Rosen, Ravensbrueck, Natzweiler, and Plaszow. By early June 1944, Majdanek is almost empty.

July 23, 1944 — Soviet Forces Liberate Majdanek Soviet forces liberate Majdanek and find fewer than 500 prisoners left in the camp. The Soviets’ rapid advance did not permit the Germans time to destroy the facility. In almost three years of operation, between 95,000 and 130,000 died or were killed in the Majdanek system; between 80,000 and 110,000 were killed in the main camp alone. The majority of prisoners were Jews; the overwhelming majority of those who died were Jews, between 80,000 and 92,000 in the system and between 60,000 and 72,000 in the main camp.

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007298>

78. Judith Becker: On Arriving at Majdanek

Shoes are the most important thing that you owned, if you owned it, in the camps because if you didn't have shoes your feet got sore and once you had sores on your feet they didn't heal. You couldn't keep up the pace and you might as well have died. You were finished. In Majdanek they took everything. Everything. I mean, the rings were cut off, earrings were pulled out of their lobes. Every orifice was checked. All our documents, everything, everything was taken away from us. As a matter of fact, my mother had her wedding ring and she hadn't taken it off for a long time and it was tight to get out and I figured: "Ah, they're not going to bother about a wedding ring" and the woman right in front of me in Majdanek had a similar situation, so the "*aufseherin*,"⁷⁴ a woman by the name Alice Orlov —"Orlovska" they called her —she says: "That's no problem" And the Polack who actually did the collecting took a chopper and chopped off the woman's finger. So I said to my mother: "We're not going to go through that" so I let her go first and I went right to this "*aufseherin*" and in my perfect German I said: *Ich wuerde es gerne 'runternehmen aber es ist v'el zueng, koennen sie mir vielleicht helfen!* (I would take it off but it's very tight. Can you help me?)" So she says: "Yes, gladly." And she took a pair of pliers and she cut off the ring. If not for that, they would have cut off the finger. And by the way, I said to her: "Would you cut off mine, too." I had a little ring that apparently my grandmother had given my father to give to me and I had put it on and never taken it off. And it was tight so she cut that one, too.



What I am trying to say is they took everything in Majdanek. And our hair she left. That same terrible *aufseherin* in Majdanek, when she looked at my sister and myself - I had long blond braids and my sister had darker brown, sort of brownish hair and also thick braids and they were cutting the hair. So she says: "*Nein, die zwei nicht* (No, not these two)." So really we never had our hair completely shorn, which was very, very important.

Now, I started to talk about shoes. When they took away our shoes in Majdanek they gave us instead these Ersatz shoes, these substitutes. And what were they? The uppers were made of some kind of a paper combination and the lowers were made of some kind of a wood combination. It wasn't real wood, it was makeshift. And that sounded very good, except the wood and the paper separated as soon as it got wet and so you walked, you had to tie it around and you had to do all kinds of things. It was impossible to run fast and you always had to run fast. And in the morning you stood in the mud for as long as they wanted you to stand in these *appells*⁷⁵ and in the evening. And we were in Majdanek from the fall until the spring so it was

⁷⁴ The *Aufseherinnen* (singular *Aufseherin*) were female guards in Nazi concentration camps during The Holocaust. Of the 55,000 guards who served in Nazi concentration camps, about 3,700 were women. In 1942, the first female guards arrived at Auschwitz and Majdanek from Ravensbrück. The year after, the Nazis began conscripting women because of a guard shortage.

⁷⁵ Roll calls.

muddy and wintery and snowy. So we were in a terrible quandary about shoes. When we got to Plaszow from Majdanek we were *persona non grata*.



Shoes of Holocaust victims from the Majdanek Memorial Centre.

Okay, I just wanted to emphasize. I am sure that every survivor's story has something about shoes because they became a matter of life and death. And from Majdanek, when we came to Plaszow, we were transported in these Ersatz shoes and in *pashaki* [?], in striped clothing. That was... in Majdanek itself we did not wear striped clothing. They gave us clothing of people who had been shot. We always knew how many people had worn it before by the bullet holes and the problem with those clothes was they were very stiff. They had been dirty and they had a "Jude" painted on the back, you know, a red "J". And they never laundered them — they used to disinfect them.

And in the process of disinfecting them they became very stiff and they would give us just one garment, a dress, that's it. No undergarment, no over-garment, in winter, doesn't matter. So when we got the striped suits it was a relief in a way because they were more flexible. They felt a little bit better.

Shoah Resource Center, The International School for Holocaust Studies
Source: Yad Vashem Archives 0.3- 9416

79. Physical Resistance: The Coal Mine

The camps were meant to degrade and destroy life and to crush the spirit of the inmates. Camp inmates who refused to give up hope or religious faith despite the circumstances engaged in spiritual resistance.

Abie Baron was born in Warsaw in 1924. He was in his teens when he and his brother, Shlomo, were deported to the Majdanek death camp in Poland. They passed the Selektion ⁷⁶and were assigned to work. Abie recalls that whenever he was faced with life-and-death decisions, he somehow figured out what to do. But he takes no credit for making the right choice.

It borders on faith-divine intervention-nothing else. Where would I as a teen get the sophistication to reason without supernatural assistance?

Once, they were taking out prisoners on a transport. Presumably, they didn't need so many prisoners at the camp, so they were going to eliminate them—but they were taking away stronger specimens. It didn't make sense! I saw there was a chance to manipulate the situation. The block master thought that the people on the transports were going to be killed, and he pushed me to the end of the line in order to save my life. But something hit my mind, which I would not have thought of on my own, and I stayed on the line for the next transport.

The block master, Leon, a man from my hometown, yelled at me: "I'm risking my life, you \$#%! Tomorrow, they'll make soap out of you!" I was taken in the second transport. They took us away to a forced labor camp that was not as bad — Jawiszowice, a branch of Auschwitz. Later I found out that, aside from the three transports, the rest of the group were all killed—gassed or machine-gunned—including Leon.

My brother, in his early twenties, was maybe too intelligent. He thought there was no sense in fighting. He lasted in Majdanek only five or six weeks.

Abie was assigned with another young prisoner to the coal mine in Jawiszowice. Using explosives, they broke coal into small pieces and transported it out of the mine by wheelbarrow.

Coal was the main ingredient fueling Hitler's war effort. We worked close to twelve hours a day without food. At night we were fed soup and given a piece of bread for the next day. I was hungry, thirsty, and tired; I was glad to be finished with my shift. The German mining engineer, Steiger Holtz—the only name I remember from all Germans—yelled at us: "I'm retaining you for another shift because you didn't work hard enough!" Then he walked away. He was a strong man, about six feet tall.

⁷⁶ **Selektion** – selection of inmates for execution or slave labor at an extermination or concentration camp.

After a while, we thought it would be safe to leave. We started to go. But Steiger Holtz suddenly stepped out of hiding and began to beat us with a two-inch-wide beam.

We ran from him, down the shaft, back toward our work area. He threw the beam at me, and I fell and landed at the shallow edge of a large dirty pool of water on the floor of the mine. Holtz dragged me to the middle of the pool where the water was deeper and stepped on me. The German thought I was dead, but I had some life in me. I was able to lift my head just enough to breathe. I was scared. I didn't know what had happened to the other inmate.

After a few minutes I got up. Steiger Holtz saw me walking toward the shaft. He was amazed, and he blasted me with water from a fire hose going at high pressure. Right away I fell down in pain; but the water washed off all of the muck.

A Polish Christian civilian in the mine helped me. He saw what had happened. He took me aside to the boiler room and gave me something to eat. I had to stay there for eight hours, until the end of the shift. Then they dragged me back to the camp, to a sick-call room, where there was somewhat better medical care. I had a fever and stayed there for a week until it broke.

When I went to work, the other inmate was not there. I never saw him again.

Steiger Holtz saw me and said in German, "You're still alive?! You are a super-Jew." He had a certain respect for me. From then on, he used me as a translator instead of for loading coal.

I don't know where I got the *chutzpah*⁷⁷ to persevere.

Teen Witnesses to the Holocaust Resistance. Rosen Publishing Company NY, 1999

⁷⁷ **Chutzpah** is the quality of audacity, for good or for bad. The Yiddish word derives from the Hebrew word *ḥutspâ* (חֲצִפּוּת), meaning "insolence" or "audacity".

80. Reserve Police Battalion 101

Reserve Police Battalion 101 was a unit of the German Order Police [*Ordnungspolizei* or *Orpo*] that during the Nazi occupation of Poland played a central role in the implementation of the Final Solution against the Jewish people and the repression of the Polish population. Members of the battalion participated in the round-up and expulsion of Jews, Poles and Gypsies, the guarding and liquidation of ghettos, the deportation to concentration camps and the mass shooting of tens of thousands of civilians.

Raised in Hamburg, Battalion 101 was one of thirteen police formations that were put at the disposal of the German army during its invasion of Poland in September 1939. Members of the battalion crossed into Poland at the border town of Oppeln and then moved through Czestochowa to Kielce, where they rounded-up Polish soldiers and military equipment and guarded a POW camp. On December 13, the police battalion returned to Hamburg where many of its recruits were transferred to other units and replaced by middle-aged reservists.



Source: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Photo USHMM court Source: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Photo USHMM courtesy of Michael O'Hara, December 25, 1940

In May 1940, the battalion was again dispatched to Poland where it was engaged throughout the Wartegau (the districts of western Poland formally annexed by the Third Reich) in the expulsion and resettlement of Poles, Gypsies and Jews. It is estimated that close to 37,000 people were evacuated by Police Battalion 101 alone in a five month period during the spring and summer of 1940. Following the resettlement actions, the battalion was involved in efforts to hunt down Poles who had evaded the evacuation order.

On November 28, 1940 the police battalion was re-deployed to guard the perimeter of the Łódź ghetto, which had been sealed seven months before. These policemen had a standing order to shoot any Jew who came too close to the fence that enclosed the ghetto.

In May 1941, Police Battalion 101 was sent home to Hamburg, where it was totally reconstituted. After most of its earlier recruits were distributed to other police units, its ranks were filled with drafted reservists. While most of its members still hailed from Hamburg, a group from Luxembourg now joined its ranks. For the next twelve months the new battalion underwent extensive training in and around Hamburg. This period coincided with the deportation to Eastern Europe of the Jewish population of Hamburg and its environs in four transports that departed between October 25 and December 4, 1941.

Members of Police Battalion 101 were involved in several aspects of the deportation process, including the guarding of the assembly center (at the Freemason Lodge in Hamburg) and the Sternschanze train station, where the Jews were boarded onto trains, and the escorting of transports to their final destinations: Łódź, Minsk and Riga. In June 1942, Police Battalion 101 was sent back to Poland. Posted to the Lublin district, the battalion arrived during a temporary lull in the mass deportations of Jews to the three Operation Reinhard killing centers of Belżec, Sobibor and Treblinka. For the next four weeks members of the battalion were deployed in rounding-up Jews from smaller settlements and concentrating them in larger ghettos and camps, particularly Izbica and Piaski, the two major assembly camps in the southern Lublin district.

Beginning in mid-July 1942 with the round-up of Jews in the town of Jozefow near Bilgoraj, members of Police Battalion 101 were utilized for the mass shooting of Jewish civilians in towns throughout the Lublin district. These included (in addition to Jozefow) Lomazy (August 1942), Miedzyrzec (August 1942), Serokomla (September 1942), Kock (September 1942), Parczew (October 1942), Konskowola (October 1942), Miedzyrzec (a second action in October 1942) and Lukow (November 1942).

Police Battalion 101's participation in the Final Solution culminated in the Erntefest [Harvest Festival] massacre of November 3-4, 1943. In the course of this killing action, perhaps the largest directed against Jews of the entire war, an estimated 42,000 Jewish prisoners at the Lublin district concentration camps of Majdanek, Trawniki and Poniatowa were wiped out. It is estimated that during the period between July 1942 and November 1943, Police Battalion 101 was alone responsible for the shooting deaths of more than 38,000 Jews and the deportation of 45,000 others.

In the final sixteen months of the war Police Battalion 101 was engaged in actions against partisans and enemy troops. Almost all battalion members survived the collapse of the Third Reich and returned safely to Germany. In the immediate postwar period only four members of the unit suffered legal consequences for their actions in Poland. These policemen, who were arrested for their part in the killing of 78 Poles in the town of Talcyn, were extradited to Poland in 1947 and tried the following year. Two were sentenced to death and two to prison. It was not until 1962, however, that Reserve Police Battalion 101 as a whole came under investigation and legal prosecution by the Office of the State Prosecutor in Hamburg. In 1967 fourteen members of the unit were put on trial. Though most were convicted, only five received prison terms (ranging from five to eight years), which were subsequently reduced in the course of a lengthy appeals process.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/battalion101.html>

Source: Browning, Christopher R., *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York, Harper Collins, 1992, pp.xv-xvii; 3-9; 38-71; 88-114; 133-146; 191-192. .

July 8

81.	Warsaw	299
82.	Historical Sites of Jewish Warsaw	307
83.	A Glimpse of Jewish Warsaw	314
84.	General Government: Administrative Districts.....	316
85.	Warsaw Ghetto Uprising	319
86.	Miła 18	322
87.	Umschlagplatz.....	323
88.	Map: Warsaw Ghetto Umschlagplatz	324
89.	Avraham Levin's <i>Warsaw Ghetto Diary</i>	325
90.	Chaim A. Kaplan's <i>Diary Warsaw Ghetto – August 1942</i>	326
91.	Mary Berg's <i>Diary</i>	327
92.	From the <i>Diary of Stanislaw Adler</i>	329
93.	The Smuggling of Food into the Warsaw Ghetto	331
94.	From the <i>Diary of Emanuel Ringelblum</i>	332
95.	The Last Letter from Mordechai Anielewicz	334
96.	Janusz Korczak	336
97.	Vladka's Eyewitness Remarks on Janusz Korczak	340
98.	Non-Jewish Teens Who Rescued Jews	342
99.	Irving Milchberg—Smuggled Guns Under Nazis' Noses in Warsaw	344



Jewish first names on the Umschlagplatz monument in Warsaw

81. Warsaw

Warsaw, the capital of Poland, once had a Jewish population equivalent to the number of Jews living in all of France. It was the only city that rivaled New York's Jewish population. The city's Jewish population was decimated during the Holocaust. Today only fragments remain.

Early History

Jews settled in Warsaw [pronounced *Warszawa*] during the 14th century, after the reign of King Kasimierz. Even at this early stage, non-Jewish townsman felt hostility toward the Jews. In 1483, Jewish inhabitants were expelled from Warsaw. From 1527-1768, Jews were officially banned from the city; consequently, Jewish settlers lived in *jurydykas* (privately owned settlements) on the outskirts of the city.

Some Jews were allowed to enter the city for short periods of time. After 1572, Jews were allowed to enter Warsaw during conventions of the National Sejm (parliament). Jewish representatives in the Council of Lands were also permitted to visit Warsaw. According to a census in 1765, 2,519 Jews lived in Warsaw. This number increased after Jews were officially allowed to live in the city in 1768. By 1792, the Jewish population nearly tripled to 6,750. A Jewish bourgeoisie began to form in Poland, consisting mainly of businessman, taverners, and artisans. Jewish entrepreneurs also emerged, acting as moneylenders and army suppliers.



Figure 1 Present day Warsaw

Jews were not allowed to have an authorized Jewish community until the Prussian conquest; however, those living in the city still ran prayer meetings, charitable associations and appointed Jewish leaders to take care of tax collection and other judicial services.

Following the first partition of Poland in 1772, a rise in organized street fights against the Jews took place. Three years later, there was a partial expulsion of Jews from Warsaw.

Many Jews in Warsaw participated in the Polish uprising against the Russians during the partition period and were killed when Russian troops massacred the Jewish civilian population.

In 1796, Warsaw became part of Prussia and Jews were subject to *Juden Reglements*, which only allowed Jews living in Warsaw prior to 1796 to remain in the city. By 1804, 11,630 Jews lived in Warsaw. Jews were subject to attacks by the Polish population in 1805.

In the late 18th century, Hasidism spread to Warsaw. On the other hand, the Haskalah, Jewish enlightenment, was not as strong. The followers of the Enlightenment Movement (*maskilim*), led by Isaac Flatau, formed their own synagogue, called the German Synagogue, in 1802.

In 1809, a Jewish quarter was established in the city. Only Jewish bankers, merchants, manufacturers, army suppliers, and doctors were allowed to live there, if they agreed to wear European style clothing and send their children to general schools.

In 1826, a government-sponsored rabbinical assembly opened; it closed in 1863 during the Polish uprisings.

The population of Warsaw continued to grow in the 19th and 20th century. In 1816, Jews numbered 15,600 and, by 1910, the population reached 337,000 (38% of the total population of Warsaw). This rise was due to mass migration in the 1860's and another set of migrations after the 1881 pogroms in Russia, after which 150,000 Jews moved to Warsaw. Many Jews came from Lithuania, Belorussia and the Ukraine.

In the early 1800's, life in the "Jewish Quarter" was restricted, but improved in the 1860's. Jews participated in the Polish uprisings against the Russians in the 1860's. Also during this period, Jews continued to play an important role in banking. Jewish bankers also had monopolies in the sale of salt and alcoholic beverages. Jews consisted of more than half of all those involved in commerce in the city and were also involved in the crafts.

Religious, Social and Political Life

During the late 1800's, Hasidism further spread throughout Warsaw. Nearly two-thirds of Warsaw's 300 approved synagogues were Hasidic.

On the other hand, the rise of the Mitnaggdim also grew with the arrival of the Litvaks. Warsaw's Jewish leadership, until the end of the 1860's, was mainly Orthodox. Four rabbis served all of Warsaw and they removed from office all the Mitnaggdim, whom did not find favor in the eyes of the Hasidic Jews.

Jewish education in this period was run by Orthodox groups in the form of the *heder*, small classes often located in the house of the rabbi. By the mid-19th century, nearly 90% of all Jewish children attended *heder*. In 1896, 433 authorized *hederim* existed in Warsaw, as well as a number of unauthorized ones.



The Nożyk Synagogue

In this period, assimilationist philosophy became popular among the youth. Many Jews converted to Christianity and Warsaw had the highest conversion rate in Eastern Europe.

From the late 18th century, the Jewish community in Praga was centered around Szeroka and Petersburska streets (now Jagiellonska and Kłopotowska). A round, masonry synagogue was built in the neighborhood by architect Józef Lessel in 1836. It was one of only six circular buildings in all of Europe, and the most important meeting place for Jews in Praga before World War II... The synagogue was used as a delousing center during the Nazi occupation. After the war, the building housed offices of the Central Jewish Committee in Poland. In 1961, the building was demolished over Jewish protest, though it was still in good condition. Since 1991, the site has been used for a public high school.

The largest and most beautiful synagogue in Warsaw was the Great Synagogue in Tłomackie Square. This was the only place offering a Reform service, and it was used by the wealthy and middle class, as well as the intelligentsia. Unlike the Nozyk Synagogue where Yiddish was spoken, Polish was used in the Great Synagogue. The synagogue, designed by Leandro Marconi (who came from a family of architects, one of whom had designed the Pawiak prison later used in the Warsaw Ghetto), held 2,400 people and had a large hall, meeting rooms, an archive, a library, and a school. It was completed in 1878. The Main Judaic library was erected next to the Great Synagogue in 1936. Construction was funded by donations of the Jewish population, and State and municipal subsidies. Its designer was the architect Edward Eber.

Most of Warsaw's synagogues were small, often private, prayer houses located in the courtyards or backyards of tenements. One such synagogue was discovered in one of the oldest houses in Praga-Warsaw. Built in 1811 at what is now 50/52 Targowa Street, the building was turned into a warehouse after World War II. Inside fragments of wall paintings depicting the Western Wall, Rachel's Tomb, and signs of the Zodiac remain. A Hebrew inscription says the paintings were financed by donations in 1934.



Entrance to a small prayer house in Warsaw.

Zionist groups flourished in Warsaw in the late 1800's. Chapters of Hovevei Zion and the Society Menuha ve Nahalah opened. Hovevei Zion opened its own modern *heder* in Warsaw in 1885.

The Bund, Jewish socialists, also promoted their ideologies. The Bund was popular among Jewish workers and helped promote Yiddish culture. The Bund was ardently opposed to Zionism and the revival of Hebrew.

Jewish Press

Yiddish and Polish weeklies emerged in the 1820's and the Hebrew Press began later in the 1880's. Warsaw became the center of Hebrew publishing in Poland and many famous writers either lived or worked in the city, including: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Shalom Asch, I.L. Peretz, David Frischman and Nachum Sokolow.

World War I and the Inter-War Period

During World War I, thousands of refugees came to Warsaw. By 1917, there were 343,000 Jews living in Warsaw, about 41% of the total population. In this period, the Jewish population increased, while the percentage of Jews living in Warsaw, compared to non-Jews, decreased to about 30%. Many Jews — about 34% in 1931 — were unemployed.

The main political struggle in Warsaw and in Poland took place between the Zionists parties and the Orthodox -Hasidic groups, which had joined together and formed the Agudat Israel. By 1936, though, the Bund had received the majority of votes to serve on the communal leadership and represent the Jewish community in the Warsaw municipality. The Polish government annulled the election results, however, and appointed a different community (*kahal*) board, which was used until the beginning of the German occupation.

In the inter-war period, a Jewish school system existed, but most Jews attended state schools. During this period, many Hebrew writers immigrated to Israel; nevertheless, the Yiddish and Polish Jewish press still thrived. By the start of World War II, more than 1,000 Jewish workers were involved in Hebrew printing works in Warsaw.

The Holocaust

Warsaw's pre-war Jewish population in 1939 was 393,950 Jews, approximately one-third of the city total. From October 1939 to January 1940, Germans enacted anti-Jewish measures, including forced labor, the wearing of a Jewish star and a prohibition against riding on public transportation.

In April 1940, construction of the ghetto walls began. On Yom Kippur, October 12, 1940, the Nazis announced the building of Jewish residential quarters. Roughly 30% of the city's population was to be confined to an area that comprised just 2.4% of city lands. Jews from Warsaw and those deported from other places throughout Western Europe were ordered to move into the ghetto, while 113,000 Christians were moved out of the area. The ghetto was divided into two sections, a small ghetto at



The Warsaw Ghetto wall

the south end and a larger one at the north end. German and Polish police guarded its outside entrance and a Jewish militia was formed to police the inside.

The population of the ghetto reached more than half a million people. Unemployment was a major problem in the ghetto. Illegal workshops were created to manufacture goods to be sold illegally on the outside and raw goods were smuggled in. Children became couriers and smugglers.

Hospitals, public soup kitchens, orphanages, refugee centers and recreation facilities were formed, as well as a school system. Some schools were illegal and operated under the guise of a soup kitchen. Still, many Jews died from mass epidemics (such as typhoid) and hunger. The streets were filled with corpses. Jews in the ghetto still had to pay for burial, and if they couldn't afford it, the bodies were left unburied.



Clandestine prayer groups and yeshivot were also started. Some religious Jews believed that their suffering was preordained and would bring about the Messiah. There were also many religious Jews involved in heroic acts. One famous leader was Janusz Korczak, the director of the Jewish orphanage, who chose to accompany the children he cared for when they were deported.

Deportations

This first mass deportation of 300,000 Jews to Treblinka began in the summer of 1942. The number of deportees averaged about 5,000-7,000 people daily, and reached a high of 13,000. At first, ghetto factory workers, Jewish police, Judenrat members, hospital workers and their families were spared, but they were also periodically subject to deportation. Only 35,000 were allowed to remain in the ghetto at one time. Adam Czerniakow, the head of the Warsaw Judenrat committed suicide on July 23, 1942, to protest the killing of Jewish children.

A second wave of deportations to Treblinka began on January 18, 1943, during which many factory workers and hospital personnel were taken. Unexpected Jewish armed resistance, however, forced the Nazis to retreat from the ghetto after four days of deportations.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Warsaw.html>

Warsaw's Jews before WWII

Warsaw became the capital of an independent Polish state in November 1918 at the end of World War I. A large civil service now made its home in the city. Warsaw was the focus of the country's political life, and cultural activity of all sorts flourished. At the same time, the loss of the Russian market, on which the city's prosperity had been largely dependent, meant that its industries suffered. The Great Depression of the 1930s intensified the difficulties. These developments conditioned the situation of its Jewish community, which was still the largest in Europe.

Warsaw's Jewish population grew from 310,000 in 1921 to 352,000 in 1931 and 375,000 on the eve of World War II. The heart of Jewish Warsaw still remained in the north of the city, in the complex of streets around Nalewki. Here were found the main Jewish restaurants and an active street life with markets and peddlers. But Jews were also found in significant numbers throughout the city. The census of 1931 showed that 47 percent of Warsaw Jews were employed in industry (mostly in small factories or artisan workshops), while 33 percent were in commerce and insurance, 4 percent in education and culture, 4 percent in medicine and health, and 1 percent in public and social services. The census also divided the population into socio-occupational groups, giving a useful picture of the social composition of Warsaw Jewry (see

TABLE 1. Socio-occupational Structure of Warsaw by Ethnoreligious Affiliation, 1931

<i>Category</i>	<i>Group by Category</i>		<i>Category by Group</i>	
	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Jewish</i>
Major Capitalists	3%	6%	52.5%	47.5%
Professionals	1	3	51.0	49.0
Lower Middle Class	14	43	46.0	54.0
White-Collar Workers	20	13	81.0	19.0
Blue-Collar Workers	57	33	83.0	17.0
Others	6	2	86.0	14.0

The

trends in Jewish political and cultural life that had emerged in the years before 1914 and during World War I now became firmly established. Though still influential socially and culturally, the assimilationists' vision of a Poland in which Jews would be full and equal citizens—"Poles of the Mosaic faith"—seemed ever less attainable. Jewish political life came to be characterized by a threefold division—Zionism, Orthodoxy, and socialism, although each of these ideological camps included a plethora of subdivisions. The Bund, which sought Jewish cultural autonomy, was also vigorous in the first years of Polish independence. All these groupings were strong in Warsaw, which became one of the main arenas of the struggle for control of the "Jewish street."

Warsaw Jews, like most of Polish Jewry, supported the coup of May 1926 that returned Piłsudski to power. The years following the coup were extremely fruitful in the cultural sphere. The Yiddish press flourished and reached a combined daily circulation of 170,000 in 1932–1933. The most important papers published in Warsaw were *Haynt* and *Moment* (unaffiliated Zionist), *Folks-tsaytung* (Bundist), and *Yudishe togblat* (Orthodox). By 1937–1938 *Nasz Przegląd*, a Polish-language daily with a largely Jewish readership, acquired a circulation of nearly 23,000. Although the Hebrew press declined and many Hebrew writers left for Palestine, Jewish creativity flourished in both Yiddish and Polish. A particularly important role in the cultural life of Yiddish Warsaw was played by the Association of Yiddish Writers and Journalists, which had its headquarters at 13 Tłomackie Street. Warsaw also consolidated its position as a major center of Yiddish publishing despite the economic difficulties of the 1930s.

In the interwar years, Warsaw played a crucial role in the development of the Jewish theater, music, and art. The most important local theatrical troupes were the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater (WIKT); the New Warsaw Yiddish Theater (WNIT); and the Yung-teater (Young Theater). These theaters presented not just the classics of Yiddish theater but also works by Shakespeare, Molière, Victor Hugo, Eugene O'Neill, and Theodore Dreiser. In addition, many theaters offered more popular entertainment in Yiddish. Jews were also an important part of the audience of the Polish theater, which flourished in those years and in which there were a number of actors of Jewish origin. There was also considerable contact between the Polish and Yiddish theater worlds. This interaction was especially a feature of cabaret, which played an important role in interwar Warsaw. Yiddish cabarets patterned on the Polish model were established, of which the first was Azazel, founded in 1925. There were important Jewish choirs, among them the choir of the Tłomackie Street synagogue, and the Grosser Choir of the Bund.

Jewish scholarship also flourished. Majer Bałaban held a chair in Jewish History at Warsaw University, and the independent Institute for Jewish Studies (*Instytut Nauk Judaistycznych*) opened in 1928.

The situation of Warsaw Jewry, as of the Jews in Poland as a whole, deteriorated seriously after the death of Marshal Piłsudski in May 1935. Calls for Polish Jewry to emigrate, the establishment of separate seating for Jews—the so-called “ghetto” benches—in the universities, a revived boycott of Jewish shops, and increased anti-Jewish violence

were features of these years and undermined the security and stability of the Warsaw Jewish community. Zionists lost ground as the chances for Jewish emigration to Palestine diminished. The radical Revisionist Zionists, the Communists, and above all the Bund, became more important on

TABLE 2. Warsaw Population

Year	Total	Jews	Percentage
1792	81,300	6,750	8.3
1810	81,100	14,600	18.0
1816	81,250	15,600	19.2
1864	223,000	72,800	32.6
1897	625,000	210,500	33.7
1914	885,000	337,000	38.1
1921	937,000	310,000	33.1
1931	1,170,000	352,000	30.0
1939	1,289,000	375,000	29.1

the Jewish street. The Bund saw its influence in Jewish Warsaw grow greatly in these years, and in the local government elections in Warsaw in December 1938, it won 14 seats (61.7% of the Jewish vote), as opposed to 5 seats for the Jewish National Bloc (which included both secular and religious Zionists) and one for the Democratic Zionists.

Source: Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Warsaw>

82. Historical Sites of Jewish Warsaw

Jerozolimskie Avenue (literally Jerusalem Avenue)

In 1774, near today's Zawiszy Square, settlements for Jews, called Nowy Potok and Nowa Jerozolima, were established. However the Warsaw authorities considered them trading competitors and a year later banned the settlements, but the road leading to the Vistula River and its name remains to this day.



Próżna Street

The small street is one of the few places where Jews lived before the war, in which the vibe of the old Warsaw has survived. This is the only former Warsaw Ghetto street still featuring all its tenement houses.



51 Próżna Street

On this street is a manhole leading to a tunnel which, in May 1943, was used by dozen of insurgents escaping the Ghetto; they included Marek Edelman, one of the Ghetto Uprising leaders. It is located right next to a symbolic monument to Professor Konrad Kucza-Kuczyński, Jan Kucza-Kuczyński and sculptor Maksymilian Biskupski. It is the form of a tube-like object descending into the tunnel, which is clutched by carved human hands.



The Ester Rachel Kamińska and Ida Kamińska Jewish Theatre (Teatr Żydowski im. Estery Rachel i Idy Kamińskich)

The theatre stages plays in two languages: Yiddish and Polish. It is the only Jewish theatre in Poland. Plac Grzybowski 12/16, tel. +48 22 620 62 81 www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl



Nożyk Synagogue (Synagoga im. Małżonków Nożyków)

The only pre-war synagogue in Warsaw still in use. Built in the years 1898-1902 on the initiative of Zalman and Rywka Nożyk. During the war the Germans turned it into a stable.



Fragment of Ghetto Wall at 55 Sienna Street (Fragment muru getta przy ulicy Siennej 55)

The only surviving fragment of the Ghetto wall is located in the yard of a house in Sienna Street, between Sienna Street and Żłota Street.



The former Bersons and Baumans Children's Hospital, now Warsaw Children's Hospital

(dawny Szpital Dziecięcy im. Bersonów i Baumanów, obecnie im. Dzieci Warszawy) ul. Sienna 60 / ul. Śliska 55

This hospital was built for Jewish children in 1876-1878, founded by donors, Majer Berson and his daughter Paulina Bauman. Janusz Korczak worked here before World War I. On August 10, 1942 the children and staff were transferred to the 'big' Ghetto, to a school building at the corner of Żelazna and Leszno streets, and from there to the Umschlagplatz for deportation



20 Chłodna Street

Chłodna Street was outside the Ghetto in autumn 1941, though the houses on the north and south side of the street from Elektoralna to Żelazna Streets were in the 'little' and 'big' Ghettos. They were separated from the 'Aryan' road by three-meter-high walls. In late 1941 Adam Czerniaków, president of the Jewish Community (Judenrat), lived in a building that survived at 20 Chłodna Street. He committed suicide in the Jewish Community building on Grzybowska Street on July 23, 1942, the day after deportations to the Treblinka death camp began.



22 Chłodna Street (former 24-26)

At this point early in 1942 a wooden footbridge was built for Jews crossing between the 'little' and 'big' Ghettos. Below the bridge ran Chłodna Street, excluded from the Ghetto because of its important role as a transport and communications link



Waliców Street

Just three buildings of the Warsaw Ghetto have survived, on the east side of this street.



The Janusz Korczak Orphanage (Dom Sierot Janusza Korczaka)

ul. Jaktorowska 6 (formerly ul. Krochmalna 92)

In the years 1911-1913 the Orphans Aid Society built a two-storey building on the city outskirts for Jewish orphans. From the start the brilliant pedagogue, writer and doctor Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldsmith) was its head. Once the Ghetto was formed, the Orphanage was moved to 33 Chłodna Street, later to 9 Śliska. On August 6, 1942, the children and their teacher were taken to Umschlagplatz and transported to the Treblinka death camp.



The Jewish Cemetery (Cmentarz Żydowski)

ul. Okopowa 49/51, tel. +48 22 838 26 22

www.beisolam.jewish.org.pl

Mon.-Thu. 10 am-5 pm, Fri. 9 am-1 pm, Sun. 11 am-4 pm

Founded in 1806, this is one of the few Jewish cemeteries still functioning in Poland. Around 200,000 gravestones have survived. It is the resting place of many well-known people in the history of the Jews, from Warsaw and Poland.



Monument to the Ghetto Heroes (Pomnik Bohaterów Getta)

ul. Zamenhofa

In November 1940, in the centre of Warsaw, the Germans created the Jewish Ghetto and surrounded it by a high wall. Approx. 500,000 Jews from Warsaw and the surrounding area were imprisoned here. Within barely three years, over 100,000 people had died of starvation and sickness. In April 1943, the Germans began destroying the Ghetto. This resulted in the Ghetto uprising. The monument to honor the heroes of the uprising was unveiled in the ruins of the city in 1948



Concentration camp, the so-called Gęsiówka (Obóz koncentracyjny tzw. Gęsiówka)

ul. Anielewicza 34

The Nazis set up the Konzentrationslager Warschau called the Gęsiówka concentration camp on the ruins of the Ghetto in August 1943. Some 5,000 Jews from Greece, France and Hungary, brought from Auschwitz, were housed in the barracks. They worked on the site of the Ghetto, tearing down burnt-out buildings, and sorting bricks and non-ferrous metals. The camp was evacuated on July 29, 1944. Only 348 prisoners remained and were liberated during the Warsaw Uprising on August 4, 1944 by soldiers of the Żośka Battalion. A granite tablet in Polish, Hebrew and English on the wall of an apartment block reminds us of these people today.



In 1989 a monument was raised to commemorate the mass graves of Poles and Jews killed during the World War II.

Umschlagplatz

ul. Stawki 10

This is the square where starting 22 July 1942 transports of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto left for the extermination camp at Treblinka.

On the adjacent wall of the building from the statue, there is engraved a verse from the Book of Job (16:18): 'O earth, cover not thou my blood, And let my cry have no resting-place'.

**The Route Recalling the Martyrdom and the Struggle of the Jews 1940-1943**

(Trakt Pamięci Męczeństwa i Walki Żydów 1940-1943)

The Route runs between the Umschlagplatz and the Monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto. It is designated by blocks of black stone with the names of individuals active in the Warsaw Ghetto carved into the stone blocks.

**S. Dubois Street, at the corner of Mila Street**

In this spot, there was once a house, and in its basement a bunker was built, which in 1943 served as the headquarters of Jewish Resistance Organisation... _bottom

**The Ghetto Heroes Monument (Pomnik Bohaterów Getta)**

Corner of L. Zamenhofa Street and Anielewicza Street

A monument honoring those who died during the Ghetto Uprising in 1943 was unveiled in the ruins of the devastated city on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising. The western side of the monument, called 'the combat', shows men, women and children holding grenades in their hands (the figure of Mordechaj Anielewicz), pistols and bottles containing petrol. This side of the monument symbolizes the heroic combat of the uprising fighters and the other side, called 'Parade to extinction', shows the suffering and martyrdom of women, innocent children and old men.



The Great Synagogue (Wielka Synagoga)

(nowadays here is a Blue Tower / Błękitny Wieżowiec)
ul. Tłomackie 7

The Great Synagogue was built in 1875-1878 and became a symbol of Jewish Warsaw. The Nazis used it as a storehouse for furniture looted from the Jewish Quarter. Following a month of combat against the uprising fighters, General Jürgen Strop, responsible for the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, decided that demolishing the synagogue would be a symbol of his victory. This was carried out on May 16, 1943 at 8.15 pm.



The Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny)

(formerly the Judaic Library)

This building was built in 1928-1936 as the library of the Great Synagogue. Aid Society. Emanuel Ringelblum created the underground archive of the Ghetto here.



28 Jagiellońska Street (Education Building)

The building was built in 1911-1914 and housed a school, nursery and shelter for Jewish children. In 1940 its occupants were moved to the Warsaw Ghetto.



University Hall of Residence

(now a police residential hotel)
ul. Sierakowskiego 7

Built in 1926 for Jewish university students. Among the students who lived here was Menachem Begin, the future prime minister of Israel.



The Mikvah (Mykwa)

ul. ks. Kłopotowskiego 31 (formerly ul. Szeroka)

Of the entire Jewish Community complex of buildings only a mid-19th-century mikvah (ritual bathhouse) survives.



Source: Official Tourist Website of Warsaw © Warsaw Tourist Office <http://www.warsawtour.pl/en/warsaw-for-everyone/judaica-164760.html?page=0,1>

83. A Glimpse of Jewish Warsaw

By Jordan Kutzik

Menachem Kipnis is known to Jewish history as a cultural figure who worked across several fields. Born in Uzhmir, Ukraine in 1878, Kipnis distinguished himself as a singer, ethnomusicologist and journalist. As a singer he was the first Jewish tenor in the Warsaw Opera (1902-1918) and along with his wife, Zimra Zeligfield, he was among the most important early singers of Yiddish folksongs.

As an ethnomusicologist Kipnis collected songs all over Europe and published them in two important pioneering anthologies of Yiddish folksongs. As a journalist he wrote articles about music in various Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers. He was also well-known for his reportages, which recounted the lives of ordinary Jews whom he encountered on the streets of Warsaw. For these articles, which were published in the Warsaw-based newspaper *Haynt* as well as in the New York-based *Tog*, as well as occasionally in *the Forverts*, Kipnis took his own photos of his interview subjects.



Kipnis died in the Warsaw ghetto of a brain-aneurysm in 1942. After his death, his wife Zimra kept his massive archive of papers, diaries, music and photographic negatives with her in the ghetto. She refused to turn her husband's archive over to Emanuel Ringelblum, who had asked her to let him preserve it as part of the secret archive he administered called "Oyneg Shabbos." Kipnis's archive disappeared without a trace after Zimra Zeligfield's deportation to Treblinka.

Although the photographic negatives themselves were apparently destroyed along with the rest of Kipnis's archive during the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, many of Kipnis's photos survived, as copies of them had been sent to America so that they could run in the *Forward*. Thanks to these surviving photographs, we are now able to learn about Kipnis's less well-known role as a photographer.

To that end a new exhibition, "Miasto i oczy" ("The City and the Eyes"), dedicated to Kipnis's photographic legacy, has opened at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. The exhibition is a collaboration between the institute and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

“I absolutely love Menachem Kipnis’s photos” Krysia Fisher, the photo archivist at YIVO and the curator of the exhibition said during an interview with the Forverts. “His photos are totally different than Roman Vishniac’s or Alter Kacyzne’s. Although all three received the same instructions from Ab Cahan to send sentimental photographs of nostalgic Jewish landscapes — of the shtetl, of little streets, of Jews from the past,” Kipnis took pictures “that don’t feel stuck in the past. The Jews are traditional but they are doing things associated with modernity; they aren’t talking about Talmudic lessons, they’re talking about immigration, they’re sitting on benches in parks and talking about politics.”

Kipnis was not a professional photographer like Kacyzne or Vishniac. Nevertheless, Fisher believes that Kipnis’s photographs are more interesting than those of his better-known colleagues because “he wasn’t estranged from the people he was photographing. This is very different than Vishniac who photographed his subjects as an outsider and had contempt for them, or Kacyzne, who complained that it was a chore having to take such pictures. Kipnis spoke with his subjects and considered himself one of them.”

Fisher explained that she serves as a bit of an advocate for Kipnis’s photographs because she believes that there is “something interesting about them, something that is so real that anyone who looks at them can tell a story about the people in the picture.” One such photograph, which Fisher is especially fond of, was published in the Forward on August 22, 1926. Kipnis wrote the following about the picture, featuring a woman helping a friend apply lipstick: “the eyes black, lips red, and when they are bored they make them redder.” Fisher noted that it is very rare to find such a candid intimate shot of Jews in pre-World War II Eastern Europe because such photographs were almost always posed. Such photos of women are even rarer.

Fisher said that the exhibition has received positive reactions from visitors. The Israeli ambassador to Poland attended the exhibition’s premiere along with other VIPs and a large crowd of visitors. “During the three days the exhibit was running when I was in Warsaw the visitors were very happy with it,” Fisher noted. “For those in Warsaw the pictures provide an intimacy and authenticity” that lacks on other occasions. “It’s not like just looking at a memorial.”

The Jewish Historical Institute will soon release a catalog of the photographs featured in the exhibition. Fisher hopes that the exhibition will travel to other cities but there are not yet any concrete plans to that end.

Source: <http://blogs.forward.com/the-arty-semite/193433/a-glimpse-of-jewish-warsaw/>

84. General Government: Administrative Districts



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:General_Government_for_the_occupied_Polish_territories.png

Administrative map of the General Government, August 1941

For administrative purposes the General Government was initially subdivided into four *Distrikte* (districts): 1) Distrikt Warschau 2) Distrikt Lublin 3) Distrikt Radom 4) Distrikt Krakau. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, East Galicia, at that point part of the Ukrainian SSR, was incorporated into the General Government and became its 5th district, the Distrikt Galizien.

These five districts were further sub-divided into *Stadtkreise* (urban counties) and *Kreishauptmannschaften* (rural counties). The districts and counties were as follows:

Distrikt Galizien	
<i>Stadtkreise</i>	Lemberg (Lviv/Lwów)
<i>Kreishauptmannschaften</i>	Breschan (Brzeżany), Tschortkau (Czortków), Drohobycz, Kamionka-Strumilowa (Kamianka-Buzka), Kolomea (Kolomyia), Lemberg-Land, Rawa-Ruska (Rava-Ruska), Stanislau (Ivano-Frankivsk), Sambor (Sambir) Stryj, Tarnopol, Solotschiw (Zolochiv), Kallusch (Kalush)
Distrikt Krakau	
<i>Stadtkreise</i>	Krakau (Kraków)
<i>Kreishauptmannschaften</i>	Dembitz (Dębica), Jaroslau (Jarosław), Jassel (Jasło), Krakau-Land, Krosno, Meekow (Miechów), Neumarkt (Nowy Targ), Neu-Sandez (Nowy Sącz), Przemyśl, Reichshof (Rzeszów), Sanok, Tarnau (Tarnów)
Distrikt Lublin	
<i>Stadtkreise</i>	Lublin
<i>Kreishauptmannschaften</i>	Biała-Podlaska (Biała Podlaska), Bilgoraj, Cholm (Chelm), Grubeschow (Hrubieszów), Janow Lubelski, Krasnystaw, Lublin-Land, Pulawy, Rehden (Radzyn), Zamosch/Himmlerstadt/Pflugstadt (Zamość)
Distrikt Radom	
<i>Stadtkreise</i>	Kielce, Radom, Tschenstochau (Częstochowa)
<i>Kreishauptmannschaften</i>	Busko (Busko-Zdrój), Jedrzejow, Kielce-Land, Konskie (Końskie), Opatau (Opatów), Petrikau (Piotrków Trybunalski), Radom-Land, Radomsko, Starachowitz (Starachowice), Tomaschow Mazowiecki (Tomaszów Mazowiecki)
Distrikt Warschau	
<i>Stadtkreise</i>	Warschau (Warsaw)
<i>Kreishauptmannschaften</i>	Garwolin, Grojec (Grójec), Lowitsch (Łowicz), Minsk (Mińsk Mazowiecki), Ostrau (Ostrów Mazowiecka), Siedlce, Sochaczew, Sokolow-Wengrow (Sokołów Podlaski-Węgrów), Warschau-Land

Demographics

The population in the General Government's territory was initially about 12 million, but this increased as about 860,000 Poles and Jews were expelled from the Germany-annexed areas and resettled in the General Government. Offsetting this was the German campaign of liquidation of the Polish intelligentsia and other elements considered likely to resist. From 1941 disease and hunger also began to reduce the population.

Distribution of food in General Government December, 1941	
Nationality	Daily calorie intake
Germans	2310
Foreigners	1790
Ukrainians	930
Poles	654
Jews	184

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Government

85. Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Between July 22 and September 12, 1942, the German authorities deported or murdered around 300,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. SS and police units deported 265,000 Jews to the Treblinka killing center and 11,580 to forced-labor camps. The Germans and their auxiliaries murdered more than 10,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto during the deportation operations. The German authorities granted only 35,000 Jews permission to remain in the ghetto, while more than 20,000 Jews remained in the ghetto in hiding. For the at least 55,000-60,000 Jews remaining in the Warsaw ghetto, deportation seemed inevitable.



http://www.sppw1944.org/index.html?http://www.sppw1944.org/powstanie/powstanie_rys_cz.html

Constructing Street Baracades

In response to the deportations, on July 28, 1942, several Jewish underground organizations created an armed self-defense unit known as the Jewish Combat Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*; ZOB). Rough estimates put the size of the ZOB at its formation at around 200 members. The Revisionist Party (right-wing Zionists known as the Betar) formed another resistance organization, the Jewish Military Union (*Zydowski Zwiazek Wojskowy*; ZZW). Although initially there was tension between the ZOB and the ZZW, both groups decided to work together to oppose German attempts to destroy the ghetto. At the time of the

uprising, the ZOB had about 500 fighters in its ranks and the ZZW had about 250. While efforts to establish contact with the Polish military underground movement (*Armia Krajowa*, or Home Army) did not succeed during the summer of 1942, the ZOB established contact with the Home Army in October, and obtained a small number of weapons, mostly pistols and explosives, from Home Army contacts.

In accordance with Reichsführer-SS (SS chief) Heinrich Himmler's October 1942 order to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto and deport its able-bodied residents to forced labor camps in Lublin District of the Generalgouvernement, German SS and police units tried to resume mass deportations of Jews from Warsaw on January 18, 1943. A group of Jewish fighters, armed with pistols, infiltrated a column of Jews being forced to the *Umschlagplatz* (transfer point) and, at a prearranged signal, broke ranks and fought their German escorts. Most of these Jewish fighters died in the battle, but the attack sufficiently disoriented the Germans to allow the Jews arranged in columns at the *Umschlagplatz* a chance to disperse. After seizing 5,000-6,500 ghetto residents

to be deported, the Germans suspended further deportations on January 21. Encouraged by the apparent success of the resistance, which they believed may have halted deportations, members of the ghetto population began to construct subterranean bunkers and shelters in preparation for an uprising should the Germans attempt a final deportation of all remaining Jews in the reduced ghetto.

The German forces intended to begin the operation to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto on April 19, 1943, the eve of Passover. When SS and police units entered the ghetto that morning, the streets were deserted. Nearly all of the residents of the ghetto had gone into hiding places or bunkers. The renewal of deportations was the signal for an armed uprising within the ghetto.



<http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/pic/biguprise8.jpg>

The Ghetto in Flames

ZOB commander Mordecai Anielewicz commanded the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Armed with pistols, grenades (many of them homemade), and a few automatic weapons and rifles, the ZOB fighters stunned the Germans and their auxiliaries on the first day of fighting, forcing the German forces to retreat outside the ghetto wall. German commander SS General Jürgen Stroop reported losing 12 men, killed and wounded, during the first assault on the ghetto. On the third day of the uprising, Stroop's SS and police forces began razing the ghetto to the ground, building by building, to force the remaining Jews out of

hiding. Jewish resistance fighters made sporadic raids from their bunkers, but the Germans systematically reduced the ghetto to rubble. The German forces killed Anielewicz and those with him in an attack on the ZOB command bunker on 18 Mila Street, which they captured on May 8.

Though German forces broke the organized military resistance within days of the beginning of the uprising, individuals and small groups hid or fought the Germans for almost a month.

To symbolize the German victory, Stroop ordered the destruction of the Great Synagogue on Tlomacki Street on May 16, 1943. The ghetto itself was in ruins. Stroop reported that he had captured 56,065 Jews and destroyed 631 bunkers. He estimated that his units killed up to 7,000 Jews during the uprising. The German authorities deported approximately another 7,000 Warsaw Jews to the Treblinka killing center, where almost all were killed in the gas chambers upon arrival. The Germans deported almost all of the remaining Jews, approximately 42,000, to the Lublin/Majdanek concentration camp, and to the Poniatowa, Trawniki, Budzyn, and Krasnik forced-labor camps. With the exception of a few thousand forced laborers at Budzyn and Krasnik, German SS and police units later murdered almost all of the Warsaw Jews deported to

Lublin/Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki in November 1943 in “Operation Harvest Festival” (*Unternehmen Erntefest*).

The Germans had planned to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto in three days, but the ghetto fighters held out for more than a month. Even after the end of the uprising on May 16, 1943, individual Jews hiding out in the ruins of the ghetto continued to attack the patrols of the Germans and their auxiliaries. The Warsaw ghetto uprising was the largest, symbolically most important Jewish uprising, and the first urban uprising, in German-occupied Europe. The resistance in Warsaw inspired other uprisings in ghettos (e.g., Bialystok and Minsk) and killing centers (Treblinka and Sobibor).

Today, Days of Remembrance ceremonies to commemorate the victims and survivors of the Holocaust are linked to the dates of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Source: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005188>

86. Miła 18

Ulica Miła 18 (or 18 Pleasant Street in English) was the headquarters bunker (actually a shelter) of the Jewish Combat Organization (ŻOB), a Jewish resistance group in the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland during World War II. The bunker at Miła 18 was constructed by a group of underworld smugglers in 1943. The ŻOB, fighters arrived there after their own bunker, at 29 Miła Street, had been discovered. The smugglers who had built it were helping the ŻOB B as guides.

On 8 May 1943, three weeks after the start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, when the bunker was attacked by the Nazis, there were around 300 people inside. The smugglers surrendered, but the ŻOB command, including Mordechaj Anielewicz, the leader of the uprising, stood firm. German and Ukrainian troops threw tear gas into the shelter to force the occupants out. Anielewicz, his girlfriend Mira Fuchrer and many of his staff committed mass suicide rather than



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Miła_18_Memorial_in_Warsaw.JPG

Miła 18 Memorial in Warsaw

surrender, though a few fighters managed to get out of a rear exit, and later fled from the ghetto through the canals to the Aryan side at Prosta Street on May 10.

The bodies of Jewish fighters were not exhumed after 1945 and the place gained a status of war memorial. In 1946 monument known as “Anielewicz Mound”, made of the rubble of Miła houses, was erected. A commemorative stone with the inscription in Polish and Yiddish was placed on top of the mound.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mi%C5%82a_18

87. Umschlagplatz

The *Umschlagplatz* (German: “collection point or reloading point”) in the Warsaw Ghetto was where Jews were gathered for deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp.

During the *Grossaktion Warsaw*, beginning on July 22, 1942, Jews were deported in crowded freight cars to Treblinka. On some days as many as 7,000 Jews were deported. An estimated 265,000 Warsaw Jews were taken to the Treblinka gas chambers, and some sources describe it as the largest killing of any single community in World War II. The deportations ended on September 12, 1942.



The *Umschlagplatz* was created by fencing off a western part of the Warszawa Gdanska a freight train

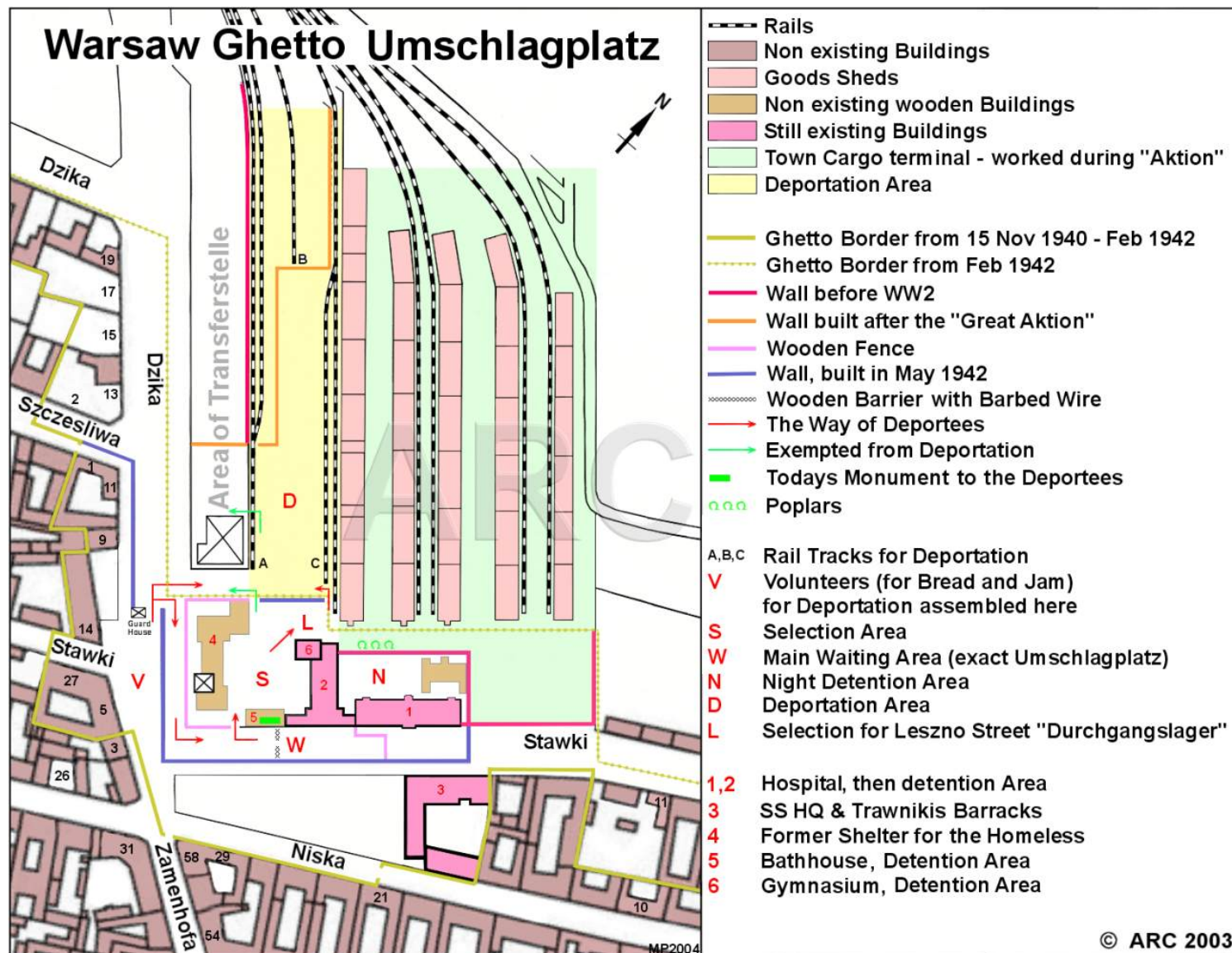
Jewish prisoners waiting at Warsaw's *Umschlagplatz* for transport by train supposedly for “resettlement in the East.” In actuality, they are going to be taken to Treblinka Death Camp and murdered.

station that was adjacent to the ghetto. The area was surrounded by a wooden fence, replaced later by a wall. Railway buildings and installations on the site as well as a former homeless shelter and a hospital were converted to the prisoner selection facility. The rest of the train station served its normal function for the rest of the city during the deportations.

In 1988, a stone monument resembling an open freight car was built to mark the *Umschlagplatz*.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umschlagplatz>

88. Map: Warsaw Ghetto Umschlagplatz



<http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/pic/bigumschlagmap.jpg>

89. **Avraham Levin's *Warsaw Ghetto Diary***

Friday, June 5, 1942

“One of the most surprising side-effects of this war is the clinging to life, the almost total absence of suicides. People die in great numbers of starvation, the typhus epidemic or dysentery, they are tortured and murdered by the Germans in great numbers, but they'd not escape from life by their own desire. On the contrary, they are tied to life by all their senses, they want to live at any price and to survive the war.... The old have just one wish: the privilege of seeing the end and surviving Hitler.”

Jewish Virtual Library www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Levin.html

90. Chaim A. Kaplan's Diary Warsaw Ghetto – August 1942

“The ghetto has turned into an inferno. Men have become beasts. Everyone is but a step away from deportation; people are being hunted down in the streets like animals in the forest. It is the Jewish police who are cruellest towards the condemned.

Sometimes a blockade is made of a particular house, sometimes of a whole block of houses. In every building earmarked for destruction they begin to make the rounds of the apartments and to demand documents. Whoever has neither documents that entitle him to remain in the ghetto nor money for bribes is told to make a bundle weighing 30 pounds – and on to the transport which stands near the gate.



Whenever a house is blockaded a panic arises that is beyond the imagination. Residents who have neither documents nor money hide in nooks and crannies, in the cellars and in the attics.

When there is means of passage between one courtyard and another, the fugitives begin jumping over the roofs and fences at the risk of their lives. But all these methods only delay the inevitable, and in the end the police take men, women and children.

The destitute and impoverished are the first to be deported. In an instant the truck becomes crowded. They are all alike: poverty makes them equal. Their cries and wails tear the heart out.

The children in particular, rend the heavens with their cries. The old people and the middle-aged deportees accept the judgement in silent submission and stand with their small parcels under their arms.

But there is no limit to the sorrow and tears of the young women. Sometimes one of them makes an attempt to slip out of the grasp of her captors, and then a terrible battle begins. At such times the horrible scene reaches its peak. The two sides fight, wrestle.

On one side a woman with wild hair and a torn blouse rages with the last of her strength at the Jewish thieves, trying to escape from their hands. Anger flows from her mouth and she is like a lioness ready for the kill. And on the other side are the two policemen who pull her back to her death.”

Source: *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan*. Collier Books, Oct 1, 1981

91. Mary Berg's Diary

August, 1942

Behind the Pawiak gate we are experiencing all the terror that is abroad in the ghetto. For the last few nights we have been unable to sleep. The noise of the shooting, the cries of despair, are driving us crazy. I have to summon all my strength to write these notes. I have lost count of the days, and I do not know what day it is. But what does it matter? We are here as on a little island amidst an ocean of blood. The whole ghetto is drowning in blood. We literally see fresh human blood; we can smell it. Does the outside world know anything about it? Why does no one come to our aid? I cannot go on living; my strength is exhausted. How long are we going to be kept here to witness all this?

A few days ago, a group of neutrals was taken out of the Pawiak. Apparently the Germans were unable to use them for exchange. I saw from my window several trucks filled with people, and I tried to distinguish familiar faces among them. Sometime later, the prison guard came panting to us, and told us that the Jewish citizens of neutral European countries had just been taken to the *Umschlagplatz* to be deported. So our turn may come soon, too. I hope it will be very soon. This waiting is worse than death.

Dr. Janusz Korczak's children's home is empty now. A few days ago we all stood at the window and watched the Germans surround the houses. Rows of children, holding each other by their little hands, began to walk out of the doorway. There were tiny tots of two or three years among them, while the oldest ones were perhaps thirteen. Each child carried a little bundle in his hand. All of them wore white aprons. They walked in ranks of two, calm, and even smiling. They had not the slightest foreboding of their fate. At the end of the procession marched Dr. Korczak, who saw to it that the children did not walk on the sidewalk. Now and then, with fatherly solicitude, he stroked a child on the head or arm, and straightened out the ranks. He wore high boots, with his trousers stuck in them, an alpaca coat, and a navy blue cap, the so-called *Maciejowka* cap. He walked with a firm step, and was accompanied by one of the doctors of the children's home, who wore his white smock. This sad procession vanished at the corner of Dzielimy and Smocza Streets. They went in the direction of Gesia Street, to the cemetery. At the cemetery all the children were shot. We were also told by our informants that Dr. Korczak was forced to witness the executions, and that he himself was shot afterward.



Thus died one of the purest and noblest men who ever lived. He was the pride of the ghetto. His children's home gave us courage, and all of us gladly gave part of our own scanty means to support the model home organized by this great idealist. He devoted all his life, all his creative work as an educator and writer, to the poor children of Warsaw. Even at the last moment he refused to be separated from them.

The house is empty now, except for the guards who are still cleaning up the rooms of the murdered children. .

Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries, Laurel Holliday, editor. Washington Square Press, 1996

92. From the Diary of Stanislaw Adler

On Beggars, Diseases and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto

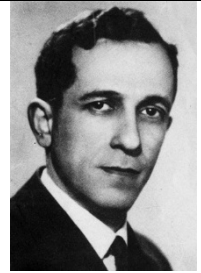
...the death toll had just begun to climb. The spotted typhus epidemic spread through the ghetto in thousands of ways. The refugee center blazed with its fire. From there, thousands of beggars spread it through the streets. Lice infestation was everywhere. Merely walking a hundred meters along the street exposed one to great danger. One had only to brush against a person infested with lice to discover these dangerous vermin in the evening while examining each piece of clothing; then there was the terrible wait in fear and trepidation for the fourteenth day to see whether the temperature would rise sharply. The children of the streets contributed most to the spread of the epidemic. They were everywhere, running at dizzying speed through the crowds, rubbing against every pedestrian. Among children, the disease is not dangerous but they spread it, without being aware of what they were doing.

Before the war, the monthly death rate among Jews in the city of Warsaw generally exceeded three hundred. Since the Quarter had been sealed off, the death rate had spiraled at a terrifying rate. In January and February of 1942, at the height of the typhus epidemic, the mortality rate in the Jewish Quarter exceeded five thousand a month.

In the street every few hundred paces, one could see a human corpse covered with newspaper. Somehow, with the passage of time, people got used to this sight and only the most sensitive crossed to the opposite side of the street and turned their heads away. But even the most courageous or insensitive lost their nerve when, in the darkness of the night, they happened to accidentally step on some soft object that turned out to be a cadaver. On these occasions, invariably, hysterical screams rang out. The number of burial enterprises rapidly increased. They used the old-fashioned type of horse drawn hearse that carried eight corpses simultaneously. Six were inside the hearse while two were placed on the roof. From beneath the sheets that covered them, it was quite common to see a brownish emaciated leg sticking out. The horde of human beings in the ghetto were drowning in heaps of refuse and animal waste which the “authorities” had forbidden us to remove from the Quarter. It wasn’t until many long months had passed and the disease had spread to the Aryan homes adjacent to our terrible Quarter that the Germans finally relented and agreed to the removal of the refuse. Meanwhile, all kinds of household and industrial waste had accumulated in public squares and burnt-out houses and ever-increasing mounds were forming in the narrow courtyards of the tenements. In some places they reached up to the first floor of the buildings, although an instinct for self-preservation advised most people to throw at least some of their refuse into the street. Then, in spite of the cold winter of 1940-1941 that delayed the process of decay, offensive smells began to pervade the air everywhere.

From: Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943. An Account of a Witness*. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 42-43

Stanislaw Adler was an attorney in the Judicial Division of the Warsaw ghetto. He escaped from the ghetto in 1943. Adler committed suicide after the Kielce pogrom, an outbreak of violence against the Jewish community centre in the city of Kielce, Poland on July 4, 1946. The pogrom was initiated by Polish Communist armed forces (LWP, KBW, GZI WP) and continued by a mob of local townsfolk. Following a false tale of child kidnapping, including blood libel which led to a police investigation, violence broke out which resulted in the killing of around 40 Jews.



93. The Smuggling of Food into the Warsaw Ghetto

Smuggling began at the very moment that the Jewish area of residence was established; its inhabitants were forced to live on 180 grams [6½ oz.] of bread a day, 220 grams of sugar a month, 1 kg. [2.2 lbs.] of jam and ½ kg. of honey, etc. It was calculated that the officially supplied rations did not cover even 10 percent of normal requirements. If one had wanted really to restrict oneself to the official rations then the entire population of the ghetto would have had to die of hunger in a very short time....

The German authorities did everything to seal off the ghetto hermetically and not allow in a single gram of food. A wall was put up around the ghetto on all sides that did not leave a single millimeter of open space....

They fixed barbed wire and broken glass to the top of the wall. When that failed to help, the Judenrat was ordered to make the wall higher, at the expense of the Jews, of course... ..

Several kids of guards were appointed for the walls and the passages through them; the categories [of guards] were constantly being changed and their numbers increased. The walls were guarded by the gendarmerie together with the Polish police; at the ghetto wall there were gendarmerie posts, Polish police and Jewish police....

The victims of the smuggling were mainly Jews, but they were not lacking either among the Aryans [Poles]. Auerswald, too, employed sharply repressive measures to stop the smuggling. Several times smugglers were shot at the central lock-up on Gesiowka⁷⁸ Street. Once there was a veritable slaughter (100 persons were shot near Warsaw). Among the Jewish victims of the smuggling there were tens of Jewish children between 5 and 6 years old, whom the German killers shot in great numbers near the passages and at the walls....

And despite that, without paying attention to the victims, the smuggling never stopped for a moment. When the street was still slippery with the blood that had been spilled, The smuggling took place — a) through the walls, b) through the gates, c) through underground tunnels, d) through sewers, and e) through houses on the borders....

Source: Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union, Y. Arad, Y. Gutman, A. Margalit (editors), Yad Vashem, 1981, pp. 228-229.

⁷⁸ The reference is to the Jewish prison in the Warsaw ghetto which was called “Gesiowka”.

94. From the Diary of Emanuel Ringelblum

On the Reactions in the Warsaw Ghetto to the ‘Great Action’

The famed Uprising, in April and May, 1943 in the Warsaw Ghetto, is universally regarded as a turning point, an absolutely new departure, not only in the chronicles of Jewish resistance to the German oppressor, but also in the history of the general struggle for the liberation of Warsaw. This was the first time when Jews took part in a major, indeed large-scale battle of that struggle. For the first time, after the defeat in 1939, the thunder of cannon and the echoing clutter of machine-guns were heard again in the capital city of Poland. The Jewish Uprising induced changes in the struggle of the Polish underground movement, which until then had concentrated its efforts mainly on acts of sabotage, and on acquiring arms and ammunition by disarming German soldiers and police. April 19, 1943, became a symbol of the Jewish public's contribution to the fight for freedom from the Nazi regime, and a motivating factor in the war of the Polish underground.

“Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself⁷⁹

As soon as the round-ups stopped in September 1942 and numerous reports started arriving from eye witnesses of the mass slaughter in Treblinka, the terrible awakening took place. The Jewish public understood what a terrible error had been made by not offering resistance to the SS. It was argued that if on the day the Warsaw “resettlement action” was announced, everyone had rebelled, if the Germans had been attacked with knives, sticks, spades and axes, if hydrochloric acid, melted fat, boiling water, etc., had been poured over the Germans, Ukrainians, Latvians and Jewish Order Service, in short if men, women and children, young and old, had begun a mass rising, there would not have been three hundred and fifty thousand murdered in Treblinka, but only fifty thousand shot in the streets of the capital. Husbands tore their hair because they had to let the Germans, unarmed, take away those dearest to them, their wives and children; children loudly reproached themselves for allowing their parents to be taken away. Oaths were sworn aloud: Never again shall the Germans move us from here with impunity; we shall die, but the cruel invaders will pay with their blood for ours. Our fate is sealed, people were saying. Every Jew carries a death sentence in his pocket, handed him by the greatest murderer of all time. Thus we must think not so much of saving our lives, which seems to be a very problematic affair, but rather of dying an honourable death, dying with weapons in our hands. The oath that was sworn in the name of the beloved victims was kept.

⁷⁹ During the Warsaw Ghetto rising, the Polish underground organizations carried out a number of armed actions in order to demonstrate their solidarity with the Ghetto in its fight. The Home Army carried out four such armed operations on a larger scale on 19 and 23 April, and some smaller ones on the following days. The Gwardia Ludowa staged actions near the Ghetto walls on 20, 22 and 23 April.

The Ghetto began to arm itself and to prepare for the new blows that were expected at any moment. Underground bunkers were dug to serve as shelter in time of danger. The Ghetto was purged of local traitors, the Jewish Gestapo-men, who had spread false tales during the “resettlement action” in order to forestall any thought of resistance, stories that the “action” would end, that people were being moved to the East where children were being given fresh milk. They were now shot like dogs for spreading tales about camps in different places for Warsaw Jews, camps for Warsaw children, etc., in order to lull the suspicions of the Jewish population. The Combat Organization dealt, in the first place, with the people who had conducted the “resettlement action”. The head of the Jewish Order Service, Colonel Szerynski, a converted Jew and a former Polish Police officer, had given the Germans loyal service. For his energetic conduct of the “resettlement action”, he was seriously wounded by a combatant. His deputy, the advocate Lejkin, whose head had been turned by power and who had exceeded all bounds in his loyalty to the Germans, was “finished off” by the Combat Organization, to the great satisfaction of the whole Jewish population.⁸⁰ The Combat Organization set about preparing cadres for the coming struggle with the invaders. Government elements were again approached for help with arming.

Source: From Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center, The International School for Holocaust Studies. See also, <http://pdf.earn4.org/w/warsaw-ghetto-uprising-s73/>.

Emanuel Ringelblum (November 21, 1900 – March 7, 1944) was a Polish-Jewish historian, politician and social worker, known for his *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. During the war Ringelblum and his family were resettled to the Warsaw Ghetto. There he led a secret operation code-named *Oyneg Shabbos* (Yiddish for “Sabbath delight”). Together with numerous other Jewish writers, scientists and ordinary people, Ringelblum collected diaries, documents, commissioned papers, and preserved the posters and decrees that comprised the memory of the doomed community. Among approximately 25,000 sheets preserved there are also detailed descriptions of destruction of ghettos in other parts of occupied Poland, the Treblinka extermination camp, Chelmno extermination camp and a number of reports made by scientists conducting research on the effects of famine in the ghettos.



On the eve of the ghetto’s destruction in the spring of 1943, when all seemed lost, the archive was placed in three milk cans and metal boxes. Parts were buried in the cellars of Warsaw buildings. Ringelblum and his family escaped from the Ghetto and found refuge outside of it. However, on 7 March 1944 their hiding place was discovered by the Gestapo; Ringelblum and his family were executed along with those who hid them.

⁸⁰ The public announcement of the Combat Organization on the day after the execution stated: “Further reprisal measures will be taken with the full rigour of the law”, and it informed the population that the following categories of people would be placed in the dock: 1) The Warsaw Judenrat and its presidency for collaboration with the Germans and help afforded them in carrying out the deportation; 2) workshop foremen and their staffs for exploiting and maltreating the workers; 3) the group leaders and officials of the Werkschutz (the body that guarded the German concerns; it included some Jews) for their cruel attitude towards the workers and the “illegal” Jewish population.

95. The Last Letter from Mordechai Anielewicz

April 23, 1943

It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another – for more than 6 hours. The mine set in the “brushmakers” area exploded. Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans. Our losses in manpower are minimal. That is also an achievement. Y. [Yechiel] fell. He fell a hero, at the machine-gun. *I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance... ..*

Beginning from today we shall shift over to the partisan tactic. Three battle companies will move out tonight, with two tasks: reconnaissance and obtaining arms. Do you remember, short-range weapons are of no use to us. We use such weapons only rarely. What we need urgently: grenades, rifles, machine-guns and explosives.

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air.

With the aid of our transmitter we heard the marvelous report on our fighting by the “Shavit” radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! *The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.*

M. Anielewicz⁸¹
Ghetto, April 23, 1943

M. Kann, *Na oczach swiata* (“In the Eyes of the World”), Zamosc, 1932 [i.e., Warsaw, 1943], pp. 33-34.

⁸¹ Anielewicz was the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Commander. Anielewicz wrote this letter to Icchak Cukierman, also known by his nom de guerre “Antek”, or by the anglicized spelling Yitzhak Zuckerman who was one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 1943 and fighter of Warsaw Uprising 1944 both heroic struggles against Nazi German terror during World War II.

Mordechai Anielewicz (1919 – 8 May 1943) was the leader of Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (English: Jewish Combat Organization), also known as ŻOB, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from January to May 1943.

On 7 September 1939, a week after the German invasion of Poland, Anielewicz escaped with a group from Warsaw to the east of the country in the hopes that the Polish Army would slow down the German advance. When the Soviet Red Army invaded and then occupied Eastern Poland in accordance with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Anielewicz heard that Jewish refugees, other youth movement members and political groups had flocked to Vilna, which was then under Soviet control. He travelled to Vilna and attempted to convince his colleagues to send people back to Poland to continue the fight against the Germans. He then attempted to cross the Romanian border in order to open a route for young Jews to get to the Mandate of Palestine, but was caught and thrown into a Soviet jail. He was released a short time later, and returned to Warsaw in January 1940 with his girlfriend, Mira Fuchrer.



In the summer of 1942, Anielewicz visited the southwest region of Poland – annexed to Germany – attempting to organize armed resistance. Upon his return to Warsaw, he found that a major deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp had been carried out and only 60,000 of the Warsaw Ghetto's 350,000 Jews remained. He soon joined the ŻOB, and in November 1942, he was appointed as the group's chief commander. A connection with the Polish government in exile in London was made and the group began receiving weapons from the Polish underground on the "Aryan" side of the city. On 18 January 1943, Anielewicz was instrumental in the first act of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, preventing the majority of a second wave of Jews from being deported to extermination camps. This initial incident of armed resistance was a prelude to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising that commenced on 19 April.

Though there were no surviving eyewitnesses, it is assumed that he died on 8 May 1943, along with his girlfriend and many of his staff, at the surrounded ŻOB command post at 18 Miła Street. His body was never found and it is generally believed that it was carried off to nearby crematoria along with those of all the other Jewish dead; nevertheless, the inscription on the obelisk at the site of the Miła 18 bunker states that he is buried there.

96. Janusz Korczak



Janusz Korczak

Janusz Korczak was the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit born in 1878 or 1879, physician, writer and educator. He was born in Warsaw, the son of an assimilated Jewish family.

Korczak's father was a successful attorney who became mentally ill when Korczak was eleven. This was a heavy blow to the family's financial situation and a trauma that cast its shadow over Korczak throughout his life.

Even while still a student of medicine at Warsaw University, Korczak was drawn to circles of liberal educators and writers in Poland. When he entered medical practice, he did his best to help the poor and those who suffered the most, at the same time he began

to write.

His first books, *Children of the Streets* (1901) and *A Child of the Salon* (1906) aroused great interest. In 1904 he was drafted into the Russian army as a doctor, and was posted to East Asia.

Both as a doctor and a writer, Korczak was drawn to the world of the child. He worked in a Jewish children's hospital and took groups of children to summer camps, and in 1908 he began to work with orphans.

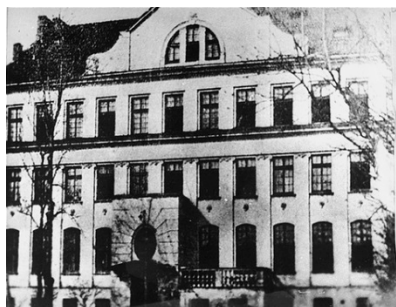
In 1912 he was appointed director of a new and spacious Jewish orphanage in Warsaw, on Krochmalna Street. Throughout his life, his partner in his work was Stefania Wilczynska, a superb educator, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family who dedicated her life to the care of orphans and greatly influenced Korczak and his career as an educator.



Childrens' Hospital

In the orphanage, Korczak studied the secret depths of the child's soul, and it was in the orphanage that he made practical application of his educational ideas. Korczak called for an understanding of the emotional life of children and urged that children be respected.

A child was not to be regarded as something to be shaped and trained to suit adults, but rather as someone whose soul was rich in perception and ideas, who should be observed and listened to within his or her own autonomous sphere.



Krochmalna Street orphanage

Every child he maintained has to be dealt with as an individual whose inclinations and ambitions, and the conditions under which he or she is growing up, require understanding.

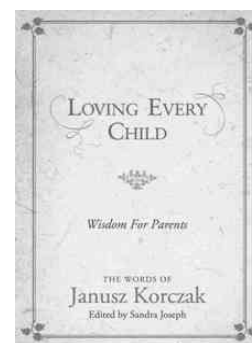
In several of his books – such as *King Matthew the First* (1923), *When I am Small Again* (1925), and the short theoretical work *The Child's Right to Respect* (1929) – Korczak stressed the social conflict between child and adult in a situation when power and control are in the hands of the adult, even when the adult

does not understand or refuses to understand the child's world, and deliberately deprives the child of his or her due. In Korczak's view "to reform the educational system

In 1914 Korczak was again called up for military service in the Russian army, and it was in military hospitals and bases that he wrote his important work *How to Love Children*.

After the war he returned to Poland – now independent – and to his work in the Jewish orphanage, but he was also asked to take charge of an orphanage for Polish children and to apply there the methods he had introduced in the establishment on Krochmalna Street.

The 1920's were a period of intensive and fruitful work in Korczak's life – he was in charge of two orphanages, where he also lived, served as an instructor at boarding schools and summer camps and as a lecturer at universities and seminaries, and wrote a great deal.



Korczak's Teachings

In the late 1920's, he was able to put into effect his long-time plan to establish a newspaper for children as a weekly added to the Jewish daily in the Polish language, *Nasz Przegląd* – it was written by children, who related their experiences and their deepest thoughts.

In the mid-1930's, Korczak's public career underwent a change. Following the death of the Polish dictator, Jozef Pilsudski, political power in the country came into the hands of radical right-wing and openly anti-Semitic circles.

Korczak was removed from many of the positions in which he had been active, and he suffered great disappointment. As a result, he took a growing interest in the Zionist effort and in the Jewish community in Palestine.

He visited Palestine twice, in 1934 and 1936, showing particular interest in the state of education, especially the educational achievements of the kibbutz movement, but he was also deeply impressed by the changes he found in the Jews living there.

On the eve of World War Two Korczak was considering moving to Palestine, but his idea failed to reach fruition.

From the very beginning of the war, Korczak took up activities among the Jews and Jewish children. At first he refused to acknowledge the German occupation and heed its rules, he refused to wear the Jewish yellow badge, and as a consequence spent some time in jail.



Korczak with friends and children

When, however, the economic situation took a sharp turn for the worse and the Jews of Warsaw were imprisoned in the ghetto, Korczak concentrated his efforts on the orphanage, seeking to provide the children there with food and the basics conditions of existence.



Feeding children in the Orphanage

He was now an elderly and tired man and could no longer keep track of the changes that were taking place in the world and in his immediate vicinity and he shut himself in.

The only thing that gave him the strength to carry on was the duty he felt to preserve and protect his orphanage, where old rules continued to apply, it was kept clean, the duty roster was observed, there were close relations between the staff and the children, an internal court of honour had jurisdiction over both children and teachers, every Sunday a general assembly was

held, there were literary evenings and the children gave performances.

Polish friends of Dr Korczak reported that they went to see him in the ghetto and offered him asylum on the Polish side, but he refused to abandon the children and possibly save himself.

During the occupation and the period he spent in the ghetto, Korczak kept a diary. At the end of July 1942, when the deportations were at their height – about ten days before he, the orphans, and the staff of the orphanage, were taken to the Umschlagplatz – Korczak wrote the following entry:

“I feel so soft and warm in the bed – it will be hard for me to get up ... but today is Sabbath – the day on which I weigh the children, before they have their breakfast. This, I think, is the first time that I am not eager to know their figures for the past week.



Dr Korczak and children gardening

They ought to gain weight – I have no idea why they were given raw carrots for supper last night.”

On Thursday 6 August 1942 the Germans deported Korczak, his assistants and the two hundred children, from the orphanage at 16 Sienna Street, the orphanage having been relocated from Krochmalna. A witness to the orphans three-mile march to the deportation train described the scene to the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum as follows:



Korczak Memorial Stone at Treblinka. It is the only stone with an individual's name

“This was not a march to the railway cars - this was an organised, wordless protest against the murder.”

The children marched in rows of four, with Korczak leading them, looking straight ahead, and holding a child's hand on each side.

A second column was led by Stefania Wilczynska, the third by Broniatowska, her children carrying blue knapsacks on their backs, and the fourth by Sternfeld, from the boarding school on Twarda Street.”

Nothing is known of their last journey to Treblinka, where they were all murdered by the Nazis. After the war, associations bearing Korczak's name were formed in Poland, Israel, Germany and other countries, to keep his memory alive and to promote his message and his work.

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/korczak.html>

97. Vladka's Eyewitness Remarks on Janusz Korczak

I never met Dr. Henryk Goldszmit . . . better known as Janusz Korczak . . . Like many in the Warsaw Ghetto I had heard of him and read his books. Even then he was a legendary figure: doctor, writer, educator, and founder of children's orphanage homes.

But I did see him once, on the day of his final march with his children. What his thoughts were, I am not qualified to say. But what his surroundings were like, what the ghetto was like on that fateful day . . . that, I will try to describe.

The summer was a warm one, the days sunny, without rain. August 5 was even hotter than usual.

The window of my hiding place opened onto Zamenhofa Street, the main route to the notorious Umschlagplatz—the railroad siding, where the trains were loaded with their teeming masses of Jews. By peering through the cracks in the curtains, we could watch what was happening in the streets below.

Suddenly, my ears caught the sound of marching steps (a new procession of deportees). The sound grew louder and louder and the street below became filled by a mass of people—men, women and children—young and old—with bags, surrounded by German and Ukrainian soldiers.

From above, I searched intently for a familiar face among those marching. The faces blended together—agitated, terrified—some looking straight ahead. I couldn't recognize anyone. And silent. Only the sound of their footsteps—the heavy, the light, the lame.

And then, a new sound: the tiny footsteps of children. They came into view—walking orderly—neatly dressed—arrayed in rows—some holding hands—others carrying blanket rolls, as if going on an outing. And silent, too, their heads turning constantly, searching the streets, the buildings, the empty doorways. Bewildered.

At their head, in front of them, was a stooped, aging man, holding a small child with each hand.” And surrounding them all—the German soldiers—with rifles at the ready.

“It’s Korczak and his orphans,” Mania Wasser whispered, her voice trembling. Yes, it was he.

It was their last march, to the Umschlagplatz to the trains, to Treblinka. Later it was rumored that at the Umschlagplatz the Germans had offered to let Korczak go. But no, he would stay with his children—and remained with them in the trams. That same day several more children’s homes were rounded up and 4,000 children were sent to their death.

Few then knew of Treblinka. The final destination of all those trains. The final stop for Korczak and his children and the others.

Thirty-two years later I returned to Treblinka, on a frosty wintery day. Treblinka is now a vast field, empty, but for huge stones in many shapes and sizes, pointed toward the sky. All of them had inscriptions of cities, towns, valleys, but only one had the inscribed name of an individual: Janusz Korczak.

In the center of the field stands a monument resembling a tall gate. Next to it, another low stone inscribed in several languages with the words—Never again! Nearby, railroad tracks—the symbol of the trains that brought the hundreds of thousands of victims to their deaths.

There are no longer any gas chambers at Treblinka, nor are there crematoria. The Germans plowed up the ground to remove the last traces of their crime. Now, only the stones remain.

Gazing at the wintry field, the stones seemed to transform, to come alive, and I began to see my own family, my friends, the marching Jews and the children—the bewildered children and their teacher, Janusz Korczak.

And I wanted to cry out to them, to reassure them that they had not been abandoned. That they will remain with us still, in our memory and our hearts, in the minds of those who are concerned with this unique chapter of history.

98. Non-Jewish Teens Who Rescued Jews

Teresa Prekerowa

Polish historian **Teresa Prekerowa** was born in 1921. She lived with her parents, three brothers, and one sister in Warsaw. During Germany's war with Poland, one of her brothers had been captured and executed by the Germans. Another brother was interned in a military camp. So Teresa's parents, Halina and Waclaw, were very worried about their other children. That is why Teresa did not tell them when she rescued a little girl in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. She knew it was dangerous, but she did it anyway.



I was a student studying history. I think it was October 1942. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. It was cold and dark, and it was raining. There was almost nobody in the street. The public could only be in the street until eight o'clock in the evening, so I was going very quickly home.

In addition to imposing a curfew on all of the citizens of Warsaw, the Nazis had forcibly moved the Jews of Warsaw into a part of the city designated as a ghetto, in November 1940. Teresa lived about a mile away from the ghetto.

But then I heard something—it was a little girl who was crying. She was standing in the entrance of a house at Mokotowska Street. It was a narrow street. It was not near the ghetto, it was near my home. She was begging for somebody to help her. She was standing in the doorway and crying. I think maybe she was three or four years old. She was wearing very, very poor clothes. And I looked at her, and I saw at once she was Jewish.

I think she had come with her mother, because when I took the girl's hand I felt that someone was watching us. I think it was her mother. I was feeling that I had to help her, but I knew that it was terribly dangerous and I was afraid. It was only a little question in my mind. Not long. I had to decide at once.

It was not a long way to my home, and so I took her. It was difficult. If somebody saw me at this moment—some German, of course—it was very dangerous. People who got caught helping Jews didn't come back home. The Germans would paste an announcement on the wall with the names of fifteen or twenty people who were put to death for helping Jews.

But I took her and went with her to my home. I lived together with my father and mother but they were away with my sister and my other brother, so I was alone. My younger brother Jerzy had been put to death in a German prison by the Nazis, and my elder brother Andrej was interned in a Nazi military camp and we didn't know what happened to him. So my father and mother were terribly anxious about my other brother and my sister and

me. They didn't want me to do something that could be dangerous. That is why I knew I could not tell them what I did.

When the young woman and the little girl arrived at Teresa's home, Teresa put her finger to her lips. The little girl understood her gesture and took care to be quiet.

She was very frightened. She didn't know Polish, only Yiddish. So I had to teach her how to say "bread." I taught her to say Catholic prayers, and how to say her name. I said to her, "You are Anja." I didn't know her real name because she didn't say it. And so I gave her something to eat, I bathed her. But her clothes were impossible to show in the street. So I went the next day to my friend who had a little girl and asked her to give me some old clothes, because it was impossible for me to buy her new clothes. I had no money.

Teresa kept Anja inside, but she knew she could not keep her hidden for long. Her family was due back in several days. She was already putting her family at risk by keeping the girl in their apartment and could not expose them to further danger.

Anja learned very quickly. It was not possible for such a little girl to speak fluently, so I didn't have to teach much. But after one week, she had learned to pray and say, "I am Anja."

And then I took her to the convent. Since she didn't speak Polish, it was impossible to explain to her where and why she was going. I only told her, "You will be safe there. The Germans will not come to that house. "

The nuns were called Nazaretanki (Sisters of Nazareth), in Warsaw, on Czerniakowska Street. I didn't know if the sisters would agree to take her. So I put a card in her hand that said, "I am Anja, my parents don't exist anymore, please give me help."

She seemed upset and afraid but did not cry. I disappeared quickly, but I went to a nearby street to see if she will stay in the convent or if they will put her out the door.

Once she was in, nobody appeared at the door. After one hour, I saw she would stay there, and I left. I was sure they would take care of her. It was a sorrowful moment. I had grown fond of her.

Two times, I looked over the fence of the convent from the street. I saw the girl playing and a nun caressing her. That reassured me; I felt that I made the right choice. After the war, I went to the convent to ask what happened. They didn't remember this special case, but they said that the Germans did not take anyone. All the girls survived.

"Non-Jewish Teens Who Rescued Jews: Teresa Prekerowa." *Rescuers Defying the Nazis*. Rosen Publishing Group, Inc. NY, 1999

99. Irving Milchberg—Smuggled Guns Under Nazis' Noses in Warsaw

By Joseph Berger, January 27, 2014

Irving Milchberg, who as a plucky Jewish street urchin escaped transport to concentration camps three times and sold cigarettes to Nazis in the heart of occupied Warsaw while smuggling guns and food to resistance fighters, died on Sunday in Toronto. He was 86. His death was confirmed by his son, Howard.



Irving Milchberg, left, in 1944
with a fellow cigarette seller
from Warsaw nicknamed
Conky.

Mr. Milchberg's improbable saga was chronicled in a 1962 memoir by a Holocaust survivor, Joseph Ziemian, called "The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square." The square was in the heart of a Warsaw district that German authorities had taken over. A nearby Y.M.C.A. had become a barracks for SS troops, another building was a German gendarmerie and a third building housed Hungarian soldiers collaborating with the Germans. A Gestapo secret police office was nearby.

The square itself was bustling and noisy, and much of the racket was contributed by about 14 cigarette sellers, most of whom were orphaned boys and girls hiding their Jewish identities and sleeping either on the streets, in cemeteries or with nervously accommodating Polish families.

For a year and a half, Mr. Milchberg and the other children hustled, sometimes fighting among themselves over customers, who included not only Poles but also the hundreds of Germans

who could shoot them on the spot if they discovered they were Jewish. The fact that Mr. Milchberg had sandy hair and blue eyes made it easier for him to pass as a Polish gentile.

"This group of Jewish children, wandering around under the very noses of a thousand policemen, gendarmes, Gestapo men and ordinary spies, constituted an unexplained and inexplicable phenomenon," Mr. Ziemian wrote.

Mr. Milchberg, who had taken the Polish name Henrik Rozowski but was known by the nickname Bull, was a leader of the group.

Born Ignac Milchberg on Sept. 15, 1927, into a Warsaw housewares merchant's family, he saw his fairly comfortable world begin to crumble after the Nazi invasion in September 1939 and the walling off of a Jewish ghetto about six months later. The family was assigned to a room over an

abandoned grocery store, and Ignac and his father were sent to work in a lumberyard outside the ghetto, sometimes bartering for food that they would sneak back.

In 1942, his father, while on the work detail, was killed by a Gestapo officer who found him hiding bread, then ordered him to run before shooting him in the back. Ignac, who had been working nearby, managed to slip back into the ghetto to bring food to his mother. When he returned, the body had already been taken to a mass grave.

One day he was seized in the street and taken to the Umschlagplatz, where Jews were put aboard trains to the Treblinka death camp. But during the night he scaled a fence, fled and returned to the ghetto. There he encountered an empty apartment. His mother and three sisters had been sent to Treblinka.

He made it out to the Aryan side and joined another work detail, but those workers, too, were taken at gunpoint to the Umschlagplatz and put aboard a train. When the train was stalled, Mr. Milchberg managed to break the bars of a car window and scramble out, roll into a ditch and flee.

“To tell you the truth, I never thought much,” Mr. Milchberg said in a 2013 interview, trying to explain his daring resourcefulness. “If I had to do something, I did it. I didn’t have time to analyze it.”

He took a series of jobs that allowed him to move between the Jewish ghetto and the outside world, and he smuggled in food. While they were loading coal for a railway, his mother’s brother, the family’s only other survivor, put him in touch with rebel fighters. Not yet 16, Mr. Milchberg, according to the Ziemian memoir, smuggled guns to the ghetto in hollowed loaves, twice by spiriting through the sewers.

For several weeks in April and May 1943, as the last remnants of the ghetto were being “liquidated,” the fighters, armed with guns, grenades and firebombs, staged a quixotic revolt in what became known as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, a milestone of Jewish resistance. Mr. Milchberg, who had visited his uncle for Passover but did not actually fight in the uprising, was rounded up and put aboard a train to the Poniatowa camp. But when the group was switched to another train, he mingled with a crowd of Polish boys selling water and escaped.

He made it back to Warsaw’s Aryan side, but he badly injured his leg while running from a gendarme. He managed to persuade a Polish doctor he had known before the war to treat him. He ran into some youths he had met before, who were now hanging out with the cigarette sellers of Three Crosses Square, and joined the clique. The boys had nicknames like Conky, Hoppy, Toothy and Frenchy.

According to Mr. Milchberg's son, surviving meant balancing "extreme fear and extreme hubris." And indeed, some boys perished. The boy known as Frenchy was flattered by the attention of an SS man, thinking that might be an advantage, but for reasons they never learned, Frenchy was taken to the Gestapo and never heard from. Fearing that Frenchy might expose them all, the cigarette sellers scattered and went their own ways until the Soviet Army liberated the city.

In 1945, Mr. Milchberg made his way to Czechoslovakia, then Austria, then to a camp for displaced people in occupied Germany, where he learned watchmaking, his lifelong occupation. In 1947 Canada allowed 1,000 children to immigrate, and he became one of three cigarette sellers who settled there, while most went to Israel.

He ended up in Niagara Falls, where he opened his own jewelry and watch business. In 1953 he met his wife, Renee, who had survived the war because she was sent with an aunt and an uncle to a Russian labor camp. She had come to Niagara Falls as a tourist.

In addition to his wife, Renee, and son, Mr. Milchberg is survived by a daughter, Anne, and three grandchildren.

In old age, Mr. Milchberg wound up in Toronto, in a neighborhood of survivors who met regularly over tea or coffee in a courtyard and traded jokes and stories of the war.

In 1993, he took a trip to Poland with his son for the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and visited Treblinka.

"He completely broke down," his son said. "I'd never seen him do that before."

A version of this article appears in print on January 28, 2014, on page B16 of the New York edition with the headline: Irving Milchberg, Who Smuggled Guns Under Nazis' Noses in Warsaw, Dies at 86.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/28/world/europe/irving-milchberg-smuggled-guns-under-nazis-noses-in-warsaw-dies-at-86.html>

July 9

100. Map: Treblinka Environs, Spring 1943	348
101. Map: Treblinka Camp, Spring 1943	349
102. Treblinka Vernichtungslager	350
103. Treblinka Timeline.....	351
104. Jankiel Wiernik: Treblinka Testimony	354
105. The Revolt in Treblinka	357
107. Tykocin.....	363
108. Łopuchowo - The Place of Execution and Burial of Holocaust's Victims	365



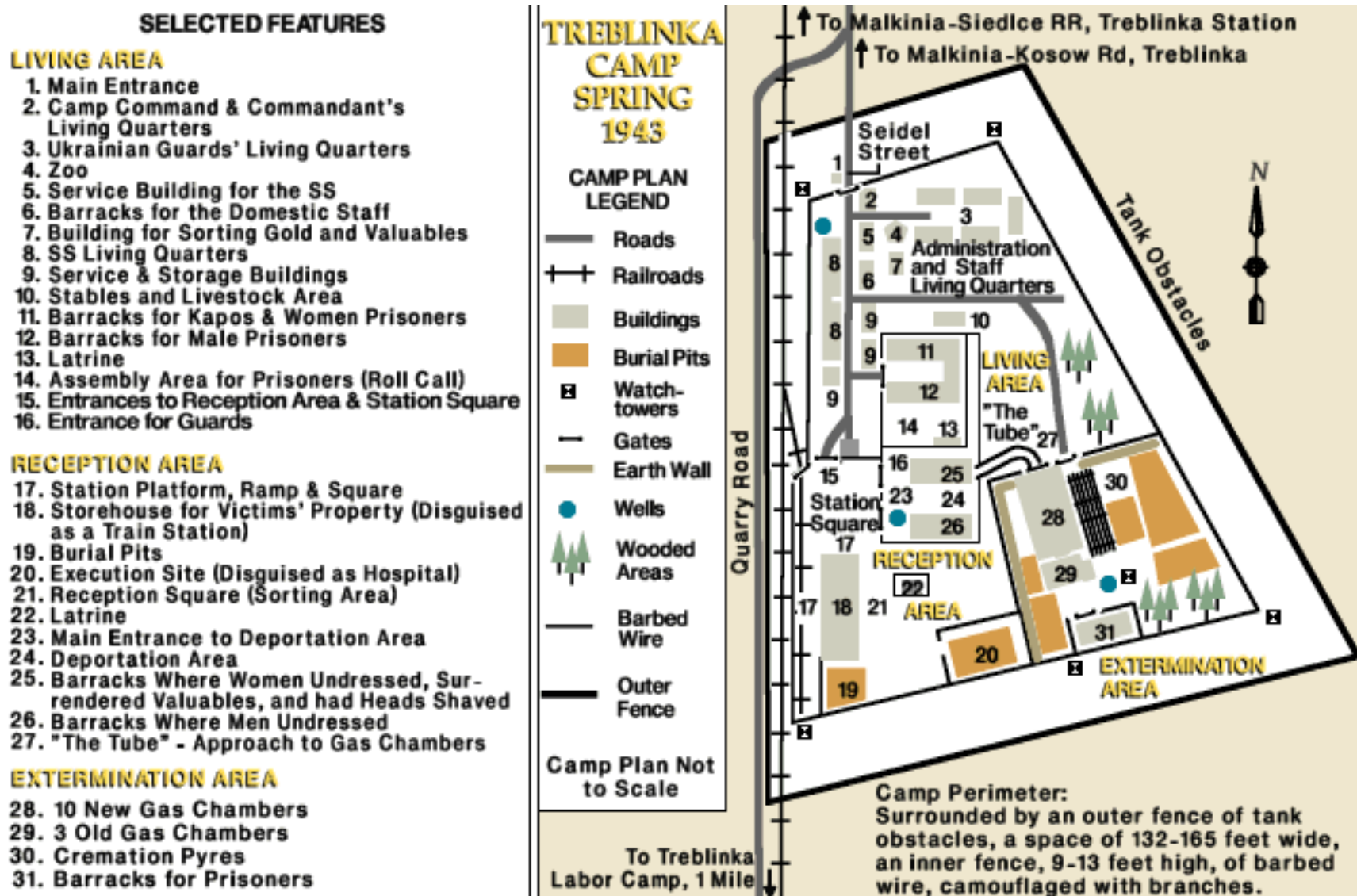
From the memorial at Treblinka, a stone bearing the name of a the city of Warsaw from where murdered prisoners originally came. It is the custom of Jews to leave a small stone, rather than flowers, when one visits a grave.

100. Map: Treblinka Environs, Spring 1943



Source: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?MediaId=448

101. Map: Treblinka Camp, Spring 1943



Source: http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005193&MediaId=447

102. Treblinka Vernichtungslager

Treblinka was what the Nazi's called a Vernichtungslager (an "extermination" center) built in occupied Poland during World War II. It was located near the village of Treblinka in the modern-day Masovian Voivodeship north-east of Warsaw. The camp operated officially between 23 July 1942 and 19 October 1943 as part of Operation Reinhard, the most deadly phase of the Final Solution. During this time, more than 800,000 Jews as well as unknown numbers of Romani people died in its gas chambers. The victims included men, women, and children. Other estimates of the number killed at Treblinka exceed 1,000,000.

Managed by the German SS and the Eastern European Trawniki (also known as Hiwi guards), the camp consisted of two separate units: Treblinka I and the Treblinka II "extermination camp" (*Vernichtungslager*). The first was a forced-labor camp (*Arbeitslager*) whose prisoners worked in the gravel pit or irrigation area and in the forest, where they cut wood to fuel the crematoria. Between 1941 and 1944, more than half of its 20,000 inmates died from summary executions, hunger, disease and mistreatment.

The second camp, Treblinka II, was designed purely for killing. A small number of men who were not killed immediately upon arrival became its Jewish slave-labor units called *Sonderkommandos* forced to bury the victims' bodies in mass graves. These bodies were exhumed in 1943 and then cremated on massive open-air pyres along with the bodies of new victims. Gassing operations at Treblinka II ended in October 1943 following a revolt by the *Sonderkommandos* in early August. Several ethnic German SS guards were killed and some 200 prisoners managed to cross to the other side, although fewer than a hundred survived the subsequent chase. The camp was dismantled ahead of the Soviet advance. A farmhouse for a watchman was built on top of it, in an attempt to hide the evidence of genocide.

In postwar Poland, the government purchased 127 hectares of land that had formed part of the camp. A stone memorial 8 meters (26 ft) tall was built there between 1959 and 1962. Treblinka was declared a national monument of Jewish martyrology during an official ceremony held in 1964 at the site of the former gas chambers; 30,000 people attended the occasion, including many foreign guests. The memorial was unveiled by the Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland in the presence of survivors of the Treblinka uprising from Israel, France, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Meanwhile, the first official German trial for war crimes committed at Treblinka was held also in 1964 with the former camp personnel first brought to justice some twenty years after the end of the war. The number of visitors coming to Treblinka from abroad began to increase significantly only after the end of communism in Poland. The new exhibition center located at the camp opened in 2006. It was later expanded and made into a branch of the Siedlce Regional Museum.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treblinka_extermination_camp

103. Treblinka Timeline

November 1, 1939 - September 1943 — Globocnik Heads Lublin SS and Police Reichsfuehrer-SS and Chief of German Police Heinrich Himmler appoints SS general Odilo Globocnik SS and Police Leader in Lublin District on November 1, 1939. On July 17, 1941, Himmler appoints Globocnik Commissioner for the Establishment of SS and Police Bases in the Occupied Eastern Territories. In early autumn of that year, Himmler tasks Globocnik with organizing the mass murder of Jews residing in the Generalgouvernement (that part of German-occupied Poland not annexed directly to Germany, attached to German East Prussia, or incorporated within the German-occupied Soviet Union). This operation later becomes known as Operation Reinhard (also called Aktion Reinhard), named after Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reich Security Main Office. Three killing centers—Belżec, Sobibor, and Treblinka II —are constructed for the sole purpose of killing Jews. Between March 1942 and November 1943, the personnel of Operation Reinhard kill approximately 1.7 million Jews.

November 15, 1941 — Labor Camp Established Under the authority of the SS and Police Leader for the district of Warsaw, the SS establish a labor camp not far from Malkinia, a village located about 50 miles northeast of Warsaw in the northern region of the Generalgouvernement.

July 19, 1942 — Killing Operations Accelerated In Lublin, Himmler meets with Operation Reinhard manager Odilo Globocnik and with Friedrich-Wilhelm Krueger, the Higher SS and Police Leader for the Generalgouvernement. They discuss the killing operations. Himmler ordered the “resettlement”— a euphemism for deportation and murder— of all Jews in the Generalgouvernement by the end of 1942. An estimated 1,200,000 Jews reside in the Generalgouvernement. Himmler’s order accelerates the killing program.

July 23, 1942 — Gassing Operations Begin in Treblinka II The killing center Treblinka II begins operations. With the arrival of the first transports of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, SS and police officials begin the killing operations. From July until September 5, 1942, SS and police personnel deport around 265,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka II. The camp authorities gas or shoot most of them on arrival.

August 5, 1942 - November 1942 — Deportations from Radom District and Lublin District. The SS and police begin deportations from Radom District in the Generalgouvernement to Treblinka II. By late autumn, SS and police personnel deport around 346,000 Polish Jews from the Radom District, as well as approximately 33,300 from the Lublin District. The killing center authorities kill almost all of these deportees upon their arrival in the camp.

August 28, 1942 — SS Temporarily Halts Deportations Odilo Globocnik temporarily halts deportations to Treblinka II. The camp gas chamber continually broke down and the burial pits were overflowing with bodies. The SS resorts to shooting incoming Jews in the arrival area of

the camp and piling bodies throughout the camp. In August, Globocnik orders SS Captain Franz Stangl, commandant of Sobibor, to replace SS 2nd Lieutenant Dr. Irmfried Eberl as commandant of Treblinka. Stangl restores order in the camp and supervises the building of new gas chambers, which are operational in early autumn 1942. Transports of Warsaw and Radom Jews begin to arrive again in September 1942.

October 5, 1942 – Deportations from Theresienstadt The first of five deportation trains depart from the Theresienstadt ghetto in the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia for Treblinka II. The SS established the Theresienstadt ghetto in 1941, ostensibly as place of “resettlement” for elderly and prominent Jews from the Greater German Reich and from western Europe. One of its purposes, however, was to serve as a transit camp for deportations to the east. During this month, the SS deports nearly 8,000 Jews from Theresienstadt to Treblinka II; killing center personnel shoot or gas almost all of the deportees upon their arrival.

October 15, 1942 - February 1943 — Jews Deported from Bialystok District The SS and police deport Jews from ghettos in Bialystok District (that part of German-occupied Poland attached administratively to the German province of East Prussia) to Treblinka II. By mid-February 1943 the SS had deported over 110,000 Jews from this district to Treblinka II—including 10,000 from Bialystok itself. Treblinka II authorities kill most of the Jews upon arrival in the facility and select a few hundred for transfer as forced laborers to Treblinka I.

March 11, 1943 — Jews Deported from Bulgarian-Occupied Territory Bulgarian military and police authorities transferred 11,343 Jews in Bulgarian-occupied Thrace, Macedonia, and (Serbian) Pirot to German custody pursuant to a February agreement between the SS and representatives of the Bulgarian government. German SS and police officials transported these Jews to Treblinka II, where almost all were gassed or shot upon arrival.

August 2, 1943 — Prisoner Uprising Deportations and gassing operations halt at Treblinka. On this date, prisoners used for forced labor—fearing that the SS will soon kill them—stage a revolt. Prisoners seize weapons from the camp armory, but SS guards in the camp discover the plot before it can be completely implemented. Hundreds of prisoners nevertheless storm the main gate in an attempt to escape. SS and police guards kill many with machine-gun fire. More than 300 prisoners escape, but the SS and police personnel eventually recapture and kill two thirds of them.

August 19, 1943 — Deportations End The SS and police personnel deport some 7,600 Jewish survivors of the Bialystok ghetto uprising to Treblinka II, killing all of them upon arrival. In all, between 870,000 and 925,000 people were killed in Treblinka II.

The SS guards force the surviving prisoners in the camp to remove all remaining traces of the camp's existence. The SS then shoot the remaining prisoners. Treblinka II is dismantled in the fall of 1943.

November 4, 1943 - January 5, 1944 — Aktion Reinhard Ends In correspondence with SS chief Heinrich Himmler, Odilo Globocnik files the final reports on the conclusion of Operation Reinhard, the dismantling of the killing centers, and the accounting of the personal possessions, currency, and valuables stolen from the murdered victims. Within the framework of Operation Reinhard, the SS and police killed approximately 1.7 million people.

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007257>

104. Jankiel Wiernik: Treblinka Testimony

Extracts from the testimony about Treblinka at the Eichmann Trial 1961

Jankiel Wiernik arrived in Treblinka death camp on the 23 August 1942 and he escaped during the revolt on the 2 August 1943. He was a master builder and along with others he built many of the structures in Treblinka, which he described at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961:



Wiernik gives testimony at the Eichmann trial

Wiernik gives testimony at the Eichmann trial “When I came there, there were only three gas chambers. The large kitchen was not there yet. I constructed various barracks, I built the guardroom. I built the door, the entrance gate.”

He described the arrival process: “This is where they remained standing. In the courtyard, there were the two large barracks. They brought the women in to the left, and the men were kept outside. They made the women remove all their clothes. The men remained standing outside. On either side, there were two large written notices to the effect that money and valuables had to be handed over, and whoever failed to do so would be put to death.

The women’s hair was cut off. At the end, a small area was fenced off their hair was cut off and then they were taken to the gas chambers.

Here (points to it) was a building with three gas chambers, in the large building there were ten gas chambers. The doors were closed and it lasted some forty to forty-five minutes.

Yankiel Wiernik was asked more questions about the layout of Treblinka:

“There were the ten gas chambers which they built when I was there, and these were the three gas chambers. The machines stood at the edge. That was the front, the side where people entered. The Shield of David was made the metal workers of the first camp.



Wiernik’s map of the Treblinka Death Camp

Wiernik was asked how the two camps were divided.

“Here was the entrance- here is the first camp (points to it). All this belongs to the first camp. This was the *Schlauch* (the tube) the path along which people walked.

And here people went through the side, they went into the gas chambers. When the gas chambers were not yet in existence they went in this way (he indicates the spot).



Wiernik's Forged "Aryan" Identification

This is what they called the *Lazarett* – they used to bring elderly people there, and underneath they put timber. They would seat the people on a bench, the back of their necks facing this way, and shoot them, so they would fall inside.

Here we made an entrance for the members of the SS and all those who were there on behalf of the SS. They made use of the entrance only. Above the gate, there was still a sign, "The Jewish State."

Yankiel Wiernik recalled the larger gas chambers built in the late summer, early autumn of 1942:

"The gas chambers of the large building were seven by seven. The entire building was thirty –six metres in length and eighteen metres wide. When the doors were open I did see them, the doors were open, they were open almost completely, and when they were opened, the dead bodies fell out, since they had been lying there crowded together. Into a room of 1.90 metres, they forced many inside. It was a room. The floor was somewhat sloping when the people inside were suffocated, they used to wash the floor with a hosepipe or a bucket of water. When they removed the bodies, they had been suffocated.

Here was the gas engine, the engine what forced the gas in. And there were pipes with valves. They would open the valve into the chamber where the people were.

There was an engine of a Soviet tank standing there, and in this way the gas was introduced. Here were the doors where people entered from one side, and on the other, this was the large door which opened along almost the entire wall.



Wiernik at work on his model of Treblinka

And after forty to forty-five minutes had passed, they would stop, they would open the door and the dead bodies would fall out. And here was a spare engine next to the three numbers 1, 2, 3 and 26 were the engines that generated the electricity, and there too, there was a motor.

Until the end of 1942 they did not burn those who had been gassed, but they would bury them in enormous pits. The bodies were placed inside. Only at the beginning of 1943 did they make various experiments of how to burn them and they did not succeed.

Then a certain *Scharfuhrer* arrived, an SS man, and he brought this model for the grids, and he always used to stand near the fire and shout “*Tadellos, tadellos*” (Perfect, perfect).

<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/trials/wierniktestimony.html>

Jankiel Wiernik wrote his memoirs from Treblinka in the end of 1943 in Warsaw where he was in a hiding place after the revolt in the camp and after his escape from there. Early 1944 the Polish and Jewish underground in occupied Warsaw decided to publish Wiernik's memoirs in two versions - Polish and English. The English version was smuggled from occupied Poland to London.



Jankiel Wiernik survived the war. At first he emigrated from Poland to Sweden and from there, in 1949, to Israel. He lived in Kibbutz *Lohamei Haghetat*. In 1959 he made a model of the Treblinka death camp. In 1961 he was a witness during the Eichmann trial. In 1964 he participated in the opening of the memorial in Treblinka. Wiernik died in Israel in 1972. He was 83 years old that time.

105. The Revolt in Treblinka

By Chil Rajchman

Everything is ready. Our excitement is running high, but so is our fear that the murderers might find out and shoot us. We step out for the midday meal. The latest news from Camp I is that everything is ready. Our only concern is that something might happen once again to spoil our plans. We have seen to it that at every point, such as the ovens, there will still be people at work, so that no one will be shut up in the barracks and unable to come to our aid. We claim that the fires need attention; that they are not burning well. In the kitchen we supposedly haven't drawn enough water so we have to send several people back to get more. These are in fact three good soldiers. Their task, the moment the revolt begins, will be to cut the throats of the Ukrainian guards and seize their weapons.

The midday rations are being distributed. We are all hungry, as always, but none of us is able to eat anything. No one asks for seconds of soup. Dozens of comrades do not touch the food. Afterwards all of us go back to work filled with happiness. We say to one another-*Ha-yom, ha-yom!*" (Hebrew: The Day, the Day!).

The work goes quickly. The murderers are pleased that the work is humming along. We avoid speaking to one another, so that no one will notice anything. Our tools are hidden in the appropriate places.

Our comrade Adolf, using various pretexts, tries to check every position. Despite all our preparations, there are still many among us who have no idea what is supposed to happen here. The time passes with extraordinary slowness. The fear that something may go wrong is unbearable.

The clock strikes 3:30.

We hear two shots from the direction of Camp I – a sign that the revolt has started there. A few minutes later we receive the order to quit working. Everyone hurries to his post. A few seconds after that, flames engulf the gas chambers. They have been set on fire. The Ukrainian standing guard next to the barracks lies on the ground like a stuck pig, blood flowing from him, his weapon now being used by our comrade, Zelo. Shots are heard from all sides. The Ukrainians, whom our comrades have lured from the watchtowers, lie dead. Two SS excavator operators are dead. We head for the barbed wire shouting – Revolution in Berlin! Several of the Ukrainians become disoriented and raise their hands. Their weapons are taken from them. We cut the wired one after the other. We are already at the third barbed-wire fence.

I am next to the barracks. Many comrades have become confused and are hiding inside out of fear. We urge them out, shouting – Comrades, come out to freedom, faster, faster!

All are now outside. The third fence has been cut open. Fifty metres further on there are trestles, thickly interwoven with barbed wire. We try to cut these as well.

The firing of the murderers' machine guns can be heard now. Some of them have succeeded in getting hold of their weapons. At the trestles lie many of our comrades who became entangled in the wires and were unable to escape.

I am among the last to go. I am already outside. Next to me is comrade Kruk, from Plock. He falls into my arms – Comrade, we are free. We kiss one another. I manage to run a few dozen metres when I see that the murderers are coming after us with machine guns. An automobile is bearing down on us at the same time. On the roof of the car is a machine gun shooting in all directions. Many fall down dead. There are dead bodies at every step. I change direction and run to the left of the road. The car continues along that Polish road and soon it is ahead of me. We run in various directions. The murderers pursue us from all sides.

I notice that the peasants working in the fields and the shepherds run away out of fear. Finally, having run about 3 kilometres, we find ourselves in a small woodland area. We decide that there is no point in running further and hide in the dense brush. We number some twenty people. The group is too big and we divide into two groups of ten men each. The groups are separated by about 150 metres.

We lie there for several minutes and suddenly see that Ukrainians with several SS men have surrounded the wood and are entering it. They encounter the second group and all of them are immediately shot.

Among us there is a Czech called Masaryk, a nephew of the former Czech president Masaryk. His wife was Jewish and he accompanied her to Treblinka. When he sees that the murderers are closing in on us, he takes a razor blade from his pocket and slits his wrists. Blood spurts from his wrists, I try to stop him, but he cannot be dissuaded, out of fear of falling yet again into the hands of the murderers.

We lie quietly for a brief period. Fortunately, they did not notice us and left the wood. I bind Masaryk's wrists with a bit of linen and succeed in stanching the flow of blood. We lie there for a time, then notice that civilians have entered the wood. They apparently have noticed us and have turned back towards us. We decide to run away quickly. We run for several hundred metres and come to another wood. Evening falls and it begins to turn dark. At midnight we proceed further, not knowing where we are going.

Masaryk, a former military officer, is able to orientate himself at night by the stars. With him leading the way, we move on. We walk all night. At sunrise we find ourselves in a big, dense forest. We decided to stay there all day. We are exhausted and very hungry.

We lie there for a whole day. We take turns every few hours to make sure that no-one snores loudly if he falls asleep, since every rustle resounds in the forest.

From: *The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Survivor's Memory 1942-1943* by Chil Rajchman. Pegasus Books, 2009

Chil Meyer Rajchman a.k.a. **Henryk Reichman** nom de guerre *Henryk Ruminowski* (June 14, 1914 – 2004) was a Polish-Jewish Holocaust survivor; former prisoner of the Treblinka extermination camp which took the lives of 800,000 Jews during the genocidal Operation Reinhard in World War II. Rajchman belonged to a group of inmates who escaped successfully during the perilous Treblinka revolt which resulted in the camp's closure in October 1943. His Treblinka memoir titled *The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Memoir* originally in Yiddish, was published in 2009 for the very first time in German and French, without the English translation, which appeared in 2011 with the Preface by Elie Wiesel seven years after his death at the age of 90.[[]



106. Excerpt from: *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*

by Jan Gross

Dominik Kucharek, a gleaner from Treblinka who had been served with an indictment for violating foreign-exchange laws – he tried to sell in Warsaw a diamond he found at Treblinka and purchase gold coins on the black market – explained in his deposition that “everybody” from his village went to dig there. “I didn’t know that looking for gold and valuables at the site of the former camp at Treblinka was forbidden, because Soviet soldiers also went there with us to search, and they detonated explosives in places where they expected to find something.” There could be several hundred diggers working the camp at any one time. Given the size of the site, approximating that of a sports stadium, it must have looked like a busy anthill.



These digs went on for decades. “First clean-up and inventory activities on the site of the former camp began in the spring of 1958,” wrote a contemporary historian of Treblinka, Martyna Rusiniak. “During the initial cleaning it wasn’t uncommon for the workers and the police to join occasionally with the diggers.”

Testimonies from Belzec tell a similar story. The main difference is that digging there had already begun during the war. Like Treblinka, Belzec was dismantled by the Germans, the camp’s terrain was plowed over, and trees and grass were planted to cover mass graves. Belzec was the first death camp to close, in mid-1943. When the Germans got wind of what the Polish locals were doing, they chased them away and installed a permanent guard to make sure that no

evidence of their own murderous activity would be unearthed. As soon as the guard fled before the approaching Red Army, the local people resumed their excavations.

“According to information provided by the policemen stationed in Belzec,” states a report prepared by a commission visiting Belzec on October 10, 1945, “the area of the camp has been dug up by local people looking for gold and precious stones left by murdered Jews. All over the dug-up terrain one finds scattered human bones, skulls, vertebrae, ribs, femurs, jaws, women’s hair, often in braids, also fragments of rotting human flesh, such as hands or lower limbs of small children.” (The report notes that everywhere were scattered bones and ashes. “From deep pits wafts the smell of rotten human flesh. It all shows that the area of the camp along its northern and eastern perimeter is one big grave of people who had been murdered there.” After the Germans fled from Belzec the local police tried to inhibit digging in the camp area, “but it is difficult to do anything,” explained the town’s police precinct commander, Mieczyslaw Nieduzak, “because as soon as one group of people is chased away, another group appears.”)

The commission worked conscientiously, and in addition to talking to scores of witnesses the authors of the report also surveyed the camp. Nine separate sites in the death camp were probed for depth; in one instance the bottom of the grave was over twenty feet down. “When digging the probes, it was ascertained that camp graves have been previously dug up,” and also “that at the present time the entire camp area is being dug up by the local population looking for valuables.”

Death-camp harvesters usually worked alone, lest a lucky find provoke envy from a neighbor (remember the “incredible relationships” in the vicinity of Treblinka, where diggers were robbed and tortured one another). Both in Belzec and in Treblinka it was common practice to take skulls home in order to check them out later and in peace.

There were also a few entrepreneurs who hired small crews to dig for them, such as a man known as the “butcher of Belzec,” who owned a brick factory in town and staked a claim to an area where a latrine had previously been situated in the camp. It was the most fertile spot, presumably because desperate Jews who figured out at last what awaited them threw valuable items therein instead of surrendering them to camp officials. After the Red Army liberated the area near Sobibor, Soviet soldiers scooped out former camp latrines with buckets, hauling out loads of wristwatches. The latrine area in Belzec also yielded small skeletons, most likely of Jewish children who had been drowned there by camp guards.

The journal of a nationalist guerilla unit active in Podlasie one year after the end of the war mentions collecting “contributions” from people who were digging through Jewish ashes at Treblinka. Thus “Jewish gold” that had been missed by the Third Reich ended up, through informal taxation imposed on gleaners, also financing the anticommunist underground in Poland.

From: *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* by Jan Tomasz Gross. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, pages 22–26.

Jan Tomasz Gross (August 1, 1947) is a Poland-born American historian and sociologist. He is the Norman B. Tomlinson Professor of War and Society, and Professor of History at Princeton University, on leave in 2015–16. Professor Gross studies modern Europe, focusing on comparative politics, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, Soviet and East European politics, and the Holocaust. After growing up in Poland and attending Warsaw University, he immigrated to the United States in 1969 and earned a Ph.D. in sociology from Yale University (1975). His first book, *Polish Society under German Occupation*, appeared in 1979. *Revolution from Abroad* (1988) analyzes how the Soviet regime was imposed in Poland and the Baltic states between 1939 and 1941. *Neighbors* (2001), which was a finalist for the National Book Award, reconstructs the events that took place in July 1941 in the small Polish town of Jedwabne, where virtually every one of the town's 1,600 Jewish residents was killed in a single day. Using eyewitness testimony Professor Gross demonstrates that the Jews of Jedwabne were murdered by their Polish neighbors, not by the German occupiers, as previously assumed. The shocking story occasioned an unprecedented reevaluation of Jewish-Polish relations during World War II and touched off passionate debate. In 2004 many of the Polish voices in this debate were published in translation in a collection, *The Neighbors Respond*.



107. Tykocin

Town in the Podlasie province of Poland; known in Yiddish as Tiktin. The first Jews settled in Tykocin in 1522 when the town's owner, Olbracht Gasztołd, brought in 10 families from Grodno (Hrodna) and permitted them to build a synagogue, establish a cemetery, and practice their trades. In 1537, the original privilege was extended to grant juridical autonomy to the Jewish community. In 1542, ownership of Tykocin passed to the crown, with subsequent kings affirming and extending privileges for Jewish residents in 1576, 1601, 1639, and 1650. In 1661, Stefan Czarniecki assumed the post of *starosta* (district official), a title that after his death passed to the Branicki family and then to the Potocki and Rostworowski families.

Jews settled in Kaczorowo, a section in the eastern district of Tykocin. The town's Jewish population expanded quickly: by 1559 it totaled 50 families; and in 1655 some 540 Jews were noted. According to the 1765 census of Tykocin and its surrounding villages, the Jewish population had risen to 2,694.

The Union of Lublin (1569) transferred Tykocin to Polish crown lands. However, several adjacent towns with affiliated communities—Zabłudów, Choroszcz, and Gródek—found themselves within the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This situation led to a dispute regarding jurisdiction over these settlements between the Tykocin community and that of Grodno, a conflict that continued well into the seventeenth century.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Tykocin was the predominant Jewish community in Podlasie and northeastern Mazovia, as well as one of the most important in the Polish Commonwealth. It had well-established community authorities, and many outstanding scholars graced its rabbinate. Among these, the most acclaimed were Menaḥem David ben Yitshak, a student of Mosheh Isserles; and Shemu'el Eli'ezer ben Yehudah ha-Levi Edels (Maharsha, 1615–1631). Also associated with Tykocin is the learned Rivke bas Me'ir of Tikotin (Rebecca of Tykocin), author of the moralistic women's manual *Meynekes Rivke* (Rebecca's Wet Nurse), which dates from the second half of the sixteenth century.

The prominence and relative prosperity of Tykocin's Jews resulted in large part from the town's location on important trade routes linking Polish lands and Lithuania. Jews of Tykocin traded with Königsberg, Vilna, Poznań, and Lublin, and also engaged in tax and tariff farming. Others worked in textiles, distilling, brewing, and milling. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, Tykocin's Jewish community began to lose its leading position to the rising community of Białystok.

In 1795, Tykocin fell under Prussian rule, becoming part of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 and of the Congress Kingdom of Poland in 1815. In 1827, Tykocin's Jews numbered 2,701, making up 63.6 percent of the population; in 1857 this number had risen to 3,456 (69.9%). By 1897, though,

the Jewish population had fallen to 2,484, or 59 percent of Tykocin's total population, and by 1921 only 1,461 Jews resided there, constituting less than half (48.8%) of the population. By this point they worked mainly in small-scale commerce and crafts and were best known for their production of prayer shawls.

In the interwar period, the Zionist movement grew especially strong in Tykocin. The town's Tarbut organization established a school and a library. The Agudas Yisroel party was also active; it established a Beys Yankev girls' school. From 1939 to 1941, the Soviets occupied the town. On 26–27 August 1941, the Germans, having taken over, shot 1,400 of Tykocin's Jews in the nearby village of Łopuchowo, sending approximately another 150 to the Białystok ghetto.

Of Tykocin's community there remains a brick synagogue, built in 1642 to replace an earlier wooden one. In the 1970s the synagogue was restored; it currently houses a Judaica museum. The brick *bet midrash*, built in 1772–1798 and rebuilt after its destruction during World War II, now houses a regional museum. A two-volume reconstruction of the communal record book, *Pinkas kehal Tiktin* (1996–1999, based on transcriptions made by Israel Halpern) was published by Mordekhai Nadav.

Suggested Reading

M. Bar-Yuda and Ts. (Z.) Ben-Naḥum, eds., *Sefer Tiktin* (Tel Aviv, 1959); Abram Gawurin, “Dzieje Żydów w Tykocinie, 1522–1795” (M.A. thesis, University of Warsaw, n.d.), housed in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (collection of Master's theses, 117/37).

YIVO Archival Resources: RG 87, Simon Dubnow, Papers, 1632-1938.

Author: Anna Michałowska-Mycielska

Translated from Polish by Anna Grojec

108. Łopuchowo - The Place of Execution and Burial of Holocaust's Victims

The town of Tykocin was conquered by Nazi Germany during the Soviet and German invasion of Poland pursuant to their secret agreement known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. At the end of September 1939, the area was transferred by the Nazis to the Soviet Union in accordance with the German–Soviet Boundary Treaty.

Upon their arrival, the Nazi Germans encouraged the local Poles from Tykocin and the surrounding villages to loot Jewish property, which they later ordered to be given back to their so-called “proper owners” (a common tactic used by the Nazis to persecute the Jewish people), for the Germans’ own anticipated benefit. On the morning of August 25, 1941 – according to a testimony of Abraham Kapice – as explained also by the Jewish and Polish memorials on the outskirts of town, the Germans ordered all Tykocin Jews to gather at the market square in order to be “resettled” to a ghetto in Czerwony Bór. About 1,400–1,700 people were soon taken from the square to a killing site in the nearby Łopuchowo forest. The men were marched on foot, and the women with children were trucked in. Some local Jews managed to escape into hiding, though very few survived. The prisoners, including women, children, and the elderly, were executed in waves into the execution pits, by an SS Einsatzkommando firing squad under the command of SS-Obersturmführer Hermann Schaper. Shaper’s mass executions of Polish Jews spread across many villages and towns of the Białystok region around the same time, including Radziłów, Jedwabne, Łomża, Rutki, Wizna, Piątnica, and Zambrów. He was brought to justice several decades later by the German authorities, but managed to deceive the interrogators during his original trial in Ludwigsburg.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tykocin_pogrom

The following is a fragment of Menachem Turek’s memoirs which are kept at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute (source: Jewish Historical Institute’s Archives, an account No. 301/1971):

“On the 16th August 1941, (...), five German gendarmes came to the town. As it turned out, Gestapo agents came soon after, with an instruction to kill all Jews from Tykocin (...). On the day following the gendarmes’ arrival, an information was spread that it had been ordered to dig three deep large holes in the nearby forest. The digging was very hasty and hundreds of village boys were involved. The holes were 12 meters long, four meters wide and five meters deep. On the same day, one of the Tykocin’s Jews, Dawid Mersz Orowicz (the son of Chaim Prażyk), who went to a nearby village of Sierki to gain some food, was caught by the gendarmes and some local policemen and was shot immediately. Both situations were harrowing for the Jewish community who could sense the coming death. They felt as they were in a mousetrap. Totally helpless and devastated (...).

At 6pm on Sunday, 24th August, it was announced that all the Jews of Tykocin, except for the sick and disabled, must gather at the market square at 6 in the morning on 25th August. The announcement was delivered by drums in the street, as accustomed in Tykocin(..). All Jewish men, women and children gathered at the

square on Monday, as instructed. Sitting at a table, the German gendarmes were ticking the names of Jews who came there. However, it didn't take long. As soon as the square got crowded, the registration ceased, as it was used only to deceive the Jews. With the help of local policeman armed with some kind of rubber whips, the Gestapo agents ordered to close the square. Afterwards the gendarmes separated the crowd into various groups: craftsmen, young people, old people. The authoritative voices of those brute Germans were heard all over the town and made the Jewish crowd tremble with fear. Some of the Jews, who sensed the coming peril, managed to flee from the square. Around 7am seven vans filled with Gestapo agents came to the place. The last van was packed with machine guns and ammunition. The whole square was strictly guarded by the German murderers. All those who were young and capable of walking were ordered to line up in fours. The column was as long as the square. It reached from its one side to the other. The bandits intentionally chose the most important people to walk in the first row. Among them were wood trader Jakub Charoszucha, his son-in-law and leather trader Mosze Żak and tailor Daniel Dajcza who was given an accordion to play on. They were all told to sing Hatikvah and hastened towards the main road. The elderly and mothers with their children were put onto the vans, as if it were more humane, and carried in the same direction(....).

The first shot was fired near a well, killing an old Jew, Szmul Luherman (called Szmulek Bobecki), who used to serve at beth midrash. He was shot because of a sick leg which kept him behind the others. The Polish assisting police helped the Germans to hasten the march with rubber whips. With forced singing on their lips and under pressure of time and whips, the Jews were chased to Jeżewo and further to Zawady village where they were locked in a previously prepared school building. All the other people, who were transported by vans, were also taken



The mass graves were identified after liberation. A memorial raised in this place bears the following inscription: " Here rest the Jews from Tykocin and its surroundings murdered by the Nazis in the August of 1941. For the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the massacre - inhabitants of the Tykocin land."

there. A straight short way lead from Zawady to the Łopuchowo forest, where the hollows already waited. As soon as all the Jews from the square were concentrated in Zawady, the last stage of the death march begun. A van full of Jews was coming to the school building every couple of minutes. The Jews were told they would be taken to a ghetto in Czerwony Bór. Instead they were taken to the holes and thrown

there alive. The hollows were 5 meters deep and there was no way out. The vans were running all day long and at dusk the devilish work was done. The hollow was filled in with people. Under the Germans' supervision peasants from nearby villages threw soil and buried the Jews alive before night came."

Source: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/tykocin/13,sites-of-martyrdom/9559>, Łopuchowo-the-place-of-execution-and-burial-of-holocaust-s-victims/

Diaries and Memoirs

109. Eva Heyman	369
110. From: <i>Yellow Star</i>	370
111. Parallel Journeys	371
112. Polish Prisoners	373
113. Excerpts from <i>How Was It Humanly Possible?</i>	375
114. Yitskhok Rudashevski's Diary	377
115. The Hidden Children	380
116. Dora Golubowicz Freilich's Testimony	383
117. Final Letters	385
118. Suicide Note of Shmuel Zygelboim	387



109. Eva Heyman

Soon it was Eva's turn. April 7:

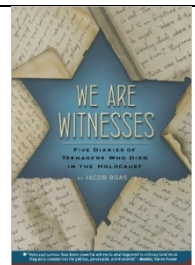
Today they came for my bicycle. I almost caused a big drama. You know, dear diary, I was awfully afraid just by the fact that policemen came into the house. I know that policemen bring only trouble with them, wherever they go. My bicycle had a proper license plate, and Grandpa had paid tax for it. That's how the policemen found it, because it was registered at City Hall that I have a bicycle. Now that's all over, I'm so ashamed about how I behaved in front of the policemen. So, dear dairy, I threw myself on the ground, held on to the back wheel of my bicycle, and shouted all sorts of things at the policemen: "Shame on you for taking away a bicycle from a little girl! That's robbery." We had saved up a year and a half to buy the bicycle.... I went to the store and took the bicycle home, only I didn't ride it but led it along with my hands, the way you handle a big, beautiful dog. From the outside I admired the bicycle, and even gave it a name: Friday. I took the name from Robinson Crusoe, but it suits the bicycle. First of all, because I brought it home on a Friday, and also because Friday is the symbol of loyalty, because he was so loyal to Robinson.... One of the policemen was very annoyed and said:



"All we need is for a Jewgirl to put on such a comedy when her bicycle is taken away. No Jewkid is entitled to keep a bicycle anymore. The Jews aren't entitled to bread, either; they shouldn't guzzle everything, but leave food for the soldiers." You can imagine dear diary, how I felt when they were saying this to my face. I had heard that sort of thing on the radio, or read it in a German newspaper. Still, it's different when yu read something and when it's thrown in your face. Especially ifit's when they're taking my bicycle away.

Jacob Boas. *We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries a/Teenagers who died In the Holocaust*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995.

Jacob Boas is a Holocaust survivor who was born in Holland in 1943 and was imprisoned in the same camp as Anne Frank. He received a PhD in 1977 from the University of California, Riverside, for a dissertation entitled "The Jews of Germany: Self-Perception in the Nazi Era as Reflected in the German Jewish Press 1933-1938." He is a historian, writer, and translator. Boas lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife.



110. From: *Yellow Star*

Gerhard Schoenberger

“The streets are so overpopulated; it is difficult to push one’s way through. Everyone is ragged, in tatters. Often they no longer even possess a shirt. Everywhere there is noise and uproar. The thin piteous voices of children crying their wares — “Pretzels, cigarettes, sweets!” — are heard above the din.

No one will ever be able to forget those children’s voices There are always countless children inside the ghetto. People on the “Aryan” side gape curiously at the piteous spectacle presented by these tattered gangs. In fact, these gangs of children are the ghetto breadwinners. If the German looks away for one second, they run nimbly over to the Aryan side. The bread, potatoes and other things they buy are hidden under their rags, and then they have to slip back the way they came.



Not all the German sentries are murderers and executioners but unfortunately, many of them do not hesitate to take up their guns and fire at children. Every day — it’s almost unbelievable — children are taken to the hospital with gunshot wounds.

The thousands of ragged beggars are reminiscent of a famine in India. Horrifying sights are to be seen every day. Here a half-starved mother trying to suckle her baby at a breast that has no milk. Beside her may lie another, older child, dead. One sees people dying, lying with arms and legs outstretched, in the middle of the road. Their legs are bloated, often frostbitten, and their faces, distorted with pain. I hear that every day the beggar children’s frostbitten fingers and toes, hands and feet are amputated.

I once asked a little girl: What would you like to be? “A dog, she answered, “Because the sentries like dogs.”

Yes, they treated dogs better than children.

Gerhard Schoenberger. *Yellow Star*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1973)

Gerhard Schoenberger (May 24 1931 in Neudamm, Brandenburg , today Dębno , Poland, December 10 2012 in Berlin) was a German author , film historian and pioneer of public discussion of the crimes committed during the period of National Socialism . He spoke of the threat of dictatorship and war as a formative influence of his childhood



From: *Yellow Star*

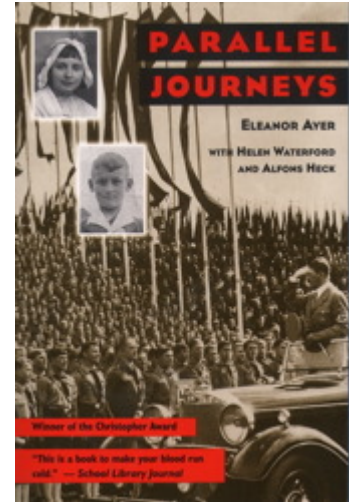
111. Parallel Journeys

Eleanor H. Ayer

One afternoon, Heinz came to our farm, all dressed up in his best velvet suit, to say good-bye. “My Uncle Herbert is taking me with him for a while,” he said sadly. Uncle Herbert was a rabbi in the city of Cologne.

“Maybe that’s best, Heinz,” said my grandmother. “It’ll be nice for you seeing a big city.” Heinz’s father had decided to send his only son away, since it was impossible for a Jewish child to go unnoticed in a small town. Sooner or later, somebody would call Heinz a dirty Jew – or worse – and his father wanted to spare him that.

My grandmother gave us a piece of cake, normally a Sunday treat, and then we shook hands awkwardly. “Auf Wiedersehn, Frau Heck,” Heinz said, but he just nodded to me. We both knew our friendship had ended. Later, when I had to go through interviews for promotions in the Hitler Youth, I always denied having had a Jew for a friend. Before long, Heinz became just a fleeting memory.



Far from being forced to enter the ranks of the Jungvolk, I could barely contain my impatience and was, in fact, accepted before I was quite 10. It seemed like an exciting life, free from parental supervision, filled with “duties” that seemed sheer pleasure. Precision marching was something one could endure for hiking, camping, war games held in the field and a constant emphasis on sports ... There were the paraphernalia and the symbols, the pomp and the mysticism, very close in feeling to religious rituals ...



It’s especially easy to manipulate children at that age ... If you can drill the notion into their heads, you are from a tribe, a race that’s especially valuable. And then you tell them something about the Germanic tribes, their loyalty, their battles ... You, you’re a child of this race, a people that dealt the Romans a destructive blow in the year 9 A.D... all that sort of thing. Then there were the songs ... “What we swear is written in the stars. He who directs the stars will hear our voice ... Before the foreigner robs you of your crown, O Germany, we would prefer to fall side by side” ... Death was nothing. The flag, the people, they were everything. You are nothing, your people – they were everything. Yes, that’s how children were brought up, that’s how you manipulate a child.

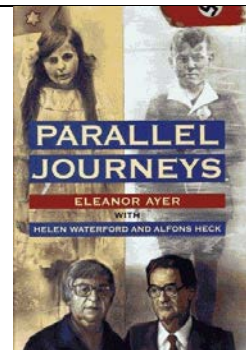
Eleanor H. Ayer, Alfons Heck, Helen Waterford. *Parallel Journeys*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1995.

Helen Waterford and **Alfons Heck** were born just a few miles from each other in the German Rhineland. But their lives took radically different courses: Helen's to the Auschwitz extermination camp; Alfons to a high rank in the Hitler Youth.

While Helen was hiding in Amsterdam, Alfons was a fanatic believer in Hitler's "master race." While she was crammed in a cattle car bound for the death camp Auschwitz, he was a teenage commander of frontline troops, ready to fight and die for the glory of Hitler and the Fatherland. This book tells both of their stories, side-by-side, in an overwhelming account of the nightmare that was WWII. The riveting stories of these two remarkable people must stand as a powerful lesson to us all.



Eleanor H. Ayer is a published author of children's books and young adult books. In *Parallel Journeys*, she weaves the stories of these two young people into a compelling exploration of the Holocaust from the point of view of a victim and a perpetrator.



112. Polish Prisoners

Tatjana Wassiljewa

Nina reckons that our life is not very different from that in the concentration camps. But I'm sure it's much worse there. One morning it bucketed down with rain, and so we marched quicker than usual. My blanket was wet through. I always wear that blanket now; during the day it serves as a coat and at night I cover myself up with it.

It was nearly day, but a dull half-light because of the rain. As we went along beside a high wall— amazing, really, that I hadn't noticed it before — we had to stop suddenly. Some of our marching columns had already gone past, but my column came to an abrupt halt. Police guards had formed a cordon in front of us.

We heard dogs barking and loud shouts. Women in black uniforms had taken position in front of the guards. I looked at them. They were tall, blue-eyed, blond — really attractive women. But their voices were sharp. “Go, go!” they yelled. Hearing them yelling “Go” sent shivers down my spine.

Together with the police, the women in black formed an almost impenetrable wall. But despite this I did see something. Between the gaps I could see people in striped clothing. They went quickly, bent over, with their heads hanging low, and they had a yellow — no, even green — skin color. One man (it might even have been a woman, I couldn't tell) hung back a little, and immediately truncheon blows rained down on his head. The unlucky man shielded his head with his arms, but the blows came still more heavily. He went faster, stumbling, but the blows hit him again and again. It hurt me. It hurt me as if I were being beaten myself

One last command, then the beautiful women in black turned around sharply, following the captives, and vanished with them behind an iron door

It was clear to me that I had just seen part of a concentration camp. But what are Aryan women exactly, I wondered, pulling the drenched blanket more tightly around me. Is it the name of a particular race, or is that what they call the guards in the concentration camps?

That evening, as I was standing in line for the vegetable soup, I was still thinking about the concentration camp and became so lost in my thoughts that I didn't notice the gap widening between me and the person in front. A guard pushed me roughly into position. Suddenly, feelings of protest and outrage rose up in me, triggered by the thought of the



people in the striped clothes, and I screamed, “Don’t be so brutal,” straight into the guard’s face. “I’ll show you what the word brutal means!”

In the same moment I received a blow that sent me flying against the opposite wall, my bowl and lid shattering against the other side. The guard struck me again and again, screeching, “You Russian pig!”

Somehow I pulled myself together and stood up-right, as the camp rules demanded. My neck burned with pain, my lips were bloody, and the blood dripped into my palms of my hands. I stood there and swallowed my tears. Nina calmed me down. “Count yourself lucky. They could send you to a concentration camp for that.”

Now I lie on my straw pallet and think about all this. I imagine that Germany is a huge metal press, like the one that stands in the corner of the factory where I work. When this press descends onto a piece of iron, it presses it together until it is quite flat and nothing remains of its original shape

Tatjana Wassiljewa. *Hostage to War: A True Story*. Translated by Anna Trenter. New York: Scholastic, 1st American ed edition (May 1997).

Tatjana Wassiljewa [Tat’iana Vasil’eva] was 13 years old and living in Wyritya, a small vacation town only 60 kilometers from Leningrad, when the Germans invaded. She was sent to Germany as a captive laborer, where she spent three years working 12-hour days in factories, all the while enduring hunger and other privations. [Note: There is also a Russian cellist named Tatjana Vassiljeva who was born in 1977.]

113. Excerpts from *How Was It Humanly Possible?*

Irena Steinfeldt

The Massacre in Bialystok

Dina Beitler

"...We marched on foot the whole way, and it was a very long way.... And we were marching in the street and the Germans and Poles were all standing on the sidewalks, laughing and shouting, and they made fun of us, completely humiliating us... and I went with my grandmother and another aunt. We were walking together until we arrived at Ponar There were several open pits. And when we got there they told us to undress They were there with dogs, standing at the pits with machine-guns, posted right at the edge of the pit. And everybody started screaming and running from one side to the other.... There were screams to heaven-it was something terrible, that one cannot forget. And there was nothing to be done, there was no way out. And before they shot me, there were the other pits where the men stood. And I saw my brother there, and we parted. He sat there and he made a goodbye sign with his hand. And that was it. They shot and he fell too.... And it was also very cold, the ground was frozen.... And when they shot me, I fell on the dead...."



Dina Beitler recounts the murder of the Jews.

From Idea to Implementation—the Leap to Action

Rivka Yossilewska

"When we got there we saw naked people. We still believed they were only going to torture us.... The walking was very hard and children suffered.... Parents and mothers said farewell to their children. We were led, they raced us to the pit. We were naked. My father didn't want to take off all his clothes and remained in his underwear They tore the clothes away from him and shot him. I saw it.... Then there was the sister. As much as she had suffered in the ghetto ... she wanted to hold onto life. She was together with her friend. He looked into her eyes and shot her point-blank, her and her friend. My sister and her friend were both shot.... And then it was my turn I turned my head. We were walking with our faces towards the pit. I turned my head and he asked me: Whom should I shoot first—your daughter or you? I didn't answer. I felt how my daughter was torn from me. I felt her cry out one last time. I heard her being shot. Then he turned to me. I turned around. He grabbed my hair and was about



Rivka Yoselewska testifying at the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem

to shoot me. I remained standing. I heard a shot, but remained standing. He turned me back and started to reload. He turned me, he shot and I fell I fell into the pit”

Source: <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/einsatz/rytest.html>.

Irena Steinfeldt. *How Was it Humanly Possible? A Study of Perpetrators and Bystanders During the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; 2002.

Irena Steinfeldt, Director of the Department of the Righteous Among the Nations of Yad Vashem. In addition to being the author of *How Was it Humanly Possible? A Study of Perpetrators and Bystanders During the Holocaust*, she is editor (along with Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith and Yehuda Bauer) of *The Holocaust and the Christian World: Reflections on the Past, Challenges for the Future*, Continuum Intl Pub Group, September 2000.



114. Yitskhok Rudashevski's Diary

Our hearts are crushed witnessing the shameful scene where women and older people are beaten and kicked in the middle of the street by small bandits. A performance. Germans stand and look at the throng of gentile women. I stand at the window and feel a sense of rage. Tears come to my eyes; all our helplessness, all our loneliness lies in the streets. There is no one to take our part. And we ourselves are so helpless! So helpless. Life becomes more and more difficult. People do not go anywhere. On scores of streets a Jew must not show himself. Only in the morning do frightened Jewish women slip out to do some shopping. The men go off to work. It rains incessantly. We are so sad, so lonely. We are exposed to mockery and humiliation. A new feeling of terror frequently overcomes the few neighbors of the yard. They are looking for weapons. The courtyard is full of Germans. There is a ring, the door is to open and all hearts are pounding. Germans in helmets rush in, their weapons resound. Meekly the cupboards and drawers are opened to them. Cruelly they fling everything apart, fling, throw, go away and leave behind them a sad house with things scattered all over. We stand around with pale faces. We calm ourselves only when we learn that they have left. The mood becomes worse from day to day. People talk about the ghetto. In the rainy evenings we gather at a neighbor's house and talk about the news, the situation in the ghetto which has now become a reality.



Friday the 8th

New students are being accepted in the technical school in the ghetto. I am now going through a big struggle, whether to learn a trade or to continue to study in the high school as I have done until now. I cannot make up my mind. On the one hand, there is war; it is easier at the moment for the person who has some kind of trade or other. I am growing up and sooner or later I shall have to go to work. On the other hand, I imagine that attendance at the technical school means an interruption of one's studies. For after the four-month vocational course the goal is to go to work, and once I start working I shall never return to school again. After long hesitation and long reflection, I decided to make use of every moment. I need to study. I still have suitable conditions, so I must not interrupt my studies. My determination to study has developed into something like defiance of the present which hates to study, loves to work, to drudge. No, I decided I shall live with tomorrow, not with today. And if for every 100 ghetto children of my age 10 can study, I must be among the fortunate ones. I must take advantage of this. Studying has become even more precious to me than before.

Saturday the 17th [October 1942]

I go out into the street — there is a disturbance near a bakery. A woman has snatched a pot from the bakery and has run away. She was pursued and beaten. It aroused a feeling of disgust in me. How terribly sad! People are grabbing morsels from each other's mouths. I am overcome with pity for the hungry woman, how she is being insulted with the dirtiest words, how they beat her. I think: what peculiarly ugly things occur in the ghetto! On one hand, the ugliness of stealing a pot of food, and on the other to strike a woman crudely in the face because she is probably hungry.

Sunday the 18th of October 1942

Toward evening a new sensation. Suddenly one bright day Jewish policemen donned official hats. I walk across the street and here go some of them wearing leather jackets, boots, and green round hats with glossy peaks and Stars of David. I hate them from the bottom of my heart, ghetto Jews in uniforms, and how arrogantly they stride in the boots they have plundered! The entire ghetto is stunned. Everyone feels the same about them and they have somehow become such strangers to the ghetto. In me they arouse a feeling compounded of ridicule, disgust, and fear.

Wednesday the 10th of December [1942]

It dawned on me that today is my birthday. Today I became fifteen years old. You hardly realize how time flies. It, the time, runs ahead unnoticed and presently we realize, as I did today, for example, and discover that days and months go by, that the ghetto is not a painful, squirming moment of a dream that constantly disappears, but is a large swamp in which we lose our days and weeks. Today I became deeply absorbed in the thought. I decided not to trifle my time away in the ghetto on nothing and I feel somehow happy that I can study, read, develop myself, and see that time does not stand still as long as I progress normally with it. In my daily ghetto life it seems to me that I live normally but often I have deep qualms. Surely I could have lived better. Must I day in and day out see the walled-up ghetto gate, must I in my best years see only the one little street, the few stuffy courtyards?

Still other thoughts buzzed around in my head but I felt two things most strongly: a regret, a sort of gnawing. I wish to shout to time to linger, not to run. I wish to recapture my past year and keep it for later, for the new life. My second feeling today is that of strength and hope. I do not feel the slightest despair. Today I became fifteen years of age and I live confident in the future. I am not conflicted about it, and see before me sun and sun and sun

Thursday the 17th [January 1943]

Today they give the five decagrams of pork on ration cards. I waited in line a short time and at last found myself inside the store. There is so much injustice evident among us Jews in the ghetto, so much that is not right, so much that is disgusting. For instance, in the distribution of meat on the ration cards. People freeze and stand in line. Policemen, privileged persons, walk in freely. During the distribution the butcher throws the piece of meat to the person in line as if he were doing him a favor, exploiting a child, a person who is less vituperative, by giving him the worst The crowd of frozen women stands in 'line,' hushed, wrathful, devouring the meat table with their eyes “

Thursday the 18^m [March 1943]

I am busy for hours at a time. It is so hard to accomplish something at school and in the club, and at the same time to be involved with cooking and cleaning. First of all reports sneaked up on us. At school we are now covering the theme of Vilna in geography. I am preparing a report 'On Jew[ish] Printing in Vilna.' For several months now there is no light in the evenings. In the evening we lie around in the workroom, the reading room. I often reflect, this is supposedly the ghetto yet I have such a rich life of intellectual work: I study, I read, I visit club circles. Time runs by so quickly and there is so much to be done, lectures, social gatherings. I often forget that I am in the ghetto.

Yitskhok Rudashevski from his diary excerpted in *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries*. Edited by Laurel Holliday

Yitskhok Rudashevski (1927-1943) was born in Vilna, Lithuania on Dec. 10, 1927. His father was a typesetter for the daily Yiddish newspaper. His mother was a seamstress. He was an only child living in the same home as his parents and grandmother. He began writing in his diary in Yiddish in 1941. He belonged to a clandestine organization attached to the Red Army. His plans and those of his comrades, to resist the Nazis and to remain devoted to Communism, were never able to be carried out. The liquidation of the ghetto began on Sept. 23, 1943. Yitskhok and his family went into hiding, but they were discovered during the first week of October. They were taken to Ponar where they were shot to death.

115. The Hidden Children

Kristine Keren (as told to Jane Marks)

We lived in Poland, in the ghetto of Lvov. My father was always looking for places to hide my little brother, Pavel, and me because the Germans were intent on getting rid of all the Jewish children. One hiding place was a small, empty space, three feet long and one foot deep, below the window, which my father had camouflaged to look like the wall. I remember having to sit in there with Pavel for hours, struggling for air and being so scared! Tears were running down my cheeks, but I didn't dare make a sound for fear the Germans would find us. But silently I'd pray for my father to come and let us out. Each time he came back, I begged him, "Daddy, *please* let this be the last time." I didn't think I could take it anymore.

My parents had to work in the labor camp, so I was often left alone with my brother. Several times when the Germans came, I had to hide Pavel in a suitcase under the bed while I hid in the closet, behind my mother's long, rust-colored satin robe. I was only seven or eight years old at the time, but I could recognize the German footsteps. I had to hide myself and then wait a few more minutes for fear they'd come back again. Then I ran back to let my brother out of the suitcase so he could breathe again.

He was good! He was only three and a half years old, but he never made a fuss.

He understood, as did I, that we just had to be quiet and do what we were told. Life was getting scarier by the day.

One day I heard a noise—like somebody gasping for air—and I looked out the back window. There I saw some Polish teenagers swinging bats and hitting a Jewish man, who was begging them to stop. But they kept it up until he lay there dead. I'll never forget that choking sound he made. I was just stunned.

It was only a few days later that we fled—not through the gates of the ghetto but straight down! My father had been digging a tunnel from the basement of a house near us, right into the sewer. When he broke through, he found himself face-to-face with a sewer worker. Instead of reporting my father, the man said, "I can help you, but you'll have to pay me a lot." My father agreed, and the next day he brought the man all the money we had. It was a risk, but the only real chance we had.

The next night my father saw some cars with soldiers coming close. He came down to where my brother and I were hidden in the basement, and he whispered, "This is it!" I cried when he explained that we'd have to go down this very narrow tunnel. He would go first, then me. Then Pavel and my mother.

I could hear the sound of water in the tunnel down below, and I knew I couldn't do it. I sobbed, "I don't want to go." My father said gently but urgently, "You have to go. Trust me, don't worry." I watched him go down, and then somebody pushed me. I felt myself falling through the blackness, and then my father caught me and put me on his back. He said, "Hold tight."

I grabbed his neck, and I held on to his hips with my feet. He kept telling me to hold tight. I was shaking. My teeth were chattering so hard, I couldn't talk. Then my mother was behind us, holding Pavel. The walkway was narrow, and we had to be careful not to fall into the water. It seemed like we had to walk forever! I kept asking my father how much longer. He said, "Don't worry, a few minutes more, a few minutes more." It was especially frightening when we had to cross from one side of the river to the other.

Meanwhile, all around us people were dropping down into the sewer through manholes. It was terrifying! Then my father's contact, whose name was Leopold Socha, appeared and took us and several other people to a special tunnel where we wouldn't be seen. He told my father where to find boards we could put across the flowing water, and on which we could sleep. By then I was so tired, I fell asleep leaning on a strange man, who said to me, "You're little, but you're so heavy."

We all stayed there for a few days. Some people couldn't take the stench and the darkness, so they left, but ten of us remained in that sewer for fourteen months! During that time we never went outside or saw daylight. We lived with webs and moss hanging on the wall. The river not only smelled terrible, but also it was full of diseases. We got dysentery, and I remember Pavel and I were sick with unrelenting diarrhea. There was only enough clean water for each of us to have half a cup a day. My parents didn't even drink theirs; they gave it to Pavel and me so that we wouldn't die from dehydration.

Mr. Socha and two of his friends very faithfully brought us food. But there were dangers. A few times other sewer workers found us because they had seen our wet shoes hanging up. We had to run to try to escape. I would get so scared, I stopped breathing. But we got away! Another time our little lamp started a fire. We thought we'd be burned, but we survived that too.

Then there was a heavy rainstorm, and the sewer swelled so that the water was almost up to the ceiling, which was less than five feet high. My parents, who were constantly bent, had to hold us children up high so we could breathe. We were frequently soaking wet.

The rats were all over us—each one was about a foot long. But we weren't afraid of them; we played with them. We fed them, and they grew even bigger from eating our bread. But they always wanted more, and my father had to stay awake at night to keep them from eating it all.

All this time nobody had to tell us to be quiet. I felt like an animal, ruled by instinct. I never spoke above a whisper. But after a few months of this life I was very, very depressed, and I didn't want to eat or talk to anybody.

That was when Leopold Socha picked me up and took me through the tunnels and said, "Look up." I saw daylight, and he said to me, "You have to be very strong, and one day you will go up there and live a life like other children." At my father's suggestion Mr. Socha brought books so my father could teach me to read and count. This way, they said, I'd be ready for school when the war was finally over.

From then on I'd always watch for Mr. Socha when he would come every other day with our food. Always the first thing I'd see was his smile: a radiant smile with perfect teeth. He was such a cheerful man—and thoughtful too! He managed to get my mother candles for the Sabbath, and he'd always share his own lunch with Pavel and me.

When liberation came, Mr. Socha was the one who came to tell us. We'd heard plenty of Russian bombs exploding nearby, but we didn't know we were free until Mr. Socha banged on the pipe. We all stayed very quiet, unsure of what the banging meant. Then he called our names. He said, "You can come out now!"

Jane Marks. *The Hidden Children*. Ballantine Books, 1995

Kristine Keren was a child in Lvov, Poland, when the Nazis began rounding up Jews for deportation to concentration camps. Her story is one of family so determined to stay together that they endured, with the help of a Gentile contact, in the sewers beneath the Lvov ghetto for fourteen months. Keren now shares a dental practice with a son and lives on Long Island. Her story is excerpted from Jane Mark's *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust*.

Keren's memoir illustrates both the fear that her family experienced before going into hiding and the terrible conditions they suffered through while in hiding.



116. Dora Golubowicz Freilich's Testimony

So we go together or we stay together. It's one or the other. This was, I guess, a Jewish concept, a family concept. ... which helped in one way and hurt in another way. Our great hope and our great bond with the family ... gave us so much more hope. That is why we were killed because we went together. Always hoping that it couldn't be bad there.

... . Now we had a guy that worked in our bakery for as long as I can remember. At that time — I am already going on 16 — we still had a little baby, and the ghetto was fenced in but not on all sides. There was some creeks running through ... and this guy that worked for my father for so many years came and ... said, "Let me have the baby. Let me take the baby to my village." She was blond. We were all dark haired but that baby was blond. "I don't know what is going to happen. The rumors are bad ..."

We debated about it and we decided to give him the baby. After two days the [German] guards from the fences were taken away and we thought the Judenrat [Jewish Council] would take care of everything again. We will work, we'll struggle, we'll die, we won't have any food, we won't have any heat, but we will still have each other. So we started looking at each other and my father said ... "Why should we tear apart a family? Let's get together again," and we [sent the man a message] that we want to get the baby back He begged us not to take the baby back, to leave the baby with him, with his family. He had a family, I think, of seven children and he said, "One more, let it be there." ... So he brought the baby back. The baby at that time was a year-and-a-half.

... . The end of 1942, the beginning of 1943, the peasants were ordered to come with the sleds. They told us to pack whatever we can take with us ... And then they took us on the trains

From my family everybody was gone in the first year in Birkenau

[After the war] our journey home ... took three months of walking and riding In my hometown in 1945, I would say July or August. ... I found a few older people that worked for my father, and I went to one of them that was the main baker in our bakery. He had worked for my father many, many years, and to whom our little girl was given away during the ghetto. And I came there and I knocked on the door. ... and he called me by my Jewish name which is Dvorah, and he says, "My God, is it you?" And I said, "Yes." ... He said, "What are you going to do here? And I said ... I came to look if my father is alive. He said, "Your father is not alive and nobody is alive from your family." And he said he doesn't think that I should stay here He didn't feel it was safe He said, "Just tell me how did you survive? I said, "I don't know." And he said, "You see, if you would have left the baby here you would have had a sister here."

Holocaust Testimony of Dora Freilich: Transcript of Audiotaped Interview. Issue 65 of Gratz College Oral History Archive. Authors: Dora Freilich, Helen Grossman. Melrose Park, PA: Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive., 1984

Dora Golubowitz Freilich, was born December 25, 1926 in Prużana, Poland, near Białystok [now Prużany [Pruzhany] located in the Brest Region of the Republic of Belarus]. In her interview, she describes pre-war life: schooling, relations with non-Jewish Poles, Jewish community life and youth groups. She talks in great detail about the Russian occupation 1939-1941 including expropriation of her family's business. After the German invasion her family had to move into the Prużany ghetto June, 1941. She describes living conditions, cultural activities, labor units, Judenrat, and contact with Jewish partisans in the ghetto. A non-Jewish ex-employee of her father hid her baby sister but later the family asked him to return the child. Dora describes both the evacuation of the ghetto January 1943, and her family's transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She witnessed Mengele's sadistic games with prisoners and was aware of his medical experiments which she describes in great detail. She details sadistic behavior by guards, including shooting her sister for sport. Conditions at Birkenau: slave labor, types of prisoners, orchestra, death process, and relations among inmates are described. She explains how the older girls tried to help the younger ones and the coping strategies they used to survive. She describes sabotage of a crematorium in October 1944 and the public hanging of four girls held responsible. She describes the escape, capture and execution of Mala Zimetbaum. January 1945 she experienced the final days of the camp and describes the death march.



117. Final Letters

Sara and Yehiel Gerlitz

7 July 1944

My dear, beloved little child,

On giving birth to you, my darling, I did not imagine that six and a half years later I would be writing you such a letter. When I last saw you, on your sixth birthday, on 13 December 1943, I had the illusion that I would still be able to see you before my departure, but now I know that this cannot be. I do not want to endanger you. We are leaving on Monday, now it is Friday evening. We are going — Daddy, Pola and I — with 51 other fellow nationals to an unknown destination. I do not know my dear child, if I will ever see you again. I take with me from home your picture, which I love so much; I am taking along your lovely chatter, the smell of your innocent little body, the rhythm of your innocent breathing, your smile, and your tears which my heart, the heart of a mother, could not allay. I take along your last image, as I saw you on 13 December 1943, your prematurely adult look, the sweet taste of your childish kisses, and the hug of your tiny arms. That is what will accompany me on my way. Could it be that Providence will allow me to survive this nightmare and to regain you, my treasure? Should this happen, I will explain to you many things you have not understood so far and which you will probably never understand, since you will be in other surroundings, and brought up in an atmosphere of freedom. My sweetheart! I want you to read this, when, by God's will, you are grown up and mature and able to criticize our behavior toward you. I desire, my dear and beloved child that you should not condemn us, that you should love our memory and our entire loathed people from which you originate. I want you to know that your father was a person of rare qualities — there are not many like him in the world — and that you can be proud of him. He dedicated his whole life to doing good to other people; may God bless every step of his, protect him, and allow him to regain you! My beloved treasure, you are your father's whole world, his only ambition, his only satisfaction for all his sufferings and pain. Therefore, I wish you to keep a good memory of him, if fate should prove unfavorable to us.... I want you to remember your grandfathers and grandmothers, your aunts and uncles... people of great value... and the whole family. Remember us and do not blame us! As for me, your mother...forgive me..... Forgive me, my dear child, for having given birth to you.... I wanted to bear you for our and your pride and joy, and it is not our fault that things took a different course. Thus, I implore you, my one and only darling, don't blame us. Try to be good as your father and your ancestors. Love your foster parents and their family, who surely will tell you about us. I ask you to appreciate the self-sacrifice of your foster parents and to be their pride, so that they should never have any reason to regret the commitment which they have taken on voluntarily. There is one more thing I want you to know: that your mother was a proud person, despite our

enemies' scorn and mistreatment, and, when she was going to die, she did so without moaning and crying, but with a smile of contempt for the enemy on her lips!

I hug and kiss you affectionately; receive all the blessings of my heart

Your loving Mother

What can I say to my only child, truly the person dearest to me in the world? One should open one's heart and reveal its inside — no pen is able to describe what goes on in there just now. But I believe firmly that we will survive and offer our hearts to one another.

Your Father

Sara and Yehiel Gerlitz of Bedzin, Poland, entrusted their only daughter, aged six, to a Polish friend by the name of Florczak. With the presentiment that they would never see their child again, they left her a letter which she was able to open when she came of age. Fortunately, the parents survived; they were reunited with their daughter and together emigrated to Israel.

Sarah and Yechiel Gerlitz with Dita, July 1939

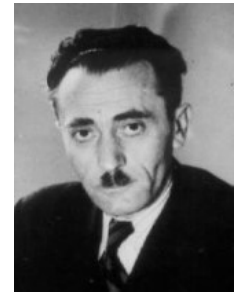


Source: Yehudit Kleinman, Reuven Dafni (Eds.), *Final Letters*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Publishing, 1991.

.

118. Suicide Note of Shmuel Zygelboim

Shmuel Zygelboim had been an elected member of the Polish parliament before World War II. He represented the Jewish political party called the Bund. When Poland was conquered by Germany, the Polish government went into exile, that is, fled to London. Zygelboim lived in London as part of the Polish government in exile. By 1943, he had learned of the massacres in Poland—in particular, in his city of Warsaw. After pleading for months with British government officials to make some public protest, he had achieved no success. Alone, desperate and depressed, he committed suicide on the steps on the British Parliament and left the following letter for the President of the Polish government in exile in London.



It has become clear from the information that has reached me from Poland that the Germans are now annihilating the remaining Jews of Poland with terrible cruelty. The last act of a tragedy without precedent in history is now being played out behind the walls of the ghetto. Responsibility for the crime of murdering the entire Jewish population of Poland lies first and foremost with the murderers themselves, but indirectly this responsibility lies with all mankind—the allied nations and governments who have not yet made any effort toward concrete action to halt the crime . . . I also wish to declare that even though the Polish government contributed much to awakening world public opinion, it did not do so in an adequate manner. It did nothing befitting the magnitude of the drama now taking place in Poland.

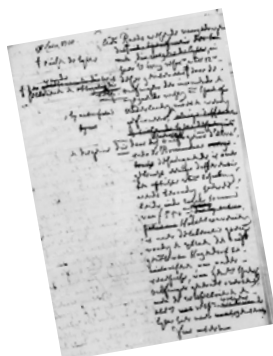
I can no longer remain silent. I cannot live when the remnant of the Jewish people in Poland, whom I represent, is being steadily annihilated. My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto fell with weapons in their hands, in the last heroic struggle. I was not fortunate enough to die as they did and together with them. But I belong to them and to their mass graves. By my death I wish to express my vigorous protest against the apathy with which the world regards and resigns itself to the slaughter of the Jewish people.”

London, May 8, 1943

<http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/lul/Readings/Reading%2016A.pdf>

Poetry

119. Everything is Forbidden to Us, and Yet We Do Everything.....	389
120. We Who Lived in Concentration Camps	393
121. I Prefer to Emphasize the Kindness	394
122. Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum	395
123. The Technical Committee of the Oneg Shabbat.....	396
124. From the Testament of Nahum Grzywacz	397
125. The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy	398
126. Voices from the Ground	399
127. Belgium, 1942.....	400
128. They Had a System: In Memory of the Girl whose Name Vanished with Her....	401
129. The Butterfly.....	402
130. Fear	403
131. Blessed is the Match.....	404
132. Riddle	406
133. A Mountain of Shoes.....	407
134. The First Ones.....	409
135. Pigtail	411
136. Posthumous Rehabilitation	412
137. I Did Not Manage to Save	413
138. Excerpts from the Poem “5.8.42 In Memory of Janusz Korczak”.....	414
139. Holocaust 1944	415
140. I Keep Forgetting	416
141. Never Shall I Forget that Night.....	418
142. Shema	420
143. There Were Those	421
144. To My Wife	422
145. Deep Graves, Red Clay	424
146. 1945.....	426
147. I Must Tell the Story	427
148. The Partisans’ Hymn	428
149. Mourners’ Kaddish.....	430



119. Everything is Forbidden to Us, and Yet We Do Everything

The Struggle to Maintain the Human Spirit during the Holocaust

RATIONALE & TEXTS FOR USE IN CEREMONIES



Elementary School, Dusiati, Lithuania, Class I-II (1921)⁸²

From right to left, top: Sheinke Yossman, [-], [-], Micha Baron, Reuven Milun, [-], Rivka Pores, Bailke Krut, Bracha Karanowitz, [-], Rachel Shub, [-]

Second row, right: [-], Sheinke Chaitowitz, [-], [-], [-] / Left: [-], [-], [-]

Third row: Honke Glick (son of Rochl-Leah), [-], Efraim-Froike Zeligson, [-], [-], Dobe-Fruma Glick (daughter of Avraham-Velvel),

teachers: Yudel Slep, Hillel Schwartz (principal) and Zvi-Hirshl Hammer, [-], [-], Masha Slep (extreme left)

In front: [-], Nechama Yudelowitz, Bunka Chaitowitz, Mirka Karanowitz, Moshe-Ber Blacher, Moishle Zeif

All of the three teachers perished in the Holocaust.

Out of all the identified pupils, five of them perished in the Holocaust.

Six immigrated to South Africa. Six made aliya.

⁸² There Was a Shtetl in Lithuania – Dusiati Reflected in Reminiscences.
<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Dusetos/Dusetos.html>

In the diary that he kept in the Warsaw ghetto, teacher and educator Chaim Aharon Kaplan wrote, “In these days of our misfortune, we live the life of Marranos. Everything is forbidden to us, and yet we do everything.”⁸³

With these words, Kaplan expressed the struggle of the Jews to maintain their human spirit under the impossible conditions in which they found themselves under Nazi German occupation.

From their rise to power, the Nazis strove to exclude all Jews – men, women and children – from the human race. They did not recoil from any means to accomplish that goal, and implemented a policy of racist oppression and legalized terror against the Jews. The Jews were isolated, cut off, singled out and starved. The Nazi process of dehumanization eventually became a systematic campaign of extermination, wherein approximately six million Jews were murdered.

Everywhere the Nazi regime reached, it acted to rupture the very structures of Jewish life, both communal and familial. Among other steps, they attempted to annihilate the Jewish spirit and culture. Therefore, one of the Nazis’ first acts was the destruction of synagogues, and the outlawing of Jewish prayer and public assembly. Confronting this reality, the Jewish community found itself moving anxiously between self-preservation and disintegration, between dire crisis and persistent efforts to create communal frameworks that might facilitate continued physical and spiritual existence.

Under the subsistence conditions of the Holocaust, where life and death existed in such close proximity, many Jews naturally focused their efforts upon their own physical survival and that of their dear ones. In a world where murder had become the norm and brute force begat acts of unprecedented horror, many were unable to do more than struggle for mere survival. Yet, simultaneously, some were able to behave differently, and demonstrated astonishing spiritual strength during a time of persecution and death. Facing the disintegration of entire fabrics of life, they clung to the essence of existence and attempted to preserve life grounded in moral values, as well as a cultural dimension befitting a decent society.

Alongside externally imposed hunger, humiliation and isolation, the Jewish ghettos also contained self-initiated organizations for mutual aid and support, medical care and culture. Many mobilized to help those weaker than themselves. Throughout the entire period, there were Jews who displayed exemplary sacrifice in their attempts to save their brethren. In a reality where education was prohibited, small study

groups were established in which children met covertly and studied with teachers, whose recompense was usually meager portions of food. Even under the harshest of conditions, Jews exercised creativity, wrote, prayed, issued religious rulings, and secretly observed their holidays.

⁸³Kaplan, Chaim Aharon. *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 174.

Youth groups and underground journalism were evident, as were impressive cultural undertakings, such as theatrical performances, lectures, literary evenings and poetry readings.

In January 1942, in the Vilna ghetto, archivist and Bund member Herman Kruk wrote in his diary, “Today I received a formal invitation from a group of founding Jewish artists in the ghetto announcing that the first evening of the local artistic circle will be held... in the auditorium of the Real Gymnasium at Rudnicka 6. A dramatic and vocal musical program will be presented... I felt offended, personally offended... Here, in the doleful situation of the Vilna ghetto, in the shadow of Ponar, where, of the 76,000 Vilna Jews, only some 15,000 remain – here, at this moment, this is a disgrace.” The Bundists decided to boycott the event, and in the streets of the ghetto Yiddish placards were hung, reading: “You don’t make a theatre in a graveyard.”⁸⁴

However, some two months later, Kruk entered as follows in his diary: “Nevertheless, life is stronger than anything. In the Vilna ghetto, life begins to pulse again. Under the overcoat of Ponar, a life creeps out that strives for a better morning. The boycotted concerts prevail. The halls are full. The literary evenings burst their seams, and the local hall cannot hold the large number that comes there.”⁸⁵

Evidence of spiritual activity could be found even behind the barbed wire of the camps, helping the prisoners transcend the extreme existential hardships there. Jewish women, deported via Auschwitz to a labor camp in Germany, organized study groups in 1944. Each woman was asked to write down poetry from memory on a piece of paper, using pencils gathered painstakingly from the ruins of the bombed-out buildings where they labored. “After a few days we were seated in a circle writing, and a few days later held our first reading. We invited guests from the other blocks and declaimed grandly until we almost forgot where we were.”⁸⁶

Writing was also a way to preserve the freedom of the human spirit: Many Jews documented their lives. Artists and intellectuals, along with children and laymen, described the shattering horror of the war through words and pictures. Some wrote out of their will to preserve the memory of the tragedy for future generations, as a final testimony. Others viewed writing as a means of venting and expressing feelings of guilt, pain and rage. Writing was also a means to sustain their spirits as free men and women. Facing the horror of death, diaries became the sole testaments that their owners left behind, the last remnant of the human soul.

Even today, the atrocities perpetrated by and in the name of Nazi Germany throughout Europe elicit challenging questions regarding the abyss to which humanity can descend. At the same time, the horrors of the period also illustrate how high the human spirit can soar, as evidenced in the

² Kruk, Herman. *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939-1944* (Yale University Press, 2002), p. 174

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 226-227

⁸⁶ ⁴ Fried, Hedy. *The Road to Auschwitz: Fragments of a Life* (Nebraska University Press, 1990), p. 121

actions and sacrifice of the persecuted, as Jews and as human beings. Even today, over 70 years after the Holocaust, we are inspired by the spiritual fortitude of those who upheld their ethics and values in a world in which these had collapsed around them.

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote, "Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress."⁸⁷⁵

Many of those who struggled to maintain and preserve the human spirit did not survive the horrors of the Holocaust, but their deeds and actions are a reminder to future generations of the stamina and the nobility of the human spirit.

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing the last of human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances - to choose one's own way.

⁸⁷ Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 2006), p. 65

120. We Who Lived in Concentration Camps

We who lived in concentration camps can remember
the men who walked through the huts comforting
We others, giving away their last piece of bread.
They may have been few in number, but they offer
sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a
man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -
to choose one's attitude in any given set of
circumstances, to choose one's own way.

And there were always choices to make. Every
day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a
decision, a decision which determined whether
you would or would not submit to those powers
which threatened to rob you of yourself, your
inner freedom.

Viktor E. Frankl, "Man's Search for Meaning"; Simon and Schuster Publishers , 1985

121. I Prefer to Emphasize the Kindness

*I prefer to emphasize the kindness and
compassion of my brothers in misfortune. These
qualities were found even in the kingdom of
darkest night, as I can testify
- indeed, as I must. The Jewish soul was a target of
the enemy. He sought to corrupt it, even as he
strove to destroy us physically. But despite his
destructive force, despite his corrupting power,
the Jewish soul remained beyond his reach.*

*I remember a Dutchman who shared his bread with a
comrade sicker than he was, a comrade he did not know. "I
prefer to be hungry than to feel remorse," he said.*

Elie Wiesel, *All Rivers Run To The Sea*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1996

122. Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum

Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum was the founder, director and leading spirit of the Underground Archives in the Warsaw Ghetto, also known as “*Oneg Shabbat*”. The excerpt below is taken from his last letter, written on March 1st, 1944, and intended to be read by Jewish cultural figures in the free world. One week later, on March 7, the Gestapo discovered the underground hideout in the ghetto where he and his family were hiding. Dr. Ringelblum, his wife Jehudith, his son Uriah and thirty-five others, mostly intelligentsia, underwent terrible torture at the hands of the Germans, and were shot in the ruins of Warsaw.

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you at a time when ninety-five percent of the Jews of Poland have already perished in gruesome sufferings, in the gas-chambers of the slaughterhouses of Treblinka, of Sobibor, of Chelmno and Oswiecim, or were murdered in the countless “liquidation-actions” in ghettos and camps....

A clandestine, central Jewish Archive has been created, with the innocent name of Oneg Shabbat, under the leadership of Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum, its initiator, and with the active help of H. Wasser, E. Gutkowski, M.A., Rabbi Huberband Winter, M. Kon, A. Lewison, a.o. This archive collected materials and documents related to the martyrdom of Polish Jews. The intensive efforts of this staff resulted in the accumulation of more than ten crates of particularly valuable documents, chronicles, diaries, write-ups, photographs, etc. All these materials were buried underground within the Ghetto. These are not at present accessible. Most of the material which was sent out abroad came from our archives. We did alert the world with exact information about the most serious crime in human history. We continue with the work of our archives. In the face of incredible conditions, we continue collecting documents and notes connected with the sufferings, the struggle and the present condition in which the remnant of Polish Jewry survives... At the present moment, there are no more Jews in Vilna. This great center of Jewish culture and modern scientific work has been completely destroyed.... It is doubtful that we will meet again. Give our warm greetings to all Jewish cultural workers, writers, journalists, musicians, sculptors, all builders of present-day Jewish culture and fighters for our national redemption, and that of humanity as a whole.

Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum,

Dr. A. Berman Warsaw, March 1, 1944 *To Live with Honor, To Die with Honor*, Edited by Joseph Kermish, Yad Vashem Publishers, 1986

Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum

123. The Technical Committee of the Oneg Shabbat

David Graber, Nahum Grzywacz and Israel Lichtensztajn constituted the Technical Committee of the *Oneg Shabbat* Archive, and it was their task to conceal its documents and papers in the ground. None of the three survived and the only trace of them remained in the three short notes authored by them, contained in the Archive together with their testaments and uncovered **with** the first installment of the archive.

Warsaw, July 31, 1942

I have thrown myself with flaming enthusiasm, into the work of collecting material for the archive. I have been charged with the role of guardian of the access gate. I hid the material...

I know we shall not last. It is not possible to live through, to survive such horrible murders, such massacres. This is why I write my testament. It may be that I do not deserve to be remembered, only perhaps for the courage to help with the Oneg Shabbat group, to be the one most exposed to danger, for my having hidden the entire material To pay with my head would have been a trifle. I risk my head for my beloved wife, Gele Sekstein, and for that jewel of mine, my little daughter Margalit.

Wish we were the redeeming sacrifice for all the other Jews the world over. I do believe in the survival of the People. Jews shall not be wiped out.

From the testament of Israel Lichtensztajn, *To Live with Honor, To Die with Honor*, Yad Vashem Publishers, 1996

3 August 1942

I want no thanks. For me enough if future generations remember our times....

Not for getting thanks we stayed up entire nights. With what kind of enthusiasm we two, Grzywacz and I, supervised and helped by Lichtensztajn, dug the graves for the boxes; with what joy we received each new material We sensed our responsibility. We shied from no risk. It was clear to us we were creating a piece of history and that was more important than individual life...

May the treasure fall in good hands, may it last into better times, may it alarm and alert the world to what happened and was played out in the twentieth century.

From the testament of David Graber, *To Live with Honor, To Die with Honor*, Yad Vashem Publishers, 1996

124. From the Testament of Nahum Grzywacz

We have decided to describe the present times. Yesterday we sat up till late in the night, since we did not know whether we would survive till today. Now I am in the midst of writing, while in the streets the terrible shooting is going on... Of one thing I am proud, that in these grave and fateful days I was one of those who buried the treasure... in those days when they were shooting... in order that you should know of the tortures and murders of the Nazi tyranny.

From the testament of Nahum Grzywacz, Facing History and Ourselves - the Jews of Poland, Massachusetts

125. The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy

Secret teaching of Judaic subjects flourished. They were taught by the great Talmudic scholars Lazar Panzer and Schein Klingberg. •

Three synagogues existed, and the religious life did not suffer any significant change. Services were held, people generally observed the religious tenets—fasting, celebrating the Shabbat and observing the holidays. During these holidays, ardent devotion was evident. The lamentations and zeal written on their faces betokened, only too well, the depth and intensity of their worship.

From the windows of the pharmacy facing the large courtyard in the rear of the building, I saw an old man with a gray beard and peyoth [side curls] rhythmically rocking to the plaintive sounds of the cantor's hymns.../ saw old women in lace-embroidered shawls standing motionless with glassy staring eyes, immersed in the monotonous sounds of the prayers while in the depths of grief and anxiety for themselves and their loved ones.

Often, and particularly in the periods of the Jewish holidays, I would listen to conversations and discussions on religious topics. The atmosphere—serious, mystical, overwhelmed one with its irresistible power.

Tadeusz Pankiewicz, "The Cracow Ghetto Pharmacy" New York: Holocaust Library, 1987

126. **Voices from the Ground**

We are slaves, deprived of every right,
exposed to every insult, condemned to
certain death, but we still possess one power,
and we must defend it with all our strength,
for it is the last - the power to refuse our
consent...

.. 150 we must certainly wash our faces
without soap in dirty water and dry
ourselves on our jackets. We must polish our
shoes, not because the regulation states it,
but for dignity and propriety. We must walk
erect, without dragging our feet, not in
homage to Prussian discipline but to remain
alive, not to begin to die.

Primo Levi, as quoted in *Auschwitz - Voices from the Ground*, Auschwitz -Birkenau'; Panstwowe Muzeum, 1992

127. Belgium, 1942

Joan Seliger Sidney

Your mother disappears
Another pair of hands
pulls off your shoes and socks
Another voice
coaxes you to eat

You don't ask why. Remember
Your name is Micheline,
not Ida.

The family teaches you
to say grace before meals, to bow
your head and pray

At school, the children
sing their songs
of trees , or birds, or stars.
Faraway
you see the yellow star your mother
stitched to your sleeve

Joan Seliger Sidney. *Body of Diminishing Motion: Poems and a Memoir*. Fort Lee, NJ: CavanKerry Press, 2005

Joan Seliger Sidney has received individual artist's poetry fellowships from Connecticut Commission on the Arts, Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, Vermont Studio Center, also a Visiting Faculty Fellowship from Yale. She's writer-in-residence at the University of Connecticut's Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life. In addition, she facilitates "Writing for Your Life," an adult workshop.



128. They Had a System: In Memory of the Girl whose Name Vanished with Her

Yala Korwin

She went to the bakery
just around the corner
to get rations of bread
for them all.
She didn't let her mother go.
She said: stay home.
Yesterday
they took old people away.
Where to?
No one knows.
Stay. I'll go.
She went and didn't return.
That day
they took the young ones away.
They had a system. They were
thorough.

Her mother worried. The girl
had nothing warm on.
Winter was near and winds

were quite strong already.
How will she work in the cold
wherever they sent her?
Then a postcard arrived.
Just a few words scribbled
with the girl's hand:
Dear Mama. I'm well.
Work isn't hard.
Don't worry.

Her mother worried.
She put the girl's warm coat
in a box,
made a neat package
and waited.
She waited for another postcard
with an address on it.
It never came.

They had a system.

Yala Korwin. *To Tell the Story: Poems of the Holocaust*. Holocaust Library, 1987.

Yala Korwin, artist and poet, was born in Poland. Having survived a labor camp in the heart of Germany, and having no place to return to, she let the winds carry her to France, where she lived as a refugee for ten years. However, after years away from her native country, the Polish tongue didn't seem the right tool anymore. French, though greatly admired, remained a stranger. A breakthrough came after she emigrated in 1956, with her husband and young children, to the United States. Enrolled in college in 1965, she majored in French Literature with a minor in Art. She eventually earned her BA degree Magna Cum Laude, and a Master's degree in Library Science.



129. The Butterfly

Pavel Friedmann 4.6.1942

Theresienstadt

The last, the very last,
 So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
 Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
 Against a white stone ...

Such, such a yellow
 Is carried lightly way up high.
 It went away I'm sure because it wished to
 kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
 Penned up inside this ghetto
 But I have found my people here.
 The dandelions call to me
 And the white chestnut candles in the court.
 Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
 Butterflies don't live in here,
 In the ghetto.



Pavel Friedman. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Edited by Hana Volavková, Václav Havel (Afterword), Chaim Potok (Foreword by). Schocken Books, 1987. Written in Theresienstadt, June 4, 1942

Pavel Friedman (January 7, 1921 – September 29, 1944) was born in Prague and deported to Theresienstadt concentration camp, in the fortress and garrison city of Terezín (German name Theresienstadt), located in what is now the Czech Republic. Little is known of Friedman's life prior to his incarceration at the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where his arrival was recorded on April 26, 1942. On June 4, 1942 he wrote a poem "The Butterfly" on a piece of thin copy paper which was discovered after liberation and later donated to the Jewish Museum in Prague (formerly State Jewish Museum). On September 29, 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz, where he died.

130. Fear

Hana Pickova

Today the ghetto knows a different fear,
Close in its grip, Death wields an icy scythe.
An evil sickness spreads a terror in its wake,
The victims of its shadow weep and writhe.

Today a father's heartbeat tells his fright
And mothers bend their heads into their hands.
Now children choke and die with typhus here,
A bitter tax is taken from their bands.

My heart still beats inside my breast
While friends depart for other worlds.
Perhaps it's better — who can say? —
Than watching this, to die today?

No, no, my God, we want to live!
Not watch our numbers melt away.
We want to have a better world,
We want to work — we must not die!

Hana Pickova. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Edited by Hana Volavková, Václav Havel (Afterword), Chaim Potok (Foreword by). Schocken Books, 1987.

Eva Picková was born in Nymburk on May 15, 1929, deported to Terezín on April 16, 1942, and perished in Oswiecim (Auschwitz) on December 18, 1943. Her poem is preserved in a copy turned over to the State Jewish Museum in Prague by Dr. R. Feder in 1955. It is signed at the bottom, "12-year old Eva Picková from Nymburk."

131. Blessed is the Match

Hannah Szenes

אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּפְרוֹר שֶׁנִּשְׂרַף וְהֵצִית לְהַבּוֹת
 אֲשֶׁרִי הַלֵּהָבָה שֶׁבְּעֶרְהָ בְּסִתְּרִי לְבָבוֹת.
 אֲשֶׁרִי הַלְבָבוֹת שֶׁיָּדְעוּ לְהִדּוֹל בְּכָבוֹד. ...
 אֲשֶׁרִי הַגִּפְרוֹר שֶׁנִּשְׂרַף וְהֵצִית לְהַבּוֹת.

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame
 Blessed is the flame that burns in the secret fastness of the heart
 Blessed is the heart with strength to stop beating for honor's sake
 Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame



Through her brief but noteworthy life, Hannah Szenes (1921-1944) became a symbol of idealism and self-sacrifice. Her poems, made famous in part because of her unfortunate death, reveal a woman imbued with hope, even in the face of adverse circumstances.

Szenes, the daughter of an author and journalist, was born in Budapest. She demonstrated her own literary talent from an early age, and she kept a diary from age 13 until shortly before her death. Although her family was assimilated, anti-Semitic sentiment in Budapest led her to involvement in Zionist activities, and she left Hungary for Eretz Yisrael in 1939. She studied first at an agricultural school, and then settled at Kibbutz Sdot Yam. While there she wrote poetry, as well as a play about kibbutz life.

In 1943 Szenes joined the British Army and volunteered to be parachuted into Europe. The purpose of this operation was to help the Allied efforts in Europe and establish contact with partisan resistance fighters in an attempt to aid beleaguered Jewish communities. Szenes trained in Egypt and was one of the thirty-three chosen to parachute behind enemy lines. With the goal of reaching her native Budapest, Szenes was parachuted in March, 1944 into Yugoslavia, and spent three months with Tito's partisans. Her idealism and

commitment to her cause are memorialized in her poem “Blessed is the Match,” which she wrote at this time.

On June 7, 1944, at the height of the deportation of Hungarian Jews, Szenes crossed the border into Hungary. She was caught almost immediately by the Hungarian police, and although tortured cruelly and repeatedly over the next several months, refused to divulge any information. Even the knowledge that her mother was at risk and that she too might be harmed did not move Szenes to cooperate with the police. At her trial in October of that year, Szenes staunchly defended her activities and she refused to request clemency. Throughout her ordeal she remained steadfast in her courage, and when she was executed by a firing squad on November 7, she refused the blindfold, staring squarely at her executors and her fate



Hannah Szenes wearing an Hungarian army uniform as a Purim costume

In 1950, Szenes’ remains were brought to Israel and re-interred in the military cemetery on Mount Herzl. Her diary and literary works were later published, and many of her more popular poems, including “Towards Caesarea” and “Blessed is the Match,” have been set to music. She has also been the subject of several artistic works, including a play by Aharon Megged.

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/szenes.html>

132. Riddle

William Heyen

From Belsen a crate of gold teeth,
 from Dachau a mountain of shoes,
 from Auschwitz a skin lampshade.
 Who killed the Jews?

Not I, cries the typist,
 not I, cries the engineer,
 not I, cries Adolf Eichmann,
 not I, cries Albert Speer.

My friend Fritz Novak lost his father –
 a petty official had to choose.
 My friend Lou Abrahms lost his brother.
 Who killed the Jews?

David Novak swallowed gas,
 Hyman Abrahms was beaten and starved.
 Some men signed their papers,
 and some stood guard,

and some herded them in,
 and some dropped the pellets,
 and some spread the ashes,
 and some hosed the walls,

and some planted the wheat,
 and some poured the steel,
 and some cleared the rails,
 and some raised the cattle.

Some smelled the smoke,
 some just heard the news.
 Were they Germans? Were they Nazis?
 Were they human? Who killed the Jews?

The stars will remember the gold,
 the sun will remember the shoes,
 the moon will remember the skin.
 But who killed the Jews?

William Heyen. *Holocaust Poetry*. Hilda Schiff, ed. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

William Helmuth Heyen (born November 1, 1940) is an American poet, editor, and literary critic. He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in Suffolk County. He received a BA from the State University of New York at Brockport and earned a doctorate in English from Ohio University in 1967. He taught American literature and creative writing at SUNY–Brockport for over 30 years before retiring in 2000.



133. A Mountain of Shoes

Moishe Shulstein

I saw a mountain higher than Mt. Blanc
and more holy than the mountain of Sinai, not in a dream.
It was real.

On this world it stood. Such a mountain I saw
of Jewish shoes in Majdanek. Such a mountain
Such a mountain I saw and suddenly
a strange thing happened. The mountain *moved*
moved....

and the thousands of shoes arranged *themselves* by size
by pairs
and in rows
and *moved*.

Hear! Hear the march
hear the shuffle of shoes left behind — that which remained from small, from large
from each and everyone.

Make way for the rows
for the pairs
for the generations for the years.

The shoe army — it *moves* and *moves*.

“We are the shoes

we are the last witnesses

we are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers, from Prague, Paris, and Amsterdam,
and because we are only made of stuff and leather and not of blood and flesh
each one of us *avoided* the hell-fire. We shoes

that used to go strolling in the market

or with the bride and groom to the *chuppa*, we shoes from simple Jews

from butchers and carpenters

from crocheted booties of babies

just beginning to walk and go

on happy occasions, weddings and even until the time of giving birth, to a dance, to
exciting places

to life

or quietly ... to a funeral unceasingly we go.

We tramp.

The hangman never had the chance to snatch us into his sack of loot, now we go to HIM.

Let everyone hear the steps which flow as tears,



the steps that measure out the judgment.”
I saw a mountain higher than Mt. Blanc
and more holy than the mountain of Sinai.

Moishe Shulstein. “A Mountain Of Shoes” translated from Yiddish by Bea Stadtler and Mindelle Wajzman in Michael Berenbaum. *The World Must Know*. Little, Brown & Company. Boston, Mass. 1993, 145
http://www.holocausteducationctr.org/clientuploads/curriculum/HHREC_Holocaust_Curriculum_Lesson5.pdf

Moische Schulstein, or Moses Schulstein, Mosheh Shulshteyn, Moyshe Shulshteyn, Moshe, (1911 - 1981) is a Yiddish poet and Holocaust survivor. After the war, he moved to Paris where he continued to publish in Yiddish. One of his poems was chosen to appear on the wall of the Holocaust Memorial in Washington DC.

134. The First Ones

Yitzhak Katzenelson

The first ones to be destroyed were the children,
Little orphans abandoned upon the face of the earth. They who were the best in the world
The acme of grace on the dark earth!
Oh, tender orphans!
From the bereaved of the world
In a house of shelter we drew consolation; From the mournful faces, mute and dark
We said the light of day will yet break upon us.

Thus it was at the end of the winter, forty-two,
In such a poor house of shelter,
I saw children just gathered from the street;
And I hid in a corner of corners,
I saw in the embrace of a nurse
A little girl less than two years old
Emaciated, thin, her face the pallor of death, And her eyes so grave, so serious.

At this station another girl I saw, about five years old;
She fed her younger brother and he cried,
The little one, he was sick;
Into a diluted bit of jam she dipped tiny crusts of bread,
And skillfully she inserted them into his mouth .
This my eyes were privileged to see!

To see this mother, a mother of five years feeding her child,
To hear her soothing words ——
My own mother, the best in the whole world
Had not invented such a ruse.
But this one wiped his tears with a smile, Injected joy into his heart.

Excerpted from *The Song of the Murdered Jewish People*, by the noted poet Yitzhak Katzenelson (1886-1944), who perished in Auschwitz with his last surviving son.

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=ivKVLcMVIsG&b=476157>

Itzhak Katzenelson (1 July 1886 – 1 May 1944) was a Jewish teacher, poet and dramatist. He was born in 1886 in Karelichy near Minsk, and was murdered May 1, 1944 in Auschwitz. Soon after his birth Katzenelson's family moved to Łódź, Poland, where he grew up. He worked as a teacher, founding a school, and as a dramatist in both Yiddish and Hebrew, starting a theatre group which toured Poland and Lithuania. Following the German invasion of Poland in 1939 he and his family fled to Warsaw, where they were trapped in the Ghetto. There he ran an underground school for Jewish children. His wife and two of his sons were deported to the Treblinka extermination camp and murdered there.



Katzenelson participated in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising starting on April 18, 1943. To save his life, friends supplied him and his surviving son with forged Honduran passports. They managed to leave the ghetto but later surrendered at the Hotel Polski. He was deported to a detention camp in Vittel, France, where the Nazis held American and British citizens and nationals of other Allied and neutral countries, for possible later prisoner exchange.

In late April 1944, Itzhak Katzenelson and his son Zvi were sent on a transport to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where they were murdered on May 1, 1944.

135. Pigtail

Tadeusz Różewicz

When all the women in the transport
had their heads shaved
four workmen with brooms made of birch twigs
swept up
and gathered up the hair

Behind clean glass
the stiff hair lies
of those suffocated in gas chambers
there are pins and side combs
in this hair

The hair is not shot through with light
is not parted by the breeze
is not touched by any hand
or rain or lips

In huge chests
clouds of dry hair
of those suffocated
and a faded plait
a pigtail with a ribbon
pulled at school
by naughty boys.

Tadeusz Różewicz. "Pigtail." Translated by Adam Czerniawski in. *Holocaust Poetry*. Hilda Schiff, ed. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/pigtail/>

Tadeusz Różewicz (October 9, 1921) is a Polish poet, dramatist and writer. Różewicz belongs to the first generation of Polish writers born after Poland regained its independence in 1918 following the century of foreign partitions. He was born in Radomsko near Łódź. His first poems were published in 1938. During the Second World War, like his brother Janusz (also a poet), he was a soldier of the Polish underground Home Army.

By the time of his literary debut as a highly innovative playwright in 1960 with *The Card Index* (*Kartoteka*), he was already the author of fifteen acclaimed volumes of poetry published since 1944. He had written over a dozen plays and several screenplays. Różewicz is considered one of Poland's best postwar poets and most innovative playwrights



136. Posthumous Rehabilitation

Tadeusz Różewicz

The dead have remembered
our indifference
The dead have remembered
our silence
The dead have remembered
our words

The dead see our snouts
laughing from ear to ear
The dead see
our bodies rubbing against each other
The dead hear
clucking tongues

The dead read our books
listen to our speeches
delivered so long ago

The dead scrutinize our lectures
join in previously terminated
discussions
The dead see our hands
poised for applause

The dead see stadiums
ensembles and choirs declaiming
rhythmically

all the living are guilty

little children
who offered bouquets of flowers
are guilty
lovers are guilty
guilty are poets

guilty are those who ran away
and those that stayed
those who were saying yes
those who said no
and those who said nothing

the dead are taking stock of the living
the dead will not rehabilitate us

Tadeusz Różewicz. "Posthumous Rehabilitation." Translated by Adam Czerniawski. *Holocaust Poetry*. Hilda Schiff, ed. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.
<http://dungtientran3.blogspot.com/2006/11/tadeusz-rzewicz.html>

137. I Did Not Manage to Save

Jerzy Ficowski

I did not manage to save
a single life
I did not know how to stop
a single bullet
And I wander round cemeteries
which are not there
I look for words
which are not there
I run
To help where no one called
to rescue after the event
I want to be on time
even if I am too late

Jerzy Ficowski. (Translated by Keith Bosley & Krystyna Wandycz) *Holocaust Poetry*. Hilda Schiff, ed. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

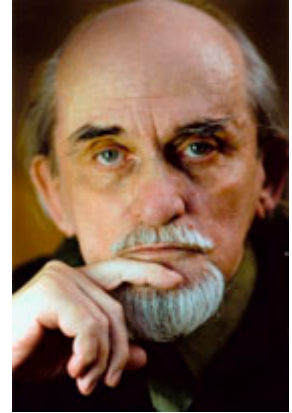
Jerzy Ficowski (October 4, 1924 - May 9, 2006) was a Polish poet, writer and translator (from Yiddish, Russian, Romani and Hungarian). During the German occupation of Poland in World War II, Ficowski who lived in Włochy near Warsaw, was a member of the Polish resistance. He was a member of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK), was imprisoned in the infamous Pawiak and took part in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. His codename was Wrak and he fought in Mokotów region. Following the uprising, Ficowski entered a camp with other survivors of the battle. After the war, Ficowski returned to Warsaw and enrolled at the university in order to study philosophy and sociology. There he published his first volume of poetry, *Ołowiani żołnierze* (*The Tin Soldiers*, 1948). Under the communist regime he urged his fellow writers to voice their concerns over censorship and the suppression of workers.



138. Excerpts from the Poem “5.8.42 In Memory of Janusz Korczak”

Jerzy Ficowski

What did the Old Doctor do
In the cattle wagon
bound for Treblinka on the fifth of August
over the few hours of the bloodstream
over the dirty river of time
I do not know
....
did he lie to them for instance
in small
numbing doses
groom the sweaty little heads
for the scurrying lice of fear
I do not know
....
Suddenly the Old Doctor saw
The children had grown
as old as he was
older and older
that was how fast they had to go grey as ash



By Jerzy Ficowski (translated by Keith Bosley) in *Holocaust Poetry*, Hilda Schiff. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995).

<http://thestringer.com.au/5-8-1942-in-memory-of-janusz-korczak-by-jerzy-ficowski/#.U1GnbFeCUtU>

139. Holocaust 1944

Anne Ranasinghe

I do not know
In what strange far off earth
They buried you;
Nor what harsh northern winds
Blow through the stubble,
The dry, hard stubble
Above your grave.

And did you think of me
That frost- blue December morning,
Snow- heavy and bitter,
As you walked naked and shivering
Under the leaden sky,
In that last moment
When you knew it was the end,
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing,
Did you think of me?

Oh I remember you my dearest,
Your pale hands spread
In the ancient blessing
Your eyes bright and shining
Above the candles
Intoning the blessing
Blessed be the Lord...

And therein lies the agony,
The agony and the horror
That after all there was no martyrdom
But only futility –
The futility of dying
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing.
I weep red tears of blood.
Your blood.

Anne Ranasinghe from *Holocaust Poetry*. Hilda Schiff, ed. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995.

Anne Ranasinghe (October 2 1925 in Essen) is one of the leading Sri Lankan writers of our time. These works are written in English. Anne Ranasinghe was born Anneliese Katz in Essen to a Jewish family. She was an only child. In 1939, at the age of 13, Anne was sent by her parents to an aunt in England to escape the Nazi terror. At the outbreak of the Second World War she was declared an enemy alien. She later learned that her parents and all her relatives were murdered by the Nazis. Anne trained as a nurse and as a journalist. In 1949 she married a Sri Lankan medicine professor and went with him to Sri Lanka.



140. I Keep Forgetting

Lily Brett

I keep forgetting
the facts and statistics
and each time
I need to know them

I look up books
these books line
twelve shelves
in my room

I know where to go
to confirm the fact
that in the Warsaw Ghetto
there were 7.2 people per room

and in Lodz
they allocated
5.8 people
to each room

I forget
over and over again
that one third of Warsaw
was Jewish

and in the ghetto
they crammed 500,000 Jews
into 2.4 per cent
of the area of the city

and how many
bodies were they burning
in Auschwitz
at the peak of their production

twelve thousand a day
I have to check
and re-check

and did I dream
that at 4pm on the 19th January
58,000 emaciated inmates
were marched out of Auschwitz

was I right
to remember that in Bergen Belsen
from the 4th-13th of April 1945
28,000 Jews arrived from other
camps

I can remember
hundreds and hundreds
of phone numbers

phone numbers
I haven't phoned
for twenty years
are readily accessible

and I can remember
people's conversations
and what someone's wife
said to someone else's husband

what a good memory
you have,
people tell me.

Lily Brett (born 5 September 1946) is a German-born Australian novelist, essayist and poet who now lives in New York City. During World War II, Brett's parents Max and Rose survived six years in the Łódź ghettos in Poland, before being taken to Auschwitz concentration camp where they were eventually separated. It took them six months to find each other again after the war ended in 1945. Brett was born in a displaced persons' camp in Germany in 1946. She was aged two (1948) before her parents were able to leave Germany and emigrate to Melbourne, Australia. Brett grew up in North Carlton. In the summer of 1967 she traveled to America to cover the Monterey International Pop Festival, then onto the UK, before returning to Australia. In 1989 Brett moved from Melbourne to New York City with her husband, Australian painter David Rankin. Brett has published seven volumes of poetry, three collections of essays, and six novels.



141. Never Shall I Forget that Night

Elie Wiesel

Never shall I forget that night,
the first night in camp,
which has turned my life into one long night,
seven times cursed and seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.
Never shall I forget the little faces of the children,
whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke
beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames
which consumed my faith forever.
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence
which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments
which murdered my God and my soul
and turned my dreams to dust.

Never shall I forget these things,
even if I am condemned to live
as long as God Himself.

Never.

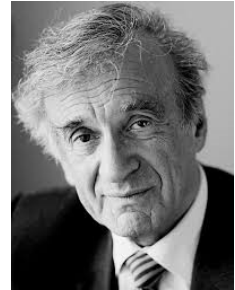
From Elie Wiesel, *Night*. (New York: Bantam, 1982, p.32. Copyright © 1958 by Les Editions de Minuit.
Translation copyright © 2006 by Marion Wiesel
<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/poetry/never-shall-i-forget-elie-wiesel>

Eliezer “Elie” Wiesel, KBE (born September 30, 1928) is a Romanian-born Jewish-American professor and political activist. He is the author of 57 books, including *Night*, a work based on his experiences as a prisoner in the Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald concentration camps.

After World War II, Wiesel taught Hebrew and worked as a choirmaster before becoming a professional journalist. He learned French, which became the language he used most frequently in writing.

For ten years after the war, Wiesel refused to write about or discuss his experiences during the Holocaust. Like many survivors, Wiesel could not find the words to describe his experiences. Wiesel rewrote a shortened version of a 900 page memoir in French, and it was published as the 127-page *La Nuit*, and later translated into English as *Night*. Wiesel had trouble finding a publisher for his book, and initially it sold few copies.

In 1955, Wiesel moved to New York City. In the US, Wiesel wrote over 40 books, both fiction and non-fiction, and won many literary prizes. Wiesel’s writing is considered among the most important in Holocaust literature. Some historians credit Wiesel with giving the term “Holocaust” its present meaning. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for speaking out against violence, repression, and racism.



142. Shema

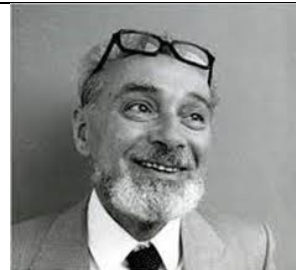
Primo Levi

You who live secure
 In your warm houses
 Who return at evening to find
 Hot food and friendly faces:
 Consider whether this is a man,
 Who labours in the mud
 Who knows no peace
 Who fights for a crust of bread
 Who dies at a yes or a no.
 Consider whether this is a woman,
 Without hair or name
 With no more strength to remember
 Eyes empty and womb cold
 As a frog in winter.
 Consider that this has been:
 I commend these words to you.
 Engrave them on your hearts
 When you are in your house, when you walk on your way,
 When you go to bed, when you rise.
 Repeat them to your children.
 Or may your house crumble,
 Disease render you powerless,
 Your offspring avert their faces from you.

Primo Levi. *Shema: Collected Poems*. Translated by R. Feldman and B. Swann. Menard Press, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1976

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/shema/>

Primo Michele Levi (31 July 1919 – 11 April 1987) was an Italian Jewish chemist and writer. He was the author of several books, novels, collections of short stories, essays, and poems. His best-known works include *If This Is a Man* (1947) (U.S.: *Survival in Auschwitz*), his account of the year he spent as a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland; and his unique work, *The Periodic Table* (1975), linked to qualities of the elements, which the Royal Institution of Great Britain named the best science book ever written.



143. There Were Those

By Susan Dambroff

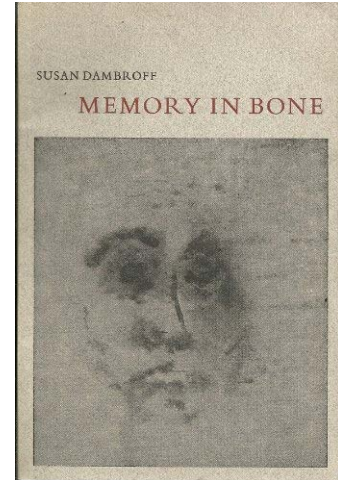
There were those
Who escaped to the forests
Who crawled through sewers
Who jumped from the backs of trains

There were those
Who smuggled messages
Who smuggled dynamite
Inside breadloaves
Inside matchboxes
Inside corpses

There were those
Who were shoemakers
Who put nails
Into the boots
Of German soldiers

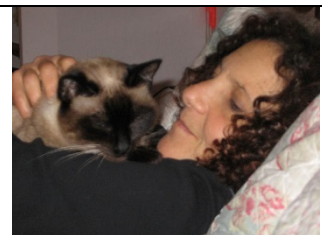
There were those
Who wrote poetry
Who put on plays
Who taught the children

There were those
Who fed each other



Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust, edited by Charles Adés Fishman. Time Being Books, 2007.
<http://sfi.usc.edu/sites/default/files/lessons/units/Previewing%20Focus%20poem.pdf>

Susan Dambroff is a mother, poet, and teacher of autistic children. She has been working with children and their families for over 25 years. Her book *Memory in the Bone* is an introspective journey about herself as a Jew and a political person. Her work has also been published in *Ghosts of the Holocaust* (Wayne State University Press) and in a number of literary journals.



144. To My Wife

By Avraham Sutzkever

Don't count the toll of wounds
The suffering, the scar.
You have ignited once
A newborn baby star

And at your feet, a spring
In our dark cave has curled
And suddenly a baby's
Cooing has touched the world.

And like the purest spring
The word was then revealed,
But up above no one
Must hear what must be sealed

I knelt for you in thanks.
My spirits too did lift.
It brought you from above
Two blades of grass, a gift.

A child is not an other –
It's you alone and me.
It leads up on a ladder

Close to ourselves, you see.
But still before we thought
A name for him that's right
The axes and the crowbars
Have plundered in the night

The babe knew not a thing.
It dozed off in its rest.
A German came and ripped him
Away from mother's breast.

And what can take its place,
Dear, desolate and wild,
When from afar they glow
The small bones of our child.

And breathlessly we rush,
Through swamp and growth so wild,
You hold in hand a rifle –
A shadow of your child

Avraham Sutzkever. *A. Sutzkever: Selected Poetry and Prose*. University of California Press, 1991.

Abraham (Avrom) Sutzkever was born on July 15, 1913 in Smorgon, Russian Empire, now Smarhorń, Belarus. During World War I, his family fled eastwards from the German invasion and settled in Omsk, Siberia, where his father, Hertz Sutzkever, died. Three years after the war, his mother, Rayne (née Fainberg), moved the family to Vilna, where Sutzkever attended cheder. In 1930, he joined the Bee Jewish scouting movement. He married Freydke in 1939, a day before World War II began. In 1941, he and his wife were sent to the Vilna Ghetto. Ordered by the Nazis to hand over important Jewish manuscripts and artworks for display in an Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question, to be based in Frankfurt, Sutzkever and his friends hid a diary by Theodor Herzl, drawings by Marc Chagall and other treasured works behind plaster and brick walls in the ghetto. His mother and newborn son were murdered by the Nazis. On September 12, 1943, he and his wife escaped to the forests, and together with fellow Yiddish poet Shmerke Kaczerginsky he fought the occupying forces as a partisan. Sutzkever joined a Jewish unit under the command of Moshe Judka Rudnitski, and took part in several missions before being smuggled into the Soviet Union. In July 1943, he gave a fellow partisan a notebook of his poems, which reached the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow. In March 1944, a small plane was sent to the Vilna forests to bring Sutzkever and his wife to Russia.



In February 1946, he was called up as a witness at the Nuremberg Trials testifying against Franz Murer, the murderer of his mother and son. After a brief sojourn in Poland and Paris, he immigrated to Mandate Palestine, arriving in Tel Aviv in 1947.

Sutzkever had two daughters, Mira and Rina. He died on January 20, 2010 in Tel Aviv at the age of 96.

145. Deep Graves, Red Clay

By Shmuel Halkin

Deep graves, red clay
Once I had a place to stay
Once I had a home

Orchards bloomed then, in the spring
And in the autumn, birds took wing
In wintertime there fell white snow
What flowers now is trouble, woe.

Tragedy from every side
Doors and windows open wide
To the murderers who kill
Those who little children slay
Those who hang the aged, gray
Those who did not spare a soul.

Deep graves, red clay
Once I had a place to stay
Once I had a home

Year after year has gone its way
Fuller are those graves today
And redder still is the red clay
That red clay is now my home
That is where my brothers lie
Limbs torn asunder – left to die
Shot near the grave – without a cry.

Deep graves, red clay
Once I had a place to stay
Once I had a home

Better times someday we'll know
Luck will change, soft winds will blow
Once again will children grow
Shout and jump and run and play
Near deep full graves.
Once again will children grow
The pain should no more overflow.

Deep graves, red clay
Once I had a place to stay
Once I had a home

<http://roseguccione.wordpress.com/2011/08/05/tif-griber-royte-ley-m-deep-graves-red-earth-shmuel-halkin/>

Shmuel Halkin (1897–1960), Soviet Yiddish poet. Born in Rogachev, eastern Belorussia. In 1917, Halkin went to Kiev to study painting, but soon moved to Ekaterinoslav, where in 1921 he published his first poems in the anthology *Trepl* (Stairs). In the early 1920s, he joined the Zionist group and composed Hebrew poetry. Along with others, Halkin was chastised in 1929 by proletarian critics for his lack of optimism and his affection for Hebraic motifs.



During World War II, Halkin was a member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. He wrote some of the most powerful Holocaust poems in Soviet literature, among them “Tife griber, royte leym—kh’hob amol gehat a heym” (Deep pits, red clay—once I had a home).

In 1949, he was arrested following the prosecution of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Thanks to a heart attack that he suffered after his arrest, he was sent to a relatively mild prison camp in Abaz’ in Russia’s far north, where he remained until 1955. There Halkin kept a poetic diary, in which he encoded his experiences in the idiom of philosophical reflection. A complete edition of his Yiddish poetic literature was issued only in 1988 in Israel

146. 1945

By Bernard S. Mikofsky

And that year
 When the fires ceased
 And the ovens were finally cool
 A strange wind moved out
 In slow, grief-laden eddies
 And sooty swirls
 Across Europe –
 And even beyond

And those with conscience
 (And even those without)
 Heard faint sounds from afar,
 Echoes from an age-old abyss,
 And sometimes these seemed to come
 From inside one's ear –
 So tiny and yet so persistent,
 Echoes of the anonymous cries
 Of numbered millions.

And far from the ovens,
 Far from the funeral fires,
 This wind still carried
 Wraiths of soot
 Too fine to water the eye
 Yet searing the heart.

That year the strange wind
 Moved slowly across Europe –
 And even beyond,
 Now and then pausing
 To eddy into the deepest corners
 Of our minds
 To remind us,
 To stir us for an instant
 From our dream of well-being.

Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust, edited by Charles Adés Fishman. Time Being Books, 2007.
<http://www.quia.com/files/quia/users/tennis27/Holocaust-POETRY.pdf>

Bernard S. Mikofsky, (1919-2005) was a brilliant scholar who graduated first in a college class of 1400. It is said that he had a working knowledge of 52 languages. He taught Russian and other Slavic and Romance languages at Kent State, Indiana University, and elsewhere.

From 1943 to 1946, he served as a U.S. Army Signal Corps Intelligence officer. As a first lieutenant in World War II, he deciphered Chinese and Japanese secret messages.

He taught numerous languages at several universities. Later he became a report-writing consultant. As such, he helped Bethlehem Steel Corp. earn numerous awards during his 21 years there. After retiring, he wrote many articles for local newspapers and published a book of poetry. He was loved by all for his kindness, generosity and sense of humor.

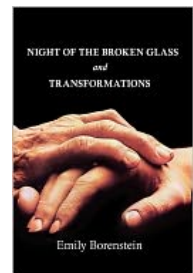
147. I Must Tell the Story

Emily Borenstein

I press my face to the pane of death to witness
 the slaughter of the Jews in Warsaw.
 I must tell the story of this tragic event.
 I write for my friend Pesha.
 I write for my cousin Perelke who was going to be
 an actress
 for my nephew Wiernicka who wrote poetry
 for Chaim Kaplan and his Scroll of Agony
 for half-witted Nathan who was hanged from a tree
 for Hinda, the bride, who died in her husband's arms
 for Motl, the tailor
 for Bruno Schulz, his stories his dreams
 for Emanuel Ringelblum who preserved for posterity
 the record of the slaughter.
 Names pile up like pebbles on tombstones.
 To forget you is to let you die twice.
 To forget you is to hear forever blasting in my head
 the single long note of the Shofar sounding in the houses
 of the dead.

Emily Borenstein. *Night of the Broken Glass and Transformations*. Eugene, OR: Timberline Press, 2007.
<https://mrleach.wikispaces.com/I+Must+Tell+the+Story>

Emily Borenstein was born in 1923 in Elizabeth, N.J. She married Morris Borenstein whom she met at Juilliard when she was a student there studying piano and theory. When her husband-to-be enlisted in the Army Air Corps, Emily dropped out of school to marry him. She earned a graduate degree in English (New York University) and in Clinical Social Work (Columbia University). She was also in private practice as a psychotherapist until 2006. Emily's poetry has appeared in poetry magazines in this country and abroad,



148. The Partisans' Hymn

Words: Hirsh Glik | Music: Russian folk song

Never say that there is only death for you
Though leaden clouds may be concealing skies of blue
Because the hour that we have hungered for is near
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble. We are here!

From land of palm tree to the far off land of snow
We shall be coming with our torment and our woe
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth
Shall our bravery, our vigor blossom forth!

We'll have the morning sun to set our day aglow
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe
And if the time is long before the sun appears
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead
It's not a song that birds sing overhead
It was a people, among toppling barricades
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.

So never say that there is only death for you
For leaden clouds may be concealing skies of blue
And yet the hour that we have hungered for is near,
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble. We are here!

After the war, this hymn of the underground fighters of the Vilna ghetto became the song of Jews throughout the world. It was written by **Hirsh Glik** in 1943 when he received word in Vilna of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Hirsh Glik was one of the most creative and promising young poets of Vilna. He fought against the enemy as a partisan in Estonia. He was killed in battle there.

<http://jewishpartisans.blogspot.com/2012/04/hymn-of-jewish-partisans.html>

Hatikvah

The national anthem of the State of Israel, corresponds to the first stanza and amended refrain of the original nine-stanza poem *Tikvateinu* by Naftali Herz Imber. He wrote the poem in 1878. Imber was a Jewish poet from Zolochiv in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, then part of Austro-Hungary, and today in the Ukraine. Imber emigrated to Palestine in the early 1880s and lived in some of the first Jewish settlements .

Kol'od balevav penimah Nefesh yehudi homiyah, Ul(e)fa'atei mizrach kadimah, 'Ayin letziyon tzofiyah;	As long as in the heart, within, A Jewish soul still yearns, And onward, towards the ends of the east, An eye still gazes toward Zion;
'Od lo avdah tikvateinu, Hatikvah bat sh(e)not 'alpayim, Lihyot 'am chofshi b(e)'artzeinu, 'Eretz-Tziyon viy(e)rushalayim.	Our hope is not yet lost, The hope of two thousand years, To be a free people in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Filip Muller was a Sonderkommando in Auschwitz—a Jewish slave laborer who was kept alive because he helped take corpses from the gas chambers to the crematoria. One of the very few Sonderkommandos to survive the Holocaust, Muller later described the remarkable behavior of one group of Czech Jews who were being marched towards the gas chambers and were told what was about to happen:

Their voices grew subdued and tense, their movements forced, their eyes stared as though they had been hypnotized... Suddenly a voice began to sing. Others joined in, and the sound swelled into a mighty choir. They sang first the Czechoslovak national anthem and then the Hebrew song 'Hatikvah.'

Enraged SS men tried to halt the singing by beating the Jews into submission, Muller wrote. "It was as if they regarded the singing as a last kind of protest which they were determined to stifle if they could." But the SS was unable to stop them. "To be allowed to die together was the only comfort left to these people... And when they sang Hatikvah, now the national anthem of the state of Israel, they were glancing into the future, but it was a future which they would not be allowed to see. To me the bearing of my countrymen seemed an exemplary gesture of national honor and national pride which stirred my soul."

"The Holocaust and 'Hatikvah': A Song of Hope in a Time of Despair."

<http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/03/29/the-holocaust-and-%E2%80%98hatikvah%E2%80%99-a-song-of-hope-in-a-time-of-despair>

149. Mourners' Kaddish

Exalted and sanctified is God's great name
in the world which He has created according to
His will
and may He establish His kingdom in your
lifetime and your days
and in the lifetimes of all the House of Israel
speedily and soon; and say, **Amen**.

May His great name be blessed forever and
to all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted,
extolled and honored, elevated and lauded
be the Name of the Holy One, **blessed be He**,
beyond (far beyond) all the blessings, and
hymns, praises and consolations
that are spoken in the world; and say, **Amen**.

May there be much peace from Heaven,
and good life for us
and for all His people Israel; and say, **Amen**.

He who makes peace in His heights
may He in his mercy make peace upon us
and upon all Israel; and say, **Amen**.

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba,
b'alma di v'ra, kir'utei,
v'yamlikh malkhutei b'hayeikhon u-
v'yomeikhon
u-v'hayei d'khol beit Yisra-el,
ba'agala u-vi-z'man kariv, v'imru **amen**.

Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh l'alam u-l'almei
almaya.

Yitbarakh v'yishtabah v'yitpa-ar v'yitromam
v'yitnasei v'yit-hadar v'yit'aleh v'yit-halal
sh'mei d'kudsha, **b'rikh hu**.
l'ela min kol birkhata v'shirata tushb'hata
v'nehamata
da'amiran b'alma, v'imru **amen**.

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya
v'hayim tovim aleinu
v'al kol Yisra-el, v'imru **amen**.

Oseh shalom bi-m'romav,
hu b'rahamav ya'aseh shalom
aleinu v'al kol Yisra-el, v'imru **amen**.

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שֵׁם ה' רַבָּא

בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרַעוּתָהּ

וְנִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמָּן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ **אָמֵן**

יְהִי שֵׁם ה' רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעֵלָם וּלְעַלְמֵי
עַלְמֵיָא

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרֹמֵם
וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל
שֵׁם ה' דְּקֻדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא.
לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תִּשְׁבַּחְתָּא
וְנִחַמְתָּא
דְּאָמְרִין בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ **אָמֵן**.

יְהִי שְׁלָמָה רַבָּא מִן שָׁמַיָא,
וְחַיִּים טוֹבִים לָנוּ וּלְכָל
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ **אָמֵן**.

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוֵמָיו,
הוּא בְּרַחֲמָיו יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם
עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ **אָמֵן**.

Using Survivor Testimony

150. Using Survivor Testimony in Your Classroom	432
151. Survivor Testimony: What Was It Like?	433
152. Survivor Testimony Workshop	434



Jakob Rotenbach, KL Auschwitz-Birkenau and KL Mauthausen-Gusen survivor. “Nowadays, I will speak when someone asks questions, but I myself won’t start the conversation because I can see that the world has not learned a thing; nothing has changed. People are cruel. And if a new Hitler showed up, the same thing would happen all over again.”

© Copyright 2007 by Maciek Nabrdalik. These pictures were published in the book [The Irreversible](#) by Maciek Nabrdalik. See more pictures by Nabrdalik on [Slate](#).

150. Using Survivor Testimony in Your Classroom

Before the Testimony

1. Call the survivor prior to the visit. Familiarize him with your objectives so that he knows which topics you want him to include. i.e., prewar life, experiences during the war, life after the war.
2. Ask the survivor to bring any photos that he may have. Prepare any maps or relevant photos that might help illustrate the survivor's story.
3. Discuss the location of the room where the testimony will be given and the number of students in the audience.
4. Teach your students about asking appropriate questions. Brainstorm and have students write questions ahead of time. It may be helpful to assign an order to the questions in case students feel reluctant to begin. In some cases, you may want to send the questions to the survivor ahead of time.
5. Ask if you may videotape the testimony as a resource for other classes.

During the Testimony

1. Sit near the survivor. This may make the speaker more comfortable and it may help if there is a need for repeating questions from the students,
2. Make sure the speaker has water, and a microphone if necessary.
3. Repeat or restate questions.
4. Be alert to map references or unfamiliar terms. Use the map and the blackboard to list words and phrases that are unfamiliar.

After the Testimony

1. Debrief your students. What did they learn? What didn't they understand? Are there follow-up questions that you can answer? That only the survivor can answer?
2. Have your students write thank you notes to the survivor. Survivors really enjoy students' responses to testimony.
3. Do a follow up activity that allows your students to reflect on the testimony.

151. Survivor Testimony: What Was It Like?

What was it like during the time of the Holocaust? For each of the following categories, record as many details of daily life as you can. You can also add categories that are not included here. Remember that life was different for Jews and non-Jews. Be specific in your answers.

Clothing	Education
Dwellings	Transportation
Food	Religion
Home Life	The Arts
Health	Civil Law
Work	Media

152. Survivor Testimony Workshop

Resources that I presently use this testimony: relating to	Resources that I need in order to support this testimony:	Ideas for projects/assignments:

National Archives Artifact Analysis

153. Written Document Analysis Worksheet.....	436
154. Photo Analysis Worksheet.....	437
155. Cartoon Analysis Worksheet.....	438
156. Poster Analysis Worksheet	439
157. Map Analysis Worksheet.....	440
158. Artifact Analysis Worksheet.....	441
159. Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet.....	442



Designed and developed by the
Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration,
Washington, DC 20408

153. Written Document Analysis Worksheet

[illegible]

154. Photo Analysis Worksheet

[illegible]

155. Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

[illegible]

156. Poster Analysis Worksheet

1.	What are the main colors used in the poster?
2.	What symbols (if any) are used in the poster?
3.	<p>If a symbol is used, is it</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Clear? (Easy to interpret?) _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Memorable? _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Dramatic? _____</p>
4	Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?
5.	Who do you think is the intended audience for the poster?
6.	What does the Government hope the audience will do?
7.	What Government purpose(s) is served by the poster?
8.	The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct. Is this an effective poster?

157. Map Analysis Worksheet

	<p>TYPE OF MAP (Check one):</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Raised Relief map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Bird's-eye map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Topographic map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Artifact map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Political map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Satellite photograph/mosaic</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Contour-line map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Pictograph</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Natural resource map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Weather map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Military map</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Other</div> </div>
	<p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE MAP (Check one or more):</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Compass</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Name of mapmaker</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Handwritten</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Title</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Date</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Legend (key)</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Notations</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Scale</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Other</div> </div>
	DATE OF MAP:
4	CREATOR OF THE MAP:
	WHERE WAS THE MAP PRODUCED?
	<p>MAP INFORMATION</p> <p>List three things in this map that you think are important.</p> <div style="margin-top: 10px;"> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> </div> <p>A. Why do you think this map was drawn?</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">B. What evidence in the map suggests why it was drawn?</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">C. What information does this map add to the textbook's account of this event?</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">D. Does the information in this map support or contradict information that you have read about this event? Explain.</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">E. Write a question to the mapmaker that is left unanswered by this map.</p>

158. Artifact Analysis Worksheet

1	...	<p>TYPE OF ARTIFACT</p> <p>Describe the material from which it was made: bones, pottery, metal, wood, stone leather, paper, cardboard, cotton, plastic, other material.</p>
2.		<p>SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE ARTIFACT</p> <p>Describe how it looks and feels: shape, color, texture, size, weight, movable parts, anything printed, stamped or written on.</p>
3.		<p>USES OF THE ARTIFACT</p> <p>What might it have been used for? _____</p> <p>Who might have used it? _____</p> <p>Where might it have been used? _____</p> <p>When might it have been used? _____</p>
4.		<p>WHAT DOES THE ARTIFACT TELL US?</p> <p>A. What does it tell us about technology of the time in which it was made and used?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>B. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and used it?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>C. Can you name a similar item today?</p> <p>_____</p>
5.		<p>BRING A SKETCH, A PHOTOGRAPH, OR THE ARTIFACT LISTE IN 4C ABOVE TO CLASS</p>

159. Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Pre-viewing											
A.	Title of Film _____ Record Group Source _____										
B.	What do you think you will see in this motion picture? List Three concepts or ideas that you might expect to see based on the title of the film. List some people you might expect to see based on the title of the film.										
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">Concepts/Ideas</th> <th style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">People</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Concepts/Ideas	People								
Concepts/Ideas	People										
Step 2. Viewing											
	Type of motion picture (check where applicable): <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Animated Cartoon</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Theatrical short subject</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Documentary Film</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Training film</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Newsreel</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Combat film</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Propaganda Film</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Other</div> </div>										
	Physical qualities of the motion picture (check where applicable): <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;"> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Music</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Live action</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Narration</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Background noise</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Special effects</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Animation</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Color</div> <div style="width: 33%;"><input type="radio"/> Dramatizations</div> </div>										
	Note how camera angles, lighting, music, narration, and/or editing contribute to creating an atmosphere in this film. What is the mood or tone of the film?										
Step 3. Post-viewing (or repeated viewing)											
	Circle the things that you listed in the previewing activity that were validated by your viewing of the motion picture.										
	What is the central message(s) of this motion picture?										
	Consider the effectiveness of the film in communicating its message. As a tool of communication, what are its strengths and weaknesses?										

D.	How do you think the filmmakers wanted the audience to respond?
E	Does this film appeal to the viewer's reason or emotion? How does it make you feel?
F.	How do you think the filmmakers wanted the audience to respond? 1. _____ 2. _____
G.	Write a question to the filmmaker that is left unanswered by the motion picture.
H.	How do you think the filmmakers wanted the audience to respond?

Resources

Ten (10) Very Useful URLs for Teaching about the Holocaust

www.memorial-museums.net

Holocaust Memorials around the World

www.ushmm.org

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

www.yadvashem.org.il

Yad Vashem

projetaladin.org/en/home.html

Holocaust: A Call to Conscience—The Aladdin Project

www.centropa.org

Centropa: Since 2000, Centropa has interviewed 1,250 elderly Jews still living in the 15 countries between the Baltic and the Aegean—from Estonia and Russia to Greece and Turkey.

www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa

German Propaganda Archive at Calvin College

dornsife.usc.edu/vhi

USC Shoah Foundation Institute

www.yivoencyclopedia.org

YIVO—*Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut* (“Yiddish Scientific Institute”)

www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm

Yale Avalon Project

www.hdot.org

Holocaust Denial on Trial

Five (5) Very Useful URLs on Jewish Resistance

www.ushmm.org

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Comprehensive overview of all types of resistance with survivor testimony.

c3.ort.org.il/Default.aspx?alias=partisaneng

Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust: Claims Conference funded project with dozens of stories of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, hundreds of pictures and maps, and lesson plans.

jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/kashariyot-couriers-in-jewish-resistance-during-holocaust

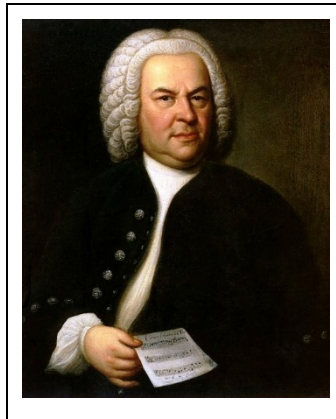
Jewish Women's Archives: Information and stories about the *kashariyot*, young women who traveled on illegal missions for the Jewish resistance in German-occupied Eastern Europe during the Holocaust.

www.jewishpartisans.org

Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation: Information on the partisan activities of Jews in Eastern and Western Europe with many individual stories of resistance.

www.yadvashem.org.il

Yad Vashem: Comprehensive overview of resistance with lesson plans.



J. S. Bach