

Documenting Life and Destruction

Holocaust Sources in Context



CHILDREN DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Patricia Heberer

■ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies

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SERIES EDITOR

JÜRGEN MATTHÄUS

DOCUMENTING LIFE AND DESTRUCTION

HOLOCAUST SOURCES IN CONTEXT

This groundbreaking series provides a new perspective on history using first-hand accounts of the lives of those who suffered through the Holocaust, those who perpetrated it, and those who witnessed it as bystanders. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies presents a wide range of documents from different archival holdings, expanding knowledge about the lives and fates of Holocaust victims and making those resources broadly available to the general public and scholarly communities for the first time.

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A project of the

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The Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus Fund
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AltaMira Press

in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
2011

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Project Manager: Mel Hecker

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Published by AltaMira Press

A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

<http://www.altamirapress.com>

Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY, United Kingdom

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Heberer, Patricia.

Children during the Holocaust / Patricia Heberer.

p. cm. — (Documenting life and destruction)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-7591-1984-0 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-7591-1986-4 (ebook)

1. Jewish children in the Holocaust. 2. Jewish children in the Holocaust—Sources.

3. Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) 4. Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)—Sources.

5. World War, 1939-1945—Children. 6. World War, 1939-1945—Children—Sources.

7. Jews—Persecutions—Europe—History—20th century. 8. Jews—Persecutions—Europe—History—20th century—Sources. I. Title.

D804.48.H43 2011

940.53'18083—dc22

2010047167

©™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

“I think that possibly the greatest tragedy the Jewish people underwent was the tragedy of the children. The children in the ghetto also used to play and laugh, and in their games the tragedy of the Jewish people was reflected.”

— From Document 8-8. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961,
in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478–479.

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Front cover: (top row left to right) USHMMPA WS# 96464, courtesy of Anita Willens; Serge Klarsfeld, *The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy*, trans. Kenneth Jacobsen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 95; USHMMPA WS# 33953, courtesy of the Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi; (bottom row left to right) USHMMMA, Acc. 2006.396, Ehrenreich Family Papers; USHMMPA WS# 30057, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghetaot; USHMMMA, Acc. 1997.36.12, Betty Troper Yaeger Collection.



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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

KRYSTYNA ŻYWULSKA (born Sonia Landau) was a survivor of Auschwitz. Born in September 1914, she and her family fled to the Polish capital to escape Nazi persecution in their native city of Łódź and were resettled in the Warsaw ghetto in 1941. In late August 1942, Żywulska and her mother escaped to Warsaw's "Aryan side," where the young woman assumed a Christian identity and joined the Polish resistance. Arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo in August 1943, "Blond Zosia," as she was known, was incarcerated in Auschwitz as a political prisoner. Creating poems to endure the endless *Appells* (roll calls) at Auschwitz II–Birkenau, Żywulska established herself after the war as an author and songwriter, retaining her Polish gentile identity. Compelled in the early 1960s to reveal her Jewish ethnicity, Żywulska wrote *Empty Water* (*Pusta Woda*, 1963), which detailed her life as a young woman in the Warsaw ghetto.¹ Within its pages, she recalls observing the play of her young neighbors, six-year-old Szymus and Anulka, aged five. Szymus was constructing forms with a set of building blocks, which Anulka always angrily destroyed. The young boy explained his playmate's actions to Żywulska.

1. See Barbara Milewski, "Krystyna Żywulska: The Making of a Satirist and Songwriter in Auschwitz-Birkenau As Discovered through Camp Mementos," *Swarthmore College Bulletin* (July 2009): 30. Most famous for her memoir *Przezylam Oświęcim* (1946), Żywulska married a prominent official in the Polish communist secret police. In 1970, she emigrated to join her son in Düsseldorf, Germany, and died there in 1992.

[She acts so] because I am building a forest. And I say to her: this is the green tree named the oak. The oak is a tree with leaves. And there is a tree named a pine, and it has needles. And then she destroys the blocks and says that there are not any trees anywhere in the world. But my Mom told me that there are many trees because she saw them herself. And these trees smell and when I am big we will go to see them.

"There are no trees, you are lying!" said Anulka.

"You see, she doesn't believe me," said Szymus. "She never believes me but anyway my Mom doesn't lie. Yesterday she didn't believe there was water named a river. With this river, water is flowing and together this is called the Vistula River.² So tell her that the Vistula exists; you saw it, didn't you? Did you see the Vistula or not?"

"There is no river," said Anulka, scowling and stamping her feet. "There is no river at all. [...]"

"Leave her in peace, Szymus," Krystyna intervened. "You can play other games. Perhaps Anulka would like to build something from the blocks herself. Let her do it and don't quarrel anymore."

"She wants to play only 'The Wall and the Gendarme,'" replied Szymus. "She always builds the wall. Then she shouts at me, 'Stop smuggling!' or 'I'm the gendarme and now I will kill you!' But I don't want to play such a game. I don't want to be a smuggler."³

Approximately 1.1 million Jewish children were murdered in the Holocaust.⁴ Millions of youngsters—Jews and non-Jews—suffered persecution, deprivation, and resettlement at the hands of the National Socialists and their wartime allies. Like Szymus and Anulka in the Warsaw ghetto, a generation of young people lost their childhoods in the conventional sense. Like them, many European children of the period knew less about meadows, flowers, pets, and toys than they did about violence, hunger, and death.

This volume is, in essence, a narrative in microcosm: it is the story of the Holocaust as seen through the eyes, and fates, of its youngest victims. With notable exceptions, the contours and chronology of Nazi racial policy were par-

2. The Vistula is one of Poland's longest and most important waterways.

3. Krystyna Żylwulska, *Pusta Wodo*, quoted in Barbara Engelking-Boni, "Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 34.

4. Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 9.

allel for children, throughout defined as youths under the age of eighteen, and adults.⁵ Jewish youngsters, just like their parents, were victims of discrimination, ghettoization, deportation, and mass murder. Yet, children encountered and contended with the persecutory policies of the Nazis in markedly different ways. This study portrays the experiences of children during the Nazi era and explores their reactions and responses to war and persecution in the schoolroom, on the playground, at home, and in the camps and ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe.

To depict the lives and circumstances of children during the Holocaust, this volume embeds contemporary documentation within an explanatory narrative. The documents represented in each chapter have been selected to reflect the full range of experiences of children during the Nazi period in terms of region, age, and ethnic identity. I have also endeavored to capture a diversity of voices and viewpoints in this volume. As a result, this story of child witnesses and victims of the Holocaust is told not only through the accounts of young persons themselves but in the words of their parents and caregivers, teachers and rescuers, liberators and persecutors. Wherever possible, the documents in this collection stem from an *in situ* source—that is to say, they were written or recorded at the time in which the events portrayed occurred. It is true that today there is no shortage of excellent memoirs authored by child survivors of the Holocaust. Yet, to freely juxtapose contemporary and latter-day sources (produced after the Holocaust) creates a kind of tension within the text in which the immediacy of events inherent in the former contends with the teleology and circumspection of the latter. Thus, every effort has been made to limit the use of memoir material in this volume. Sometimes the nature of the event in question or the age of the child involved has made it impossible to use *in situ* documentation. In these instances, the closest available primary source, such as postwar trial testimony or the accounts of witnesses made in the immediate postwar period, have been used in their stead.

These considerations pose a number of difficulties to the collector of sources concerning children during the Holocaust. This volume represents a very small selection from among the wealth of materials concerning the fate of children during the Nazi era; yet, a close examination of such documentation reveals that

5. Significant exceptions include, at least in its initial stages, the child “euthanasia” program, which, unlike its adult corollary, also targeted disabled infants and toddlers outside institutional settings. Another notable exception includes aspects of Germanization policy associated with the *Lebensborn* program, which sought out Slavic children in German areas of occupation who possessed German racial characteristics and, often removing them from their parents by force, settled them with adoptive parents in Germany; see chapter 6 of this volume.

only a fraction of these contemporary sources were actually created by children. In part, the physical circumstances of persecutees and victims of war are responsible for this dearth of materials. Resettlement, deportation, and incarceration in concentration or forced labor camp settings imposed formidable obstacles for both adults and children who wished to record accounts of their experiences. The lack of writing instruments and especially paper hampered children's efforts to depict what happened to them and their parents. Other reasons for the lack of children's sources lies in the very nature of childhood and young adolescence. Children generally did not, and do not, generate as much written material as their adult contemporaries. With certain exceptions, children do not engage in the same amount of private and public correspondence as their parents do; they do not, in the main, write studies, monographs, or letters to newspaper editors or author administrative files or legal documents. Furthermore, persecutory polices in German- and Axis-occupied countries often prevented school-age youngsters from acquiring the education necessary to read and write, thus depriving them of the intellectual capacity to record their experiences. There is a marked imbalance between sources created by young children and those stemming from older youngsters and adolescents, which this volume reflects. Most of the childhood diaries, letters, and drawings available to us from the Holocaust period came from young people in their preteen or teenaged years. Of course, very young children without the appropriate skill sets to write or draw had no chance to document their thoughts and feelings. Particularly for these youngsters, accounts by adult parents, relatives, or caretakers are the only sources we have to testify to their young lives. These voices often restrict our insight, for not even the most sensitive or perceptive adult can capture the full range of a child's experiences, hopes, and anxieties.⁶

Using the varied sources available to us, this volume forms a narrative weaving historical documentation with contextualization by the author. Its chapters have been developed thematically to articulate the wide variety of children's experiences during the Holocaust. The majority of these deal with young Jewish victims and follow the chronological arc of persecution from discrimination to deportation, ghettoization, and incarceration and murder in the vast Nazi concentration camp system. The last two chapters of the book cover issues of resistance and rescue of Jewish youngsters and the experiences of surviving young Jewish victims at liberation and in the immediate postwar period. Chapters 2 and 7 examine Jewish and non-Jewish children as victims of war and as targets of racial hygiene (eugenic) policy, respectively. Chapter 7, "The Lives of Others," stands

6. See, e.g., Bela Weicherz, *In Her Father's Eyes: A Childhood Extinguished by the Holocaust*, ed. and trans. Daniel Magilow (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

out in this collection in that it addresses the experiences of youngsters growing up as "Aryans" in Nazi Germany. Chapter 8, "The World of the Child," also deviates from the chronological progression of the work in order to explore the ways in which youngsters coped with their menacing world through study, play, and creative endeavors. In each chapter, the historical documents have been printed in a distinct format to distinguish them from the explanatory text. They have been reproduced, and translated where necessary, to correspond as faithfully as possible to their original version both in form and content. Emphasis on words or phrases by the original author or authors of the document has been highlighted here by underlining the relevant portion. In places where the document could not be printed in its entirety, ellipses ([. . .]) have been inserted to mark omissions in the text. In some places, always clearly delineated by footnotes in the text, the surnames of victims and their families have been anonymized or replaced by pseudonyms to protect the privacy of these individuals.

A number of names, places, events, and organizations appear in boldface throughout this volume when they are mentioned for the first time in a chapter. This indicates that readers can find further information on these highlighted terms in the glossary at the end of the volume. Using the rich resources of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's library and archives, I have attempted to provide brief information concerning the lives and fates of individuals discussed in this book. Some of this data appears in the glossary and some of it in the footnotes to the documents and explanatory texts. Regrettably, it was not always possible to find biographical information on every individual named in these pages. A bibliography at the end of the volume offers readers the opportunity to explore the topics discussed in this book in greater depth.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to thank the many individuals who made this volume possible. I am grateful to our donors, the Blum Family Foundation and the Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus Fund for the Study of the Fate and Rescue of Children in the Holocaust, for their generous support, which proved crucial to the fruition of this project. Series editor Jürgen Matthäus offered scholarly direction and was a voice of calm reason during the vicissitudes of production and publication. He and project manager Mel Hecker provided careful and conscientious editing and saw that the transition from draft to publication went smoothly and efficiently. Researcher Greg Wilkowski helped me enormously with reference work for this volume, while Ryan Farrell undertook the thorny task of securing rights with patience and tenacity. Jan Lambertz continuously plied me with new source materials and bibliographical references. Doris Bergen (Toronto), Jochen Böhler (Jena), and Beate Meyer (Hamburg) provided me with many useful suggestions and references to documents that are reprinted in this book. Sara Horowitz (Toronto) and Judy Gerson (New Brunswick)

reviewed an early version of the manuscript, providing helpful insights for revision and commentary on its use as a source edition for classroom teaching. Nechama Tec (Connecticut), in addition to authoring the volume's introduction, shared valuable advice and suggestions at every stage of writing. I am profoundly grateful to Louise Lawrence-Israels, Rabbi Jacob Weiner, and Robert Ehrenreich for sharing with me materials and firsthand accounts concerning their experiences or those of their family members during the Holocaust. At AltaMira Press, thanks are in order to Marissa Parks, Elaine McGarraugh, Jennifer Kelland, and Kim Lyons for their dedication to this project.

I am indebted to so many of my wonderful colleagues at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Paul A. Shapiro, director of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, has provided unwavering support for the staff's scholarly endeavors, including the production of this volume. The personnel of the museum's library; film, photo, and textual records archives; and its collections division have been enormously helpful in securing documents, photographs, and other sources. Special thanks are due to my colleagues Michlean Amir, Vadim Altskan, Bill Connelly, Judy Cohen, Radu Ioanid, Marc Masurovsky, Nancy Hartman, Teresa Pollin, Vincent Slatt, and Anatol Steck for making me aware of an interesting collection, an important artifact, or a fascinating document that I might have otherwise overlooked. Within the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, staff historians Martin Dean, Emil Kerenji, Geoffrey Megargee, and Leah Wolfson shared with me their knowledge and experiences gleaned from their efforts for the center's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* and *Jewish Responses to Persecution*. I am also grateful to my supervisor, Senior Historian Peter Black, for the breadth of his historical knowledge and for his enduring support of this project; thanks also to our interns Elissa Frankle, Johannes Breit, Lukas Lang, Philipp Selim, Emily Utzerath, and Anna Ullrich, who, when deadlines loomed, generously undertook some of my usual tasks to free my time for writing.

I owe a very personal debt of gratitude to my family: to Jim Rice, who endured long-winded descriptions of each new find I made in the library or archive and who read several iterations of this manuscript; and to Diane Heberer: may every child have such a kind and loving parent. My very last thanks go to our museum's survivor volunteers, many whom were child survivors of the Holocaust and who have been a daily source of inspiration to me as I wrote this volume. This work is dedicated to them.

Patricia Heberer
Washington, DC, 2010



ABBREVIATIONS

AJDC, AJJDC, JDC, the Joint	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
BDM	Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls)
BdS	<i>Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD</i> (commander of the Security Police and SD)
DP	displaced person(s)
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HJ	Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ITS	International Tracing Service
KLV	<i>Kinderlandverschickung</i> (literally, “transfer of children to the countryside”)
KZ	<i>Konzentrationslager</i> (concentration camp)
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei (National Socialist German Workers’ Party, or Nazi Party)
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People’s Welfare Organization)

ORT	Obshestvo Remeslenofo zemledelcheskogo Truda (Society for Trades and Agricultural Labor)
OSE	Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Children's Aid Society)
Pg.	<i>Parteigenosse</i> (party comrade)
POW	prisoner of war
RKFDV	Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of German Ethnicity)
RM	Reichsmark
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office)
RuSHA	Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt
SA	Sturmabteilung (Storm Division or Storm Troopers)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Protective Squadron)
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
USHMMA	USHMM Archives
USHMMPA	USHMM Photo Archive
YIVO	Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut (Jewish Scientific Institute)



INTRODUCTION

BY NECHAMA TEC

AS A HOLOCAUST scholar and child survivor, I welcome Dr. Patricia Heberer's essential publication about children during the Holocaust. I am convinced that the crimes committed against children are the most shocking and least understood injustices against humanity. As we try to unravel the mysteries of these crimes, we inevitably turn to Poland, the largest Jewish community in Europe and the prewar home of roughly 1 million Jewish children. In part because of my personal experiences, I concentrate in this introduction on the Holocaust in Poland and its effects on the fate of Jewish children in order to highlight some specific features of this book's intriguing topic.¹

My Holocaust research is guided by the assumption that a concentration on the extreme inevitably promotes our understandings of less acute circumstances. From the perspective of the Third Reich, what did the presence of Jewish children mean? It appears that there was a dual and contradictory perception of Jewish children as they were seen as at once useless and potentially threatening. They were useless because children could not contribute to the German economy. They were threatening because, as future adults, these children would inevitably undermine the purity of the "Aryan" race. Eventually, and more certainly, as adults, these former children would want to avenge the

1. This text draws on my earlier publications, particularly Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

crimes committed against their ancestors. Even in cases where Jewish children were considered useful for exploitation, their ultimate fate seldom differed. Historical evidence consistently shows that when the Germans faced decisions that required choosing between racial and economic advantages, racial calculations usually trumped considerations of economic utility.²

Historical documentation concerning the fate of Jewish children during the Holocaust is at the same time extensive and limited. German perpetrators generated many of the sources that survived the war, but these often offer dry statistics or general references to the execution of what came to be called the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question.” These documents shed at best a pale light on the suffering of victims, and clearly they show no empathy even for the most innocent and vulnerable among them. But even the most cursory reference in German documents to underaged targets of mass annihilation is historically important. In the course of events that formed the Holocaust, the systematic murder of Jewish children marked the passing of the threshold toward genocide. In the summer of 1941, just weeks after the Third Reich commenced its war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, traces of the “Final Solution” began to appear in reports and letters written by Germans who were involved in or witnessed the wave of mass executions sweeping across the occupied area. A member of a German police battalion wrote home to his family in the Reich, “The Jews are free game. [...] One can only give the Jews some well-intentioned advice: bring no more children into the world. They no longer have a future.” In early August 1941 he noted, “Last night 150 Jews from this village were shot, men, women, and children, all killed. The Jews are being totally eradicated.”³ In perpetrator documents, Jewish children, like adult Jews, appear only as logical targets in a process of “cleansing” German-dominated territory; yet, as the murders of the children in Byelaya Tserkov (Documents 3-9 through 3-11) demonstrate, what transpired in the ghettos and at the killing sites in eastern Europe depended as much on local conditions and decisions on the ground as on directions from Berlin.

What do we learn from listening to the voice of a child attesting in the early postwar period to the criminality of the German regime? The time is 1945 to 1946. The name of the child survivor is Ala Openheim; she is from Poland. What she shares she calls “A Horrible Experience,” recollections of her escape

2. See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939*; Vol. 2: *The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997, 2007).

3. Quoted from Christopher R. Browning with Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln/Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press/Yad Vashem, 2004), 260–61.

from persecution as an eight-year-old. She wrote these lines in an orphanage in Pieszyce (formerly called Pietrolesie, located in Lower Silesia):

With the approaching New Year, my past returns to haunt me. This past forces me to revisit portions of my wartime experiences. These are memories which I cannot forget. They had penetrated into the depths of my existence, towering over my entire soul. They cannot and ought not to be forgotten! Horrible, horrible . . . !

A dark night. The city is engrossed in a deep sleep. The city is in a state of complete silence. Here and there, desperate people fly by, actually already not people but shadows of people. They run to hiding places to become invisible to the SS men. This means that I, my mother and my sister were among them. Nevertheless, nothing helped us. We fell into the hands of the oppressors. The hands of these bandits were beating us in a horrible way. They were pushing us into the prison. They forced us into a cell in which there were many people like us. Many who resembled us, in darkness, in dampness, in horrible hygienic conditions of cleanliness. We sat there for two weeks. Patience was bursting with impatience. Our fate was anyway predetermined. This fate was hanging over us. In the same camp I stayed in were my father and my brother. They were not locked up. Here and there, they would approach our barred windows.

One time, in the middle of the night I asked my astonished father for a hammer. Father refused to grant my request, but my brother, exposing himself to death, brought me a large German hammer. It was very dark. The prison was surrounded by SS men. Without giving it much thought, I banged the bars, everything hit the ground with a big crash. I, an eight-year-old child jumped out in a nightgown through the opening in the window. The Germans shot after me, but I escaped. Bullets were whizzing past my head, but I did not stop. I imagined that someone was calling me, screaming, "Escape, escape!" Behind me I heard steps. Someone was running, but no one could have guessed who. My little sister ran after me. It was terribly cold. This was December. We were barefoot and in nightgowns. We ran in an unknown direction, petrified, unconscious through the streets of the little town. Where to? We had no idea.

Here we were: two little orphans! We sat down next to a gate. Our frozen feet refused to obey. Sitting like that, we realized that we were all alone. Our mother had not succeeded in running away with us. Remembering that we had abandoned our mother, we forgot about the freezing cold. We forgot that we were almost naked. The snow kept falling,

covering us. Exhausted, leaning on the gate of the house, we wondered if happy children, in clean beds, had lived and slept there. Also wondering if such children had mothers, we fell asleep.⁴

Postwar recollections by child survivors are crucial because they open a window onto a past otherwise closed to us. At the same time, a combination of factors—children's lack of perspective at the time of persecution, the impact of trauma, and later transformations in memory—may blur our comprehension of the concrete circumstances and causal connections of events that are remembered. No doubt, postwar accounts by child survivors are indispensable to our understanding of what happened to children, their families, and their communities. At the same time, we must acknowledge especially the limits—or, rather, the complexities—of young children's recollections in our attempt to reconstruct the harrowing history of the Holocaust.

More than half a century after the end of the war, this is what Charlene Schiff remembers about the loss of her mother and her struggle to stay alive:

I was in the water up to my neck. The water was cold. We were hiding in the bulrushes and I knew we could not move. It was very quiet and any sound would give us away. Mama gave me some soggy bread. It tasted awful, but she insisted I had to eat it to keep strong. I was tired and wet. The night was dark and dawn came suddenly. In the light of day we saw that many other people from the ghetto had made their way to the river. Shots, which had been sporadic during the night, became more regular now. The Ukrainian guards kept yelling, "Come out, Jew. I can see you," and most of the people were doing just that.

Mama kept whispering to me to stay put and not to make any sound. Days passed in confusion. Shots kept coming, seemingly from every direction. It was hard to remain quiet while listening to screams and cries and watching fire and smoke coming from the ghetto.

"When are we going to cross the river, Mama?" I wanted to know.

Mama tried to keep me calm and assured me that we could cross the river as soon as the Ukrainians and Germans left.

"When will that be?" I asked rather impatiently. After all I was only eleven years old.

"Soon, my sweet child, soon," Mama replied.

"At that time we will make our way to the farm of the K. family," Mama explained.

4. Testimony by Ada Openheim, 1945/46, ŽIH 301/2215 (my translation from Polish).

Farmer K. had promised to hide Mama and me. We knew his family. We used to buy dairy products from them before the war.

It was very tiring to stand in the river and at times I dozed off leaning on the bulrushes. One horrible moment I woke up and Mama was nowhere in sight. I was terrified, all alone, lost. I felt betrayed and guilty for falling asleep. I felt like screaming and crying for Mama, but could do neither. By evening, all had become quiet.

I thought Mama had not been able to wake me and had made her way to the farm where she would be waiting for me. I crossed the river and walked until I reached the farmer's place. He greeted me in the barn like a stranger who was not welcome at all. He would not even let me in the house. I noticed Papa's gold pocket watch and chain dangling from his dirty coveralls. He told me my Mama was not there.

I never saw my mother again.

In search of her mother, Charlene began a forest journey that lasted two years.⁵

In countries under the German occupation, the survival rate of Jewish children was consistently lower than that of the general Jewish population. By war's end, the Germans had succeeded in murdering at least 1.1 million Jewish children. In France, out of 350,000 French Jews, an estimated 75 percent survived; among them, the number of child survivors ranges from 5,000 to 15,000, or about 2 to 4 percent. After the war in Łódź, social workers collected evidence about the fates of 1,246 children under the age of fourteen who had registered with different Jewish committees, offering some information about the history of their survival. The distribution in the following table shows how these Jewish children endured the Holocaust.⁶

5. See Charlene Schiff's wartime recollections in *Echoes of Memory: Stories of the Memory Project* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM], 2003), 2:59–60. Over many years, as a member of the USHMM Speaker's Bureau, Charlene has lectured to a wide range of audiences, including college and high school students. She was married to Brigadier General Edward Schiff, who had shared his wife's interest in the Holocaust. Charlene is the sole survivor of her family of four. Her father, Professor Perlmutter, was a distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Lvov University. As most Jewish elites he was murdered during the early stages of the German occupation. The circumstances under which her mother and sister perished are unknown.

6. Lucjan Dobroszycki, "Redemption of the Children," in "An Inventory to the Rescue Children Inc. Collection, 1946–1985," Yeshiva University Archives, 1986, [\(accessed November 20, 2010\).](http://libfindaids.yu.edu:8082/xtf/view?query=redemption+of+the+children&docId=ead%2Frescue%2Frescue.xml&chunk.id=)

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
On the Aryan side	742	59
In concentration camps	280	22
In the forests	125	10
In the Łódź ghetto	61	5
In partisan units	38	3

These figures point to certain patterns. The fact that about 60 percent of the children survived on the “Aryan side” suggests that most of them were protected by Christians. Moreover, additional evidence shows that in countries under the German occupation, the survival rate of Jewish children was consistently lower than that of the general Jewish population. With time, the Germans succeeded in murdering 1.1 million Jewish children. Also, right after the war, according to lists compiled by ad hoc committees, five thousand Jewish children were left alive in Poland.⁷

As an eight-year-old Jewish child, how did I fit into German-occupied Poland? At the time, I heard my parents say over and over again that childhood was a luxury Jewish children could not afford. They elaborated this idea in a variety of ways. Clearly it meant that if I wanted to live, I had to grow up fast. But what did growing up fast mean? It called for my willingness to learn, to follow directions. Most significantly, it required keeping secrets. Time and the changes around us had inevitably taught me that some things could not be mentioned to anyone associated with Germans—or even to anyone I was unfamiliar with. My parents were watchful, ready to explain, to clarify any of the changes that continued to evolve. Gradually for me, to be silent, to deny knowledge of things, became second nature. Explanations that came with examples helped me grasp all kinds of situations. When we were forced to move to less desirable quarters and lost valuable possessions, I heard my parents say, “You cry for people, not for things.”

Indeed, my father, owner of a candle factory and co-owner of a large chemical plant in the city of Lublin, never complained about the loss of both. The candle factory he fictitiously transferred to one of his friendly employees, Mr. P.

7. These figures are discussed in Nechama Tec, “Jewish Children: Between Protectors and Murderers,” *Occasional Paper of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2005), 2–3; see also Nechama Tec, “Between Two Worlds,” *Journal of Literature & Belief* 18, no. 1 (1998): 16–17.

The Germans had confiscated his chemical plant and installed in it a German director, known as a commissioner, who offered my father a job. Father hardly talked about this switch of roles. As we relocated to a modest part of this plant, my parents and my sister worked all day. I was too young to be given any kind of responsibility—a fact that I resented. I would have liked to visit my family during the day, but my father felt that the workers might object to a child's presence, and he advised me to stay away.

The factory consisted of a cluster of simple structures, some of them one and others two stories high, arranged in a half circle. In the back of the half circle, stairs led to an upper level, on which there was a house divided into a few apartments and a garden surrounded by a wall. Beyond the wall was a convent that an order of teaching nuns ran as a boarding school for girls. I found a small opening in the wall from which, unobserved, I could watch the girls at play. To me they seemed so content, so carefree, and I envied them their fun. Did they know that a war was on? At times, as I watched them, I too became engrossed in their games and almost forgot about the war. But the bell, which called them back to class, called me back to reality, and at such moments I became more acutely aware of my loneliness. In the end, these small excursions made me feel more miserable than ever. The girls in the boarding school were so near and yet so far. The wall that separated us was thick indeed, and eventually I could not bear to go near it.

My parents were aware of my loneliness and depression, but there was little they could do to comfort me. Then, one day in 1942, I heard that many young Jewish women would be coming to work and live in this factory. Sure enough, about fifty of them moved onto the same floor, a portion of which had served as our old living quarters. They were young, between fifteen and twenty. They came from the ghetto, in the Majdan Tatarski suburb on the outskirts of Lublin.⁸ Most of them had lost their families. Each was given a bed with curtains around it for privacy so that all of us had an illusion of small separate rooms within the huge space. These newcomers made a fuss over me, and for a while I felt less lonely. But with time the novelty wore off, and even though it was lively and pleasant after working hours, I still had to be alone during the entire day. My depression returned more strongly than before. I lost my appetite, as well as all interest in my surroundings, and when it became obvious that

8. See "Lublin Ghetto," in *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, Vol. 2: *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, ed. Martin Dean (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011), 30.

I was losing weight day by day, my parents began to worry. Because at that time it was peaceful in the ghetto, to improve my state of mind, mother took me there for visits. I could see Czuczka, the teacher I loved, and I would visit other children. Each time I went, my urge to stay grew stronger. I found it harder and harder to leave.

One day, casually, Czuczka said to my mother, referring to me by my pet name, “I wish I could keep Helka with me. This would make the two of us happy.” “And what if there should be a new **deportation**, and we lost her?” my mother asked sadly. Her fears, after all, were justified. One never knew what the Germans would do or when they would do it. But as my depression grew and I lost more weight, my parents became increasingly concerned about my health. After much hesitation, and despite serious reservations, they agreed that I should move to the ghetto and stay with Czuczka for a while. I was delighted. It did not matter that Czuczka worked in an office during the day. I knew that she would be happy to devote all her free time to me. I had no doubt that for her I was special, just as she was special for me. Welcoming me with a hug, she said, “Helka, this time there will be no regular lessons—we will only enjoy each other’s company.”

On its surface the ghetto looked tranquil, but it was vibrating with anticipation and anxiety. It was a community predominantly of young people, most between eighteen and thirty, most of them unattached, and they appeared to be throwing off all social restraints. The breakup of families, the Nazi restrictions, and the imminent danger all led to an emphasis on the now. The few older members of this community were neither willing nor able to impose their authority. After all, why should they try? These were perilous times: why should the young not feel free to enjoy themselves for as long as they could? Furthermore, what claim to authority did older people have when their traditional roles had been completely undermined: men had lost their ability to provide for their wives and families; women lacked the means to care for their children.

As a matter of policy, the Nazis had concentrated on the extermination of Jewish children. Because we were in special danger, adults looked upon us as a precious commodity. No Jew would have thought of mistreating a child, and almost all of them refrained from even the mildest form of discipline. In the Lublin ghetto, children like me formed a tiny minority. We came to expect our elders to treat us with indulgence, and they did. It was the summer of 1942. Because few of us were left, we felt close to each other and relied on one another for support, for entertainment, and for enlightenment. We children managed to enjoy ourselves as we roamed about the ghetto. We spent our days outdoors. In

the evenings we took turns visiting each other's homes. One house in particular we enjoyed—the home where our friend Hanka lived. Hanka was an accomplished pianist, as the Germans knew, and sometimes they would summon her to entertain them and their guests. They even provided her with a piano of her own, the only one in the ghetto. We loved to gather at Hanka's. She would play both popular and classical music, and we would join her in singing. We were all aware of the special value of these gatherings. Although unable to express the presentiment in words, we felt that our carefree existence could not last much longer.

We knew that we lived in a dangerous and unstable world, but we preferred not to talk about it. Did we think that the danger would go away if nobody mentioned it? Or was the situation simply too frightening for discussion? In the crowded house in which I lived with Czuczka and her family, there also lived the agronomist Stach. He was a tall, good-looking man, with dark hair and intelligent black eyes. There was an overall sadness that never left him, even when he smiled. Mixed with his sadness was a touch of resignation. I learned that during the last deportation, his wife, who was eight months pregnant, had been beaten to death by a German right in front of his eyes. According to Czuczka, the image of his dying wife was always with him. Yet he was not bitter but kind, eager to help in whatever way he could. When he was doing someone a favor, when he worked in our garden—that was when he smiled. During the day he had a laboree's job outside the ghetto. His evenings he devoted to our garden. His love for gardening, coupled with his great fund of agricultural knowledge, transformed our garden into a showpiece.

Frequently, as we worked and chatted, Czuczka would join us. Sometimes Stach, Czuczka, and I would go for a walk. I walked between them, holding each one's hand. They both spoke softly, including me in their conversation, trying to make it interesting for me. They never talked down to me. They gave me a feeling of importance. Those were precious moments; I was acutely conscious of their value, knowing they would not last. The friendship they felt for me and for each other I valued highly. I observed them, and I understood enough to know that they cared for each other in two different ways. Quietly and tenderly, Czuczka was in love with Stach, but she never made her love known. Stach respected Czuczka and appreciated her as a friend. He talked to her, confided in her more than in anyone else, wanted her support and her understanding, and needed her comfort. I was impressed by the depth of their friendship. I was also aware that other women tried to press their attentions on Stach. Sometimes they interrupted our work in the garden, and I got angry with them—angry that they dared to intrude, that they were trying to spoil something so precious to me. I was glad that Stach did not encourage them. Interpreting his lack of

interest as an act of faithfulness to Czuczka, I was grateful that our friendship could continue untouched by the distractions of our surroundings.

For a while, the summer of 1942 continued without any major disasters. Then one afternoon my mother came to Czuczka's house, very upset. She had heard disturbing rumors and wanted to take me back to the factory. She insisted that I would be safer there. The prospect of leaving all my friends and Czuczka as well was unbearable, and I pleaded with my mother to let me stay at least until the next day so I would have time to say good-bye to everyone. I cried until she agreed, saying she would stay with me at Czuczka's until the morning. That night I lay silently beside my mother, feeling angry and sorry for myself. I had been having such a good time. What did she want from me? Why didn't she leave me alone? My questions were soon answered. At about 4 a.m., mother shook me violently out of my sleep. "Hurry, Helka, hurry. There is no time. We must hide." Someone had come to warn us that there would be an *Aktion* in the ghetto. Children and the elderly were, as always, in particular danger. I did not need to ask questions, and in no time I was ready.

My mother grabbed me by the hand and ran across the street to the house of friends who had a special hiding place, a skillfully camouflaged cellar. Breathless, we knocked, and my mother begged for admittance. But there was no room there. They were crowded, sitting virtually on top of each other. They could not take us. "Save at least the child, please," my mother entreated. They refused, suggesting another place. Frantically my mother ran, dragging me along. I could not keep up with her. Twice I fell and got up again, not daring to complain. We knocked at a number of doors, all in vain. But my mother had courage. She did not give up easily. She ran—she almost flew. She knew many people, and she was convinced that someone would help. On our way we passed a few baby carriages in full view, babies inside. There was no place for them. No one would allow them into a hiding place for fear that they would cry and lead to discovery. At last mother's pleas were heard, and I found myself squeezed into a cramped cellar, where I almost had to sit on someone's head. There was no place for my mother, so she left me there. I learned later that only at the last minute did she find shelter.

Loudspeakers blared that all Jews were to come out of their houses and into the square. Farmers were needed in recently reclaimed lands, and those selected would work them and lead good lives. A thorough search of every house followed this announcement, and many people were removed. When the *Aktion* was over, the population was reduced to a fraction of what it had been. Again, an unusually large proportion of those taken were older people, women, and children. Many were killed immediately. All the babies in carriages were shot,

and so were some adults who desperately attempted to run away. A friend of my mother's tried to escape through an opening in the barbed wire, holding a child in her arms. A Ukrainian guard shot at her, and the child, a boy, was killed. Half crazed, she was pushed into the group for deportation, clinging to the dead child. She was taken away, still holding him in her arms.

Only after some hours did the people with whom I was hidden allow me to leave. I walked out into a deserted, lifeless street. When I looked into the baby carriage, I saw an unrecognizable, bloody mass that seemed strangely alive. I felt weak and dizzy. All curiosity left me and all courage as well. I began to run, trying to avoid the bloodstained baby carriages and the bodies scattered in every direction on the ground. I felt all the dead were trying to keep me there with some terrifying, inexplicable power. I had to get away. I burst into Czuczka's home, straight into my mother's outstretched arms. Only so close to her was I able to let myself cry. Then, relieved, I noted that Stach, Czuczka, and her family were all there too. I stopped crying. But there was no happiness in our reunion. Without asking questions, I began to pack. This time I knew that my departure was inevitable, and I felt numb with guilt for having caused my mother so much pain and anxiety.

I expected her to reproach me. Instead she said tenderly, almost in a whisper, "Helka, I am so grateful that you are alive. Maybe there is a God after all!" I felt too miserable and ashamed of myself to answer. A few people stopped by for a brief moment to see if we had been spared and to tell us of the disasters that had befallen so many others. Almost all of those I cared about were gone; there would be no point in looking for them. Czuczka and Stach watched as I silently got ready to go. I could not bear the idea of saying good-bye to them at that public ghetto gate, and it was as if Czuczka had read my mind. "Let us part here," she said, "not at the gate." First I embraced Czuczka's parents and brother. Then I turned to Stach. After a strong, almost desperate hug, he took my face into his hands, looked straight into my eyes, and said seriously, "Promise me always to be brave. Don't ever give up. Ever!" I nodded, feeling a lump in my throat, and turned to Czuczka. I held on to her with all my strength. If I hurt her, she did not show it. I lost control and began to cry bitterly. I could not let go of her. I felt her body tremble, and she too began to cry openly—Czuczka, whom I had never seen weep before.

My mother's hand was on my shoulder: "We must go. Surely you will see them again soon." I did not believe her. I felt my mother did not believe herself. Inside me was a void, and with it came the strong conviction that I would never see any of them again. Still crying, I followed my mother into the street. When I turned, Czuczka and Stach were standing just as I had left them. Blinded by my tears and unable to make out their faces, I quickly wiped my eyes with the

palms of both my hands, but just as quickly, before I had a chance to see them one last time, I turned away. My mother, with her shoulders stooped, walked in front of me. As we neared the ghetto gate, she lovingly reached for my hand. I was overcome by a wave of sad tenderness. Oh, Mama, how good it is to have you! I thought.

Majdan Tatarski, the Lublin ghetto, was behind me. I had spent less than two months there, but the time seemed longer. I had learned so much, made so many friends, received so much attention and love. It had been a period packed with meaningful impressions and events, and everything that had happened had touched me deeply. Perhaps it was the significance and fullness of life that made those few months seem to stretch out in memory as if they had been years.

Back in Lublin, no one worried about my well-being. Survival was the only consideration, and my parents were convinced that the factory was a good place to work. Everybody had enough food, and the treatment was humane. But we were not making the decisions; nor was the seemingly powerful and humane German director of the plant. I became friendly with a Polish chemist named Bronek and his wife, Genia, who lived in the house in the garden. Genia, in particular, enjoyed having me around. She liked to hug me and would say, "You are such a lovely child, not Jewish at all, not at all." As I did not "look Jewish" and spoke Polish very well, I had a good chance of passing as a "hidden child" on the "Aryan side"; in addition, my parents had the means to facilitate our evading the German's escalating anti-Jewish measures. In the early part of November 1942, Lublin was declared free of Jews (*judenrein*). Majdan Tatarski ceased to exist. Some of the ghetto inmates were murdered. Others were deported to concentration camps. Only a handful escaped. After my parents had acquired false papers, we moved to Warsaw in stages. There, we spent much of our energy on eluding the relentless Jewish persecutions. For safety we moved separately from place to place. In Warsaw the life-threatening situations prevented us from staying together for long. As most Jews, we had to change locations frequently to elude capture.

Because I could more easily pass for a Polish Catholic than the rest of my family, I often had to be separated from my parents and sister. I found these separations painful and refused to recognize that they were supposed to improve my chances of survival. Most Jews who tried to pass for Christian Poles were forced to change their living quarters often. By placing me with Poles who were willing to protect me, my parents felt that they were improving my chances of eluding the Nazis. Fortunately, after a number of life-threatening efforts, my father and mother found Polish rescuers who, for payment, offered them a more permanent place to reside. Officially my parents ceased to exist. For two

years they never left their living quarters. My sister moved in with us. Protected by my “Aryan” looks and command of the Polish language, I had often stayed behind alone. For the final two years of the war, we did reconnect as a family in Kielce. My parents remained invisible. My sister and I appeared as nieces of the Polish family of laborers who protected us for payment. We were, in effect, supporting this Polish family.

Publications about the Holocaust refer to children who tried to survive by pretending to be Christian as “hidden children.” Two basic demands dominated our lives: relinquishing our Jewish identity and remaining silent. Complying with both, even temporarily, implied a rejection of our pasts. In part, this was also a denial of our religion. Most of us came from secular homes—Jewish Orthodox children hardly ever made it to the Christian world. And yet, religion assumed an important place in our lives. We knew that being Jewish had deprived us of our right to live. Being Jewish meant something bad, something for which we could be killed. Being Christian meant being protected. The difference between being Christian and being Jewish hinged on the approval of different kinds of Gods. Invariably, the question had to come up about the differences between these Gods. A God who could not even protect his children did not seem very trustworthy. Undoubtedly, the extent to which children followed this kind of reasoning depended on many factors: age, Christian protectors, and contact with both parents and other Jews.

We were disappointed in our God. We felt abandoned by Him. Yet, we needed consolation from a God, from a religion. Comforted by a new God who promised us acceptance and safety, we were in fact ready for that God. By saving us, this new God protected us from evil, and so we equated Him with goodness. Of the different Christian religions, Catholicism was particularly influential in the lives of the hidden children, partly for the simple reason that the vast majority of Poles are Catholic. Those of us old enough to realize what was happening welcomed Catholicism; those who were very young embraced it blindly. From the perspective of the Jewish child, baptism and Catholicism were positive forces. Each shielded him or her from danger. Each offered a feeling of security and comfort. However, this security required a certain proficiency and ability to learn the kind of behaviors required by the Catholic religion. We had to become well versed in the new religion. We had to know principles, prayers, and how to behave in church. We had to know which behavior was appropriate for each religious and nonreligious setting.

Inevitably, the influence of religion spilled over into the postwar lives of the hidden children. For them, their very survival proved that they had adjusted well to their roles as Christians. But at the end of the war, they were often asked

to switch again. For many of us, the return to Jewish identity was a drawn-out process. Some never returned. Acceptance, hostility, ambivalence, resentment, shame, and regret were only some of the emotions we hidden children shared. Some of us may continue to harbor such feelings about our Jewishness, about our religion. At times mixed together, appearing and disappearing, these emotions are not surprising. We could not easily give up that which had helped us to survive. If being Jewish brought danger and disapproval, if it was something one could be killed for, why would a child want to take it back? Most of us felt conflicted about these issues. For a while, we were suspended between two worlds. Some of us could not reconcile them. Still others took a definite step toward Christianity or Judaism. Did becoming a part of two different worlds give us a broader, less prejudiced perspective on life, on people? Perhaps.⁹

Children represent the future. In the ghettos, women, bound by their special ties to children, continued to gravitate toward activities related to the young. But precisely because ghetto children promised a Jewish future, the Germans targeted them for annihilation, most visibly by prohibiting births. Under German rule, the laws and expectations regarding procreation and motherhood were diametrically opposed when applied to the Jewish women and to the "Aryan" German women. As chapter 6 of this volume, devoted to German racial hygiene policies, demonstrates, for "Aryan" German women, childbearing and child care were highly valued, promising imaginary and actual rewards. In sharp contrast, Jewish procreation and motherhood were defined as political threats. The severity of German opposition to Jewish children and to Jewish procreation varied with time and place. Humiliation, starvation, and the accompanying oppressions themselves diminished the chances of successful births. When occasionally pregnancies happened, to avert punishment, Jews often relied on abortions.

Dobka Freund-Waldhorn was one of the women caught in a web of conflicting orders and wishes: prohibitions against Jewish motherhood and a desire to give birth to a baby. Dobka came from a wealthy, Orthodox family of nine children. Her father, in particular, saw Dobka as an independent rebel. Even in her 1939 marriage to Julek Frohlich, a man she loved deeply, this father saw a form of resistance. Handsome, intelligent, and from a respectable family, Julek was deemed unsuitable because he was not Orthodox. The war and the opposition to Dobka's marriage pushed the young couple to Vilna and from there into the Vilna ghetto. In Israel, in 1995, in Dobka's comfortable home, at the end of a long interview, she invited me to come again because she wanted to share with me a secret she never talked about: a wartime pregnancy. Since I was leaving Israel the next day,

9. See also Nechama Tec, "Conflicts of Identity," *The Hidden Child Newsletter* 7, no. 1 (1997): 1–2.

the interview took place a year later. At that time I heard that when Dobka was transferred from the Vilna ghetto to a nearby estate, she realized that she was pregnant. By then Jewish women in Vilna were prohibited from having babies. Dobka's husband and a Polish doctor at the estate pleaded with her to discontinue the pregnancy. She refused. In love with Julek, she wanted his child.

When she was seven months pregnant, as a concession to her husband, Dobka went to the ghetto hospital to learn firsthand about her options. Although sympathetic, the doctor in the ghetto hospital urged her to give birth and "to dispose" of the baby. Under the existing rules, unless she followed that advice, both she and her baby would die. The doctor accepted Dobka into the ghetto hospital and tried to induce delivery. In a restrained, almost artificial voice, Dobka said,

I stayed in the hospital, for a long time, maybe a month. They gave me medication to have the water move, but there was no birth. They increased the dosage. They did all kinds of things, but the child refused to be born. Eventually, I got a fever, high fever. I think that it was already the eighth month. Only then it happened. She was alive. They showed me the little girl. She was so beautiful. She looked just like my husband, and we were so much in love! Then, they took her away. . . . The doctor tried to console me, that I was young, that I will have other children, that this had to be. . . . My husband came to the hospital. He knelt next to my bed. . . . He took my hands into his, and he cried . . . terribly, terribly. "You will see, we will have children, there will be children."¹⁰

With Julek Frohlich, there were no more children. He died in the Klooga concentration camp (in Estonia). After the war, Dobka remarried and gave birth to two sons. In the same, constrained voice, Dobka continued: "After the birth of my second son, with my second husband, I dreamt that my first husband, Julek, came to me. He looked very neglected, not shaved. 'Where were you?' I asked, 'so many years? I have a husband and children.' He answered, 'Yes, but you will come back to me.' In the dream I thought how could I go back to him? But to him I said, 'I will come back to you.' I woke up and found my pillow soaking wet from my tears."¹¹

10. Dobka Freund-Waldhorn, personal interviews conducted by the author, Kvar Shmariahu, Israel, 1995, 1996. See also Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 67–69.

11. See Nechama Tec, "Historical Perspective: Tracing the History of the Hidden Child Experience," in *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust*, ed. Jane Marks (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 273–91. Marks's book is a collection of memoirs written by Jewish child survivors.

Childbearing and child rearing are universally cherished traditions. Hence these anti-childbearing German prohibitions created havoc within Jewish communities, especially among potential and actual parents. Significantly, the intricately close mother-child connections, by themselves, took a heavy toll upon potential and actual mothers of young children. In the end, these German measures resulted in startling differences between young single women and mothers. Beyond the direct German killing of Jewish mothers and their young offspring, Jewish mothers often experienced the terrible pain of watching their children starve to death or witnessing their brutal murder. Many reports about parents, and more particularly mothers, marvel at the ingenuity and courage with which they tried to protect their young, born and unborn.

Pregnancy as a prelude to life compelled some Jewish women toward life-threatening decisions. At one time, when Zwia Rechtman roamed the Polish countryside alone, searching for a resting place, she heard that her mother had been denounced and murdered. This intelligent and resourceful woman was arrested in the office of a Polish gynecologist to whom she had turned for help. Zwia was convinced that this physician had betrayed her mother when she asked him to abort her pregnancy. Jewish mothers with children often faced insurmountable obstacles. Even though most of them preferred to stay with their children, they were willing to separate if doing so promised the child's survival. Sometimes Gentile rescuers agreed to keep a child but not the mother.

Indeed, ten at the time, Zwia Rechtman recalls in an interview conducted in 1995 how she and her mother had to move from one place to another begging for shelter. Rarely were they kept for more than a few days. Then, one winter night, when the two were resting in a cold attic, the peasant giving them shelter asked them to leave. This daughter recalled with pain how her intelligent and proud mother begged the peasant to let Zwia stay. In the end, the woman agreed to keep the starved and half-frozen girl. Zwia was not sure whether her acquiescence was promoted by pity, money, or both. When I asked how she felt about staying there, I heard Zwia say, "I don't know if I wanted to stay or not. The situation was such that if she wanted to keep me, I should have stayed. Of course, I didn't know that I will never see my mother again. . . . Till the present, I cannot say good-bye to anyone! [Zwia cries]. . . . When mother left, the woman asked me to come into the house. [. . .] There was only one small room in the entire place. I don't even remember who else was there. I wasn't even thinking if that peasant was nice or not. She was very, very poor. [. . .] But this arrangement did not last." In a little while, Zwia

had to leave.¹² She received sporadic help from a variety of Poles. Eventually exhausted by the many changes, with the help of one of her protectors, Zvia decided to volunteer, pretending to be a Pole, for work in Germany. She survived the war as a Polish laborer in the German countryside.

In trying to understand the Holocaust as it relates to Jewish children, the meaning of motherhood, and death, we cannot ignore the diversity of findings. The assaults upon Jewish children and their parents varied with time and place. As the war drew to a close, persecution against Jews and their rescuers became more stringent. In eastern European countries, more so than western ones, German opposition to motherhood and Jewish children had perilous implications. As the Germans lost the war at the front, they seemingly became more obsessed with winning the war against the Jews. Concretely, this meant that the attacks against all and any Jews became more severe.

Margot Draenger was one of the rare women who did not take into consideration the hardships associated with motherhood. Born in 1922 in Berlin, Margot was deported to Poland with her Polish-born parents in 1938. The family relocated to Kraków, then was forced into the Kraków ghetto. There, Margot met and married Jurek Draenger. At the end of 1943, the young couple was in hiding in a bunker in Bochnia, near Kraków. Jurek Draenger, familiar with this area and its many forests, was very resourceful. He knew who among the local peasants had sheltered Jews. For a while, the young Draengers stayed at a farm owned by a widow, Hanka Berota, who protected them without pay. The couple shared a small, damp, dark hiding place with Margot's father and uncle. They were denounced twice. Each time the police failed to find their hideout. Food and money were scarce. At night, Jurek would sneak out to steal whatever he could find in fields and unguarded barns. Their protector was barely able to feed her two young children.

Soon Margot realized that she was pregnant, which she took for granted. When she felt the baby's movements, the couple began to collect rags, cotton, and scissors. Shortly before Easter, in 1944, Margot's birth pains began. She knew the danger of screaming; she kept silent. Only her hands forcefully gripped the ladder next to her bunk. Her husband helped with the delivery. He cut the umbilical cord with scissors. It was a little girl. But the infant lived only a few hours.

12. Zvia Rechman, personal interview conducted by the author, Tel Aviv, Israel, 1995. Born in 1927 in Niedrzwica Duża in the Lublin district of Poland, of her five-member family only Zvia survived. Her interview was permeated with admiration for and pain about her mother, whom Zvia continues to miss. She had a family of her own that she valued and loved. A capable and fine individual—for Zvia the loss of her mother is a painful reminder that she continues to deplore deeply.

Margot thought that a poorly tied umbilical cord had caused the baby's death. She suffered from serious postpartum complications, yet had no time to dwell on them. Two days after the delivery, the farm was raided. This time, the Germans came instead of the Polish police. Once more they found no trace of the fugitives. But the Draengers' protector had had enough. Fearing for her own two children's lives, she asked her charges to look for another place. Three days later, the Draengers left and entered a bunker, prepared by another peasant. They were fortunate. Somehow during the entire war, they managed to find Christians who were willing to protect them.¹³

Fathers also devoted themselves to saving their children. After his wife was shot by Ukrainians in July 1941, one such man, Dr. Richard Aptowicz, protected his son, Adam, born in 1933, for three years in the Kraków ghetto. Father and son had a challenging journey ahead of them. They passed through more than eight concentration camps, each seriously threatening their lives.¹⁴ As chapter 5 of this volume explains, a child in a concentration camp was a rare and unexpected presence—not surprisingly, one welcomed by some and opposed by others. Among the individuals whom this father remembered warmly was Mrs. Wolf, who devoted much attention to Adam, particularly when father and son were prisoners in the Skarzysko Kamienna munitions factory,¹⁵ in its notorious Department C, widely known for its cruel mistreatment of workers and very high death rate from toxic materials.¹⁶ Fortunately, this father and son were, in time, transferred to other camps. Among the various moves, the most effective one had to do with their arrival at **Buchenwald**, known for its long-lasting, well-organized underground, directed and run by political prisoners, some of whom were Jewish communists, while others were

13. Yad Vashem testimony, 03/1686, recorded in September 1960 in Tel Aviv, Israel, 30–31. After the war the doctors advised Margot against pregnancy as they felt that giving birth to another child would endanger her life. Margot disregarded the physician's warnings and in 1949 gave birth to a son. The problem predicted by the physicians did not materialize.

14. Ryszard Aptowicz, Yad Vashem testimony, 03/2712; Eugene Weinstock, *Beyond the Last Path* (New York: Boni & Gaer, 1947), 127, 191–93.

15. See Felicja Karay, *Death Comes in Yellow: Skarzysko Kamienna Slave Labor Camp* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996). The word “yellow” refers to the color that those prisoners who worked in Section C acquired from the poisonous substance trotyl. Not only did exposure to this chemical turn the workers’ skin yellow, but trotyl attacked various parts of the body, which led to deterioration and death.

16. For additional sources describing the deadly effects of trotyl, see Ida Buszmicz, Yad Vashem testimony, 03/2798. For testimony by a former prisoner in Skarzysko Kamienna, Section C, who escaped from this camp, thanks to the help extended by Dr. Aptowicz, see: ŽIH 301/1322.

affiliated with a range of political parties. The prisoners came from a variety of countries, including Germany. In charge of the second block was an old-time underground member, German Jewish communist Emil Karlebach, a prisoner since 1939. One of the earliest initiators of the underground child rescue program, he personally accepted Adam into the children's block (*Kinderblock*).¹⁷

At Buchenwald, children were protected in a variety of ways. First, they were shielded from heavy work, which was potentially lethal for young forced laborers. Second, many prisoners attempted to safeguard children in every way that they could and sacrificed their own rations so that youngsters could have access to larger portions and more nourishing food. Third, the well-established Buchenwald underground organization did everything in its power to prevent children of all ages from being removed from this camp. Adam was assigned to one of the children's blocks, where he was prevented from overwork and received adequate nourishment and, very significantly, where he stayed until liberation. On the initiative of the camp elders, two separate *Kinderblocks* were established that included Jewish children belonging to a variety of groups. In effect, because of these efforts, 904 children were saved in Buchenwald.¹⁸ The youngest among them was Stefan Jerzy Zweig, featured in Document 5-13. The son of a Polish Jewish lawyer, Zacharias Zweig, Stefan was three and a half years old when he was liberated from Buchenwald.

One particular source of help for young Adam came from Motel, a prisoner who had recently come to Buchenwald from Skarzysko Kamienna, where he had earlier benefited from Dr. Aptowicz's care. Now he was eager to reciprocate and thank the doctor for his past help. Motel was also familiar with Buchenwald's underground members and willing to use his influence to promote Dr. Aptowicz and his son. At Motel's initiative the Buchenwald underground investigated Dr. Aptowicz's past. Impressed by his credentials and particularly by the help he had been extending to camp inmates, they arranged for Dr. Aptowicz to stay in the children's block and hide there for the duration of any future *Aktion*. The blocks for the young were very well protected by the resistance members. American troops liberated Buchenwald in April 1945. Father and son moved to Kraków; in 1950, the pair moved with the doctor's new wife to Israel.

17. Yad Vashem testimony, 03/2712, 23–24.

18. See *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, Vol. 1: *Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS–Business Administration Main Office* (WVHA), ed., Geoffrey Megargee (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), 293.

As with Jewish fathers, the wartime experiences of mothers varied greatly; thus, so did the fates of their children. Cyla Fast, born in 1907, was married to an engineer who, at the start of the German invasion of Lvov, was arrested with a group of prominent Jewish men. His wife was never officially informed of her husband's fate. Expecting the birth of their first baby, Cyla had waited in vain for his return. Most probably, exposed first to degrading experiences, her husband, a gifted engineer, was murdered with a large group of Jewish men, all of whom had shared their elitist class affiliation. Cyla had a hard time accepting the circulating rumors about the killing of this entire group of men. In the fall of 1941, still missing and waiting for him, Cyla gave birth to their daughter. Now the mother and baby experienced a series of forced moves from one place to another, each entailing the loss of property, of freedoms, and of people. Soon, Cyla and the baby ended up in the Lvov ghetto.

During one of the ghetto deportations, mother and baby were pushed outside their home and into a group of ghetto inmates. At that point Cyla was approached by a Ukrainian, who asked her what she, a Christian, was doing there in a group of Jews. Noticing that the baby must have pushed her Jewish armband down, making it invisible, she told the Ukrainian that she had been passing by and was simply pushed into the group of waiting ghetto inmates. She went along with his suggestion that she was not Jewish, knowing that her looks and her knowledge of both the Russian and Polish languages denied her Jewishness. In a sense, this Ukrainian was giving her a chance to live. And so, on his own, he turned to one of his superiors, explaining why Cyla should be free to return to her home.

This is how mother and baby moved into the Christian world. When the two reached the outskirts of town with its high grass, they sat down to rest. She was at a loss as to what to do next. At that point, a woman came by and invited mother and child to her nearby cottage. Later on, thanking her for the hospitality, Cyla left to seek out some of her Polish friends for help. In fact, one of these friends helped her buy false papers. She stayed for two weeks in the homes of two other Polish friends. Then yet another Polish friend located a young, unmarried Polish woman who was willing to adopt the six-month-old baby. This required a birth certificate, which the local priest supplied, together with other needed documents. Again, the unexpected happened. At the moment of parting, the baby clung to her mother, crying loudly. There was something so disheartening and sorrowful in the infant's crying that the Polish woman who came for her could not take her. The baby stayed with Cyla, who soon found a job as a cook on an estate. She welcomed the work and the peace that came with it. In her free time she befriended a teacher, a woman who was out of work, and a Polish woman

who was helping Jews who lived in a nearby forest. Cyla supplied food to these new friends.

All ran smoothly until a new law was passed requiring Poles to get special working papers. As a result, the estate manager discovered that Cyla's birth certificate was fake, and he asked her to leave immediately. She was glad that he did not denounce her to the authorities. Several Christian friends helped by keeping her for a day or two. This sporadic aid, together with her strong will to protect her baby, kept her going. Her prospects improved drastically when one of her friends found her a job with a German officer who was looking for a cook. There she worked practically until the 1944 takeover by the Red Army. In fact, this officer wanted to take her and the baby with him to protect them from the "barbarian Russians." Cyla had a hard time explaining to him why she had to stay behind. At the end of the war, she wrote, "My little daughter has been the sunshine of my life. Till this day she continues to bring me good luck. At dangerous times this child would distract a murderer's attention from me to herself. Occasionally, too, the compassion people felt for her made them invite us both into their homes during our horrible wanderings."¹⁹

Such happy endings were extremely rare. The effects of war and persecution often left their mark upon mother-child relationships and continued to exert an enduring pressure upon the surviving parties that sometimes reached beyond the grave. This volume provides only a glimpse of the universe of loss that defines the history of children during the Holocaust: the loss of childhood and innocence and, for many hundreds of thousands of Jewish children, the loss of life and loved ones. My most painful experiences had to do with temporary and permanent losses of those I loved. High on this list was Czuczka. My parents made all the necessary arrangements to save her—but failed. When our trusted Pole went to the designated place to pick Czuczka up, he found her murdered body on the ground. Throughout Poland, the devastation of Jewish communities and families was almost complete. In 1939, Lublin had a Jewish population of forty thousand. When the war was over in 1945, about 150 Jews came back to this city. Among these, there were only three intact families. My parents, my sister, and I were one of them.

19. See Yad Vashem testimony, 033/634, in which Cyla describes her gratitude to the Catholic priest who was most generous with his help. She also expressed appreciation to the various Polish friends who offered her protection. After the war, only gradually did she identify herself as a Jew. After locating some relatives in Israel, she and her daughter settled in that country, where she worked as a librarian.



CHAPTER 1

CHILDREN IN THE EARLY YEARS OF ANTISEMITIC PERSECUTION

ON NOVEMBER 27, 1938, the family of **Elisabeth Block**, Bavarian Jews from the small village of Niedernburg, made an outing in the surrounding countryside. “At around 11:30 we all made ourselves ready to drive with the car,” wrote fifteen-year-old Elisabeth, “because the whole week we have had such lovely weather. [...] At Chiemsee we got out and hunted for shells. The lake mirrored the splendid blue of the mountains; it was a wonderful sight. We also got out in Traunstein [...] and drove along the German Alpine Road, where we also looked out upon the glacier garden. [...] Only at quarter to six did we finally turn for home.”¹

As elsewhere in her diary, Elisabeth Block devoted her energies that autumn day in 1938 to describing those things that absorbed her most: the intimacies of family life, the familiar pastimes enjoyed with relatives and friends, and the splendor and beauty of nature. Elisabeth does not, however, mention in her journal entries concerning her trip to Chiemsee a development that must have troubled each family member: the excursion would be the Blocks’ last outing together in their own automobile. Beginning on December 3, 1938, German Jews would be forced to surrender their drivers’ licenses and registration papers. Also omitted in the text are allusions to the lingering effects that the family continued to experience in the wake of the nationwide **pogrom** against Jews on

1. Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 163–64.

Reichskristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass) on November 9 and 10, 1938. Although the well-assimilated Blocks had been spared the worst of the antisemitic excesses in their insulated hamlet of Niedernburg, local **Sturmabteilung (SA)** and Nazi Party activists had plundered and vandalized Jewish-owned shops and businesses in nearby Rosenheim. More significantly, Elisabeth's uncle, Dr. Leo Levy of Bad Polzin,² had been murdered in his apartment by SA men in the midst of the pogrom, an event Elisabeth references only in passing in her journal.³ Further disturbing developments—the exclusion of Jewish pupils from “German” schools and the economic and social dislocation caused by the stringent antisemitic decrees issued in the wake of *Kristallnacht*—receive similarly short shrift. Worse trials lay ahead, although, as always, the maturing teenager was loathe to record them: the loss of the family home⁴ and business; the **compulsory sterilization** of Elisabeth's father; the 1941 forced labor provisions for all able-bodied German Jews. Until the family's transfer to Munich-Milbertshofen, a **collection camp** (*Sammellager*) for Jews pending **deportation**, Block remained largely silent in the face of such ominous developments.

Elisabeth Block's reticence concerning the difficulties she and her family encountered as a result of National Socialist anti-Jewish policy was perhaps an atypical response to persecution. For a generation of Jewish children like Elisabeth, the 1930s in Nazi Germany was a time of danger, anguish, and uncertainty. Nazi antisemitic measures isolated Jewish youngsters from their “Aryan” friends and classmates, deprived them of physical and financial security, and subjected them to scorn and humiliation. How did these children respond to such difficult circumstances? How did they view the discriminatory practices aimed at themselves and their loved ones? What strategies did they employ in order to cope with the emotional and psychological trauma they experienced?⁵ This chapter follows the arc of persecutory policies against Jews in Nazi Germany and their impact and consequences for Jewish children.

2. Formerly a German spa town in Pomerania, today this is the Polish city of Połczyn-Zdrój.

3. Block, *Erinnerungszeichen*, 162.

4. In October 1939, the Blocks learned that they must relinquish their family home to other owners, but were allowed to inhabit one of its upper rooms.

5. For a discussion of German Jewish reactions to persecution in general, see Jürgen Matthäus and Mark Roseman, *Jewish Responses to Persecution*, Vol. 1: 1933–1938 (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010).

FROM ASSIMILATION TO MARGINALIZATION

Some 523,000 Jews lived in Germany in January 1933.⁶ Comprising less than 1 percent of the total population, German Jewry had throughout the nineteenth century waged a hard-fought battle for emancipation and gained full civil rights with the unification of the German state in 1871. Although tacit—and open—anti-Jewish sentiment persisted and received added impetus with the formation of antisemitic political parties and the development of new “racially based” antisemitic theories at the turn of the century, the establishment of the democratic **Weimar Republic** (1918–1933) marked an era of unprecedented integration of Jewish citizens into German social, cultural, and economic life.⁷ The process of assimilation, manifested by soaring rates of intermarriage⁸ and a rise in conversions to Christianity, facilitated Jewry’s tenacious and thorough-going participation in nearly all aspects of German society. At the same time, German Jews cultivated a diverse, yet distinct, identity ranging in scope from the mainstream assimilationists to more marginal Orthodox and Zionist circles. An overwhelmingly middle-class community as a result of the economic opportunities that came with industrialization, a majority of Jews lived in Germany’s great cities: Berlin, Frankfurt, Breslau,⁹ Cologne. Just the same, in 1933, one in five German Jews still lived in a small town. Wherever they lived, most Jews thought of themselves as Germans, as inherently a part of the country and society in which they lived.¹⁰

6. Of these, approximately four hundred thousand were German citizens; the remaining number represented chiefly eastern European Jews, many of whom had been born in Germany and held permanent residence status.

7. Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (London: André Deutsch, 1970), 36ff.

8. In 1927, for example, 54 percent of all German Jews who wed contracted their marriage with a non-Jewish partner.

9. Today this is the Polish city of Wrocław.

10. Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 5ff. See also Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel, eds., *The German-Jewish Dilemma: From the Enlightenment to the Shoah* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); Hermann Levin Goldschmidt, *The Legacy of German Jewry*, trans. David Suchoff (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007); George Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985); Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Marion Kaplan and Beate Meyer, eds., *Jüdische Welten: Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005); Arnold Paucker et al., eds., *The Jews in Nazi Germany, 1933–1945* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986).

Bertel Kugelmann¹¹ was nine years old when the National Socialists came to power in January 1933. Her family of grain merchants lived in the small municipality of Fritzlar, one hundred miles north of Frankfurt am Main. For most of her young life, she had lived a secure existence in rural Hessen. Yet, within weeks of Adolf Hitler's becoming chancellor of Germany, the unexpected responses of her neighbors and playmates had shaken much of this sense of security and rootedness. Bertel Kugelmann, who like many of her coreligionists had never before encountered overt antisemitism, was now made to feel the brunt of that prejudice often lying just beneath the surface of German village life. For children and adults alike, the profound integration of German Jews within German society and their deep roots in their own local communities made the dislocation and marginalization that accompanied early Nazi antisemitic policy all the more disconcerting and incomprehensible.

DOCUMENT 1-1. Bertel Kugelmann, "My Story," quoted in Paul Gerhard Lohmann, "*Hier waren wir zu Hause": Die Geschichte der Juden vom Fritzlar, 1096–2000, vor dem Hintergrund der allgemeinen Geschichte der deutschen Juden* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2002), 257–58 (translated from the German).

We were Jews and our neighbors Catholics, and during my early childhood that was unexceptional. But soon after Hitler came to power in 1933, things slowly began to change. The non-Jewish children from the neighborhood harassed us. Many of them said, "You are a Jew, and you killed Jesus. I can't play with you any more." I went home crying and asked my parents what was meant by this accusation. My parents tried to comfort me and told me that we weren't to blame for the death of Jesus. [. . .] As the persecution of the Jews began to intensify, and one heard from Jews in nearby towns and villages that they had been beaten, that gravestones had been overturned, and that windowpanes had been shattered, Jewish families and some of the [single] adult Jews left their homes and the place of their birth, and emigrated. . . .

11. Bertel Kugelmann lived with her family in Fritzlar until 1939, when she moved to be near a sister in Hamburg. On June 25, 1943, she was deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp; she was interned there for almost two years and liberated at Lenzing-Oberdonau, a subcamp of Mauthausen, by American troops on May 5, 1945. In June 1946, Kugelmann immigrated to the United States, where she pursued a career in nursing. In 1956, she married Dr. Melvin Borowsky.

My father, Josef Kugelmann,¹² was a grain dealer, highly respected in the community and also among the farmers in the nearby villages with whom he did business. Everyone knew him and came to him when they needed help. Once, when he gave a surety for one of the farmers, he had to put out a good deal of money in order to free him from his debt. He had served in the German army and fought at the front in France throughout all four years of World War I. His father, my grandfather, had served during the Franco-Prussian War. Both felt themselves Germans, like all the other veterans. With their wartime comrades, they were members of veterans' associations and organizations. When my mother pressed my father to leave Germany, he would not listen to her. "Don't get yourself worked up," he said. "Nothing will happen to us. After a little while, Hitler will go away again."

My brother Max, twelve years older than I, was an enthusiastic soccer player and belonged to the local soccer league. One day he came home after a soccer game to my room—I remember it as if it were yesterday. His face was black and blue, his lips swollen. He told me that he had been beaten up by some of the spectators; they didn't like it that a Jewish boy was playing with the rest of the team members. After this incident, my father agreed that my brother should go to my father's two sisters in the United States, where my older sister Irene had already emigrated in 1929.¹³ This is what happened to Jewish children already in April of 1933; nevertheless most people voted for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in November 1933.¹⁴

12. Josef Kugelmann (1877–1942) was incarcerated in the Buchenwald concentration camp in the immediate aftermath of *Kristallnacht*. In May 1941, he was again detained, in the Breitenau camp near Kassel. On December 16, 1941, Kugelmann was transferred to Dachau, where he died on June 16, 1942. His wife, Betty Kugelmann (née Plaut), perished in the Ravensbrück concentration camp on October 11, 1942. Three of their four children, including Bertel Kugelmann, survived the war. Their second daughter, Brunhilde, born 1916, was deported to the Łódź ghetto in 1942 and later perished at the Izbica transit camp near Lublin.

13. Max Kugelmann served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1945 and returned to Germany in the immediate postwar period in order to locate surviving family members.

14. On November 13, 1933, German voters went to the polls to vote in an election to the Reichstag; the ballot also contained a referendum asking German citizens to sanction Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. The electorate voted overwhelmingly for the National Socialists; however, the ballot for the Reichstag election contained no other party lists beside the Nazi roster.

National Socialist ideology declared that Jews exerted an undue and pernicious influence upon the German and world economies, an influence promoted, Nazi dogma suggested, by the growth of “international Jewry” and its “conspiracy” for world domination. When the Hitler regime came to power in late January 1933, Nazi authorities proclaimed their intention to eliminate Jews from German economic life. When the American Jewish Congress and allied Jewish organizations held a rally in New York’s Madison Square Garden¹⁵ on March 27, 1933, to protest early Nazi discriminatory measures and to exhort fellow American Jews not to buy German-manufactured products, the Nazi government used the occasion as a pretext to launch its first centrally directed economic measure against German Jewry. On March 28, 1933, the Nazi Party leadership announced a boycott effort against Jewish-owned shops and businesses to begin on April 1. The rationale behind the endeavor was twofold: the campaign would at once represent an initial effort to marginalize Jews in their own communities and might also consolidate public opinion in favor of Nazi antisemitic policy. On the morning of the boycott, local party action committees stationed SA or **Schutzstaffel (SS)** men outside Jewish-owned stores and enterprises, often holding placards encouraging passersby to purchase their wares only in German stores. Officially, sentries were posted only to “warn the population against entering Jewish businesses”; in practice, “Aryan” shoppers attempting to cross the picket line were often verbally or physically harassed, and in some places, demonstrations turned to violence against Jewish shop owners and spectators. Nevertheless, despite the best intention of central planners like **Der Stürmer** publisher **Julius Streicher**, the boycott ultimately failed to win the public support the Nazis had wished for, and international condemnation of the measure ensured that the centralized boycott campaign would be confined to a one-day affair.¹⁶ However, depending on the degree of local antisemitic sentiment, so-called wild boycotts, or **Einzelaktionen** (uncoordinated individual acts against Jews), continued well into the late 1930s, inevitably forcing Jewish-owned businesses in many localities into insolvency or liquidation.¹⁷

15. In addition to the event at Madison Square Garden, similar protest rallies took place in Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, and several other American cities.

16. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, 84–89.

17. See Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933–1943*, trans. William Templer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989).

Irmgard Marx lived in Höchst, today a municipal district of Frankfurt am Main, where her father owned a grain and feed business. She was ten years old on the day of the **boycott of April 1, 1933**. In contrast to the campaign's unsuccessful engagement in Berlin, the national capital, the boycott movement in Frankfurt experienced a measure of success, and the young Marx witnessed, perhaps without fully comprehending, the earliest efforts of the Nazi government to displace Jews from German economic life. From a financial standpoint, the stream of antisemitic measures aimed at Jewish-owned businesses had grave repercussions for Marx's family, who lost their business in 1937 and emigrated to the United States after *Kristallnacht* in 1938. For both ten-year-old Irmgard Marx and her parents, the loss of familiar customers and the gradual erosion of community support in a place where they had once felt at home would take an emotional toll.

DOCUMENT 1-2. Irmgard Marx, "Everyday Terror," in Elfi Pracht, ed., *Frankfurter jüdische Erinnerungen: Ein Lesebuch zur Sozialgeschichte* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1997), 227–32 (translated from the German).

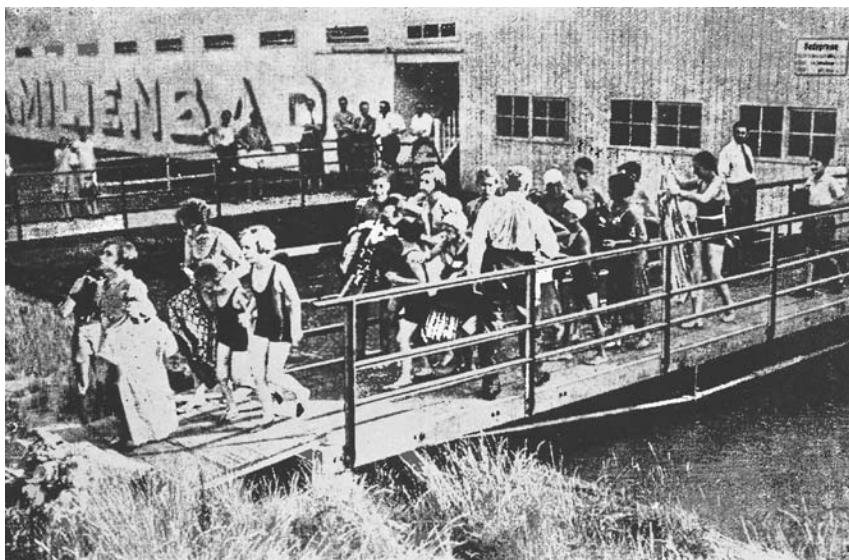
On the day of the boycott, on April 1, 1933, an SA man stood in uniform before our store and hindered customers from coming inside. A few brave souls came in through the courtyard¹⁸ in order to buy their goods, but the largest share of our customers stayed away. In one case a man, very agitated, came to us in our apartments after he had an exchange of words with the SA man. But this was an exception, and I cannot remember his name. My parents had told us children nothing about the boycott. I myself was shocked when I saw the SA man, but had no inkling of what all this meant for the future. After the boycott, the business went on. The circle of customers had grown smaller, but there was still enough to do. No, in any event, Christian businesses did not shut down for the day out of solidarity [with us]. Things like that just didn't happen in those days. Later one could see certain Christian-owned stores with signage that said "German" or "Aryan." Many were businesses that had formerly belonged to Jewish owners. I can still remember very well the signs which appeared on the restaurants, cafes, and movie theaters—when this was I can't remember any more—which said that Jews were not desired there or that entry was forbidden to Jews. These signs were also posted for swimming pools. In one bakery in our neighborhood, there was once a sign that read,

18. That is, through the back entrance.

"We do not say *Grüss Gott*¹⁹ any more, but *Heil Hitler!*"²⁰ Even as young as I was, I was horrified. Now I couldn't even say "Good day" when I entered a shop or store in order to buy bread or rolls. There was a steady stream of new discriminatory laws which made the daily lives of Jews more difficult. Even my parents and their business were affected.

Yes, there were several "faithful customers" who came to buy from us long after the boycott, but that circle—especially after 1936—became smaller and smaller. My parents closed their business either in late 1937 or early 1938. How high their losses were I can't say. [...] After the store was empty, my parents rented the space to the "Boha" shoe store.²¹

DOCUMENT 1-3. The antisemitic *Der Stürmer* newspaper portrays Jewish children ejected from a public swimming pool in Bad Herweck, near Mannheim, 1935, USHMMPA WS# 11196, courtesy of the Wiener Library Institute of Contemporary History.



19. This was the customary greeting, meaning "good day," used throughout most of southern Germany and Austria.

20. This was the so-called German greeting introduced by the Nazis as a standard salutation.

21. Following the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, the Marx family emigrated to the United States, where Irmgard Marx pursued a career as a textile artist in New York City.

IN THE SCHOOLROOM

Many of the Nazi discriminatory measures of the 1930s aimed to marginalize Jews within their own communities. For adults, marginalization meant removal from professional life, the loss of livelihood and property, and restrictions on their movements and actions in communal spaces. For children, a prominent aspect of segregation was the limitation on numbers and eventual dismissal of Jewish youngsters from German schools. The April 25, 1933, **Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities** had introduced a *numerus clausus*²² for Jewish pupils and students, stipulating that enrollment of Jewish youth in schools and universities be limited to 1.5 percent of those registered at any given institution. The expulsion process concluded on November 15, 1938, with a decree definitively banning Jewish pupils from state and public schools.²³ Until then, as German law prescribed mandatory education for youngsters under the age of fourteen, significant numbers of Jewish children remained in school beside their “Aryan” classmates. The experiences of these pupils differed appreciably. Elisabeth Block, introduced in the chapter’s introduction, remained at her desk in her rural Bavarian schoolhouse until November 1938, cherishing the time she spent among her sympathetic instructors and close-knit school friends. Yet, many other children were not so lucky and faced mounting discrimination in the public school environment throughout the 1930s. Treated as pariahs and the objects of harassment and ridicule, Jewish students were often subjected to public humiliation and punitive measures by politically zealous teachers and experienced both scorn and neglect at the hands of their peers. Because Nazi authorities also sought to win the hearts and minds of society’s youngest members, Jewish children, beside their “Aryan” colleagues, also endured the endless homilies dedicated to Nazi political, racial, and antisemitic ideology, distilled in class lectures, assembly addresses, and daily songs and rituals.

Gerd Zwienicki²⁴ was a high school student²⁵ in the northern German city-state of Bremen. The eldest of four children, he was the son of Jewish parents

22. Literally, this means “closed number”; in normal usage, it is a method to limit the number of students at universities where the number of applicants greatly exceeds the places available. Before 1945, such limitations were often used as a racial quota in order to limit the number of students of a given minority, especially Jews.

23. See Document 1-11.

24. Gerd Zwienicki, later Rabbi Jacob Wiener (1917–2011), earned a PhD in human development and social relations from New York University and became a social worker for the New York City Department of Human Resource Administration after World War II. In 1948, he married Trudel Farntrög, a fellow survivor. Rabbi Wiener was a longtime volunteer at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

25. That is, he was a pupil in an *Oberrealschule*.

who ran a bicycle shop in the Hanseatic port city. After his graduation in the mid-1930s, Zwienicki began rabbinical studies in Frankfurt and enrolled at the Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Würzburg. In the course of *Kristallnacht* in Bremen in November 1938, his mother, Selma, was murdered by SA men. The following year, the remaining Zwienicki family members emigrated to Canada, and in 1944 Gerd was ordained as a rabbi, taking up a position at the Hebrew National Orphan's Home in Yonkers, New York. But in 1934, Gerd Zwienicki was a seventeen-year-old teenager with a class composition to write. The topic assigned to him for the essay—"Does history show that racial mixing leads to the decline of a people?"—forced the young Jewish student to reflect and reiterate Nazi racial theories concerning the purity of the Nordic "Aryan" race and the danger of assimilation with "inferior peoples."

DOCUMENT 1-4. A class essay by Gerd Zwienicki, "Does History Show that Racial Mixing Leads to the Decline of a People," c. 1934, USHMM, Acc. 2055.122.1 (translated from the German).

Does History Show That Racial Mixing Leads to the Decline of a People[?]

It is the most significant merit of the National Socialist movement that it clearly recognizes—and that it time and again points out to all racial comrades [*Volksgenossen*]²⁶—that a great people [*Volk*] can only endure for the long term when it concerns itself with maintaining the purity of its race. To support the assertion that a mixing of races unquestionably leads to the decline of a people, history delivers several striking examples.

First, let us think of the fate of the great world empires of antiquity: the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman empires, to summon forth the most conspicuous examples. From the peasant stock of the Iranians came the establishment of the Persian Empire that was sustained by the spectacular religious movement of Zarathustra. This religion has a very Nordic composition in that all world events are connected to the battle between good and evil, of light against darkness. The idea of world empire

26. The term *Volksgenosse* (*Volk* comrade) first appeared in usage in German-speaking countries in the early nineteenth century; it had a meaning similar to the German term *Landsmann* (compatriot). The term was adopted and widely used by National Socialists to impart a feeling of inclusivity to those persons of "German blood" who belonged to the *Volkgemeinschaft*, the German racial community.

was originally foreign to the Aryan²⁷ peoples of Persia. Only after the final conquest of Babylon did they adopt the idea from vanquished Semitic peoples and follow this course to its highest realization. But the borders [of the empire] were spread too far; and the upper stratum of peasant and chivalric peoples of Nordic ancestry and upbringing were not of sufficient number in such a multiracial world empire, and they dissolved into racial chaos. The Persian Empire grew ever more frail and irresolute. With ease it could be overwhelmed by such a powerful people as the Macedonians. Even Alexander [the Great] fell victim to the dream of world empire, which he came so close to accomplishing. Here we witness the terrible tragedy, unparalleled in history. Just so, the Führer, as the willing servant of his people, in accordance with their nature, willfully rejects the notion of the fusion of races, so that he might establish a world empire of eternal peace, God's kingdom upon earth. This mixing of races and peoples, however, transpired at the cost of the Macedonian-Greek conquerors and naturally led within the briefest of periods to the decline of this people and to the disintegration of their world empire. Nevertheless, the vision of world empire experienced such a renewal and intensification through Alexander that this ideal has never again disappeared.

The history of the Roman Empire is the history of Rome. Its march of destiny leads from the Latin patrician state to the national state and climaxed with world empire. The founders of the Roman state [were] the Indo-Germanic and Nordic peasant peoples. The healthy growth from city-state to national state advanced mainly through the constant foundation of farming settlements, which was first made possible by the great reproductive capacity [*Kinderreichtum*] of the peasant families and the *gens*.²⁸ For centuries, the vitality of the Roman people, built upon peasant foundations, maintained its ascendancy. With the further expansion of the empire beyond the borders of Italy, friction slowly developed between

27. The word "Aryan" derives from Sanskrit. Since ancient times, Persians (the peoples of modern-day Iran) have used the term *Aryan* as a racial and ethnic designation to describe their lineage, language, and culture. Indeed, the name "Iran" is a cognate of "Aryan" and means "land of the Aryans." In linguistic terminology, "Aryan" refers to a subfamily of the Indo-European languages, and before the term's adoption and perversion by National Socialist ideologues, it was employed to describe the parent language of the Indo-European language family. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, linguists and ethnologists began to argue that speakers of the Indo-European languages constituted a distinct race, separated in the racial hierarchy from the Semitic peoples (i.e., Jews).

28. These were Roman patrilineal clans comprising families with the same stock in the male line, sharing a common family name and worshipping a common ancestor.

those peoples who, no longer tied to the soil, followed the advance of expansion—together with nonfarming peoples engaged in trade—and those of a Nordic hereditary disposition whose innate drive for expansion of ethnic territory functioned through a strategy of colonization. These two opposing impulses, which developed side by side contemporaneously, we can clearly perceive in Rome's political actions, but to explore specific examples would take us too far afield from our subject matter. After the greatest and most difficult wars which Rome had to fight, after the war against Carthage, the foundation of the state, its peasant class, was almost completely [decimated]²⁹; the racial core of the population was most gravely affected. Now the greatly enervated foundation of peasant stock succumbed to the geopolitical laws of a world power, with all of the consequences inherent in racial transformation. With the riches from every land streamed into Rome also masses of peoples of foreign race. A mercantile spirit and a dissolute culture, introduced from other religious practices, also permeated deeply into political life. The newly established class of great landholders adopted from Carthage the plantation farming economy, with thousands of slaves. The peasantry was completely undermined, both racially and economically. While the Romans' hereditary character, as well as their political forms and prototypical works, would have great impact for hundreds of years to come, the old vitality of the Roman *Volk*, with its origins in the race, began slowly to erode, until their world empire was overrun by Germanic tribes. [...] In conclusion, let us look within the confines of contemporary history and the present. Can we not here clearly see the results and consequences of racial mixing? We have only to compare North and South America. While in South America, the predominantly Latin European settlers have for the most part mingled with the aboriginal inhabitants, the largely Nordic population of North America has interbred very little with the lowly colored peoples.³⁰ The results that must arise from these circumstances we see before us. The racial makeup and culture of South America are clearly different from that in North America; the racially pure Germanic has become the lord of the American continent, and will remain so as long as he does not degenerate by defiling his blood.

In September 1935, in the midst of the seventh annual Nuremberg party rally, Nazi leaders promulgated the so-called Nuremberg racial laws, which

29. This word is obscured in the original.

30. Today this reference would be viewed as pejorative.

historians view as a central feature of the acceleration of legislated discriminatory measures in Nazi Germany. The first, the **Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor** (Blood Protection Law) (*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*, or *Blutschutzgesetz*), imposed bans upon marriage and extramarital relations between German Jews and German “Aryans,” thus providing a legal basis for the punishment of **Rassenschande** (“race defilement”), or miscegenation. The second piece of legislation, the **Reich Citizenship Law** (*Reichsbürgergesetz*), created a new status for “Aryan” Germans, “Reich citizen,” upon which all political and civil rights in Germany would be based. Jews were denied most integral civil rights, possessing only *Staatsbürgerschaft* (state citizenship), a status that suggested they were now subjects, not citizens. Ancillary ordinances provided a legal definition for “Jewishness” based on confessional, as well as biological, terms.³¹

Artist Irene Spicker Awret lives today in Falls Church, Virginia. In the summer months of 1935, fourteen-year-old Irene lived with her parents in a comfortable middle-class district of Berlin, where she dreamed of becoming a painter. Although the escalating discriminatory legislation had persuaded the secular teenager to take increased pride in her Jewish heritage, the regime’s antisemitic measures had had limited practical impact upon the young girl’s life: the demeanor of her teachers and classmates had not yet altered, and best friend Tutti Mahlow “did not care that [she] was Jewish.”³² The two girls spent hours together, playing, studying, and reciting the plays of Goethe and Schiller. With the promulgation of the **Nuremberg Laws**, however, Irene’s world changed dramatically. Lifelong friendships extinguished overnight, and the girl who had once hidden her childhood illnesses from her parents in her eagerness to go to school now hated the classroom lectures in history and ethnology (*Volkskunde*), which were punctuated with antisemitic rhetoric and Nazi propaganda. With the Nuremberg Laws came a heightened sense of discomfort and anxiety for Germany’s Jews, both young and old. For young Irene Spicker, in those difficult

31. See Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003); Cornelia Essner, “Die Nürnberger Gesetze” oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns, 1933–1945 (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2002); Lothar Gruchmann, “Blutschutzgesetz und Justiz: Zur Entstehung und Auswirkung des Nürnberger Gesetzes vom 15. September 1935,” *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (1983): 418–42; Otto Dov Kulka, “Die Nürnberger Rassengesetze und die deutsche Bevölkerung im Lichte geheimer Stimmungs- und Lageberichte,” *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 32 (1984): 582–624; Abraham Margalit, “The Reaction of the Jewish Public in Germany to the Nuremberg Laws,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 12 (1977): 75–107.

32. Irene Spicker Awret, *They’ll Have to Catch Me First: An Artist’s Coming of Age in the Third Reich* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 78.

days before her family left Germany for Belgium in 1939, art seemed her only stable refuge.³³

DOCUMENT 1-5. Irene Spicker Awret, *They'll Have to Catch Me First: An Artist's Coming of Age in the Third Reich* (Madison, WI/Takoma Park, MD: University of Wisconsin Press/Dryad Press, 2004), 88.

Shortly after returning from my vacation trip, the Nuremberg Laws were published, making mixed marriages unlawful and punishing sexual intercourse between Jews and “Aryans” with hard labor.³⁴ At the same time we were demoted from citizens to subjects. To top it all, my friend Tutti Mahlow dropped me like the proverbial hot potato. I should try to understand, she said, sounding very considerate—her father was a magistrate, her sister had to think of her fiancé’s career. In the space of a day, we went from being good friends to classmates who politely greeted each other from a distance. It was more humiliating than having to sit through one of Doctor Kadner’s ethnology courses. Though he was a good teacher of French and geography, and had a doctorate from the Sorbonne, the Nazi bacillus seemed to have softened his brain. More and more often he arrived in class wearing his brown S.A. uniform, giving the “*Heil Hitler*” salute as if from a grandstand, and proclaiming the planned geography lesson had been changed to ethnology. For forty-five minutes I would try to concentrate on a drawing so as not to have to listen to Doctor Kadner’s description of the characteristics of sub-species such as Negroes and Jews, mainly of Jews. On the blackboard, he wrote in neat rows: “kinky hair,” “flat feet,” “receding forehead,” “obesity.” Then he strode to my bench at the back of the class, praising my drawing. My teacher’s conduct toward me remained correct and friendly, the unspoken agreement of my dispen-

33. Irene Spicker (1921–) fled from Berlin to Belgium in 1939, where she remained in hiding for several years. Arrested in 1943, she continued to draw while confined to a Gestapo prison in Brussels. Her artwork attracted the attention of Gestapo officials, who ordered her transfer to an art workshop at the Mechelen (Malines) transit camp. There Spicker avoided deportation and fell in love with fellow prisoner-artist Azriel Awret. The couple married soon after their liberation from Mechelen in September 1944.

34. Persons convicted of *Rassenschande* (“race defilement”) typically received a prison sentence; during the war years, such a crime might warrant the death sentence or internment in a concentration camp without trial.

sation from the “German greeting,”³⁵ extending to ethnology. While he taught his revolting antisemitic drivel, I continued to sit in the back of the class drawing.

“I DECIDE WHO IS A JEW”³⁶

On March 12, 1938, German troops marched into Austria. A long tradition of sentiment in both countries favored a unification of the two German-speaking lands, particularly in truncated Austria after World War I. Although the **Treaty of Versailles** and that of St. Germaine³⁷ specifically forbade such a union, a pan-German nation represented a political goal of many disparate interest groups in both states, including the National Socialist Party. Supported by the Hitler government, the Austrian Nazi Party, which had been illegal since 1933, staged a coup on March 11, 1938, the eve of the German invasion, in part to preclude a national referendum on Austro-German unification. The so-called *Anschluss*, the incorporation of Austria into Germany, proceeded formally on March 13, 1938, and received the enthusiastic support of most of the Austrian population.³⁸ In the days and weeks following these events, German anti-Jewish legislation was extended to what came to be called the *Ostmark*, and Vienna and other centers of Jewish life in Austria became sites of brutal and spontaneous antisemitic violence.³⁹ For Austria’s 192,000 Jews, some 4 percent of the general population, the spring and summer months of 1938 played out in nightmarish scenes of physical violence, appropriation of private property, and public

35. This was *Heil Hitler*, the Nazi salutation that often replaced such greetings as “good day” in common conversation.

36. This saying, later attributed to various Nazi leaders, was first spoken by Karl Lueger (1844–1910), the antisemitic Christian Socialist mayor of Vienna.

37. The Versailles Treaty officially ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied powers in World War I, while the Treaty of St. Germaine-en-Laye represented peace terms between the Allies and the new Republic of Austria.

38. See Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

39. See Hans Safran and Hans Witek, *Und keiner war dabei: Dokumente des alltäglichen Antisemitismus in Wien*, 2nd ed. (1938; Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2008); Evan Burr Bukey and F. Parkinson, eds., *Conquering the Past: Austrian Nazism Yesterday and Today* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989; Hans Safran, *Eichmann’s Men*, trans. Uta Stargardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010).

humiliation. Eighteen-year-old Walter Grab,⁴⁰ from a Viennese middle-class family, learned two valuable lessons from his own encounter with local Nazi zealots in this context. For him, the events of the spring of 1938 demonstrated what many Jews in Germany did not yet comprehend and would first grasp in the wake of *Kristallnacht*: that Jews could no longer count themselves safe from the escalating anti-Jewish measures of regional and national authorities or from the sometimes violent wrath of the local antisemitic population, many of whom were their neighbors. Second, Grab began to understand that grassroots antisemitism was neither logical nor rational and that familiarity could breed both contempt and salvation.

DOCUMENT 1-6. Walter Grab, “The Jews are Vermin Except for My Jewish Schoolmate Grab,”⁴¹ in “Niemand war dabei, und keiner hat’s gewußt”: *Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit und die Judenverfolgung, 1933–1945*, ed. Jörg Wollenberg (Munich: Piper, 1989), 45–50 (translated from the German).

On the afternoon of April 25, 1938, after six weeks of Nazi rule in Austria, I was on my way home. Not far from our apartment there was a Jewish gymnasium [*Turnheim*] in the basement of the house at 20 Liechtensteinstrasse. As a child of seven or eight, I had often exercised there. As I neared this building, I was halted by a number of Nazis who had formed a column and were wearing armbands and swastikas. One of them called to me, “Are you a Jew?” As I answered in the affirmative, he dragged me to the building where the gym hall was and ordered me down the cellar stairs. [. . .] In this anteroom of the gymnasium, I saw some twenty to twenty-five Jews, whom the Nazis had assembled and forced into a corner of the room. A Nazi sent me over there as well. The large gymnasium and also this antechamber were—you must pardon the expression—completely covered in shit. The floors and even the walls were completely plastered with excrement. It stank to high heaven. Here, in my estimation, an entire regiment of SA or SS or some other kind of Nazis had relieved themselves, and clearly right before they began to gather Jews

40. Walter Grab (1919–2000) emigrated to Palestine in 1938. He became a prominent historian of Germany, researching the democratic trends prevalent before German unification in 1870 and writing extensively on the history of German-Jewish emancipation. As a professor of history at the University of Tel Aviv, Grab founded that university’s Institute for German History in 1971.

41. In German, “Die Juden sind Ungeziefer, ausgenommen mein jüdischer Schulkamerad Grab.”

together here; the excrement was still very fresh and moist. Apart from the Jews, there were fifteen or twenty Nazis in the changing room. Behind me there were more Jews being forced down the cellar steps, so that there were thirty-five or forty of us in all—only males. For the Nazis, this was enormous fun. They amused themselves tremendously because they could vent their anger on these helpless and perplexed Jews whom they had chased into this excrement-covered gymnasium. They laughed and shouted at us for ten or fifteen minutes, and mocked us because we were afraid. Finally, one of them stepped forward and said, “You Jews have left us this filthy gymnasium. Jewish gyms are so dirty! Once again one can see how filthy Jews are! And now you have to lick it up!” What does one say when one is delivered into the hands of such barbarians, who seem to have human faces? Nothing. We stood there silently. We had been delivered up to them and imagined now that anything could happen. But they were just making a joke. They had devised a way to humiliate and humble the Jews. This was not an ordered action, like the pogrom of November 9 [*Kristallnacht*], in which Jewish businesses were plundered and the homes of Jewish citizens demolished. No, this was mob amusement. I am not sure if such “fun” took place in other cities, but in Vienna it did. We were completely at the mercy of the arbitrary whims of these Nazis. And they found it so hilarious that we huddled together in terror. How could one lick up this Nazi excrement?

And then one of them shouted, “Okay, let’s get started. To work!” And several Jews actually tried to scrape together the excrement with their hands and to throw it in the bathroom toilets. But it was impossible. At the best one could only smear the excrement around. It wasn’t possible to clean the dressing room and gymnasium in this way. The Nazis laughed and jeered at us, but finally one of them brought us a shovel, a broom, a waste can, and a couple of towels, and we turned the water faucet on. But for this type of cleaning one needed a fire hose. I took one of the towels—had a burning fear of being beaten in this cellar by these Nazis and tried to crawl after the other Jews and throw the excrement into the toilets. The whole thing lasted a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, during which time we tried to obey the Nazi orders. We were not very successful. And while I squatted and bent, so that in my terror, I would hide my fright as much as possible, I lift my eyes, and my glance meets unequivocally the glance of one of these laughing Nazis, standing around with the swastika armband on his brown shirt. And I recognized him immediately. It was a [former] schoolmate of mine from the *Volksschule*. [. . .] He had even once

eaten next to me, had played in the schoolyard with me. His name was Lichtenegger. That I will never forget.

And this former schoolmate Lichtenegger saw me and recognized me, even as I had recognized him. This recognition was uncomfortable for him and embarrassing. I saw that in an instant; I sensed that he did not want to humiliate *me*, a Jew whom he knew, but an anonymous Jew, the Jewish bogeyman of the National Socialist racial madness. “The Jew” was a vermin that one crushed underfoot, that one must destroy, but schoolmate Grab, whom he had known as a fellow creature, that he didn’t want. These were his thoughts, which I comprehended in a split second, as our eyes met. And I got up, threw down my towel, and went over to Lichtenegger, while the other Jews tried to wipe the mess away. In my broadest Viennese dialect, I said, “Look here, Lichtenegger, you know me, get me outta this.” He looked down at the ground, [.] tore a piece of the edge of a newspaper, and wrote on it, “This Jew can go.” Apparently he had a little authority, was some kind of low-level leader of these Nazis. After he wordlessly handed me the piece of paper, I went to the cellar stairs, said to the Nazi on guard there, “Lichtenegger said I can go,” and revealed the scrap of paper. Then I ran up the stairs, showed the paper to the Nazi before the door, and ran home as fast as my legs could carry me.

DOCUMENT 1-7. A crowd of Viennese children look on as an Austrian Nazi forces a youth to paint the word *Jud* (Jew) on the facade of his father's store, 1938, USHMMPA WS# 01510, courtesy of the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte.



TRAINING YOUTH FOR JOBS ABROAD

As antisemitic policies escalated in the mid-1930s, thousands of German Jews chose to emigrate from their native land. By the outbreak of war in September 1939, some 282,000 Jews—nearly half of the Jewish population as it had

existed in 1933—had fled Nazi Germany.⁴² But emigration was difficult: it required sufficient funds and flexibility to resettle in a foreign land. The worldwide Great Depression and pervasive antisemitism presented added obstacles to immigration. Moreover, in order to obtain the necessary visas for entry and residence, most countries demanded that each new immigrant provide the name of a guarantor, who might pledge financial support for the new arrival in the event of illness or unemployment. Most also required that the refugees possess the skills and ability to find work in their new homeland.

German Jewish youth faced particular difficulties both in gaining professional skills and in facilitating their emigration abroad. Limited educational opportunities and the decrease in the number of businesses that might take in Jewish employees or apprentices prevented many youngsters from garnering the knowledge and proficiency required for professional placement. Those who had gained the necessary expertise or experience were “not unemployed,” as Jewish educator Heinemann Stern noted; rather “they [were] without a profession.”⁴³ As one solution, Jewish self-help organizations promoted occupational training centers, where young people could acquire the skills they needed to find a job overseas. Most of these training centers were sponsored and directed by Zionist associations, which offered their students vocational training as well as Hebrew-language instruction in the hope that they might immigrate to Palestine.

In 1936, the **Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland** (Reich Association of Jews in Germany) established an emigration-training farm (*Auswandererlehrhof*) at Gross-Breesen in Silesia, one of the only non-Zionist centers of its kind.⁴⁴ Organized by the Hamburg-born pedagogue Curt Bondy (1894–1972), Gross-Breesen began its efforts with 135 boys and girls, aged fifteen to seventeen.⁴⁵ This initial cadre learned farming and animal husbandry techniques, housekeeping, and artisan skills, as well as carpentry and metal-working. In tandem with the technical curriculum, students received foreign-language training, courses in history and civics, and in-depth instruction in the Jewish religion, with an emphasis on their common cultural heritage. Although

42. That is, Germany's 1937 borders; 117,000 Jews had also emigrated from annexed Austria by September 1939.

43. Heinemann Stern, *Warum hassen sie uns eigentlich? Jüdisches Leben zwischen den Kriegen: Erinnerungen*, ed. Hans Christian Meyer (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1970), 194.

44. For a definitive account of the *Auswandererlehrhof* Gross-Breesen, see Werner T. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope: Jewish Youth in the Third Reich*, trans. Werner T. Angress and Christine Granger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

45. Despite Bondy's repeated efforts to recruit more female candidates for the training farm, the overwhelming majority of Gross-Breesen's student population consisted of teenage males.

early conditions at the center proved primitive, Bondy's two-year training program would ultimately attract 240 students to the 567-acre estate at Gross-Breesen. Candidates for the training farm were usually recruited from the Bund Deutsch-Jüdischer Jugend (League of German Jewish Youth),⁴⁶ while the youngsters' parents or guardians undertook the costs for schooling and board.

The leaders of the Reichsvertretung had conceived of their emigration-training farm as a basis for a number of Gross-Breesen settlements abroad. Preliminary efforts focused on the establishment of a coffee plantation in the Paraná province of Brazil, but negotiations foundered, and although new opportunities for satellite farms presented themselves to Bondy and his colleagues, their painstaking efforts yielded few results. Their only successful overseas endeavor materialized in the Virginia Plan. In 1938, William Thalhimer Sr., owner of a Southern-based department store chain headquartered in Richmond, donated a tract of land in nearby Burkeville, Virginia, as the foundation for a communal farm on American soil. Thirty-seven young trainees would immigrate to Virginia in an effort to establish Thalhimer's Hyde Farm as an outpost of the Breesen experiment; each young person, including Ernst Löwensberg,⁴⁷ author of the correspondence below, received joint stock in the farm from Thalhimer so that he or she could fulfill residency requirements through the ownership of property.⁴⁸ While Löwensberg toiled in Burkeville, many of his male colleagues and the staff at the Gross-Breesen training center were arrested by Nazi authorities in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* and imprisoned at the **Buchenwald** concentration camp, while the farm itself suffered extensive damage as a result of the pogrom. Thereafter, several students emigrated; in the following years, thirty-one additional students made their way to England, Argentina, Australia, Kenya, and Palestine. Curt Bondy himself ultimately escaped Nazi Germany through the Netherlands and found a post teaching psychology in the United States at the College of William and Mary. On August 31, 1941, **Gestapo** officials ordered the dissolution of the Gross-

46. The League of German Jewish Youth was established in 1933 as a union of several Jewish youth organizations. In 1936, under pressure from Nazi authorities, the association changed its name to the Ring Bund Jüdische Jugend; in January of the following year, the association was banned.

47. Ernst Moritz Löwensberg (later Ernest Loew) served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Following the war, he purchased a farm near Norwich, Connecticut, which he managed until his death in January 1986.

48. Virginia Historical Society Archive, Manuscripts MSS1 T3275 a FA1, William Blum Thalhimer Papers, 1914–2005.

Breesen farm and deployed remaining faculty and trainees as forced laborers.⁴⁹ Many of the last generation of Gross-Bresseners perished during the Holocaust.

DOCUMENT 1-8. Letter of Ernst Löwensberg, Burkeville, Virginia, to students of the emigration-training farm at Gross-Breesen, Silesia, June 16, 1938, USHMM, Acc. 2000.227, Herbert Cohn Gross-Breesen Collection (translated from the German).

Dear Friends!

It is eight days that I have been here on the farm, where we will all be gathered together in the near future in order primarily to advance what we started in Breesen: working and learning. Concerning what comes after that, we don't want to discuss right now. I will try to report briefly to you all that I have done and experienced and seen since I have been here.

From Richmond it is about sixty miles to Burkeville, and then another six miles beyond that. [Curt] Bondy has told us that the landscape here is like that of the Black Forest, and this is true. [...] The road leading here is very curvy and hilly, and also much varied in appearance. The fields on either side are always surrounded by forest. People's houses lie quite aloof from the roadway. That somewhere in the distance there must be a house, one determines in the following way. At the edge of the road stand posts on which a kind of pipe has been mounted (it almost looks like a drainage pipe), and on this there is a name. This is the mailbox for the *U.S. Mail*,^{*50} which comes once a day by automobile. [...] Some six miles beyond Burkeville there is also such a mailbox. The lettering reads "R. J. Barron," and next to it a pretty sign announces Hyde Farmlands, and here the road forks. Then one drives another five minutes with the car, and then one does not see a cottage but a massively built manor house. [...] I won't write much about it. I can only say to you that it is excellently suited to our purposes. Twenty-two rooms are at our disposal—bigger ones and smaller ones. They are only waiting for a painter to spruce them up a bit. [...] There is a lovely balcony on the second floor, and I can imagine that we will put our musicians up there, while we sit and listen on the lawn below.⁵¹ The former owner of the grounds is living here—a man who like

49. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 73.

50. All phrases marked in italics with an asterisk (*) in this document were written in English by Löwensberg within the original German-language text.

51. The Gross-Breesen students held nightly musical performances at their training farm.

other people in the area only farmed a portion of the entire property. He'll remain here on the site principally as an "expert." Since the farm property has been purchased by Mr. Thalhimer, he is working now with two young hands who live here and with a neighbor family. [...] Tuesday we harrowed with the new machine for *cowpeas*,* and at the same time we spread phosphorus fertilizer. Then I separated and hoed the *cucumbers** (*Gurken*). When each of you hears that from me, I can imagine that many of you cannot resist letting a smile cross your lips. Yes, indeed, Ernst Löwensberg does the weeding, and he will do much, much more. Here hoeing is more difficult than in Breesen because there is only one *hoe*,* and you cannot change blades on it. One cannot always be running to the blacksmith to sharpen it all the time. What sort of tool do you all imagine I used over and over, one and the same, for all the hoeing I have done? It is dull on every side. But in any case, we keep going. In Breesen I would have said that I couldn't work with such a tool. But one gets used to many things! On Wednesday, we hoed *cucumbers** the whole day. This morning hoeing watermelons.* Then *butter beans*.* This afternoon we hoed the *corn** (*Mais*). In between we planted more butter beans. But what soil! In Gr[oss] Breesen, it would be sifted, plowed, cleared of roots and stumps, and harrowed beforehand. I can't describe to all of you how much stubborn quack grass there was, in addition to all the other weeds. The hoeing work proceeds like this: the weeds are hoed out of the rows [and fall] into the furrow. They are left there. One rain is all it takes, and they are [striking root and] growing again to beat the band. There are not enough people to clear them away and then burn them. I'll say it again: through intensive effort and supported only by our brief experience at Gr[oss]-Breesen, we will cultivate the soil here and will then succeed in bringing in a full harvest. The chief crop here is tobacco. [...]

I could write about much more. But for now this is enough. I hope that you have at least an impression of what it looks like here from what I've told you. There are many special things of which I have not written. I have resumed the connection with you all after the four weeks of silence while I was underway on my journey here. I will gladly answer your questions as best I can. You only need to write to me. There are certainly things that would interest each of you.

Now I have written you all! Now I expect that you will write me!

Greetings to you all,

Ernst Löwensberg

DOCUMENT 1-9. Jewish teenagers unload a cart of hay at the Gross-Breesen's emigration-training farm, Germany, c. 1936, USHMMPA WS# 68299, courtesy of George Landecker.



REICHSKRISTALLNACHT

On the night of November 9 and 10, 1938, a nationwide pogrom against German Jews erupted throughout Germany and annexed Austria and in areas of the **Sudetenland** and Czechoslovakia recently occupied by German troops. *Kristallnacht*, or Night of the Broken Glass, as the event came to be known, had its roots in the murder of Ernst vom Rath, a German embassy official stationed in Paris, on November 7, 1938. Herschel Grynszpan, a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew living in Paris, had shot the diplomat in response to the German authorities' recent expulsion of several thousand resident Polish Jews from the Reich.⁵² Vom Rath's death two days later happened to coincide with the anniversary of the Nazi's 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, the most significant date in the National Socialist calendar. The Nazi Party leadership, assembled in Munich for the commemoration, chose to use the occasion as a pretext to launch a night of antisemitic excesses.

52. See Gerald Schwab, *The Day the Holocaust Began: The Odyssey of Herschel Grynszpan* (New York: Praeger, 1990). Grynszpan's family numbered among the deportees.

In its aftermath, German officials would contend that *Kristallnacht* had begun as a spontaneous outburst of public sentiment; in reality, the pogrom was initiated primarily by Nazi Party officials and conducted by members of the Nazi Party, the SA, and the **Hitler Youth**. The “rioters” destroyed 267 synagogues throughout Greater Germany. Many synagogues burned throughout the night, in full view of the public and local firefighters, who had received orders to intervene only to prevent flames from spreading to nearby buildings. SA and Hitler Youth members smashed windows, plundered homes, and looted Jewish-owned shops and businesses. The pogrom proved especially destructive in Berlin and Vienna, home to the two largest German Jewish communities. Mobs of SA men roamed the streets, attacking Jews they encountered and forcing them to submit to acts of public humiliation. Although Nazi authorities had not specifically ordered aggravated violence against individuals, *Kristallnacht* claimed the lives of at least ninety-one Jews between November 9 and 10. As the pogrom spread, units of the SS and Gestapo arrested some thirty thousand Jewish males, ultimately transferring most to **Dachau**, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and other concentration camps until each prisoner could produce the requisite papers for emigration abroad. Significantly, *Kristallnacht* marked the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale on the basis of their ethnicity. The events of *Kristallnacht* represented an important turning point in Nazi antisemitic policy. After the pogrom, anti-Jewish measures radicalized dramatically, with a concentration of powers for antisemitic policy resting more and more concretely in the hands of the SS.⁵³

Twelve-year-old Marguerite Strasser experienced the events of November 9 and 10, 1938, in Munich, the cradle of the National Socialist movement. Strasser’s mother had died shortly after her birth, and her father had recently fled to Strasbourg, so Marguerite lived until her own flight to France in the care of her elderly grandmother. The events of November 10 made a powerful impression upon the young girl. Many of the pogrom’s central features—the burning synagogues, the mistreatment of Jews in the streets, the ransacking and destruction of houses and businesses, and the arrest of Jewish men en masse in the wake of the action—figure as Strasser’s fundamental images of the event. Her latter-day recollections also make it clear that Strasser internalized much of

53. For a more detailed account of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, see Hermann Graml, *Reichskristallnacht: Antisemitismus und Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988); Walter Pehle, ed., *November 1938: From “Reichskristallnacht” to Genocide*, trans. William Templer (New York: Berg, 1991); Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht, 1938* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).

the rejection and trauma she and other Jews experienced at the hands of their fellow Germans in the wake of *Kristallnacht*.⁵⁴

DOCUMENT 1-10. Marguerite Strasser, “Then I Felt Like a Subhuman . . . ,” in Friedrich Kraft, ed., *Kristallnacht in Bayern: Judenpogrom am 9. November 1938: Eine Dokumentation* (Ingolstadt: Claudius Verlag, 1988), 109–10 (translated from the German).

On this day [November 10, 1938], I didn’t want to go to school, because I already had the feeling that something was up. In my class, it was doubly difficult, because I was already a complete outsider there. And on this day the atmosphere was worse still. I was harassed more often, and the looks were even more hateful. In the first period we had calisthenics, and the teacher humiliated me on this day more than usual. Then my schoolmates hid all of my clothes, and I, completely dissolved in tears, had to search for them in every nook and cranny.

It was a very wicked prank, and of course as a result I came much too late to the math hour which followed. And, because I had also not done my homework, I promptly received an extra homework assignment.

In the middle of class, a pupil came in with an order from the director that the Jewish pupils had to leave the school immediately. I packed up my things. My classmates made very merry: they clapped and shrieked as I crept towards the door. But the mathematics teacher called after me, “And don’t forget your extra assignment!” With this he showed that he didn’t approve of this expulsion. It was very nice of him—until today I have not forgotten that. I was afraid to go straight home and went first to the home of a friend, who lived close by. She was half Jewish. She was not home yet, however, and her parents were in complete despair. She came home a half an hour later, sobbing, with torn clothing and covered with bruises. She was treated so cruelly by her fellow classmates. Her parents were so distressed that they sent me home immediately.

I was able to sneak past the synagogue in the Kanalstrasse.⁵⁵ The building was still giving off clouds of smoke. The windowpanes were shat-

54. Marguerite Strasser (b. 1926) emigrated in May 1939 to France, where she worked for several years as a social worker. In 1951 she returned to Munich, where she worked as a translator and raised a family.

55. This is today Munich’s Herzog-Rudolf-Strasse.

tered. On the street among the shards of glass lay singed books and burnt religious objects.

Many people were standing before the synagogue, most of them in uniform, yelling “*Juda, verrecke*”⁵⁶ or something of that nature. Others walked by shyly—it was embarrassing to them. I went away then, with tears in my eyes. I did not dare take the tram.

When I arrived home crying, my grandmother said to me that I should save my tears until I knew everything. That is to say that my uncle, like all Jewish men over the age of eighteen, had been taken to Dachau. The Gestapo had been to the house, had ransacked the place, and ordered that we had to leave the apartment immediately.

Our loyal housekeeper, Afra, was indignant that an old lady and a little girl should simply be thrown out of their apartment. So she went in the afternoon to the Gestapo headquarters and carried on like a mad-woman, asking what the big idea was and declaring how inhumane they were. In any case, we were allowed to remain in the apartment.

My grandmother had always said I must be proud that I am Jewish, but that was completely incomprehensible to me. I had always been terribly ashamed that I belonged to this horrible people with their terrible Jewish grimaces, as they were pictured in *Der Stürmer*. In my family certainly no one looked like that, but somehow it had still made an impression on me, and I felt like an inferior *Untermensch*.⁵⁷ And in school I was treated in exactly this manner, and at some point came to accept that I was of lesser value than the others.

THE DISMISSAL OF JEWISH CHILDREN FROM “GERMAN” SCHOOLS

In 1933, some sixty thousand Jewish children were of school age in Nazi Germany.⁵⁸ Especially in the earliest days of anti-Jewish legislation, parents and family members may have been able to shield youngsters from the worst aspects of antisemitic persecution: financial difficulties, the diminution within the circles of customers and business associates, the attenuation of social and community support, the likelihood of the loss of livelihood and property. But no one could protect Jewish children from the unconcealed prejudice and

56. This invective, used often in Nazi parlance, translates roughly as “Die, Jews!” or “Jews, drop dead!”

57. This means “inferior being.”

58. See Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 103.

discrimination that they encountered in their classrooms. Long before comprehensive efforts were undertaken to displace Jewish pupils from German public schools, Jewish boys and girls often experienced brutal treatment and painful rejection at the hands of their teachers and fellow students. In many schoolroom settings, they were held up to public ridicule by instructors and endured both taunting and bullying from their peers. Jewish children often had to sit on separate benches from their “Aryan” schoolmates, and in some schools, Jewish and German pupils were physically segregated. Spurned by classmates with whom they had been friendly for years, they could not join in many student events and were often excluded from school festivities and outings. The curriculum itself was alienating, with its emphasis on “Aryan” superiority, **racial hygiene**, and Nazi themes such as antisemitism and the subordination of so-called inferior peoples. In the midst of these indignities, Jewish pupils had few alternatives. As German law prescribed that school attendance was mandatory until age fourteen, many Jewish teenagers simply dropped out of school. Others—some 52 percent by 1936—enrolled in Jewish schools supported by the Reichsvertretung or other private organizations. Although this was a substantial leap from the 14 percent of students attending Jewish schools in 1932, a significant percentage of Jewish children nevertheless remained in public school classrooms until a decree in November 1938 definitively banned them from attending German schools.⁵⁹

Nazi efforts to expel Jewish pupils from German public schools began with the April 25, 1933 Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities. This legislation imposed a quota for Jewish students, stipulating that enrollment of Jewish youth in schools and universities be limited to 1.5 percent of the students registered. The decree looked imposing, but in practice, its bark was worse than its bite, for exemptions were granted to all students whose fathers had fought in World War I; and in many areas, the Jewish population was such that resident Jewish children in a given district fit within the prescribed quota. In the years that followed, regional ordinances further limited Jewish school attendance in certain areas, but a comprehensive national ban came only in the wake of *Kristallnacht*. Among the multitude of regulations marginalizing Jews in German social and economic spheres in the aftermath of the pogrom came a November 15, 1938, decree from the Reich Minister of Education, dismissing all Jewish pupils from German (i.e., public) schools.⁶⁰

59. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 103.

60. See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997); Monika Kingreen, ed., “Nach der Kristallnacht”: *Jüdisches Leben und antijüdische Politik in Frankfurt am Main, 1938–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999).

DOCUMENT I-II. Decree of the Reich Minister of Science, Education, and Adult Education re the schooling of Jews, November 15, 1938 (translated from the German).

The City President of the Reich Capital, Berlin Dept. of Higher Education	Berlin, C.2., November 22, 1938 Burgstrasse 20 Tel. no. 52 0021
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III Gen 1952/38

Copy

The Reich Minister for Science, Education, and Adult Education	Berlin, W 8, November 15, 1938 Postal Box
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E I b 745 (b)

Re: Schooling for Jews

After the infamous act of murder in Paris, no German schoolteacher can further be expected to give instruction to Jewish schoolchildren. It also goes without saying that it is intolerable for German school pupils to sit in the same classroom with Jews. The segregation of races in schools has already been generally accomplished in the last several years; but there is still a residual number of Jewish students in German schools, for whom school attendance with German boys and girls can no longer be permitted.

Subject to further legal regulations, I hereby order the following, effective immediately:

1. Jews are not permitted to attend German schools. They may only attend Jewish schools. As far as this has not occurred already, all Jewish male and female pupils now attending German schools are to be immediately dismissed.

2. Jews are defined by §5 of the First Decree of November 14, 1935, of the Reich Citizenship Law (*German Law Gazette*, I.P. 1333).

3. This regulation extends to all schools falling under my jurisdiction, inclusive of compulsory education establishments.

Signed for
(L. S.)

Zschintzsch

Elisabeth Block, a fifteen-year-old Jewish girl from Niedernburg, Bavaria, had remained in her unsegregated classroom until the late fall of 1938.

Although she lived in a rural community, where the abuse of Jewish pupils often proved harshest, Elisabeth thrived, surrounded by friendly schoolmates and buoyed by frequent outings with her class to the beautiful Alpine countryside. Elisabeth, who was introduced earlier, kept a diary in which, even during this dark period, she was loathe to record unpleasant developments. On November 17, 1938, she noted her expulsion and that of her siblings, Trudi and Arno, from their small Bavarian school. Just a week after the murder of her uncle, killed by SA men during *Kristallnacht*, Elisabeth remained cautiously optimistic about the new state of affairs. Although resolved to make the most of her new homeschooling, her entry makes plain the pain of isolation and separation from her friends and old life that lay just beneath the surface.

DOCUMENT 1-12. Diary for Elisabeth Block, entry for November 17, 1938, in Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 162–63 (translated from the German).

November 17, 1938

Now what Mama has feared for so long has come to pass. Trudi, Arno, and I may not go to school any longer. With a terribly heavy heart, I took leave of my dear schoolmates.

My Schedule:

6:30: wake up; make the beds after breakfast. Around 8:00 a.m.: go to “school” in Papa’s room, which will last till 10:00 a.m. We have German, mathematics, geography, history, drawing, and geometry. Tuesdays and Fridays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.: stenography and English with Mama. Between 10:00 and 1:00: cooking and washing dishes. Afternoons: digging in the garden, homework, etc. Mondays: help Kathi with the wash, which is very much fun, because in the shed we’ve had a very nice, spacious laundry set up. In the evenings, *Gabriele von Bülow’s Daughters*⁶¹ and *An Artist’s Life* by F. Wasmann will be read aloud while we sew.

61. This was *Gabriele von Bülow’s Töchter*, a book coauthored by Anna von Sydow and Gabriele von Bülow, daughter of the famous German scholar, philosopher, and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt.

I am now completely preoccupied with this schedule and with preparations for Christmas⁶² and feel exactly as content again as if I were going to school.

DOCUMENT 1-13. A young girl reads her classroom lesson in Hebrew to her fellow classmates at a school sponsored by the Jewish Community of Berlin, c. 1935, USHMMPA WS# 32505, courtesy of the Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.



WHAT'S IN A NAME? ISRAEL AND SARA

In the wake of *Reichskristallnacht*, Nazi authorities accelerated legislation aimed at the “**Aryanization**” of Jewish-owned property and businesses and intensified efforts to isolate and segregate Jews from their fellow Germans. Jews were barred from all public schools and universities, as well as from cinemas, theaters, and sports facilities. In many municipalities, Jews were forbidden to enter designated “Aryan” zones. In order to further marginalize members of the Jewish community, German officials required Jews to identify themselves in ways that

62. Like many German Jews, the secular Blocks celebrated Christmas and other Christian holidays, not from religious conviction but to participate in the holiday's outer trappings. The Blocks had a Christmas tree and joined in local public festivals; Elisabeth's diary is full of holiday drawings and references to religious events and periods, such as Lent.

would separate them from the rest of the population. All German Jews were required to carry identity cards that indicated their “racial” heritage, and in the autumn of 1938, all Jewish passports bore the identifying letter *J*. In August 1938, German authorities had already decreed that Jews could employ as a forename only those “Jewish names” from an official list maintained by the Reich Interior Ministry. This Second Decree for the Implementation of the Law for the Changing of Family Names and First Names⁶³ went into effect on January 1, 1939. Thereafter, Jews whose given names did not correspond to those on the authorized register had to add the name “Sara” after their first name if female, and “Israel” if male. On September 1, 1941, Nazi officials took this marginalization effort to an ominous conclusion, ordering all Jews over the age of six resident in the German Reich to wear a yellow star on their outer garments when in public.

In the summer of 1939, lawyer **Gilbert Kraus** and his wife, Eleanor, traveled to Europe to bring refugee Jewish children back with them to the United States. Under the aegis of the Brith Sholom lodge, a Jewish fraternal organization headquartered in Philadelphia, the Krauses, with the help of Vienna’s Jewish Community (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*) chose fifty Viennese youngsters who already possessed affidavits and stood on the U.S. quota list. The Krauses and their lodge personally vouched for the financial security of the children and arranged foster homes for them in the Philadelphia area.⁶⁴ While procuring visas for the youngsters at the American consulate in Berlin, Eleanor Kraus witnessed the disquieting effects of recent Nazi policy upon a young Jewish girl in her charge.

DOCUMENT 1-14. Eleanor Kraus, “Don’t Wave Good-bye” (unpublished manuscript, private collection, c. 1940), 144–46 (© Liz Perle and Steven Kraus, reprinted with permission).

The children looked terrible. They were so weary and most of the little ones were still crying. The more we tried to stop them, the more they seemed to cry. Finally, I saw Gil.⁶⁵ I went up to him. “What about the visas? What about the visas?” I said. He leaned over and whispered to me, “There are fifty-seven visas here and waiting. All our worries are over.”

63. The German is *Zweite Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes über die Änderung von Familiennamen und Vornamen*.

64. For a more comprehensive discussion of the Krauses’ rescue efforts on behalf of Brith Sholom, see chapter 9.

65. This refers to Eleanor’s husband, Gilbert Kraus.

I went to Bob⁶⁶ and gave him the news. None of us made any comments. After all, no one else but the three of us knew what a gamble we had taken. Now we had to settle down to clearing the children's papers. The Embassy had put on about fifteen extra clerks to help with the paper work. Each child had to be interviewed separately and had to fill out a form and each child would have to have a physical examination by the doctor at the Embassy.

Gil went into Mr. Volmer's office and I went into Mr. Rose's office. We decided to bring one child in at a time for the interview. The child would enter and sit at the desk and Mr. Volmer and his German secretary would ask the questions of the child in German. He would give his name, address and all the other information. He would also have to sign, if he could write. Mr. Volmer was sweet with each and every child. I tried to make the child feel at home. The secretary kept typing all the information as it was given. The Vice Consuls were most considerate—had worked out every detail to make things go as quickly as possible for all of us. It was tedious, it took time, but on the whole it was going quickly. Some of the children were only four years old and these interviews naturally consumed more time than the older children.

There was one little girl I will never forget. I think she was about six or seven years old. She came in for her interview and sat in the big office chair across from Mr. Volmer. She looked like an Alice in Wonderland figure sitting in the chair with her long blond hair and her bright blue eyes. Mr. Volmer smiled. "Can you write?" "Ya" [sic], she said. We put the pen in her hand. "Write your name here," said he, showing her the place on the paper. At this she seemed to freeze with fear. She grabbed the pen, lowered her head, and began to sob hysterically. She mumbled something over and over again which we could not hear. "What's the matter? Don't cry. Raise your head. We can't hear you."

Still she kept her head lowered, still she kept mumbling the same words over and over. She naturally spoke in German. I said to Mr. Volmer, "Can you understand her? What is she saying? I can't make it out." [...]

She was so overcome with terror I did not know how to pacify her. Finally she raised her head and said for all to hear, "*Muss ich Sarah schreiben?*" ["Must I write 'Sarah'?"]

66. This refers to Dr. Robert Reuss, who accompanied the Krauses to Germany to make arrangements for the emigration of the children.

It took a moment for the implication of this question to hit all of us. We were too stunned to answer. Even the German clerk stood with her mouth open. Mr. Volmer lowered his head into his hands for a moment. My German was so limited, but I answered, “*Nein, nein. Schreibe Charlotta. Schreibe Charlotta*” [sic].

Mr. Volmer took over. “Write Charlotta. Write Charlotta,” said he. “Your name is Charlotta. You will always keep your name where you are going. You need never write Sarah again.”



CHAPTER 2

CHILDREN AND THE WAR

WORLD WAR II was the most destructive conflict in modern history. Beginning in Europe on September 1, 1939, with the German invasion of Poland and later extending into the Pacific sphere, the war prompted the mobilization of 100 million military personnel. Although accurate casualty statistics are difficult to ascertain, scholars estimate that the number of total dead as a result of hostilities ranges from 50 to 70 million, including some 20 to 25 million combatants.¹ Even as it exceeded the aggregate military deaths from the Great War which preceded it,² World War II also marked an early manifestation of a new trend in modern warfare: it claimed far more civilian lives than military casualties. Within the parameters of “Total War” which blurred the distinction between military and civilian targets, it is believed that at least 40 million noncombatants fell victim to strategic bombing, war crimes, persecution, famine, and epidemic in the course of World War II.

This chapter covers World War II in the European context and examines the effect of German and Axis aggression upon civilian families and their children, viewing the hardships and tragedies of warfare through the eyes of youngsters. In this context, children often witnessed death for the first time and experienced hunger and deprivation. The German occupation of nations in eastern and western Europe meant that Jewish children and adults in lands under Axis control became subject to stringent anti-Jewish measures. Other

1. This number includes some 5 million military personnel who died in captivity.

2. That is, World War I.

young people found themselves caught up in the midst of **partisan** warfare or fell victim to bitter reprisal actions. The following documentation demonstrates how children confronted the realities of conflict as World War II came home to them.

THE FIRST TASTE OF CONFLICT

Julien Hequembourg Bryan (1899–1974) was a well-known American photographer, filmmaker, and author, widely respected as the founder of the International Film Foundation, established in 1945. Bryan had gained fame in the 1930s for his vivid depiction of life in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin and for the extensive lecture tours he undertook in the wake of his visits there. In September 1939, Bryan found himself the sole photojournalist from a neutral country left in Warsaw when German forces began their *Blitzkrieg* invasion of Poland. Fortunately still in possession of several thousand feet of film left over from a recent tour of western Europe, Bryan remained in the Polish capital throughout the three-week-long siege, witnessing the German army's brutal attacks on military and civilian targets and documenting the anguish and courage of the Polish population. Bryan managed to evacuate the war zone along with other citizens of neutral countries during a brief truce on September 21, 1939. His film footage of the German assault on Warsaw would figure as America's first cinematic glimpse of the European conflict that became World War II and would earn the filmmaker an Academy Award nomination in 1940.³

One of Bryan's most famous and moving images of the Polish campaign portrays ten-year-old Kazimiera Kostewicz,⁴ who, in the presence of the photographer and his Polish guides, discovered the body of her elder sister, killed in a strafing run by German pilots. Bryan's photograph and accompanying postwar commentary capture the cruelty of a war waged against civilians and of a child's first experience of death.

3. Bryan's film *Siege* (Pathé Films, 1940) lost the Oscar that year for short subjects on a technicality: the film had not been released to general audiences at the time of its nomination. For a discussion of Bryan's contributions to photojournalism and documentary cinematography, see "Everyone Would Believe My Pictures: The Legacy of Julien Bryan," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/research/collections/highlights/bryan (accessed November 20, 2010).

4. Kazimiera Mika (née Kostewicz, 1929–) survived the war and was reunited with Julian Bryan when he returned to Warsaw in 1959. Mika recently joined the cinematographer's son Sam Bryan at the seventieth-anniversary screening of *Siege* in Poland in 2009.

DOCUMENT 2-1. Ten-year-old Kazimiera Kostewicz (Mika) discovers the body of her sister Anna, killed in a strafing run by German pilots on Polish civilians near Warsaw, September 1939, USHMMWA WS# 50898, courtesy of Julien Bryan.



DOCUMENT 2-2. Julien Bryan, *Warsaw: 1939 Siege, 1959 Warsaw Revisited* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1959), 20–21.

Bodies are not pleasant sights under any circumstances, and when they are of young women, torn to pieces by bombs and sometimes without heads or arms or legs, they are horrible to behold. In photography we ordinarily think of beauty of composition. There was no beauty here. But it was true: women and children had been killed by enemy bombs. I was not making a

travelogue. I was in Warsaw, whether I liked it or not, making a historical record on film of what happens in modern war. People might not believe my story if I told it in words when I returned to America. Everyone would believe my pictures. [. . .]

As we drove by a small field at the edge of town, we were just a few minutes too late to witness a tragic event, the most incredible of all. Seven women had been digging potatoes in a field. There was no flour in their district, and they were desperate for food. Suddenly two German planes appeared from nowhere and dropped two bombs only two hundred yards away on a small home. Two women in the house were killed. The potato diggers dropped flat upon the ground, hoping to be unnoticed. After the bombers had gone, the women returned to their work. They had to have food. But the Nazi fliers were not satisfied with their work. In a few minutes they came back and swooped down to within two hundred feet of the ground, this time raking the field with machine-gun fire. Two of the seven women were killed. The other five escaped somehow.

While I was photographing the bodies, a little ten-year-old girl came running up and stood transfixed by one of the dead. The woman was her older sister. The child had never before seen death and couldn't understand why her sister would not speak to her.

"What has happened?" she cried. Then she leaned down and touched the dead girl's face, and drew back in horror.

"Oh, my beautiful sister!" she wailed. "What have they done to you? You are so ugly!" Then, after a few seconds: "Please talk to me! Please, oh, please! What will become of me without you!"

The child looked at us in bewilderment. I threw my arm about her and held her tightly, trying to comfort her. She cried. So did I and the two Polish officers who were with me.

What could we, or anyone else, say to this child?

As the first battles of World War II raged in Poland, German citizens too were coming to terms with the early ramifications of the new conflict. German Jews, already marginalized and persecuted in the early years of the Third Reich, now found living in Nazi Germany even more precarious. Among them was seventeen-year-old Inge Deutschkron. An award-winning writer and journalist in the postwar, she survived the war years in Berlin as a "U-boat,"⁵ a Jew living

5. The German is *U-Boot*, meaning "submarine." For a discussion of Jews living underground in Berlin during the war years, see Leonard Gross, *The Last Jews in Berlin* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); Inge Deutschkron, *Berlin Jews Underground*, trans. Hanna Silver (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 1990).

“underground,” often under a fictive name or on false papers. Her father, a *Gymnasium*⁶ teacher and staunch Social Democrat, lost his post in 1933, when the Nazi **Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service** banned both Jews and “politically unreliable” elements from civil service posts. In 1939, Martin Deutschkron managed to flee to London, but Inge and her mother were prevented from joining him when World War II in Europe commenced on September 1 of that year. A flurry of anti-Jewish legislation in the wake of **Kristallnacht** had already curtailed Jewish life in social and economic spheres. With the outbreak of war, a new rash of decrees and regulations further limited Jews’ ability to function within German society.⁷ Jewish citizens were severely limited in their movements, especially in public places. Food and clothing were strictly rationed. Inge Deutschkron recalled the anxiety and frustration of Jewish existence in those early war days, before Nazi antisemitic policies drove her and her mother “underground.”⁸

DOCUMENT 2-3. Inge Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, 4th ed. (1975; Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1983), 60–67 (translated from the German).

In the months following [the outbreak of war], Jews were the subjects of a multitude of decrees and ordinances, in order, so it was said, to hinder “subversive activities.” Jews had to give up their radios. Their telephone lines were disconnected. Between 8:00 p.m. (9:00 p.m. in summer) and 5:00 a.m., Jews were not allowed to leave their residences. They had to remain in their air raid bunkers until the all-clear signal was blown, so that they could not give any lighted signals to the enemy. All protections for Jewish renters were lifted. Jews had to give up their furs, binoculars, cameras, electrical appliances. [...] In the end, Jews were not allowed to visit theaters or concert halls or cinemas. Parks and public spaces were closed to them. Even sitting on a bench once meant for Jews and marked with a yellow star was forbidden. Certain areas of Berlin were declared off-limits to Jews: the government district was one of them.⁹

6. This is a German school providing secondary education in preparation for college study, much like college-preparatory high schools in the United States.

7. See Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, esp. 245ff.

8. Deutschkron (1922–) began writing as the German correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv* in 1958 and in 1966 became an Israeli citizen. She later settled in Berlin, where she remained active as a writer; in 2008, Deutschkron won the prestigious Carl von Ossietzky Prize for contemporary history and politics.

9. This refers to the traditional district encompassing government buildings, most lining the Wilhelm-Strasse below Unter den Linden in the central Tiergarten district of Berlin.

Naturally, it can be ascribed to my youth that, unruffled, I declared to my mother that I would not even think of adhering to these regulations. I needed to visit the theater once in a while; I needed music or a walk in the Grunewald.¹⁰ I couldn't endure the narrowness of Jewish society, which had now been turned in upon itself. Their conversations now revolved around all the aggravating things that the Nazis had already decreed or those things that we could expect from them in the future. Fear and depressive foreboding resonated from these discussions. People tormented themselves: "I have heard from a reliable friend who has it directly from the propaganda ministry that the Nazis are planning this and that." Then this passed [...] from house to house and frightened and plagued the people, who were already so anxious. [...]

The Jewish population of Berlin had almost without exception all that they needed that their limited ration cards deprived them of. Their fellow citizens in Berlin saw to that. First of all there were the owners of the grocery stores who put aside their "extras" for their faithful old customers. My mother and I went once each week to Richard Junghans, a former Social Democrat and friend of my father's, who opened a grocery store at the "Knie" (today Ernst-Reuter-Platz) after he lost his post with the union in 1933. He furnished us with fruits and vegetables as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do so. It was the same with our butcher Krachudel, who had his stand at the weekly market on the Wittenbergplatz, where my mother had shopped for the last fifteen years. Now he gave my mother the same amount of meat that our family had requested for years, without our having to give up one single ration card. [...]

On April 1, 1939, my school years ended. That did not happen voluntarily. The Nazis closed the Jewish schools.¹¹ [...] We girls celebrated our "graduation" in our own way, by dancing with each other. [...] Dance class, which at this time was customary for well-bred girls, was of course not available for Jewish students. Even meeting with young people of the same age was rarely possible. The fear of being recognized by some Nazi in a café or park and abused deprived these moments of flirtation of any pleasure. [...]

Shortly after the outbreak of war, the Nazis blocked my father's pension fund with the justification that he lived in an enemy country, and so

10. This large and picturesque forest in the Charlottenburg-Wilhelmsdorfer neighborhood of Berlin later became a deportation site for the Jews of Berlin.

11. Most segregated Jewish schools were officially closed on July 7, 1942.

we had no right to the money. We had to cut back our spending, although at that time we couldn't spend much money. The sale of food supplies was restricted. Jews didn't receive ration cards for textiles. We moved into a more modest room in the Hansaviertel.¹² [...] Constantly the radio intoned, "Because we're marching, because we're marching, because we're marching on England," and "Today Germany belongs to us, and tomorrow, the world."¹³ For us Jews it was eerie. We were filled with fear. What would happen if Hitler, against expectations, won the war? Little Frau Oppenheimer, whose husband was once a lawyer and was a friend of my father, said to my mother in a conversation on the street, "We will not live through that. For us there would be no survival." It is difficult to say where she got the courage to say out loud what none of us knew, what we did not want to believe. Shortly before the outbreak of war, she had sent her thirteen-year-old son to England. Later, in the midst of the deportations, the Oppenheimers took their own lives—true to their motto, "*Us* they won't get."

As **Wehrmacht** forces expanded the boundaries of the German Reich and those regions under its military and civilian control, German authorities transferred various tenets of antisemitic legislation to areas under their jurisdiction. In Austria (the *Ostmark*) and in German-annexed areas of Czechoslovakia (the so-called **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**) and Poland, German officials simply extended those regulations concerning racial policy to these territories as they were incorporated into the Greater German Reich. In the **Generalgouvernement (General Government)**—those parts of occupied Poland not directly annexed to Germany—Governor General **Hans Frank** issued a string of anti-Jewish ordinances in the late autumn of 1939, ordering the clear designation of Jewish persons and Jewish-owned property and businesses, prohibiting Jews from moving their residences, restricting freedom of movement and travel without permit, and introducing forced labor. In most cases, those antisemitic regulations put in place in German-occupied Poland represented harsher and more repressive measures than those imposed in Germany or its annexed territories at the time. In other nations that Germany had defeated and in which it installed occupation administrations or quasi-independent puppet governments—as in France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Yugoslavia, and Greece—German authorities or their

12. This refers to a small quarter in central Berlin near the Tiergarten.

13. Both phrases are lines from Nazi wartime propaganda songs.

indigenous collaborators introduced legislation defining who within the population would be regarded as Jewish, usually based on Nazi Germany's **Nuremberg Laws**. Parallel laws circumscribed Jews from that nation's social, cultural, and economic life.¹⁴ This phenomenon also occurred in Axis countries allied to Germany, such as Hungary, Romania, and Italy, although Nazi German leaders could not control the internal policies of these nations and needed to exert varying degrees of pressure to persuade their allies to accede to their demands.

One of the most ubiquitous antisemitic measures employed in German- and Axis-controlled Europe was the mandatory wearing of the **Jewish badge** (yellow star). This effort to impose a distinctive mark upon the Jewish population marginalized its members and made them more vulnerable to official and spontaneous discriminatory actions. The measure affected both children and adults and varied in its essentials from region to region. The first such decrees requiring Jews to wear the Jewish badge appeared in occupied Poland in November 1939, where Hans Frank ordered that all Jews above the age of twelve living in the General Government must wear on the right sleeve of their outermost garment a white armband affixed with a blue Jewish star. Similar regulations, with various discrepancies in the badge's appearance and the age of the wearer, materialized in other districts of Poland and in areas occupied by German forces following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.¹⁵

Twelve-year-old Idel Kozłowski experienced firsthand the series of restrictive decrees and regulations imposed by German authorities following the occupation of western Belorussia. Shortly after the arrival of German forces in June 1941, Jews in his hometown of Golshany were compelled to wear the Jewish star and confined to an enclosed area of the town that formed a small ghetto. To the youngster, it was immediately clear that the new measures rendered him and his fellow Jews vulnerable to the aggressions of their antisemitic neighbors and helpless in the face of Nazi persecution.

14. An exception to this pattern was Denmark, whose government steadfastly resisted the implementation of most antisemitic measures, including the imposition of the Jewish badge.

15. For a discussion of the designation of Jews in Germany and in German-occupied Europe, see Diemut Majer, "Non-Germans under the Third Reich": *The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939–1945*, trans. Peter Thomas Hill, Edward Vance Humphrey, and Brian Levin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2003).

DOCUMENT 2-4. Interview of Idel Kozłowski (Kozlovskij) by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, February 14, 1947, USHMM, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, Łódź, 301/3626 (translated from the Russian).

Autobiography:

I, Idel Abramovič Kozlovskij,¹⁶ was born in 1929 in the small town of Golshany [Polish: Holszany; Yiddish: Olshan] in the Vilno oblast to a family of merchants. My father traded in linen cloth. Our family consisted of six persons. My father Abram Kozlovskij, my mother Masha Kozlovskaja. Two brothers: Èlia and Isaak. My sister Chasia. From 1937 until 1939, I went to a Jewish school. In 1939, when the Germans conquered Poland, the Red Army took over our oblast, western Belorussia, as well as the western Ukraine and transferred it to the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union. With the beginning of Soviet control [in the area], I went to the Jewish N.E.Š. [Novaja Evreskaja Škola, or New Jewish School]. These were the last happy days of my young and promising life. So my life went before 1941. [. . .]

On June 23, 1941, the German marauders, in a breach of trust,¹⁷ invaded the USSR, and by June 24, 1941, they were already in our village. Already in those first days the Germans commenced their predatory and bloody deeds. From the scoundrels [*Psy*] within the Polish population, they assembled a police force that helped them to accomplish their rapacious deeds. Immediately, the Germans issued the order that from now on Jews would not be considered equal citizens [under the law]. The Jews had to wear a white band with a large six-pointed star in the middle upon the arm.

Jews were forbidden to walk on the sidewalk, only in the gutter. The police went to all the Jewish houses [and] beat, robbed and ridiculed everyone. Two months later, we were chased from our houses and driven into the “GHETTO”¹⁸—that is, into a section of the village that was fenced in with planks—and in that they drove all of us Jews. With our move to the ghetto, a new order decreed that Jews were forbidden to go outside the ghetto. The Jews had to wear a new kind of marking: a large, six-pointed star on the chest and back. Circumvention of this order was

16. The child's name is spelled in two different ways in the interview protocol.

17. The German army's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, violated the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939.

18. Capitals and quotation marks are present in the original.

punished with shooting. [...] So we lived in this difficult, bloody situation and witnessed how these dogs—our enemies—lived in our houses, how they walked untroubled in the streets [while] we sat fenced in like cattle in the ghetto, awaiting death every day and without the possibility to [save] ourselves.

German Jews were finally forced to wear the Jewish badge on September 15, 1941,¹⁹ shortly before the first **deportations** of Jews from the Reich began in October 1941. The Police Decree Concerning the Designation of Jews (*Polizeiverordnung über die Kennzeichnung der Juden*) required all Jews over the age of six to attach to the left side of their outer garment a six-pointed yellow star, inscribed with the word *Jude* (Jew) in black lettering. The decree further applied to Jews in Austria and the Protectorate; it was also officially introduced at this time in German-annexed territories of Poland, although in many areas such policies had already been in place since the autumn of 1939.

Legislation mandating the Jewish badge was soon adopted in western lands occupied by Germany and in German satellite states. Belgian and Dutch Jews, for example, began to wear the yellow star in the spring months of 1942. In occupied France, such an ordinance was issued on June 7, 1942, although bureaucratic resistance on the part of French officials meant that a similar measure was never applied in **Vichy France**, even when German forces occupied those regions of France in November 1942.²⁰

19. The decree appeared on September 1, 1941, and went into effect two weeks later.

20. See Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), esp. 234ff.

DOCUMENT 2-5. A Jewish child in occupied France wears the yellow star, USHMMPA WS# 63042, courtesy of Michael O'Hara.



CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: THE WAR ON CIVILIANS

The sustained bombing of London and other British cities between September 7, 1940, and May 10, 1941, known colloquially as the Blitz,²¹ figures as one of the most well-known events of World War II. At its height, German bombs rained down on London for fifty-seven consecutive nights, causing extensive damage and loss of life among the civilian population.

What many historians call the Battle of Britain began in July 1940. Prior to the planned invasion of the British Isles (Operation Sea Lion), the German Luftwaffe (air force) began to bomb strategic targets such as military airfields

21. This is a shortening of the German word *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war).

and key manufacturing areas in an effort to achieve air superiority over the Royal Air Force and to facilitate a possible German invasion across the English Channel. The first deliberate air raids on civilian London began on September 7.²² In that initial attack, launched in late afternoon, the Luftwaffe struck the city's port and Docklands, where bombs, falling in nearby residential districts, killed more than 430 Londoners. In the days that followed, some one to two hundred German aircraft bombarded the city nightly, dropping an estimated thirteen thousand tons of explosives on the British capital. Perhaps the most devastating raid came shortly after Christmas, on the evening of December 29, when Luftwaffe planes dropped incendiary and high-explosive bombs on the city center. The resulting firestorm destroyed the largest contiguous area of urban land witnessed in any German raid of its kind, rivaling the devastation of the Great Fire of London in 1666.²³

London was not the only target of German bombing. From November 1940 through February 1941, the Luftwaffe attacked British port cities, such as Liverpool, Cardiff, Plymouth, and Southampton, as well as military and industrial centers, such as Manchester, Hull,²⁴ Belfast, and Coventry. Although in the campaign's later stages bombers increasingly concentrated on strategic, rather than civilian, targets, the principle objective of the Blitz remained the same: to shatter the morale of the British people. British citizens, however, responded to the destructive raids with great courage and determination. London's civilian population contributed enormously to the defense of their city, volunteering with the Home Guard, as air raid wardens, and as the intrepid "Blitz scouts," who aided local fire brigades in their rescue efforts. By night, thousands of Londoners descended into the safety of London's Tube, or subway system, or crowded into public bunkers; others huddled with family members in so-called Anderson shelters, small self-constructed bomb shelters made of corrugated steel, sunk in the backyards and gardens of homes throughout the country. Youngsters endured long separations from their parents and family members, as British authorities

22. When an initial German foray over residential London prompted a retaliatory British raid upon Berlin, an enraged Hitler called for a "disruptive attack upon the population and air defenses of major British cities, including London, by day and night" (quoted in Klaus Maier et al., *Germany and the Second World War: Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 387). Controversy has long existed over whether this earliest bombing of London's East End on August 24, 1940, was accidental or German pilots were acting on a loosely worded order from Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring.

23. See Peter Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Richard Overy, *The Battle of Britain: Myth and Reality* (London: Penguin, 2000).

24. After London, Hull was the most severely bombed British city during World War II, with 95 percent of its housing damaged or destroyed.

evacuated nearly one hundred thousand children and adolescents from their homes in London and other urban areas to the safety of the countryside.²⁵

The bravery and resilience of British citizens paid off. By May 1941, with no British surrender forthcoming, most Luftwaffe units had redeployed to the East for the coming invasion of the Soviet Union. Although the German air force would never again attack British targets with such intensity, smaller raids upon British cities would claim the lives of some eight thousand more civilians, while the infamous V-1 and V-2²⁶ flying bombs, early forms of cruise missiles, killed an almost equal number of Britons in the last stages of World War II. But the sustained bombing experienced throughout the Blitz was over. From early September 1940 until late May 1941, forty-three thousand British citizens had died in air raids, half of them in London, while 1 million housing units had been damaged or destroyed.

Olive McNeil was fourteen years old on “Black Saturday,” September 7, 1940, when German bombs pounded the residential neighborhoods bordering the Docklands on London’s East Side. The family had just installed a private shelter, and she, her mother, and her younger brothers had just enough time to reach the bunker before the first shells fell. Olive recollected that, on that first day of the Blitz, an air of unreality mingled with the terror of the moment.

DOCUMENT 2-6. Olive McNeil, London, England, undated testimony, quoted in Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees, *Blitz: The Civilian War, 1940–1945* (London: McDonald Optima, 1990), 12–13.

I was in the backyard watching my two little brothers play—although most of our yard was taken up by the Anderson [shelter] that the council workmen had put in—and I could hear this strange droning sound. Looking up I could see lots of planes very small and very high. I called the boys to look. We said how pretty they looked with the sun glinting on them, they looked like stars. But there were so many of them and they were coming over us in lines. Suddenly everything changed, the planes that were high up started to swoop down and down and the air was filled with screaming whistling sounds. The siren was blowing and Mum came running out and pushed us down the shelter. But the screaming whistlings

25. The bulk of these evacuations occurred in and after June 1940; many children returned over the course of 1941 as urban areas became safer. Another evacuation of women and children from London began in June 1944, when German forces deployed V-1 and V-2 rockets on British civilian targets. See Carleton Jackson, *Who Will Take Our Children: The British Evacuation Program of World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2008).

26. In each case, the V stood for *Vergeltungswaffe* (revenge weapon).

didn't stop, they got louder and louder[;] I could feel the thudding of the ground around me. Some of the screaming whistlings were making the earth floor in the shelter jump. I could feel the dirt and dust was coming through the cracks in the shelter. I could hardly see, it was covering my hair and was getting in our eyes. Mum told us to lie down and she lay on top of us and she kept saying her prayers, and I said, "Please Jesus, don't let the screaming whistlings come too close." Mum told me to shut up and not frighten the boys. But the screaming whistlings went on and on, and one got so close that the shelter nearly got lifted out of the ground. We all screamed and we heard glass breaking and things flying around.

Suddenly everything went quiet, and we clung together in the blessed silence until the all clear went and we thanked God we were all right. I was out first. By now it was getting dark. I remember standing by the shelter and looking around me, it was as though I was in a dream. The sky as far as I could see all around me was orange and pink. It glowed, making everything look like fairyland.

World War II fits within the paradigm that defines an increasingly more common pattern in warfare: it claimed more civilian lives than military casualties. Noncombatants on both the Allied and Axis sides fell victim to strategic bombing and mining, war crimes, persecution, population transfers, famine, and disease. In many countries, hapless civilians were caught in the veritable crossfire of partisan warfare.

Perhaps no region saw a more vicious partisan struggle than the former Yugoslavia, where resistance against the Axis occupiers combined with internecine warfare. On April 6, 1941, the Axis powers invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from all sides. The country was quickly overrun by, and partitioned among, the aggressors: Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. German forces occupied northern Slovenia and the truncated Serbian state; in the regions representing the modern nations of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, German authorities created the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska), a puppet state over which Germany exerted considerable influence. A strong Yugoslav resistance emerged, in two distinct manifestations. The Chetniks, a conservative royalist and nationalist force whose support came largely from the Serbian population, initially gained recognition from the Western Allies, but they compromised their position through increasing collaboration with Axis forces.²⁷ In July 1941, the communist resistance formed

27. After the Teheran Conference in late 1943, the Allies and the Yugoslavian government in exile recognized the Yugoslav Partisan Movement as the country's legitimate liberation force.

the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia, known simply as the Partisans, led by future Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980). At the outset, Partisan forces were poorly armed and lacked an efficient infrastructure, but they possessed two important assets that they would use to advantage. First, their units formed around a small central cadre of men who had gained combat experience in the recent Spanish Civil War and could share with their comrades important strategies and tactics employed in modern guerrilla warfare. Second, the Partisan movement united under an antifascist ideology that embraced factions from the republican, socialist, and communist Left but transcended the boundaries of ethnicity in a multiethnic state. The Partisans fought an increasingly successful guerrilla campaign against the Axis occupiers and the fascist Croatian **Ustaše** regime. The occupying forces and their local collaborators administered the region with such brutality that the Partisans gained widespread support and assistance from the local populations. In the end, the government of the Independent State of Croatia found itself unable to control its territory, resulting in a number of anti-insurgency campaigns undertaken by the German army and the Ustaše militia.²⁸

The Partisans were ultimately successful in cooperating with Allied forces to liberate Yugoslavia, but the ensuing partisan warfare came at a tremendous cost. Throughout the period of insurgency, law and order effectively broke down in many regions, and guerrilla groups combed the countryside, terrorizing the populace. Both the Ustaše militias and the Chetniks committed wide-ranging atrocities against the local populations. The German occupiers carried out massive reprisals for guerrilla activity against German troops and murdered thousands of civilians in retaliation for resistance activity. The Yugoslav Partisans also engaged in reprisal actions, although the most egregious of these occurred in the immediate postwar period.

In July 1942, Milovan Đilas, a guerrilla commander with the Yugoslav Partisans, wrote an entry in the diary of his closest associate, Vladimir Dedijer. Both men would play vital roles in the founding of the communist Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in the immediate postwar.²⁹ Visiting his com-

28. See John Lampe, *Yugoslavia As History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Sabrina Ramet, ed., *The Independent State of Croatia* (London: Routledge Press, 2007).

29. Milovan Đilas (1911–1995) was groomed as Tito's eventual successor until his calls for greater democratization in both party and state led to his downfall in 1954. Vladimir Dedijer was Tito's official biographer but lost influence with Đilas's fall from power. Thereafter, he devoted himself to writing and teaching history at a number of universities in the former Yugoslavia, Great Britain, and the United States. Among his well-known works is *The Yugoslav Auschwitz and the Vatican: The Croatian Massacre of the Serbs during World War II*, trans. Harvey Kendall (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1992).

rade after a month's absence, the battle-hardened Đjilas described with horror the Ustaše massacre of women and children he had witnessed in Urije, in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina. "When he had finished," wrote Dedijer, "I gave him my diary and said, 'Note for me all of this so nothing is lost.'"³⁰

DOCUMENT 2-7. Addendum of Milovan Đjilas to the July 28, 1942, diary entry of Vladimir Dedijer, in Vladimir Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer, Vol. 1: From April 6, 1941, to November 27, 1942* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 269–70.

I was following an ordinary village road, and it was an ordinary summer morning, rather clean because of the gentle rain which had fallen during the night. . . . I was so depressed I wanted to cry, because I could not drive from my mind the picture of those wonderful comrades who had died in yesterday's skirmish with the Ustaše, there somewhere in front of me, in the lush meadows. But what I saw yesterday [. . .] so filled me with disgust that it totally erased all the pain I felt for my dear comrades. [. . .]

We went on our way a little further, on both sides of the road, hazel hedges and ferns, and suddenly, in the middle of the road, I do not recall the exact number, ten or twelve corpses. I think there were two middle-aged men—the remainder were women, girls, children, babies. Three or four paces from this heap of blood and flesh—an empty cradle, without swaddling, without a child, with straw dampened by a child's urine. This straw seemed as if it was still warm from the child's body. The child was lying in the heap of corpses, but its head was completely smashed. [. . .]

The remaining corpses too were disfigured. The face of a ten-year-old had knife wounds on its forehead and cheeks. Some boy, also with an empty skull, like that infant, lay twisted around the bush at the side of the road, his bare legs and thin arms bent. Because rigor mortis had set in, the skin was gathered and the sharp white bones peered out at the temple. If the boy had not been so disfigured, one would have thought he was sleeping in the shade, by the road, a little hidden so the farmers wouldn't see him and scold him for sleeping, not keeping an eye on the livestock so they wouldn't get into the farmer's fields and meadows. [. . .]

The road at this point is broad and there is a lot of room, as there should be on the outskirts of a town, where the peasants can sit in the evening, to rest

30. Vladimir Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer, Vol. 1: From April 6, 1941, to November 27, 1942* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 269.

and admire the town. But the corpses were all slaughtered on the edge of the road, up against the fence, as if a storm had swept them there.

Among them were two mothers with their infants. If at the earlier group, one could not tell who the mothers of the children were, here it could easily be seen. One mother, young and dark, held her child in her arms. [. . .] The other mother had not held her child so firmly. She lay on her back, and the child, abandoned by her side, lay in a heap, its blouse torn from its chest. The first mother, with dark eyebrows, gave the impression of those old-fashioned, false romantic pictures of murdered or drowned mothers with children, but this was nothing old-fashioned or false, or romantic, but an actual mother killed with her child, a mother whom death had frozen, holding her infant to her breast.

DOCUMENT 2-8. Body of a young boy killed in an antipartisan campaign on the slopes of Petrova Gora, a stronghold of communist resistance activity in Yugoslavia, 1942, USHMMPA WS# 01138, courtesy of Lydia Chagoll.



As for most civilians in war-torn Europe, privation was the central experience of children's wartime existence. For a significant number of Europe's young population, it was neither exploding shells nor encroaching invaders but hunger that proved the greatest enemy. One scene of unparalleled deprivation

in the midst of World War II was the Soviet city of Leningrad (today Saint Petersburg), the site of a devastating 872-day siege by German forces, which began on September 8, 1941, when an advance of German troops to the shores of Lake Lagoda on Leningrad's eastern edge effectively completed the encirclement of the city. On September 19, Red Army soldiers and civilians from the town halted the Germans before hastily dug defense lines in a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) perimeter about the city. While Adolf Hitler announced that his forces had no interest in saving the lives of the civilian population, German army units settled in for a protracted siege. Early in the conflict, German bombs had destroyed the city's major supply depot, and with only a trickle of provisions reaching the metropolis, the city's 3.5 million inhabitants—400,000 of them children—knew the most extreme deprivation.³¹ Without sufficient food-stuffs, water, or fuel, the death rate that winter soared. In January 1942, rations dropped to their lowest point: just 125 grams (4.4 ounces) of bread per person per day. City dwellers ate paper, wallpaper paste, their pets. Furniture, books, and floorboards were burned for warmth. In January and February 1942, amid the coldest winter in recent memory, some two hundred thousand Leningraders died from starvation, disease, and the incessant bombing and shelling by German forces.³² Despite the grim conditions, the city did not surrender. In January 1943, a Soviet offensive opened a narrow corridor near Lake Lagoda that would prove a vital artery for goods and supplies and an urgently needed evacuation route for the city's thousands of starving inhabitants. On January 27, 1944, Soviet forces dislodged German troops from the city's southern outskirts, breaking the nearly nine-hundred-day siege. Leningrad had survived one of the most devastating blockades in modern history, one that claimed the lives of at least eight hundred thousand of its citizens.³³

Twelve-year-old Tanya Savicheva is perhaps Russia's most famous chronicler of the Leningrad siege. Tanya began keeping her brief "journal" during roughly the same period that **Anne Frank** commenced writing to her "Dear Kitty," in

31. Lynn Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 313.

32. Nicholas, *Cruel World*, 313.

33. Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion, 1941–1945: Eine Dokumentation zum 50. Jahrestag des Überfalls auf die Sowjetunion* (Berlin: Argon-Verlag, 1991), 67. For a detailed discussion of the Leningrad siege, see Harrison Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995: Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

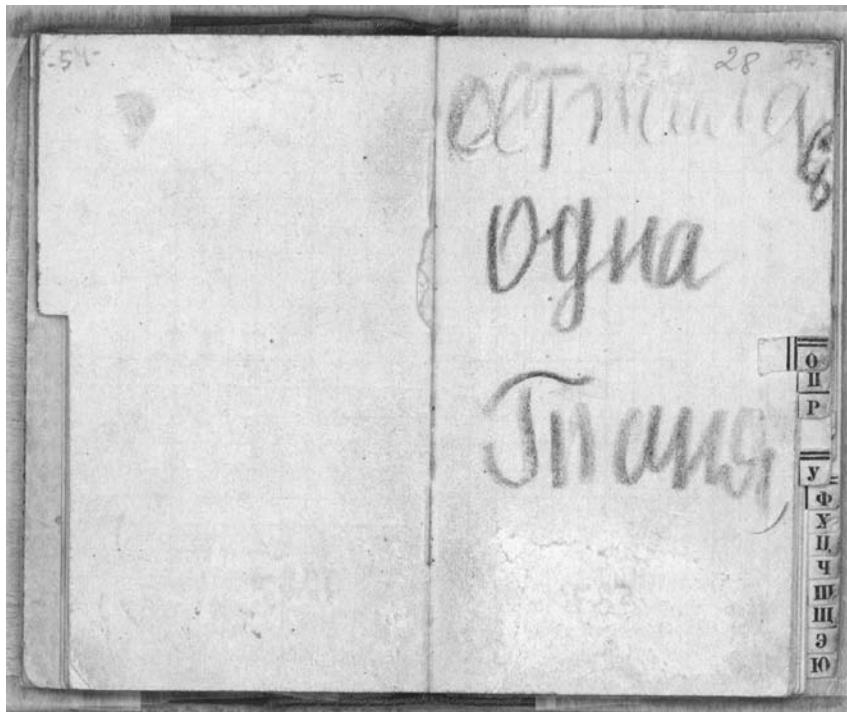
early 1942. While the Russian youngster's entries lack the length, elegance, and intricate detail of Frank's more famous diary, they succeed by terse intensity in conveying the desperateness of the times. Tanya was born on January 25, 1930, the youngest child of a Leningrad baker, Nicolai Rodionovich Savichev, and his wife, Mariya Ignatievna, a seamstress. Savichev died when Tanya was six, leaving his wife to support their five children. When the siege began in September 1941, all family members but Mikhail, an elder son who had left Leningrad months earlier, helped to promote the city's survival. Mariya Ignatievna sewed uniforms. Her son Leka worked as a planner in the admiralty office. Tanya's elder sister Nina was enlisted to help in constructing and stabilizing the city's defense lines, while sister Zhenya labored in a munitions factory. Uncles Vasily (Vasya) and Alexander (Lesha) manned antiaircraft defenses. Tanya herself, then only eleven, was put to work digging ditches.

In the late fall of 1941, as the siege tightened, Nina Savicheva was evacuated with other defense workers. Unaware of the measure, her family believed her dead. It was in memory of Nina that Tanya received her sister's small address book in which to record her thoughts. Tanya had long kept a real diary, a thick leaf volume, but along with all the other books in the house, it had long ago been burned for fuel. Because it had once belonged to the "dead" girl, Nina's address book was spared and would now serve as the basis for Tanya's unusual journal.

Tanya Savicheva began making entries in her diminutive "diary" shortly after December 28, 1941, the day on which her sister Zhenya succumbed to severe malnutrition during her shift at the munitions plant. Thereafter the youngster noted the deaths of each family member throughout the terrible Leningrad winter and spring of 1942. On May 13, the day her mother died, Tanya presumably made the final three entries in her journal, noting that she was the last living member of her family. In August 1943, a students' nursing brigade rescued Tanya, weak with hunger, from the family apartment. The young girl was then evacuated with other Leningrad children along the narrow lifeline carved out by the Soviet army that summer, to an orphanage in Krasny Bor, 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) away. Despite the best efforts of physicians and nursing staff, Tanya Savicheva died in the hospital on July 1, 1944, probably of chronic dysentery. At war's end in 1945, Nina Savicheva, evacuated in 1941, returned to the family home in Leningrad and discovered Tanya's writings. The diary contains only nine lines; the child was too weak to write more. The terse pages bear witness to the harrowing world of deprivation and death that children inhabited during the Leningrad siege.

DOCUMENT 2-9. Diary of Tanya Savicheva, Leningrad, December 1941 to May 1942, courtesy of the Saint Petersburg Museum of History, Saint Petersburg, Russia (translated from the Russian).

- Sheet 1: Zhenya died on December 28, 1941, at twelve noon.
- Sheet 2: Grandma died on January 25, 1942, at three in the afternoon.
- Sheet 3: Leka died on March 17, 1942, at five o'clock in the morning.
- Sheet 4: Uncle Vasya died on April 13, 1942, at two o'clock at night.
- Sheet 5: Uncle Lesha died on May 10, 1942, at four o'clock in the afternoon.
- Sheet 6: Mama died on May 13, 1942, at 7:30 in the morning.
- Sheet 7: The Savichevs are dead.
- Sheet 8: Everyone is dead.
- Sheet 9: The only one left is Tanya. [See sample page below.]



In territories controlled by German military or civilian administrations, indigenous resistance, in both organized and spontaneous forms, attempted to break the hold of the Nazi occupiers. German authorities reacted to the

killing of German soldiers and occupation officials by guerrilla forces with brutal reprisals, often directed against innocent civilians. In the spring of 1942, trained volunteers of the Czech army in exile, aided by British armed forces, planned the assassination of **Reinhard Heydrich**, acting Reich Protector of German-annexed Bohemia and Moravia. On May 27, 1942, Czech parachutist Jan Kubiš and his Slovakian counterpart, Jozef Gabčík,³⁴ succeeded in hurling a bomb at the passing motorcade as Heydrich made his way from his living quarters at the villa Panenské Břežany to his headquarters in Prague. Heydrich, best known for his seminal role in planning the “Final Solution,” survived the attack but succumbed to infection on June 4, 1942. In the days immediately following the attempt on Heydrich’s life, **Gestapo** intelligence in the Protectorate erroneously linked the small Czech town of **Lidice** with the assassins.

On June 9, the day of Heydrich’s state funeral in Berlin, Hitler ordered retaliatory measures against the Czech population. Services for the fallen Protector had scarcely ended when SS-Gruppenführer Karl Hermann Frank,³⁵ who held the positions of German state secretary (*Staatssekretär*) and higher SS and Police Leader of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, ordered units under SS-Standartenführer Horst Böhme³⁶ to raze the small village of Lidice to the ground and to take a number of prescribed actions against its citizens.³⁷

That very evening, German police and **Schutzstaffel (SS)** officials surrounded Lidice. Near midnight, the town’s five hundred residents learned that they must pack warm clothing, valuables, and food for three days and appear in the village square. Once the people had assembled, SS-men separated males over the age of fifteen from the townswomen and children. On the following morning, the village’s 173 men and boys were shot by firing squad on

34. SS and police discovered Jan Kubiš (1913–1942) and Jozef Gabčík (1912–1942) with several other resistance fighters on June 18, 1942, in the Church of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Prague. Kubiš died of wounds incurred in the firefight with police officials, while Gabčík and his comrades committed suicide in order to evade capture.

35. Czech authorities convicted and executed Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946) in May 1946 for his role in organizing the massacres of the citizens of Lidice and Ležáky.

36. Following the retaliatory measures at Lidice, Horst Böhme (1909–1945) was transferred as a police attaché to Bucharest. From January 1943 through August 1944, he undertook the leadership of *Einsatzgruppen B* and *C*. He was last seen on April 1945 in the area of Königsberg; in 1954, a German court in Kiel officially declared him dead.

37. Less famously, the small Bohemian town of Ležáky (pop. forty-seven) was also included in the retaliatory actions. Most of the village’s adult inhabitants were shot to death, and the town, like Lidice, was razed to its foundations.

a farmstead on the outskirts of Lidice.³⁸ Later that day, the women and children, who had spent the night in the local schoolhouse, were transferred to the nearby town of Kladno. “You know what has happened in Lidice,” a Gestapo official told the group, “and that is why you will spend some time in a camp. You women will travel by train; the children will be sent to you by bus because it will be more comfortable for them.”³⁹ With few exceptions, the women of Lidice found themselves deported to the **Ravensbrück** concentration camp, where most spent the balance of the war years. Of the 203 women, 60 died in the Nazi camp system prior to the end of World War II.

Before the forcible separation of the townswomen from their children, the youngsters of Lidice endured a racial screening carried out by SS personnel. On the orders of **Heinrich Himmler**, officials of the organization **Lebensborn** (Fount of Life)⁴⁰ ultimately chose nine children⁴¹ who possessed sufficient Germanic background or “appropriate racial features” to make them candidates for **Germanization** and placed them with adoptive German parents.⁴² At war’s end, Allied humanitarian agencies returned these children to their mothers or to other surviving family members in Czechoslovakia. Under the auspices of the **SS Race and Settlement Main Office (SS Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt)**, the remaining children of Lidice traveled by train to Łódź in occupied Poland. There they found themselves interned at a camp in the city’s Gneisenaustrasse, while German authorities awaited further instructions. Confined in an abandoned textile factory, the group, which included many small children, lived for several weeks, ill clothed, lice ridden, sleeping on the bare floor, and surviving on a bare minimum of black bread and water. On July 2, 1942, **Security Police** officials in Łódź took formal possession of the children, sealing their fates. It was presumably on this day or the next that German authorities asked the children

38. In all, 192 men and boys from the village were murdered in this and later shootings in the vicinity of Lidice.

39. Unidentified female survivor of Lidice, quoted in Jolana Macková and Ivan Ulrych, eds., *Fates of the Children of Lidice: Memories, Testimonies, Documents*, trans. Elias Khelil (Nymburk: Lidice Memorial, 2004), 15.

40. For a detailed discussion of the Nazi organization *Lebensborn* and its part in Nazi racial policies, see chapter 6.

41. Ten children were initially chosen from racial selections for “Germanization,” three in Kladno and a further seven when the remainder of the children arrived at the camp at Łódź. One of the children, Dagmar Veselá, who had been selected and later rejected for inclusion in the *Lebensborn* program, was sent to Łódź on a later transport and shared the fate of the other Lidice children.

42. NARA, RG 238, Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, Doc. NO-4173, Heinrich Himmler to Max Sollmann (*Lebensborn*), re Lidice children, June 21, 1943.

to compose letters to surviving relatives in the Protectorate, instructing them to request that food, clothing, and other provisions be sent to them in Łódź. On July 3, 1942, the camp register noted the transfer of the children to an undisclosed location. At this point, they vanished without a trace. Historians strongly suspect that the eighty-two remaining youngsters from Lidice—including fifteen-year-old Marie Šroubková and her eight-year-old brother Josef—perished in the mobile gas chambers of **Chełmno**, the first killing center of the “Final Solution.”⁴³

DOCUMENT 2-10. Letter of Marie (Maruška) Šroubková, c. July 2, 1942, in Jolana Macková and Ivan Ulrych, eds., *Fates of the Children of Lidice: Memories, Testimonies, Documents*, trans. Elias Khelil (Nymburk: Lidice Memorial, 2004), 36.

Dear Uncle and Auntie!

Regards and memories from Poland from Pepoušek⁴⁴ and Maruška. We are all children here. Do you know of Daddy's whereabouts?⁴⁵ Do you know about Mommy?⁴⁶ We would like to ask you to send us something. We have nothing but what we are dressed in. We need a lot. Please if you could send something for Pepoušek and me as well. Besides, I would need a couple of needles and a reel of w[hite] thread and a reel of b[lack] thread. We have got only one pair of shoes and one pair of stockings each here. On Saturday it will have been three weeks since we came here, and we have not changed clothes yet. And if you could send us also some German money—coins would be best—also notepaper, envelopes—and German stamps. Please speak to the Čičovskýs [and see] whether they could send us something too. I have sent them a letter too. We do not know how long we will stay here [...] but it is likely that we will stay

43. See Macková and Ulrych, *Fates of the Children of Lidice*, 41; Isabel Heinemann, “Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut”: Die Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

44. This is the Czech diminutive for Josef, the name of Marie Šroubková's younger brother.

45. Josef Šroubek Sr. (1894–1942) was murdered in the Lidice massacre on June 10, 1942.

46. The elder Marie Šroubková (née Chalupová, b. 1914) was transferred to the Ravensbrück concentration camp on June 12, 1942; there she was subjected to medical experimentation and murdered in September 1942. See Bärbel Schindler-Saefkow, *Gedenkbuch für die Opfer des Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück* (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).

long. Reply soon, with a detailed letter. If you would, also send us something to eat, we would appreciate it.

Please, I have just been told that I am allowed to write only one letter; could you show this letter to Grandpa and Grandma in Chýně? I know they will feel sorry about it, but I cannot help it.

Yours,

Pepoušek and Maruška

[On reverse of postcard]

To Chýně: Dear Grandpa and Grandma!

First, accept please the warmest regards and memories from Poland. Can you answer any of the questions on the other side? Please, if you could send Pepoušek a pair of stockings. And if you could send us two spoons, a comb, a towel, a pencil, and maybe some food. God bless you for this.

Yours,

Pepoušek and Maruška

THE WAR'S LONG SHADOW: THE LAST YEARS OF CONFLICT

In the winter months of 1944 to 1945, the population of the German-occupied Netherlands experienced a devastating famine. Following their successful landing on the coast of Normandy on D-day (June 6, 1944), Allied forces were able to drive into the Dutch interior, liberating the country's southern provinces. The failure of Operation Market Garden,⁴⁷ which halted western troops at the Rhine, effectively thwarted further Allied efforts to wrest northern and western regions of the Netherlands from German control until the very last days of the European conflict. A national railway strike, called by the Dutch government in exile in support of the Allied offensive, triggered a retaliatory German embargo on food provisions to the Dutch western provinces. By November, even as German administrators had lifted certain terms of the embargo, food resources in occupied areas were in short supply. A particularly harsh winter set in, further compounding the crisis, as frozen canals impeded barge traffic. As

47. This was an Allied offensive of September 17–25, 1944, whose strategic purpose was to facilitate the crossing of the Rhine River, the last major natural barrier to an advance into Germany and into that nation's industrial stronghold in the Ruhr Valley. The operation's failure to capture the bridge at Arnhem formed the basis for the popular epic film *A Bridge Too Far* (1977).

the deadly winter wore on, fierce fighting, now on Dutch soil, contributed to a further dislocation of the transport system; the destruction of agricultural lands, as well as German sabotage of locks and dams, which flooded arable areas, exacerbated the shortages. As the nutritional intake of the Dutch population plummeted to less than one thousand calories per day, city dwellers fanned out into the countryside to forage for fuel and foodstuff. In desperation, Dutch citizens ate tulip bulbs and sugar beets and destroyed vacant lodgings for firewood. Relief finally came in late April and early May of 1945, when Canadian, British, and American troops liberated the remnant of the Netherlands still in German hands. In the end, the Dutch Hunger Winter of 1944 to 1945 claimed the lives of eighteen thousand citizens.⁴⁸

The well-known Dutch poet Bert Voeten (1918–1992) chronicled the months before Allied liberation in his only prose work, *Doortocht: Een Oorlogsdagboek (Passage: A War Diary)*, published in 1946. Linked with the Dutch Resistance, Voeten was living on false papers in Heemstede, near Amsterdam, in 1944. Joining him in hiding was the writer and journalist Marga Minco (1920–), whose Orthodox Jewish parents had already been deported to the **Auschwitz** or **Sobibór** concentration camps. The only member of her family to survive the Holocaust, Minco would use her wartime experiences to transform her approach to writing, establishing herself as one of the Netherlands' most important postwar authors with such powerful and laconic works as *Bitter Herbs (Het bittere Kruid, 1957)* and *An Empty House (Een leeg huis, 1966)*. Minco and Voeten, a non-Jew, were able to legally marry at war's end in 1945. In December 1944, their first daughter, Bettie, was born amid the catastrophic first months of the Hunger Winter. In his diary entry for December 12, Voeten contemplated the birth of a child in such harrowing and uncertain times.

DOCUMENT 2-II. Bert Voeten, *Doortocht: Een Oorlogsdagboek, 1940–1945*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 1947), 198–99 (translated from the Dutch).

December 12, 1944

Our child was born on this night. The surroundings were quite primitive with a stove which consumed our entire supply of heating oil, a clandestine gas jet,⁴⁹ and a smoldering oil lamp. The sky was full of thundering

48. See Henri A. van der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland, 1944–1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), esp. 304ff.

49. The German occupying force ordered a general blackout in the Netherlands after dark.

aircraft. There was a dark and heavy atmosphere over the city, over the house, over the small room in which this new life gave its first cries. How fragile yet how resilient, this life which emerged in the midst of this reign of terror.

December 18, 1944

The famine is inevitable.

Tens of thousands make their way to the outlying areas, to Haarlemmermeer and Wieringermeer,⁵⁰ to the east, and even to Friesland, in order to get whatever [food] there is still to be had. An unusually heavy rainfall has flooded the roads and open fields. The flooding⁵¹ has turned the fields into lakes. All this makes it even more difficult to reach the far-away sources of plenty.

Today the temperature hovered around the freezing point. One cannot bear the cold any longer. People collapse in the street. Empty houses are stripped bare in broad daylight, trees are chopped down, fences and poles uprooted. Bakers' carts are overturned and plundered by packs of local women. A policeman standing guard near a bread cart is no longer a rare sight. Yesterday a crowd ransacked a grocery store in Zuid.⁵² Desperation breaks down the boundaries of bourgeois respectability.

Under these circumstances our child was brought into the world. In this misery it must grow, must be fed, and kept as warm as a tender hot-house plant. Fortunately, our friends from the "Movement"⁵³ generously support us. They have even provided a legal document with false names. Our little creature is already in hiding.

50. Haarlemmermeer and Wieringermeer are both polders (low-lying land reclaimed from lakes) located in the province of North Holland to the west and north of Amsterdam, respectively.

51. These floods were caused in part by German forces sabotaging Dutch locks and dams.

52. This is the southern district of Amsterdam.

53. This refers to the Dutch underground resistance.

DOCUMENT 2-12. Malnourished Dutch children in the German-occupied Netherlands, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 89175, courtesy of David Briggs.



The German conquest of Poland in September 1939 and the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 brought a massive influx of civilian laborers into Germany from the East, most forcibly deported from their homelands to augment the Reich's critical labor shortage in agriculture, manufacturing, and the armaments industries. By 1944, 7.5 million foreign laborers, including prisoners of war, remained on German soil, among them 2.2 million Soviet and 1.65 million Polish civilians. Laboring and subsisting under deplorable conditions, these Eastern workers (*Ostarbeiter*) fell victim in large number to serious illnesses, injuries, or debilitating psychiatric disorders.

Before mid-1943, Eastern workers incapacitated by illness or injury for more than three weeks were simply returned to their countries of origin.⁵⁴ Initially included among these *Arbeitsunfähigen*⁵⁵ were pregnant foreign workers. In August 1941, the Reich Labor Ministry ordered that participating agencies and work installations immediately report female laborers for transfer as soon as the fact of their pregnancy became known in order to obviate unnecessary costs in medical care and maintenance to their employers or local labor offices.⁵⁶

From the beginning, German authorities found themselves torn between two conflicting facets of National Socialist policy with regard to the problem of pregnant Eastern workers: aspects of race and ideology, of primary relevance to Himmler's **Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt)**, and the economic aspects that underpinned the use of forced labor, a significant concern to Germany's labor administration. Reaching a compromise in September 1942, Fritz Sauckel, the general plenipotentiary for labor allocation (*Generalbevollmächtiger für den Arbeitseinsatz*), made plans to retain "racially valuable" children of foreign laborers. From December 12 until March 31, 1943, German authorities excluded pregnant workers from transports returning ailing civilian forced laborers to their native lands. On March 20, 1943, this directive was extended until the end of the war, and on July 27, 1943, a further SS decree removed all exemptions for the repatriation of pregnant Eastern workers. By the spring of 1943, a string of ordinances had lifted existing abortion restrictions in Germany for all female Eastern workers, provided they were not expecting "racially valuable" children.⁵⁷

At this time, German administrators opened the first so-called *Säuglingslager* (infant camps) and *Ausländerkinderpflegestätten* (so-called nursery care facilities)

54. By mid-1943, this policy had begun to change. As the successful advance of the Soviet army and the pressing need for all available resources in support of retreating German lines made such repatriations impossible, mentally ill "Eastern workers" were assembled at specially designated mental health facilities throughout Germany and Austria; in the course of 1944 and 1945, many of these people fell victim to the Nazi "euthanasia" program (see chapter 6). Physically incapacitated Eastern workers were confined in so-called infirmary camps (*Krankenlager*), where thousands perished under deplorable conditions. For further reading, see Matthias Hamann, "Die Morde an polnischen und sowjetischen Zwangsarbeitern in deutschen Anstalten," in *Aussonderung und Tod: Die klinische Hinrichtung der Unbrauchbaren. Beiträge zur Nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1985), 160–67; Holker Kaufmann and Klaus Schulmeyer, "Die polnischen und sowjetischen Zwangsarbeiter in Hadamar," in *Psychiatrie im Faschismus: Die Anstalt Hadamar, 1933–1945*, ed. Dorothee Roer and Dieter Henkel (Bonn: Psychiatrie-Verlag, 1986), 256–82.

55. This was the Nazi German term for "individuals unable to work."

56. Hamann, "Die Morde," 122.

57. Abortion was illegal for most "racially valuable" Germans.

for foreign laborers. Although initial plans for such establishments did not clearly specify which groups of laborers such institutions were to serve, subsequent decrees from Sauckel's office and from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt made it plain that these facilities were meant to house the offspring of female Eastern workers—primarily women from Poland and the Soviet Union, who made up the largest percentage within the female forced labor population. Such installations ostensibly provided a place where female workers could give birth and where they and their infants might receive postnatal care.

Viktor Klemperer, in his incisive work *LTI—Lingua Tertian Imperii (The Language of the Third Reich)*,⁵⁸ asserts that National Socialist authorities were skillful and consistent manipulators of the German language for purposes of public consumption. In precisely this vein, the notion that Germany's *Ausländerkinderpflegestätten* were infant-care facilities was pure metaphor. These establishments existed purely to ensure that pregnant laborers returned to their work sites as quickly as possible, unencumbered by their newborns. Labor officials were completely disinterested in the fate of the children inhabiting these facilities. Local authorities often divided sharply over which agencies bore actual responsibility for managing and funding the makeshift institutions, with the result that foodstuffs and supplies were often in woefully short supply, and appalling conditions prevailed.⁵⁹ Fellow female Eastern workers served as untrained nurses and caretakers for the mothers and their offspring. Under fortunate circumstances, German authorities might enlist Soviet medics from nearby prisoner of war camps to serve as physicians but even these functioned under the most primitive conditions, usually without appropriate medicine or equipment. Records pertaining to the *Ausländerkinderpflegestätten* are sparse and incomplete, and these institutions often provided fictive mortality statistics for official records, so we may never know definitively how many of these facilities existed in the last years of the war or how many lives they claimed. We do know concretely from postwar adjudication of these crimes, in such proceedings as the

58. Viktor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (London: Continuum, 2002).

59. For a closer examination of Germany's *Ausländerkinderpflegestätten* and their conditions, see Gisela Schwarze, *Kinder, die nicht zählten: Ostarbeiterinnen und ihre Kinder im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1997); Raymond Raiter, *Tötungsstätten für Ausländische Kinder im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hanover: Hansche Buchhandlung, 2003); Evelyn Zegenhagen, "Facilities for Pregnant Forced Laborers and Their Infants in Germany, 1943–1945," in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 65–76.

Velpke and Rühen trials,⁶⁰ that the death rates at most of these establishments were extremely high. In a work focusing on institutions for infants of Eastern workers in northern Germany, Raymond Raiter estimates that at “care centers” serving large-scale industrial or agricultural concerns, mortality among infants neared 90 percent.⁶¹

In the following testimony, Ernst Wirtz,⁶² a defendant in the Nuremberg proceeding against German industrialist Alfried Krupp⁶³ and his associates, describes the conditions of a “care facility” for the infants of forced laborers in Voerde, near Essen.

DOCUMENT 2-13. Testimony of Ernst Wirtz, 1948, *United States of America v. Alfried Krupp, et al. (Case 10: “Krupp Case”)*, in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 14 vols. (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., 1997), 9:1113-17.

Q: Where were you in January 1945?

A: In January 1945, I was in Kulmbach in Oberfranken [Upper Franconia, Germany].

Q: What was the order that Director Hupe gave you in Kulmbach regarding the transport of eastern workers from Voerde?

A: In January 1945, I had to go to Essen—the beginning of January—and I had to pick up a consignment of eastern workers. In Essen I was told by Mr. Dollwein that I had to go to Voerde in order to set up the transport of eastern workers.

60. George Brand, ed., *Trial of Heinrich Gerike, Gustav Claus, Georg Hessling, Richard Demmerlich, Werner Noth, Fritz Flint, Hermann Müller, Valentina Bilien (The Velpke Baby Home Trial)* (London: W. Hodge, 1950); Rühen Baby Farm Case, British Public Record Office, WO 235/263-277 and WO 235/674, Judge Advocate General’s Office, War Crimes Case Files, Second World War.

61. Raiter, *Tötungsstätten*, 201.

62. Ernst Wirtz supervised foreign forced laborers for the Krupp concern beginning in the autumn of 1942. A denazification tribunal in Kulmbach sentenced Wirtz to eight years in prison for his mistreatment of forced laborers in the areas of Essen, Kulmbach, and Mulhouse.

63. Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach (1907–1967) was a member of Krupp family of industrialists headquartered in Germany’s Ruhr Valley. Famous for its steel and armaments manufacture, Friedrich Krupp AG Hoesch-Krupp was Europe’s largest company in the early twentieth century. During World War II, the Krupp concern was an important supplier of arms to the Third Reich and utilized foreign forced laborers and concentration camp prisoners in various plants and factories. As head of the conglomerate from 1943, Krupp, together with eleven other associates, was tried by American military authorities in the tenth Subsequent Nuremberg Trial (known as the Krupp Trial); in 1948, Krupp was convicted and sentenced to twelve years in prison. He was released from Landsberg Prison in 1951.

Q: What was in Voerde?

A: In Voerde we have a former camp of the Organisation Todt. [. . .]⁶⁴

Q: How many people were in this camp?

A: I assume about 4,000.

Q: Were these men and women?

A: Mixed, men, women, and children.

Q: From among these women and children, did you pick the people for Kulmbach?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you see in the barracks in which the children lived?

A: The children were undernourished. There was no child at all whose arms or hands were thicker than my thumb.

Q: How old were those children?

A: From babies up to the age of two years.

Q: Were these the children of eastern workers?

A: Yes, they had been born in the camp.

Q: How were these babies housed in the Voerde camp when you saw them?

A: In sort of prison bunks. They had paillasses [straw-filled mattresses] with rubber sheets, and the children were there quite naked.

Q: Could you see definite signs of undernourishment in these children?

A: Yes, many of them had swollen heads. [. . .]⁶⁵

Q: Mr. Witness, were you surprised about this pitiable state of the children?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you tell the camp leader?

A: I told the girls in charge of the children—I asked them how it came about that these children were so undernourished, and I was told that these children had very little to eat.

Q: Were these female eastern workers?

A: Yes.

Q: And they told you that these children didn't get enough food?

A: Yes.

64. The Organisation Todt was a civil and military engineering group named for its founder, Fritz Todt, a German engineer and senior Nazi official. The organization was responsible for a large range of engineering projects both in Germany and in German-occupied territories, deploying hundreds of thousands of forced laborers.

65. Presumably this was caused by edema, a sign of acute malnourishment.

Q: Did these female eastern workers also tell you how many children died every day?

A: Yes. Fifty or sixty children died every day, and as many were born every day, because there was a constant influx of eastern female workers with children.

Q: You said fifty to sixty children died every day.

A: Yes.

Q: And there was a steady influx of new ones?

A: Yes.

Q: Were these eastern female workers who had children married for the greater part?

A: Yes.

Q: What happened to the children of the female eastern workers—did they tell you what happened with the children who died?

A: I asked the interpreter to ask them how it came about that so many children died, and if the children were buried; and the interpreter told me the children were cremated inside the camp. [. . .]

Q: Do you know how long—do you know during which time, how long a time it was during which Krupp administered the camp at Voerde?

A: I can't tell you in detail, but I assume since 1943.

Q: Since 1943?

A: Yes.

Q: But if you say that the female workers told you fifty or sixty children died every day, you didn't mean that this number of children died over the whole period?

A: No.

Q: This only referred to a short period?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you give us an estimate concerning which period approximately?

A: There was January 1945—it may have been for one year.

Q: At the most for one year?

A: Yes [. . .]

Q: [. . .] Witness, do you know what happened to the children of a female worker who worked for Krupp?

A: As soon as the eastern worker had given birth to the child, she was allowed six weeks; and after this six weeks, she went back to work; and the child was kept in the camp so that the female workers could go to work again. She saw that child only after work.

Q: Was this child separated from the mother?

A: Yes. [. . .]



CHAPTER 3

LIVES IN THE BALANCE ESCAPE AND DEPORTATION

NATIONAL SOCIALIST policies directed at “cleansing” those territories under their control of their Jewish populations hinged on the twin dynamic of emigration and **deportation**. In their early efforts to remove Jews from German economic, political, and cultural life, Nazi authorities promoted measures that encouraged a mass emigration of Jews from the Reich. Discriminatory laws and the hardships these engendered prompted thousands of German Jews to relocate abroad. The first part of this chapter examines the efforts of Jewish families to flee persecution and the impact these actions had upon affected children and adolescents. Both children and adults faced an uncertain future in a new land. While affording escape from Nazi persecution, emigration imposed financial and emotional hardships upon refugees. The need to adapt to a new language and culture added to the anxieties of would-be emigrants, as did the very real threat of detention by German authorities. The absence of friends and family members weighed heavily upon youngsters who emigrated, as did their anxiety for loved ones left behind. How did the loss of homeland and familiar surroundings impact the lives of such children? The documentation below explores the challenges these young refugees faced in adjusting to new environments and new circumstances.

The opposite extreme of emigration was deportation—and death. Those Jews who did not escape persecution by fleeing abroad Nazi authorities aimed to “cleanse” from their territories by murdering them in their own communities or deporting them from lands under German and Axis control to ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers in the East. The mobile killing units

of the **Einsatzgruppen** followed **Wehrmacht** forces deep into Soviet territory, murdering over 1 million Jews, as well as thousands of **Roma**, disabled patients, and Soviet political officials. Even children, not spared from these shooting actions, were murdered beside their family members on the killing fields of the Soviet Union. For Jews in other areas of Europe under Axis occupation, deportation was an integral mechanism in the implementation of the “Final Solution.” In this volume, deportation carries two meanings. First, it refers to the process of uprooting Jews from their home communities and transporting them to ghettos, camps, or extermination centers. Second, deportation was a method of transferring Jews from ghettoized communities, such as Warsaw or Łódź, to killing centers for “liquidation.” In most instances, Nazi policy dictated that whole families be deported together, although, as we shall see in the case of Felicitas Gumpel (Document 3-14), French officials initially opted to dispatch only adult Jews to the East, a decision that rent families apart and hampered deportation efforts. Germany’s Axis allies developed diverse strategies for ridding their territories of Jewish populations. Here, too, children’s voices documented the harrowing circumstances of their dislocation.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND: EMIGRATION

The antisemitic policies pursued by the National Socialist government in the 1930s drove more than half of Germany’s Jewish population into exile. From the time of the Nazi rise to power in January 1933 until October 23, 1941, when Reichsführer-SS **Heinrich Himmler** imposed a ban on further Jewish emigration from Reich territory, some 340,000 Jews left Germany and German-annexed Austria.¹ The impetus to flee Nazi Germany began with the first major discriminatory measures imposed by Nazi authorities in the spring of 1933. Pressure to leave mounted with the introduction of the **Nuremberg Laws** in September 1935 and reached its climax with the **Kristallnacht pogrom** of November 1938. Desperate to find a safe haven from Nazi persecution, many

1. For further discussion of German-Jewish emigration during the Nazi period, see Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin and Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der Deutschen Juden nach 1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006); Marion Bergahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2006); Herbert Strauss, ed., *Jewish Immigrants of the Nazi Period in the USA* (New York: Saur, 1978); Jim Tobias, “*Und wir waren Deutsche!*: Jüdische Emigranten erinnern sich” (Nuremberg: Antogo, 2009).

German Jews hoped to emigrate overseas—to the United States, Great Britain, or Palestine.²

DOCUMENT 3-1. Youth Aliyah immigrants pose for photographer Dr. Franz Ziss upon their arrival at Kibbutz Ben Shemen agricultural school in Palestine, 1940, USHMMPA WS# 07152, courtesy of the Keren Kayemet Archives.



Thea Gersten was thirteen years old when she left her home in Leipzig in eastern Germany. Her father, Chaim Lazar Gersten, a Polish Jew, had settled in Berlin before World War I. He and his German-born wife, Rosa, owned a successful fur business; they were prosperous and devoutly Orthodox and shared a comfortable home with their two young children, Thea and Adi. But the events of *Kristallnacht* shattered the family's quiet existence. On the night of November 9, 1938, local Nazi activists plundered and destroyed their residence and store. Fleeing arrest, Thea's father, still a Polish citizen, perhaps unwisely made his way to Warsaw, where he worked to establish a new furrier trade and to make preparations for his family's immigration to America. While her

2. Palestine, then under a British mandate, was a favored destination of many European Jews, but British authorities sharply curtailed Jewish immigration in the mid-1930s. In 1939, the famous White Paper further restricted such immigration and the purchase of land in Palestine by Jews.

fortunate brother had secured emigration papers and settled with a host family in England, Thea, with Rosa, joined her father in Warsaw in July 1939. On the eve of World War II, mother and daughter traveled to London to visit Adi and to set up temporary quarters until the family's quota number came up, allowing the Gerstens entry into the United States. Waiting for a shipment of furs with which he could finance his family's voyage to America, Chaim Gersten remained behind in Warsaw to settle his business affairs.

In the chaotic months before her emigration, Thea Gersten began to keep a diary. Deprived of her closest friend, Lolo, who had recently left Germany, she found in her journal a tool to restructure her perplexing circumstances and a confidante for her disquieting thoughts and memories. After a first unsettling month in London, Thea wrote her first diary entry since her arrival in Britain. In it she reflected upon the sudden loss of her childhood. "For what does childhood mean?" she later wrote. "Is it not the sensation of being rooted and safe, sheltered and needed?"³ Thea's reflections mirrored the feelings and concerns of thousands of children in similar circumstances: the isolation and loneliness, the loss of familiar surroundings and native language, the uncertainty of life in a new land, the absence of friends and family members. Shortly before leaving Germany, she had had her first kiss; now, despite the crises of war and fears for her young Jewish associates back home, the future of her new romance dominated her thoughts. The safety of her father was another source of abiding anxiety and concern, one that would only grow as the war progressed. Unable to join his family in Poland when war broke out in September 1939, Chaim Lazar Gersten was swept up in the Nazi dragnet. Interned in the **Warsaw ghetto**, he was deported on January 20, 1943, to the **Treblinka** killing center, where he perished.⁴

DOCUMENT 3-2. Thea Gersten Hurst, *Das Tagebuch der Thea Gersten: Aufzeichnungen aus Leipzig, Warschau und London, 1939–1947* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 58 (translated from the German).

London, August 21, 1939

It has been so long since I've written in my beloved diary. But these four weeks were such a difficult time for me that I had no patience for

3. Thea Gersten Hurst, *Das Tagebuch der Thea Gersten: Aufzeichnungen aus Leipzig, Warschau und London, 1939–1947* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 11.

4. Gita Conn, "Thea's Diary," *Manchester Guardian*, January 27, 2003. Thea, her mother, and her brother survived the war in Great Britain.

anything. But I don't even want to mention it, don't want to think of it. Now everything has improved a bit. But it is still not entirely better. It can only be better when I have my Lolo again. And there is no prospect of seeing her. Oh, how will I be able to stand it? I miss her more and more each day. I am frantic about her, and [we've received] no mail.

The day is too short for me. I have so much to think about and so much to do that I will never be finished. I don't stop until 12:30 at night. And still! I have just been reading, and then such a terrible longing for Philipp came over me. But now that has all passed. It always comes in waves. I have even kissed his picture. He would be the only one to completely understand me. But what should I do? I would really like to know if he is still in Grimma.⁵ He wrote me, "You really cared for me. I still care for you!" But does he still think that?

We have been living here for almost four weeks. I thought that here I could find contentment. But just the opposite. I am so discontented. I need a friend. But I don't want to form any new friendships here. I only want to be together with Lolo. Every acquaintance that I make here is only superficial. During the day, all this doesn't really enter my consciousness, but at nighttime, just like now, one feels it all so keenly. I am so discontented. I look forward to tomorrow afternoon. Most probably I will be all alone here. Then at least I can daydream. Oh, how wonderful! I wish that I could give free reign to my thoughts. But I never have time for this. I am so dissatisfied with myself, and exactly that is the worst thing of all. But what shall I do? I reproach myself that I think so seldom about my father. But then when I do think of him, I do it with my whole heart. I am also displeased that I have not yet accomplished everything I have undertaken. But these are all things that I cannot change.

For refugees escaping Nazi Germany, the flight from one's homeland represented a traumatic experience on many levels. The labyrinthine bureaucratic arrangements, the harrowing wait for visas and travel documents, and the financial hardships imposed by emigration all combined to create a limitless number of worries and headaches for adults organizing asylum for their families in a

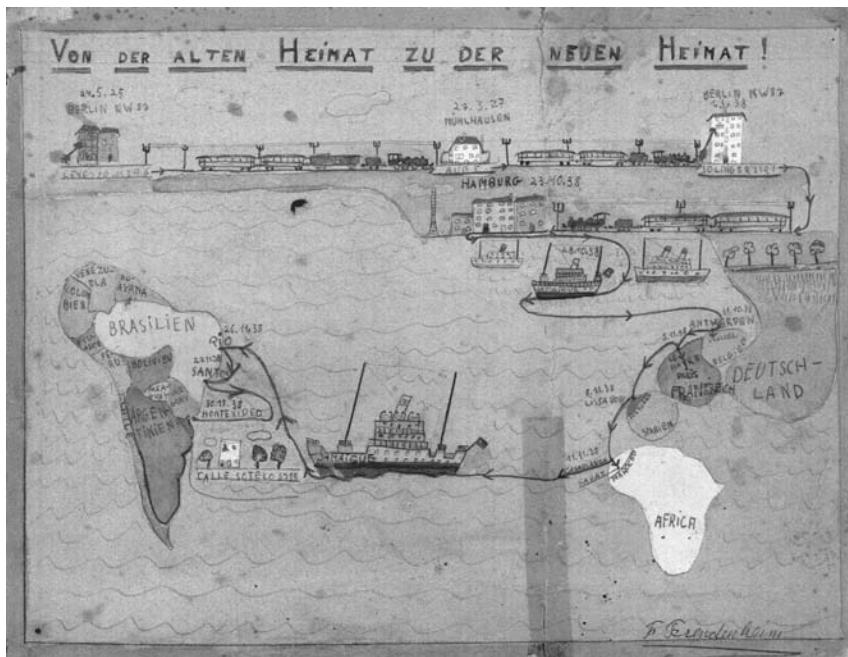
5. This is a town in Germany about 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) from Leipzig. Philipp had been trying to leave Germany aboard a *Kindertransport* and succeeded in acquiring a place on the last one, on September 1, 1939, the day on which Germany invaded Poland, initiating World War II. Philipp would locate Thea in England, and the childhood romance would develop into a lasting friendship, which continued until Philipp's death in 2002. See Conn, "Thea's Diary."

foreign country. Beyond the planning and preparation, prospects for a new life abroad also presented a formidable set of difficulties. Would the family manage to adapt to its new surroundings? Would the household's breadwinner be able to find work in a new land and in a new language? What would become of friends and family left behind?

While emigrating abroad may have been a distressing and unsettling time for adults, it could also represent an adventure for young children, especially those who had been shielded from the direst aspects of Nazi persecution. Fritz Freudenheim was twelve years old when his family left Germany in October 1938. In order to document his family's flight into exile, young Fritz endeavored to make a colored pencil drawing of their long voyage overseas to their new quarters in South America. He began his sketch, "From Our Old Home to Our New Home" ("Von der alten Heimat zu der neuen Heimat"), in Berlin's Levetzowstrasse, where the Freudenheims lived at the time of Fritz's birth. In 1927, the household moved to Mühlhausen in Thuringia. The whimsical map illustrates how the family traveled by train to Berlin in March 1938, presumably to arrange the appropriate documents, and then on to the German port at Hamburg, where the Freudenheims boarded the SS *Jamaïque* on October 23, 1938. Fritz recalls the liner's many ports of call in Europe and northern Africa before the Freudenheim family arrived at its destination in Montevideo, Uruguay, on November 30, 1938.⁶

6. Fritz, later Frederico, Freudenheim grew up in South America and settled in São Paulo, Brazil, with his wife, Irene (née Gebhardt). He died there on March 15, 2008.

DOCUMENT 3-3. Crayon drawing by Fritz Freudenheim, “*From Our Old Home to Our New Home*,” c. 1938, in Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin and Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), 155.



The violent events of *Kristallnacht* accelerated the emigration of Jews from the Third Reich. The rescue of children became a paramount concern among refugee and children's aid organizations, both in Germany and abroad. Following the November pogrom, the British government agreed to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of seventeen to enter the United Kingdom from Germany and German-annexed territories. Many public and private organizations, most significantly the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, worked to bring refugee children to Great Britain. These efforts, collectively known as the *Kindertransport* (children's transports), rescued some nine to ten thousand children, seventy-five hundred of them Jewish, from Nazi Germany, Austria, and German-occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland.⁷

The first *Kindertransport* from Germany arrived in Harwich, England, on December 2, 1938. Children chosen for a *Kindertransport* convoy typically

7. For a more comprehensive description of the *Kindertransporte*, also see chapter 9.

traveled by train to ports in the Netherlands, where they sailed for Great Britain. Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return for this guarantee, the British government agreed to allow these unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood that when the crisis was over, the children would return to their families. Parents or guardians could not accompany them. The few infants included in the program were tended by other children on their transport.

Cilia Jutta Horwitz, nicknamed Cilly, and her elder brother Max sailed with the first *Kindertransport* to England. Born in 1926, Cilly had enjoyed a comfortable middle-class existence with her family in Harburg, near Hamburg. Her Jewish father, Walter Horwitz, owned a local department store. Although her husband was not deeply religious, Cilly's Christian mother, Margarete, had converted to Judaism upon her marriage. The Nazi's rise to power brought the Horwitzes' happy family life to an end. According to the Nuremberg Laws, Margarete Horwitz was still legally an "Aryan," but the children of her mixed marriage had been raised in the Jewish faith and were thus regarded as Jews (*Geltungsjuden*),⁸ subject to the full range of antisemitic persecution. In 1936, the family moved to Hamburg. Soon thereafter, Cilly's father lost his business; shattered that he could not find employment, he attempted suicide. In the wake of this incident, Max and Cilly were removed from their home and placed in an orphanage. Desperate to regain their children, the Horwitzes decided to divorce so that Margarete might work.⁹ Fortunately, after *Reichskristallnacht* the Horwitz children were chosen to travel with the first *Kindertransport* to Britain. They lived apart, with different host families, and hoped for a time when their father and his new Jewish wife might join them in England.¹⁰

A letter from Walter Horwitz to his daughter in February 1939, three months after twelve-year-old Cilly arrived in England, reflects the hardships that both child and parent endured as a result of such a difficult separation. Refugee children found themselves alone in a strange land, far away from family

8. According to the First Supplementary Decree to the Nuremberg Laws from November 14, 1935, children of a mixed marriage who were *Mischlinge* of the first degree and had been raised in the Jewish religion counted as "full Jews" in the context of Nazi racial laws.

9. Enormous pressure brought to bear on "Aryan" partners in mixed marriages to divorce their Jewish spouses included restrictions on civil service employment and limited opportunities for private employment.

10. See "Der Kindertransport nach England," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, September 1, 2007.

and friends. Although many such children found an affectionate home among English host parents, some foster families found it difficult to integrate the new arrivals into their households, and many youngsters, like Cilly, spent most of the war years in a children's home, an environment that often intensified feelings of isolation, abandonment, and rootlessness. As time went on, it was often difficult for parents to disguise their increasingly desperate circumstances back in Germany, which added to the children's anxiety. Cilly and Max Horwitz remained in England for the duration of the war. On November 8, 1941, Walter Horwitz and his second wife, Sophie (née de Vries), were deported from Hamburg to Minsk; both perished in the Holocaust. Although Cilly often visited her mother, who survived in Hamburg, after the war, she herself married an Englishman and as Celia Jane Lee made her home in Great Britain.¹¹

DOCUMENT 3-4. Letter of Walter Horwitz to his daughter Cilia (Cilly) Horwitz, February 15, 1939, in Reiner Lehberger and Ursula Randt, eds., “*Aus Kindern werden Briefe*”: Dokumente zum Schicksal jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der NS-Zeit (Hamburg: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, 1999), 39–40 (translated from the German).

Air Mail

Hamburg 13, February 15, 1939

Grindelallee 79, 3rd floor

My dear, sweet Cilly!

Very many thanks for your dear card, which made me very happy. And so too for the kind words and greetings from your dear [host] parents, Mr. and Mrs. Watts. I return them with all my heart and send them my very best greetings. In the next few days I will write them personally; please let them know that. Now you are in good hands, my child, and are being properly spoiled. I am delighted for your sake. Do you often meet with Max? What is he up to? Children, I am so happy that everything has come together so well for you. My thoughts linger often with you. My fiancée sent a package with chocolates for you to Selsey, but it came back, “delivery refused”; customs probably should have been paid on it. Tonight I'm eating the last piece and thinking of you, Cilly. Be good and nice to

11. See Reiner Lehberger and Ursula Randt, eds., “*Aus Kindern werden Briefe*”: Dokumente zum Schicksal jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der NS-Zeit (Hamburg: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, 1999), 39–44.

your host parents, but don't completely forget your Papa. You asked me in your last letter how things are going with my emigration. Right now, very badly. I don't know what to do. My fiancée has a sponsorship for the U.S.¹² and will try through relatives who hold an influential position in New York to arrange for me also to have a sponsor. [One of them] is a patent lawyer. However, [my fiancée] falls under the Polish quota, which comes up only in July, and probably has to wait until the end of the year. She wants to go to England to work as a housemaid in the interim; she is already in communication with a family, who has already requested a permit for her from the Home Office.¹³ [She] would like to have me out along with her, even wants to put her income at my disposal. You know why. Think of the time before your departure. I don't have any salary or income anymore. We have written Max at length about this; read the letter that we wrote to him. Perhaps your [host] family can do something for me. You two must get in touch with Aunt Johanna. She must get involved now and help, together with Robert. Today I heard that [even] if one has a guarantor there, one can end up in a camp.¹⁴ Perhaps, dear children, you can do a favor for me. I want to come to England only for the short-term and from there go on to the United States. I don't want to become a burden or exploit anyone. I would like to move forward, but I want to have my peace of mind again. My intended bride is very sweet and nice and has grown so fond of you, has heard so many good things about you, and I am very happy. She has become good friends with Mommy, which would also interest you. I hope now to get a detailed answer from Max concerning my last letter. Be good, my child, work very hard in school. Just this Friday, an acquaintance of mine will be in London, just a day before his departure for America. A Mr. Behr from Hamburg, the brother of my landlord, will bring you both greetings from me. You can reach the gentleman in London under the name Martin Behr from Hamburg, Endsleigh Hotel, Endsleigh Garden, London. Perhaps Mr. Watts will drive you and Max to see the gentlemen if you ask very nicely, and then write me about it. You could also call ahead to the hotel and make an appointment with him, because the gentleman has much to do. He can tell you all

12. That is, Sophie de Vries had a guarantor who was willing to vouch for her financial security in the United States.

13. This refers to the British government ministry administering security, public order, and immigration issues.

14. German citizens living in Britain following the outbreak of hostilities, including German-Jewish refugees, were often interned as enemy aliens.

about Papa, also knows my fiancée, and will also meet our relatives in New York. I am hoping for the best. I have also written to my cousin Waldemar Horwitz in New York. Well, now my child, I have related to you everything that's worth knowing. I hope that you are doing very well. Continue to stay healthy and cheerful. Hold me dear. Greet the Watts family and their daughter Betty for me. For you, my child, I am sending a thousand tender greetings and kisses.

Always,

Your devoted, fat Papa!

[P.S.] My intended, Ms. Sophie de Vries, sends her warm greetings. She will write you soon. I'll write too. Papa.

On May 13, 1939, the Hamburg-America transatlantic liner MS *St. Louis* left the German port of Hamburg bound for Havana, Cuba. The vast majority of her 938 passengers were refugees, fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany. Most were Jews who had applied for visas to reside in the United States and purchased transit visas that would allow them to remain in Cuba until their quota number came up, granting them U.S. entry. The ship's passengers were not aware that, even before they sailed, Cuban president Federico Laredo Bru (1875–1950) had invalidated all recently issued landing certificates, in part because the director of Cuba's immigration office had come under scrutiny for selling such certificates illegally. When the *St. Louis* docked in Havana harbor, immigration officials admitted twenty-eight passengers with legitimate landing cards. Cuban authorities, however, refused to honor the landing certificates of the remaining 908 passengers¹⁵ and denied them entry into the country. Thus began the drama of the *St. Louis*, played out in the international press before millions of readers in Europe and the Americas.¹⁶ Representatives of the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** (Joint, or JDC) at once began desperate negotiations with President Bru to convince him to take in the refugees, without success. Aboard the *St. Louis*, German attorney Josef Joseph and several of his fellow passengers formed an onboard committee

15. Concerning the fate of the two remaining individuals from the original passenger list, one desperate immigrant aboard the *St. Louis* was evacuated to a hospital in Havana after attempting suicide when the ship anchored in Cuba; another passenger died of natural causes during the voyage.

16. For further discussion of the *St. Louis* incident, see Sarah A. Ogilvie and Scott Miller, *Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006); Diane Afoumado, *Exil impossible: l'errance des Juifs du paquebot St-Louis* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005).

to help aid the Joint in their efforts and to lift the morale of the refugees. Sailing so close to the U.S. mainland that they could see the coast of Florida, the passenger committee cabled President Franklin Roosevelt, appealing for refuge in the United States. The U.S. State Department, however, declined to undertake special measures that might allow the refugees admittance to a U.S. port, informing the passenger committee that “refugees must wait their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas” before they could enter the United States.¹⁷

Barred from safe haven in the Americas, the *St. Louis* was forced to sail back to Europe. Of course the terrified passengers did not wish to return to Nazi Germany. In the end, several Jewish organizations, most significantly the Joint under its European director, Morris C. Troper (1892–1962), secured entry for the refugees into four European countries: France, Belgium, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. This *St. Louis* story did not end, however, when the steamship docked in Antwerp, Belgium, on June 17, 1939. While all but one of the refugees admitted to Great Britain survived the war,¹⁸ 532 *St. Louis* passengers who remained in France and the Low Countries following the German invasion of May 1940 fell again within the Nazi dragnet. Just over half of these people lived through the war years, while 254 of their number perished in the Holocaust.

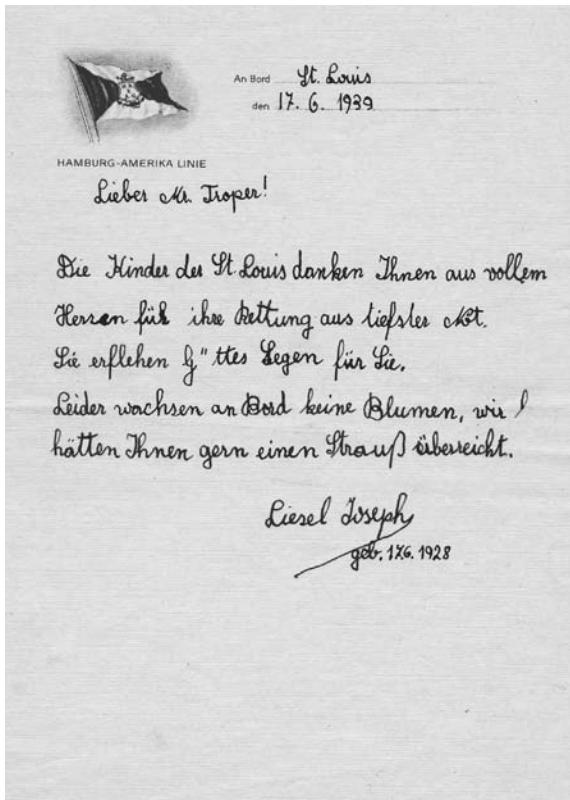
On June 17, 1939, the day on which the *St. Louis* arrived in Antwerp, Liesel Joseph, the daughter of passenger committee chairman Josef Joseph, was celebrating her eleventh birthday.¹⁹ Upon learning that she and her parents would find refuge in England, Liesel wrote a note thanking Morris C. Troper on behalf of all the children aboard the vessel. In the following month, Troper received dozens of letters from young passengers recounting their adventures aboard the MS *St. Louis*.

17. A. M. Warren, State Department Visa Division, quoted in the *Congressional Record*, Senate Resolution 111, “Seventieth Anniversary of the Tragedy of the MS *Saint Louis*,” May 19, 2009, S5646; Ogilvie and Miller, *Refuge Denied*, 25.

18. One of the former St. Louis passengers admitted to Britain died in an air raid in 1940.

19. Liesel Joseph, later Loeb (1928–), spent the first year of the war in England. The youngster lived with her mother in London during this time, while her father, Josef, was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man. In September 1940, the family reunited and emigrated to the United States. In 1947, Liesel married fellow German-Jewish refugee Hans Loeb, who had served with the American army during World War II.

DOCUMENT 3-5. Letter of Liesel Joseph to Morris C. Troper, European director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, June 17, 1939, USHMMMA, Acc. 1997.36.12, Betty Troper Yaeger Collection (translated from the German).



(Insignia of the Hamburg-Amerika Line)

On Board: The St. Louis

Date: June 17, 1939

Dear Mr. Troper!

The children of the St. Louis thank you with their whole heart for rescuing us from deepest despair. We entreat G-d's blessing upon you. Unfortunately, no flowers grow here on shipboard; we would have liked to have sent you a bouquet.

Liesel Joseph, born
June 17, 1928

DOCUMENT 3-6. Letter of unidentified young St. Louis passenger to Morris C. Troper, July 1939, USHMMMA, Acc. 1997.36.12, Betty Troper Yaeger Collection (translated from the German).

(Boy, fifteen years old)

July 1939

My Experiences aboard the St. Louis

When, on May 13, 1939, the MS St. Louis lifted anchor in Hamburg, a thousand passengers breathed more easily to be leaving Germany, land of unhappiness and oppression. Everyone said that now we would finally come to a free land, Cuba.

When I came onto the ship, I first went to the cabin, and then I explored the whole ship.

After two days, we arrived at the French harbor at Cherbourg in order to take on passengers from France and Holland.

Everyone was happy. During the day, we played on the sports deck. In the evening there was the cinema, dancing, or some type of party. The captain and the entire crew treated the people very well, and the service was first-rate.

After a merry voyage of fourteen days, we landed in Havana. Then a physician and a commission came on board. The physician examined us, and the commission looked at our passports. All at once, we heard that negotiations about our landing were still in progress. We waited a few days; the boats with relatives, parents, and children who were already in Havana sailed in circles around our steamer and yelled to us that we would soon be coming ashore. Fifty men from the harbor police came on board. After five days some of the people had already lost their nerve. One man slit his wrists and jumped into the water. A sailor rescued him, and he was taken to a hospital in Havana, where his life was saved.

After eight days the captain was forced to leave Havana with his ship, and us. After a few days we sailed by Florida, saw Miami, and then the ship set course towards Europe. We thought at first that we would come back to Havana; once we were supposed to be able to land on the island of Pinosa, but the ship sailed on an unaltered course towards Europe.

One day there came a telegram from Paris from Mr. Troper, the head of the European [wing of the] American Joint Distribution Committee, telling us that our landing outside of Germany was secured and that in thirty-six hours we would learn something more definite. The telegram of salvation came punctually. Mr. Troper had secured us landings in England, Holland, France, and Belgium.

The last days brought us happiness and contentment. Finally the ship landed in Antwerp on June 17, 1939. There we were divided into groups for the four countries. The people who were going to Belgium were taken from the ship, then those going to Holland. Those going to France and England were to sail with the HAPAG²⁰ ship MS *Rhakotis*. On June 18, we left Antwerp, and on June 19 we arrived in Boulogne, France. We disembarked and were driven to a hotel for immigrants. From there we were

20. This is an acronym for the Hamburg-American Passenger Line.

divided among all the regions of France. Thus we have happily landed outside Germany after all.

DOCUMENT 3-7. German émigré scientist Albert Einstein welcomes a group of Jewish children newly immigrated to the United States from Germany, c. 1945, USHMMPA WS# 71763, courtesy of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.



VICTIMS OF *EINSATZGRUPPEN* ACTIVITY

The infamous *Einsatzgruppen* operated in Soviet territory as mobile killing units composed primarily of German **Schutzstaffel (SS)** and police personnel. Under the command of the German **Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei, or Sipo)** and **Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst, or SD)**, the *Einsatzgruppen* had among their tasks the murder of perceived racial or political enemies found behind German combat lines in the occupied Soviet Union. These “enemies” included Jewish civilians, **Roma** (Gypsies), and officials of the Soviet Communist Party. The *Einsatzgruppen* also murdered thousands of residents of institutions for the

mentally and physically disabled. Many scholars believe that the systematic killing of Jews by these forces represented the first step of the “Final Solution,” the Nazi policy to murder all European Jews.²¹

During the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* followed the German army as it advanced deep into Soviet territory. The mobile units, often drawing on indigenous auxiliary support, carried out mass killing operations. In contrast to the methods employed later, in which Jews were deported from their towns and cities to ghettos and killing centers, *Einsatzgruppen* came directly to the home communities of Jews and murdered them there. With the aid of local informants, Jews in a given locality were identified and received instructions to report to collection points. Thereafter they were marched or transported by truck to the execution site, where trenches had been prepared; in some cases the captive victims had to dig their own graves. After the victims had surrendered their valuables and undressed, men, women, and children were shot, either “military style,” standing before an open trench, or lying face down in a prepared pit, in a manner that came to be known irreverently as “sardine packing.” Shooting was the most common form of killing used by the *Einsatzgruppen*. Yet, in the late summer of 1941, Heinrich Himmler, noting the psychological burden that mass shootings produced on his men, requested that a more convenient mode of killing be developed. The result was the **gas van**, a mobile gas chamber mounted on the chassis of a cargo truck that employed carbon monoxide from the truck’s exhaust to kill its victims. Gas vans made their first appearance on the eastern front in late fall 1941 and were eventually used, along with shooting, to murder Jews and other targets in most areas where the *Einsatzgruppen* operated.²² By the spring of 1943, *Einsatzgruppen* and Order Police battalions had killed over 1 million Soviet Jews and tens of thousands of Soviet political commissars, **partisans**, Roma, and institutionalized disabled patients. The mobile killing methods, particularly shooting, proved inefficient and psychologically burdensome to the killers. Even as *Einsatzgruppen* units carried out their operations, the German authorities

21. See Christopher Browning, “A Reply to Martin Broszat Regarding the Origins of the Final Solution,” *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1 (1984), 113–29.

22. See Mathias Beer, “Die Entwicklung der Gaswagen beim Mord an den Juden,” *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 35 (1987): 403–17.

planned and began construction of special stationary gassing facilities at centralized killing centers in order to murder vast numbers of Jews.²³

Eyewitness accounts by victims of these massacres are rare because very few survived to tell their stories. Rivka Yoselewska lived with her extended family in the small town of Zagrodski, near Pinsk (in modern Belarus). On the morning of August 15, 1942, mobile killing units attached to Einsatzgruppe B rounded up several hundred Jewish families from the Zagrodski ghetto and marched them to a series of prepared trenches on the outskirts of the village. On that day, unit forces murdered Yoselewska's entire family before her eyes, including her young daughter, Marka. The young mother herself received a head wound during the shooting, which propelled her into the burial pit. Regaining consciousness, she was able to extricate herself from the tangled bodies of her friends and neighbors and pull herself from the trench. Rivka Yoselewska survived her horrifying ordeal and lived in hiding until the end of the war. Her testimony at the **Eichmann Trial** in Jerusalem in 1961 presents us with indelible images of that August day and is a poignant reminder of the terrible fate that awaited children on the killing fields of the Soviet Union.

DOCUMENT 3-8. Testimony of Rivka Yoselewska, May 8, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:516–17.

Witness Yoselewska: [...] Children began screaming [at the assembly point]. They couldn't help it. They wanted to eat and drink. We were left standing all day. We were used to such things, because more than once they chased us out of the ghetto. [...] Then the gate of the ghetto opened and a truck moved in. Those who were strong enough climbed up by

23. For further discussion of the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen*, see Christopher Browning with Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln/Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press/Yad Vashem, 2004); Helmut Krausnick, *Hitlers Einsatzgruppen: Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges, 1938–1942* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985); Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2005); Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941–1943* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992).

themselves, but the weak ones were thrown in. They were piled into the truck like cattle.

Attorney General: Did they count the Jews beforehand?

Witness Yoselewska: They counted all of us. Some were missing. They went back into the ghetto and searched. They tormented us this way until afternoon.

Q: They filled up the truck. What happened to those who had no room on the truck?

A: The rest they made run after the truck.

Q: And you were running with your little girl?

A: I was holding my little girl and running after the truck, too. Many mothers had two or three children. All the way we had to run. When somebody fell down, they wouldn't let him get up; they shot him on the spot. All my family was there. We arrived at the place. Those who had been on the truck had already got down, undressed and stood in a row. [. . .]

Q: What did you see when you came there?

A: When we arrived at this place, we saw naked people standing there already, so we thought maybe they are being tormented, perhaps there was still hope we would remain alive. To get away was impossible. I was curious to see whether anybody was below that hill where the people had to stand and I made a quick turn. I saw three or four rows, twelve people already killed.

I wish to add that when they lined us up in the ghetto, my little daughter asked, "Mother, why are you wearing your Sabbath dress? They are going to kill us." Even when we stood near the ditch she said, "What are we waiting for, come, let's escape." Some of the younger ones tried to run away. They hardly managed a few steps, they were caught and shot. Then came our turn. It was difficult to hold the children, they were shaking. We took turns. Parents took the children, took other people's children. This was to help us to get through it all; to get it over with, and not see the children suffer. Mothers took leave of their children, the mothers, the parents.

Presiding Judge: How did you survive all this killing?

Attorney General: She will tell it all in her own words.

Presiding Judge: Very well, only please lead her somewhat.

Witness Yoselewska: We were lined up in fours. We stood there naked. Our clothing was taken away. My father didn't want to undress completely and kept on his underwear. When he was lined up for the shooting and was told to undress, he refused; he was beaten. We begged

him, "Take off your clothes. Enough of suffering." No. He insisted on dying in his underwear.

Q: And then the Germans tore it off?

A: They tore his things off and shot him.

Q: And he fell into the pit?

A: I saw it. Then they took Mother. She didn't want to go, but wanted us to go first. Yet we made her go first. They grabbed her and shot her. There was my father's mother, who was eighty, with two grandchildren in her arms. My father's sister was also there. She, too, was shot with children in her arms.

Q: Then your turn came?

A: Then my turn came. My younger sister also. She had suffered so much in the ghetto, and yet at the last moment, she wanted to stay alive, and begged the German to let her live. She was standing there naked holding on to her girlfriend. So he looked at her and shot them both. Both of them fell, my sister and her girlfriend. My other sister was next. Then he got ready to shoot me.

Q: Did he ask for something?

A: We stood there facing the ditch. I turned my head. He asked, "Whom do I shoot first?" I didn't answer. He tore the child away from me. I heard her last cry and he shot her. Then he got ready to kill me, grabbed my hair, and turned my head about. I remained standing and heard a shot, but I didn't move. He turned me around, loaded his pistol, so that I could see what he was doing. Then he again turned me around and shot me. I fell down.

Q: And then you fell into the pit?

A: I felt nothing. At that moment I felt that something was weighing me down. I thought that I was dead, but that I could feel something even though I was dead. I couldn't believe that I was alive. I felt I was suffocating, bodies had fallen on me. I felt I was drowning. But still I could move and felt I was alive and tried to get up. I was choking, I heard shots, and again somebody falling down. I twisted and turned, but I could not. I felt I was going to suffocate. I had no strength left. But then I felt that somehow I was crawling upwards. As I climbed up, people grabbed me, hit me, dragged me downwards, but I pulled myself up with the last bit of strength. When I reached the top I looked around, but I couldn't recognize the place. Corpses strewn all over, there was no end to the bodies. You could hear people moaning in their death agony. Some children were running around naked and screaming, "Mama, Papa." I couldn't get up.

Presiding Judge: The Germans were still there at that time?

Witness Yoselewska: No. The Germans were not there. No one was there.

Attorney General: You were naked and covered with blood.

Witness Yoselewska: I got out naked, covered with blood from the corpses whose bellies had burst.

Q: What did you have on your head?

A: When he shot me I was wounded in the head. I still have a big scar on my head, where I was wounded by the Germans. [The witness shows the scar.] I got to my feet to see that horrible scene. The screaming was unbearable, the children shouting, “Mama, Papa.” I ran over to the children, maybe my daughter was there. I called out, “Markele.”²⁴ I didn’t see her. The children shouted, “Mama,” “Papa.” I didn’t recognize the children either. All of them were covered with blood.

Q: There were three other women?

A: Further off I saw two women standing up. I walked over to them. I didn’t know them, and they didn’t know me. We asked each other for our names. Then they said, “You’re alive, too. You also survived?” “What should we do?” [. . .]

Q: Please let us be brief, Mrs. Yoselewska. It is difficult to recount and difficult to listen to. Tell us, did you hide?

A: We struggled all night long and all day screaming and shouting. Looking around, we saw Germans again and people with horses and shovels. The Germans ordered the gentiles²⁵ to pile all the corpses together in one place. So they did. A lot were still alive. The children were all running around in the field. As I was walking, I saw them and went over to them. The children were running after me and wouldn’t leave. I sat down in the field and remained there.

Q: The Germans came back and rounded up the children?

A: Germans came and helped round up the children. They left me alone. I just sat and looked. There was no need for much shooting at the children. They fired some shots and children fell down. [. . .]

In August 1941, the mobile killing units of the *Einsatzgruppen* had been operating in German-occupied Soviet territory for less than two months. From August 8 to 19, units of the **Sonderkommando** 4a (SK 4a), under the

24. This is the Yiddish diminutive for Marka.

25. Presumably this refers to farmers living in the area of the shooting site.

command of SS-Standartenführer Paul Blobel²⁶ (1894–1951), murdered several hundred Jewish inhabitants in the Ukrainian town of Byelaya Tserkov (today Bela Tserkva). Initially, the *Einsatzgruppen*, following in the wake of Wehrmacht forces, focused primarily on the killing of Jewish males of military age as well as other racial and political targets. However, by late July, with larger deployments of SS and police auxiliaries in place, *Einsatzgruppen* practice shifted to the destruction of whole Jewish communities, including women and children. This extension of killing actions to entire populations followed an uneven chronological and regional pattern and evidently led to initial confusion among mobile killing units. Thus, while the **Waffen-SS** platoon and local Ukrainian auxiliaries attached to SK 4a carried out the murders of hundreds of adult males and females belonging to Byelaya Tserkov's sizable Jewish community, they neglected to shoot the children.

The offspring of the murdered Jews were assembled in an abandoned building at the edge of town. On August 19, perhaps realizing for the first time the infeasibility of maintaining hundreds of unsupervised children without provisions in such a locale, mobile-unit commanders ordered their troops to collect three truckloads of youngsters and shoot them at a nearby rifle range. Ninety young children remained behind. Languishing in deplorable conditions without food or water, the children, and their predicament, soon came to the attention of Wehrmacht troops quartered in the vicinity. Outraged noncommissioned officers appealed to military chaplains Ernst Tewes and Gerhard Wilczik²⁷ to intercede on behalf of the children. Tewes and Wilczik alerted the chaplains attached to the 295th Infantry Division, Dr. Joseph Maria Reuss (1906–1985), later bishop of Mainz after the war, and his Protestant colleague Pastor Kornmann, who visited the children and reported their findings to Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth (1898–1943), the division's first general staff officer.

The incident put local military leaders at loggerheads with those SS officers responsible for the massacre in Byelaya Tserkov. At the core of the conflict was

26. Paul Blobel's Sonderkommando 4a was attached to Einsatzgruppe C in the Ukraine. He and his unit organized the killing of Jews and other Soviet citizens in cities such as Lutsk, Zhitomir, and Berdichev, and they were responsible for the murder of over thirty-three thousand Kiev Jews at Babi Yar on September 29 and 30, 1941. In June 1942 he was tasked with *Aktion 1005* (Operation 1005), the effort to destroy evidence of Nazi atrocities in eastern Europe. Following the war, Blobel was tried and convicted by an American military tribunal in the *Einsatzgruppen* Trial in Nuremberg and hanged at Landsberg Prison on June 7, 1951.

27. Ernst Tewes (1908–1998) survived the war and became an auxiliary bishop of Munich and Freising in 1968. Gerhard Wilczek returned to his duties as a parish pastor in 1945.

Groscurth, a former member of military intelligence (Abwehr) and an early active opponent of the Nazi regime.²⁸ Groscurth's protest to senior officials reflected traditional conceptions of correct military conduct toward civilian populations and echoed the sentiments of many conservative career military officers who had grown increasingly uneasy with Germany's "racial war" in the East. His attitudes stood in stark contrast to the ideologically driven positions of SK 4a commander Blobel and the unit's field commander, General Walther von Reichenau,²⁹ who "considered the extermination of Jewish women and children to be pressingly urgent and should be carried out in whatever form it took."³⁰ Groscurth's efforts to forestall the murders of the Jewish youngsters ultimately ended in failure. Nevertheless, the ensuing conflict among commanders concerning which unit would carry out the shootings suggests that even among those inured to the brutal realities of German racial policy, the taboo against the killing of children still initially remained intact.

28. In 1938, Helmuth Groscurth joined in the so-called September Conspiracy, an aborted attempt among military and Abwehr officials to overthrow Hitler's regime. In October 1939, with Hasso von Etzdorf and Erich Kordt, Groscurth penned the memorandum "Das drohende Unheil" ("The Threatening Calamity"), exhorting military officers to resist. In April 1943, Groscurth died in Soviet captivity following the battle of Stalingrad. See Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution*, 73ff.

29. Walther von Reichenau (1882–1942) commanded the Tenth Army during the invasion of Poland; this army group was renamed the Sixth Army, which Reichenau commanded in Belgium and France in 1940. In the same year, Reichenau was promoted to field marshal, the German army's highest military rank. In 1941, he led the Sixth Army in the invasion of the Soviet Union, becoming the commander of Army Group South in November 1941. Reichenau is best known for his October 10, 1941, order (*Tagesbefehl*), which encouraged Wehrmacht troops under his command to cooperate with *Einsatzgruppen* forces in murdering indigenous Jewish populations; many of the most famous massacres conducted by mobile killing units, including the September 29–30, 1941, murders of thirty-three thousand Jews at Babi Yar, occurred in areas under the jurisdiction of the Sixth Army. In January 1942, Reichenau suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage and died on January 17, 1942, of a subsequent heart attack when the plane flying him back to Germany for medical care made an emergency landing near Poltava.

30. Helmut Groscurth, quoted in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *The Good Old Days: The Holocaust As Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, trans. Deborah Burnstone (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 148.

DOCUMENT 3-9. Report of military chaplain Dr. Joseph Maria Reuss, Catholic divisional chaplain, to Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth, First Generalstabsoffizier, 295th Infantry Division, August 20, 1941, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., “Schöne Zeiten”: Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 135–36 (translated from the German).

I submit the following report to 295th Infantry Division:

This afternoon around 14:30 hours Military Chaplains Tewes and Wilczek of the reserve military hospital 4/607 came to the Protestant divisional chaplain and myself and reported the following:

German soldiers had drawn their attention to the fact that Jewish children, aged between a few months and five and six years, whose parents are said to have been executed, are locked up in a house under intolerable conditions and are under guard by Ukrainian militiamen. In the vicinity of this house, the children can be heard whimpering continuously. They went there themselves in order to confirm this fact, but did not see any member of the Wehrmacht or any other authority responsible for keeping order there or carrying out guard duty. Only a few German soldiers were present as spectators, and these men had expressed indignation at this state of affairs. They asked us to report this issue to our headquarters.

Their description of these incidents made it reasonable to suspect that this was an arbitrary action on the part of the Ukrainian militia. In order to be able to report the matter accurately, I myself, accompanied by the two military chaplains and the Protestant Divisional Chaplain Kornmann, paid a visit to the house, where we discovered the following:

In the courtyard in front of the house the crying and whimpering of children could be heard very audibly. Outside there were a Ukrainian militiaman keeping guard with a rifle, a number of German soldiers, and several young Ukrainian girls. We immediately entered the house unhindered and found in two rooms some ninety (I counted) children aged from a few months to five, six or seven years old. There was no kind of supervision by the Wehrmacht or other German authorities. [. . .]

The two rooms where the children were accommodated [. . .] were in a filthy state. The children lay or sat on the floor, which was covered in their excrement. There were flies on the legs and abdomens of most of the children, some of whom were only half dressed. Some of the bigger children (two, three, four years old) were scratching the mortar from the wall and eating it. [. . .] The stench was terrible; the small children, especially those who were only a few months old, cried and whimpered

continuously. The visiting soldiers were shaken, as we were, by these unbelievable conditions and expressed their outrage over them. [. . .] German soldiers who were present in the courtyard told me that they had their quarters there (in the house in the immediate proximity) and that since the afternoon of the previous day, they had heard the children, who had been there for such a long time, crying constantly. Sometime on the evening of the previous day, three lorry loads of children had already been taken away. An official from the SD³¹ had been present. The lorry driver had told them that these were children of Jews and Jewesses who had already been shot, and the children were now going to be taken to be shot. The shooting of the children was to be carried out by Ukrainian militia. The children still in the house were also to be shot. The soldiers expressed extreme indignation over the conditions in which the children were being kept; in addition, one of them pointed out that he too had children back home. [. . .]

Because there is no German watch or supervision over this house and these children and because German soldiers can observe the present circumstances at any time—which has already happened and provoked declarations of indignation and criticism, I am herewith reporting this incident to my immediate superiors.

Dr. Reuss,
Military Chaplain³²

DOCUMENT 3-10. Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth to commander in chief of the Sixth Army, Field Marshall Walther von Reichenau in re report on events in Byelaya Tserkov on August 20, 1941, August 21, 1941, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., “Schöne Zeiten”: *Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 140–42 (translated from the German).

On August 21 at 11:00 a.m., Captain Luley [Abwehr officer AOK 6] appeared together with Standartenführer Blobel and Obersturmführer [August] Häfner³³ to a meeting called by the army. This meeting took

31. That is, the German Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service).

32. This document and those that accompany it are available in complete English translation in Klee, Dressen, and Riess, *The Good Old Days*, 137–54.

33. August Häfner, born 1912, was an officer with Blobel's unit, Sonderkommando 4a. In 1968, he was a defendant in the Callsen Trial in Darmstadt for the murder of thirty-three thousand Jews at Babi Yar on September 29–30, 1941, but charges against him were eventually dismissed. In 1973, another Darmstadt court sentenced him to eight years in prison.

place at the field commander's office. [. . .] I conveyed the views of the division and made it very clear that the division had only intervened because of the way in which the action was being carried out. The Standartenführer and the Obersturmführer admitted there had been shortcomings in the way things had been run and stated that a way had to be found to settle the matter quickly on the basis of the prevailing conditions. [Häfner] said he did not now see himself as still in a position to be able to carry out the shooting. [. . .]

Concluding remarks

1. The troops have been trained by their officers to have a decent, soldierly attitude and to avoid violence and brutality against a defenseless population. They have complete understanding for the need for the most stringent intervention against [partisans]. In the case in question, however, the measures are undertaken against women and children. These in no way differ from those atrocities being carried out by the enemy, about which the troops are continually being informed. It is unavoidable that these events will be reported back home, where they will be compared to the Lemberg atrocities.³⁴ The troops expect their officers to intervene. This is particularly true for the older, married men. An officer is therefore forced to intervene out of consideration for his troops when such things take place in a public setting. In the interest of maintaining military discipline, all similar measures should be carried out, out of the sight of the troops.

2. The shootings might have been carried out without any sensation if the field commander and also the local commander had taken the necessary steps to keep the troops away from the scene. [. . .] Following the shooting of the town's entire Jewish population, it became per force necessary to eliminate the Jewish children, particularly the infants. This should have transpired together with the elimination of the adults in order to prevent this inhuman agony. The field commander and the Obersturmführer declared that it was not possible to provide an alternative accommodation for the children, whereby the field commander declared several times that this brood was to be exterminated.

Signed,
Groscurth

34. This refers to a report of Soviet atrocities against the civilian population of Lvov (German: Lemberg; today: Lviv), used extensively in German propaganda.

Following the discussion of Groscurth with members of Sonderkommando 4a, SS-Obersturmführer August Häfner was instructed to arrange for the killing of the remaining children. In 1965, he described his actions to German postwar investigators.

DOCUMENT 3-11. Testimony of August Häfner, May 31, 1965, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., “Schöne Zeiten”: Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 145 (translated from the German).

Then Blobel ordered me to have the children shot. I asked him, “Who should carry out the shooting?” He answered, “The Waffen SS.” I objected. I said to him, “These are all young men. How are we going to answer to them if we make them shoot small children?” To this, he said, “Then take your men.” Again I said to him, “How can they do that? They also have little children.” This tug-of-war lasted about ten minutes. . . . I suggested that the field commander’s Ukrainian militia should shoot the children. There were no objections from either side to this suggestion . . . ;

I went out to the woods all alone. The Wehrmacht had already dug a pit. The children were brought along in an all-terrain military vehicle. I had nothing to do with these technical arrangements. The Ukrainians stood around trembling. The children were taken down from the [vehicle]. They were lined up along the edge of the pit and shot so that they fell into it. They were hit wherever they were hit.³⁵ They fell into the pit. The wailing was indescribable. This scene I will never forget as long as I live. I [still] find it very hard to bear. I particularly remember an experience I had with a small blond-haired girl who took me by the hand. She was shot later too. [. . .] Some of the children were hit four or five times before they died.

35. By this, Häfner means that the Ukrainian commando, apparently intimidated by the age of the children, did not aim carefully at their victims.

DOCUMENT 3-12. A young mother with her two young children waits with other Jews from Lubny at an assembly point before their murder, c. April 1942, USHMMPA WS# 83014, courtesy of the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung.



“WE’VE BEEN PICKED UP”: ROUNDUPS AND DEPORTATIONS

The note was written hastily on a small slip of paper. Several months after Nazi authorities began deporting German Jews from the Reich to ghettos and concentration camps in the East, agents of the Berlin **Gestapo** had come to collect young Klaus Scheurenberg and his mother, Lucie. Sixteen-year-old Klaus left a quickly scrawled message for his father on the kitchen table, notifying him that the pair had been rounded up and could be found at the **collection camp** (*Sammellager*) for Jews awaiting deportation in Berlin’s Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse. This was not the first time that Klaus and Lucie Scheurenberg had been picked up by the Gestapo or that the family patriarch, Paul Scheurenberg, would be able to wrest his family members from the grasp of deportation officials.

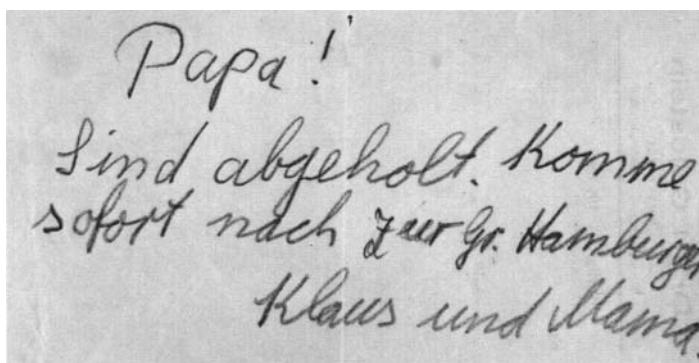
The elder Scheurenberg had served the Jewish community through their social welfare agency, the Jewish Winterhilfe (Winter Relief Organization), throughout the late 1930s. As Gestapo authorities regularly compelled officials of the Reich Association of Jews in Germany to assist in deportation measures, Paul Scheurenberg received a summons in November 1942 to help organize transports of Berlin Jews at a collection point in the Levetzowstrasse. There he worked distributing food to hapless deportees as they awaited processing and stored their baggage for the journey east. His forced service in the deportation of his own community weighed heavily upon him. Scheurenberg’s one consolation was that his loathsome responsibilities granted his immediate family a stay from deportation. Several times he had freed his wife and son from internment in the Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse, and although he had not been able to prevent initial measures against his newly wed daughter, Lisa, and her husband, technically a separate household, he had, with the help of a sympathetic SS officer, been able to retain them at the collection camp indefinitely, staving off the threat of immediate deportation.³⁶

Luck ran out for the family in May 1943, when Gestapo agents came at last for the Scheurenbergs at their home in the Elsässer Strasse. As Paul Scheurenberg had been a veteran of World War I, the family was deported to **Theresienstadt**, where young Klaus Scheurenberg became so proficient in carpentry that, in August 1944, he was transferred to a detachment of Jewish artisans assigned to build evacuation headquarters for the **Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt)** 60 kilometers (37.3 miles) outside Berlin.

36. The couple was eventually transferred in 1943 to Theresienstadt and in 1944 to Auschwitz, where both perished in the gas chambers immediately upon arrival.

Camp officials promised that the Jewish workmen and their immediate households would be spared from deportation to killing centers. Although tendered in order to reduce the chance of flight among workmen at the thinly guarded worksite, this measure meant that sixteen-year-old Klaus effectively replaced his father as the family's benefactor. Klaus Scheurenberg and his parents survived the war. From 1981 until his death in 1990, Scheurenberg served as chairman of the Berlin Society for Christian-Jewish Relations.³⁷

DOCUMENT 3-13. Note of Klaus Scheurenberg to his father, Paul Scheurenberg, c. 1942, Scheurenberg collection, Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin–Centrum Judaicum, CJA 614 Nr. 8.



Papa!

Have been picked up. Come to the Gr.[oss]-Hamburger[-Strasse] immediately.
Klaus and Mama.

Following the **Wannsee Conference** of January 20, 1942, Nazi authorities began to prepare the deportation of Jews in France and other western European countries occupied by Germany. Securing the cooperation of the French government in **Vichy**, German officials aided by French police conducted round-ups of Jews in both occupied and unoccupied zones of France throughout the summer of 1942. As regional policy dictated that these initial deportation convoys from France carry only adult Jews to the East, these **razzias** literally rent

37. For a complete discussion of the Scheurenberg family, see Christian Dirks, “‘Traurige Erlebnisse aus der Nazi-Hölle Deutschland’: Zum Schicksal der Familie Scheurenberg,” in *Juden in Berlin, 1938–1945: Begleitband zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung in der Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin*, ed. Beate Meyer and Hermann Simon (Berlin: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), 204–13.

families apart, as parents, grandparents, and elder siblings were separated from younger children at collection points and at French or German assembly camps. By the autumn of 1942, some forty-two thousand Jews had passed through the **Drancy** transit camp on the outskirts of Paris. Nearly one-third of these individuals came from unoccupied France. A significant percentage of these were foreign or stateless Jews, sacrificed by the Vichy government in a vain attempt to spare France's indigenous Jewish population. The final destination of these deportees was **Auschwitz**, where the vast majority was gassed upon arrival.³⁸

Among those caught in the roundups in Vichy were members of the Gumpel family from northern Germany. In August 1937 Gertrud Gumpel had left Hamburg with her young children, Felicitas and Thomas, to join her husband and eldest son, Kurt, in Antwerp. In the months before the German invasion of Belgium and the Netherlands, businessman Berthold Gumpel succeeded in emigrating to the United States, but as his prospective employer had issued the visa to him alone, he had had to leave his family, now settled in Brussels, behind. With the German occupation of Belgium in May 1940, Gumpel, in New York, frantically sought to secure the necessary travel papers for his wife and children, without success. As the Nazi persecution of Belgian Jews escalated, Gertrud Gumpel decided to undertake a dangerous venture: to journey with her children across southern France in an attempt to reach Portugal, where her husband's business associates might help her arrange a passage to America. The desperate gamble failed, and the small family fell into the hands of Nazi authorities, who interned them.

On July 14, 1942, thirteen-year-old Felicitas Gumpel, nicknamed Fee, wrote a letter to her grandmother from Drancy advising her that her mother, Gertrud, and eighteen-year-old brother, Kurt, had been taken away to another camp. Writing awkwardly in German, for she had only had a few years of formal schooling in Hamburg before fleeing to Belgium, Fee attempted to calm the elderly woman's fears about the fate of her daughter and grandchildren. The brief lines added by her eleven-year-old brother, Tommy, as a postscript reveals the children's true sense of loss and despair. On July 20, 1942, Gertrud and Kurt Gumpel departed France on a convoy to Auschwitz, where they perished. By late summer, local exigencies had convinced French authorities to alter their

38. See Serge Klarsfeld, *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942–1944: Documentation of the Deportation of the Victims of the Final Solution in France* (New York: Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983); Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II*, trans. Nathan Bracher (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press in association with University Press of New England and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

policy in favor of including juveniles in deportations to the East. On September 23, 1942, Felicitas and Thomas boarded Convoy 36 from Drancy to Auschwitz, where they shared the fate of their mother and brother.³⁹

DOCUMENT 3-14. Letter of Felicitas and Thomas Gumpel, July 14, 1942, in Reiner Lehberger and Ursula Randt, eds., “Aus Kindern werden Briefe”: Dokumente zum Schicksal jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der NS-Zeit (Hamburg: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, 1999), 52–53 (translated from the German).

July 14, 1942

Dear Grandma,

Now don't be shocked about the newest thing that I have to tell you: this morning Mama and Kurt were taken away with others to work. But they are staying in France, they are still in Tours in order that they will be examined [by a doctor]. Those that are sick⁴⁰ will come back here. We children all remained here and are in good hands; they are taking good care of us. We have good things to eat, better than normal anyway: cookies, bread with butter, etc. We even sleep at night with a family that Mama had befriended before; they are very kind to us. At nine-thirty we must all assemble again in our barracks, and then we will get to hear news; I hope good news. Just don't excite yourself too much; this is all only for the time being. Share this letter with the entire family, because I cannot write to everyone. It is very sad in the camp, because only the old men and women are here. They each have a suitcase a piece and 200 francs and a comforter, a thick one from us. This evening we haven't heard any more [news]. I must close for today. Many, many greetings and kisses,

Your Fee

Dear Grandma,

With this news I think I have cried as never before, but this is how it is, so [many] fathers gone from their children, mothers gone from their children. I write these lines with tears in my eyes. Many greetings and kisses,

Your Tommy

39. See Gert Koppel, *Untergetaucht: Eine Flucht aus Deutschland* (Westermann: Braunschweig, 1999).

40. The translator has attempted to reflect Fee Gumpel's imperfect German in the text.

DOCUMENT 3-15. Lissy Asser, a young girl from Göttingen, waits with other German Jews at a deportation point in Hildesheim, c. March 1942. Lissy, her parents, and a younger brother are believed to have been murdered in Treblinka, USHMMPA WS# 69635, courtesy of the Stadtarchiv Hildesheim.



While Nazi authorities and their indigenous collaborators carried on their efforts to deport Jews from German-occupied central and western Europe, the fate of Romanian Jewry lay in the hands of Germany's Axis allies. Approximately one-half of Romania's prewar Jewish population of 756,000 perished in the Holocaust. As a result of territorial changes realized during the course of World War II, 150,000 Romanian Jews living in northern Transylvania fell under Hungarian jurisdiction. In 1944, Hungarian authorities deported this population, along with other Hungarian Jews, to Nazi concentration camps and killing centers, where 135,000 were murdered. Some forty-five to sixty thousand Jews living within wartime Romanian borders were killed by Romanian and German forces in the regions of Bessarabia

and Bukovina in the summer and fall months of 1941.⁴¹ Most remaining Jews from these areas were deported in 1941 to the so-called Transnistrian Reservation, within a newly created Romanian military district established from recently acquired Soviet territory between the Bug and Dniester rivers. Terrible atrocities often preceded these deportations, such as the infamous Iasi Pogrom (June 28 to July 2, 1941), in which as many as thirteen thousand Jews were murdered in cold blood or died of starvation, dehydration, or suffocation aboard the infamous “Death Trains” that carried the surviving Jews of Iasi to other parts of the province.

Transnistria was a deathtrap for the 155,000 Jews and 25,000 Roma driven to remote areas by Romanian authorities. Thousands died en route of hunger, thirst, exposure, and maltreatment. Once the deportees reached their destination, Romanian officials took little responsibility for feeding and sheltering them. Interned in ghettos and camps, thousands fell victim to mass shootings and epidemics of **typhus** and other diseases. Starvation, forced labor, and abuse shaped deportees’ daily lives. Between 105,000 and 120,000 Romanian Jews and 11,000 Roma died as a result of the expulsions to Transnistria.⁴²

Among those Jews deported from Bessarabia were ten-year-old Iser Franghieru and his family. Placed in a Hehalutz⁴³ orphanage after the war, the teenager shared his wartime experiences in the Transnistria with a social worker from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

41. See Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000); “Executive Summary” in *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* (Bucharest: International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, 2004).

42. *Final Report*, 3. The reservation was also a killing site for indigenous Jews. Scholars estimate that between 115,000 and 180,000 Jews living in the area of the newly formed Transnistria were murdered, especially in Odessa and in the counties of Golta and Berezovka.

43. This international youth organization was founded in 1921 in Warsaw. Dedicated to the Zionist ideal of reestablishing a Jewish homestead, the Hehalutz organized professional training courses for European Jews as they prepared to leave for Palestine and create kibbutz settlements there. In the ghettos of German-occupied eastern Europe, Hehalutz cells maintained their structure, and the organization’s members formed the activist core of fighters in ghetto uprisings and the Jewish partisan units. In the postwar period, it was instrumental in encouraging Jewish emigration to Palestine.

**DOCUMENT 3-16. Vita of Iser Franghieru, Hehalutz Orphanage, September 12, 1947,
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, USHMM RG 25.001, American Joint
Distribution Committee, Case Files of Romanian Orphans.**

Iser Franghieru

Among the crowd of children, inmates of the Hehalutz, Bucharest, home for Transnistrian orphans, it is rather easy to discern the tall figure of this young fellow, and the warm smile permanently fluttering on his face.

Iser Franghieru is a boy of Hertză, where he was born on February 12, 1931. His father, Haim Leib, the shoemaker, died when Iser was only a baby.

In 1941 the ten-year-old child followed his mother and a married sister with her husband and two children over the Dniester into deportation, in a convoy formed at Edinetz.

"We marched whole days and nights, through rain and knee-deep mud as far as Casauti forest. There we halted for the night. I was terribly cold and shivering. The first snow flakes of winter were falling and the next dawn revealed among the trees in the snow several hundred dead hard frozen by the frost."

The others resumed their trudge, eyes fixed on the ground. All moaned with pain, many fell. Of these some died immediately as they fell, others were helped to death by the gendarmes.

"All the road was strewn with corpses. I saw many children fall with little streams of blood oozing from their mouths. Mother covered my eyes to stop me from seeing so many dead."

The convoy crossed the Dniester, then marched through Jampol and towards evening halted one kilometer [0.6 miles] off Obodowka.

"The whole night was spent in a stable, but only after the first hour you stepped⁴⁴ on the dead bodies of those who succumbed to hunger and weariness. Dead and alive were robbed by those who drove us."

The next day in a crowd of 283, they were sent to labor on a farm at Dubina. All were huddled for the night in a stable.

Before long the continual hunger began to tell on the mother. She suffered, and the child ran out one afternoon to beg by all means some food for his mother. On his return towards evening, it was too late. She

44. This word is misspelled as "stipped" in the original. The author of the document, typing for Joint records, made many similar typographical errors in the text. To aid the reader, they have been corrected in this manuscript.

had died. Transportation of the dead was allowed for full cartloads only. So the dead body lay for three days with the living until twelve corpses were completed [collected]. The deportees worked hard and long hours and were too scantily fed, so mortality was great. The boy's brother-in-law died, a child of his died, and out of the 238 which [*sic*] set out, only seventy-six were left in the end.

The dead were buried under the dung heap and covered with snow. But in spring the pigs unearthed heads and limbs from the rotten bodies.

Left alone with his married sister and one of her children, the boy did all he could to get them some food. He toiled in the fields, sold off the remnants of the rags they had left, begged, and at last watched a herd of swine. Of the food for his charge he too could have his fill, and when he managed to save some for his relatives there was jubilation in the stable.

But one day, new hope surged in the weakened hearts of the survivors. Iser had sighted a group of partisans.

He was repatriated in 1944. For three months in Iasi, then at Baarlad, now in Bucharest. Here the Hehalutz movement supervises a home exclusively supported by JDC [the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee] for Transnistrian orphans. Iser enjoys young life in it and attends the ORT⁴⁵ technical courses, likewise supported by JDC. He does very well and is particularly good at draughtsmanship. His plans for the near future are to become an efficient mechanic and then emigrate.

45. Established in Russia in 1880, the Jewish self-help organization Obshestvo Remeslenofo zemledelcheskofo Truda (The Society for Trades and Agricultural Labor) still provides occupational training to Jewish communities around the world.

DOCUMENT 3-17. Iser Franghieru in a Bucharest orphanage, c. 1947, USHMMPA
WS# 01827, courtesy of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.



Throughout the early 1940s, the National Socialist regime and its allies succeeded in destroying most of the Jewish communities within their jurisdictions. Yet, incredibly, in 1944 in the heart of central Europe, one large national community of Jews remained largely intact. Hungary's Jewish population numbered approximately 825,000. Four hundred thousand of these individuals lived in Trianon Hungary,⁴⁶ together with several hundred thousand Jews living in regions acquired by the regime of Admiral **Miklós Horthy** after 1938. A

46. This refers to the traditional Hungarian borders minus those crown lands ceded in the Treaty of Trianon following World War I.

further one hundred thousand people in these areas were classified as Jews by the Hungarian racial laws. Hungary's Jews faced harsh discriminatory measures beginning in 1938. After 1940, further legislation compelled all able-bodied Jewish males of draft age to perform forced labor. Working under brutal conditions without adequate food, shelter, or medical care, at least twenty-seven thousand perished before the German forces occupied Hungary in March 1944.

And yet, even as their coreligionists all over Europe perished in the Holocaust, members of Hungary's Jewish community continued to survive. Most Hungarian Jews had been spared deportation prior to the German occupation because Nazi German leaders were unable to control the internal policies of their Hungarian allies. Confident after the German defeat of Stalingrad in 1943 that Nazi Germany would ultimately lose the war, Hungarian prime minister Miklós Kállay,⁴⁷ with the tacit approval of Admiral Horthy, sought to negotiate a separate armistice with the Western powers. In order to preclude these events, German troops moved to occupy Hungary on March 19, 1944. Dismissing Kállay, who had so far resisted German demands to deport Hungarian Jewry, Nazi leaders installed the pro-German Döme Sztójay as premier.⁴⁸ Sztójay proved committed to Hungary's continued participation in the war effort and yielded to German pressure to allow the deportation process to begin. In April 1944, German authorities ordered Jews living outside Budapest to concentrate in certain regional centers; Hungarian gendarmes enforced this ghettoization of Jews from rural areas. Beginning in mid-May, German authorities under the personal direction of **Adolf Eichmann** worked with Hungarian officials to deport Jews from these districts. By July 1944, some 440,000 Jewish

47. Miklós Kállay (1887–1967) was a member of the Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament when he replaced the pro-German László Bárdossy as prime minister of Hungary. Following the arrest of Admiral Miklós Horthy in October 1944, Kállay surrendered to Arrow Cross officials and was deported to Mauthausen and then Dachau, where he was imprisoned with other prominent political prisoners. Kállay survived the war and settled in New York City, where he served on the Executive Committee of the Hungarian National Council in Exile. He died in New York on January 14, 1967.

48. Döme Sztójay (1883–1946) was a member of the Hungarian General Staff; from 1925 to 1933, he was a military attaché in Berlin, and from 1935 until March 1944, he served as Hungary's chief diplomat to Nazi Germany. Replacing Kállay as prime minister, Sztójay introduced extensive anti-Jewish legislation and allowed the deportation of Hungarian Jews to killing centers. Following his removal as prime minister on August 29, 1944, Sztójay, already in failing health, retired to a sanatorium. Sztójay fled Hungary before the arrival of Soviet troops in January 1945, but he was arrested by American military authorities and tried by a Budapest court for war crimes in March 1946. He was sentenced to death and executed by firing squad on August 24, 1946.

men, women, and children had been removed from Hungarian soil, primarily to Auschwitz; only the Jews of Budapest remained.

Faced with Allied threats and a worsening military situation, Miklós Horthy called a halt to these deportations on July 7, 1944. While the admiral negotiated with Soviet leaders, whose troops were nearing the Hungarian frontier, and prepared to announce an armistice, German officials staged a coup d'état. On October 15, 1944, they arrested Horthy and installed a new government under Ferenc Szalasi, leader of the fascist and radically antisemitic **Arrow Cross**. During its brief time in power, the Arrow Cross initiated a reign of terror, torturing and murdering Budapest Jews in the streets and reinitiating deportations from the capital.⁴⁹

Caught up in the initial wave of Arrow Cross violence against Jews was seventeen-year-old Pinchas Eisner. Fearing his family would soon be deported or share the fate of neighbors murdered in their own homes, the youth wrote a letter of farewell to his elder brother Mordechai, who was serving in a Hungarian forced labor camp. Five days later, the young man was seized by an Arrow Cross militia and transferred to the village of Csomád outside Budapest. On November 3, 1944, Eisner and seventy other Jews were marched to a nearby forest, instructed to dig a large trench, and shot to death before their self-made grave. Mordechai Eisner received his brother's letter when he returned home upon liberation.

DOCUMENT 3-18. Letter of Pinchas Eisner to his brother Mordechai Eisner, Budapest, October 16, 1944, in Reuvan Dafni and Yehudit Keliman, eds., *Final Letters* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholas 1991), 454–57.

Budapest, October 16, 1944, 6:15 p.m.

My Dear Brother:

Good-bye! Think of our talk that night. I felt as one with you. I knew that, if it were you whose life would end, I would go on living as if I had lost half of my body and soul. You said that if I die, you will kill yourself.

49. See Randolph Braham and Brewster Chamberlin, eds., *The Holocaust in Hungary: Sixty Years Later* (New York: Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 2006); Randolph Braham, *Eichmann and the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry* (New York: World Federation of Hungarian Jews, 1961); Randolph Braham and Scott Miller, eds., *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998); Hans Safrian, *Eichmann's Men*, trans. Uta Stargardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010).

Think of what I told you, that if you stay alive, I will live on within you. I would have liked to continue my life with you and with our family. Plans, desires, hopes were before me. I longed for the unknown. I would have liked to know, to live, to see, to do, to love. . . . But now it is all over. In the city, Jews were exterminated from entire streets. There is no escape. Tonight or at the latest tomorrow it will be our turn. At seventeen I have to face certain death. There is no escape. We thought that we would be exceptions, but fate made no exceptions. [. . .] It seems like fate put a curse on each of us. After Jisreal⁵⁰ it is now my turn together with my father, mother, and Sorele. I hope you will survive us. Farewell and forgive me if ever I have offended you. [. . .]

The calamity started last evening. By nightfall, the Jews of [house numbers] 64 and 54 had already been taken away. There was a pool of blood on the pavement, but by morning it was washed away. I was awake the whole night. R. J. and K. S. [friends of the boys] were here. Poor R. J. could hardly stand on his feet he was so full of fright. At first we hoped that the police and the army would protect us, but after a phone call we learned everything. Slowly morning arrived, but the events of the day made our situation hopeless. K. S. came at 6:00. He was about to faint after he fought with four Nazis who beat him terribly. He barely escaped with his life. He was stumbling and trembling, and could not start talking because of what he had seen and been through. I write fast, who knows if I will have time to finish? K. S. offered to take Sorele to a safe place. She promptly jumped at the suggestion and wanted to go immediately. But Mummy stepped in front of her and with a completely calm voice said that she would not let her go, because the Nazis might catch them on the street. Sorele was crying and hysterical. She wanted to go, she wants to live. Finally Mother proposed that if I go too then she will give her consent. You should have heard the way she said that. Sorele wanted to go, I stayed. . . . I could not leave our mother and father. [. . .] Father was praying the whole night. He still has some hope left, but he is talking about this world being like a vestibule to prepare ourselves [for] the real world to come.

Mother and Father are telling religious parables to K. S. about the inevitability of destiny. Mathild [an aunt] is sitting next to us and listens. Sorele is outside and I am writing. I am relatively calm, facing death, my

50. This was the Eisners' brother, who died at nineteen. Sorele, mentioned in the next line, is their sister.

thoughts coherent. [. . .] It is not fear that I feel but the terribly-considered, bitter and painful realization of things to come. I hope I'll get it over with quickly, only it will be terrible to see each other's agony. God will help us and we will be over it.

Farewell, dear, sweet Brother. Farewell! Remember me. I hope that I, too, will be able to think of you even from over there. I would like to hug and kiss you once more. But who knows to whom I write these lines? Are you alive? Farewell, my dear brother, my sweet Mordechele, live happily. Kissing you for the last time—till we meet again.

Your Loving Brother



CHAPTER 4

CHILDREN IN THE WORLD OF THE GHETTO

DURING WORLD WAR II, German policy aimed to isolate Jewish communities from non-Jewish populations, particularly in the occupied eastern territories. Shortly after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, German authorities began a systematic concentration of Jews in so-called ghettos in many Polish metropolitan areas. Confined within an enclosed municipal district, Jewish populations were often incarcerated behind makeshift walls and barbed wire fences and forced to live under deplorable conditions. Nazi officials often compelled Jews from surrounding communities and adjacent rural districts to resettle in urban ghettos so that many ghettoized populations suffered from severe overcrowding and acute shortages of food and essential goods.

German authorities established over one thousand ghettos in German-annexed Poland, the **General Government**,¹ and the occupied Soviet territories alone. The first ghettoization effort took place in the small city of Piotrków Trybunalski, in central Poland in October 1939. Other major ghettos were established in Łódź, Vilna (today Vilnius), Kovno (today Kaunas), Białystok, Kraków, Riga, Lvov (today Lviv), Czestochowa, Minsk, and **Theresienstadt (Terezin)**. The largest of these concentrated communities was the **Warsaw ghetto** with four hundred thousand Jews crowded into a total area of 1.3 square miles. Although each community differed appreciably in terms of composition and structure, most ghettos in eastern Europe shared some characteristics in common. Communal life within the ghetto was administered by

1. That is, German-occupied Poland.

a German-appointed **Jewish Council (Judenrat)**, responsible for the internal organization of the community and the management of its goods and services. A ghetto police force, the **Jewish Order Service**, imposed public order and enforced the decrees of German authorities and ordinances promulgated by the Jewish Council. Jews within the ghettos were required to wear distinguishing badges or armbands, often bearing the **Jewish star**, in order to further differentiate them from the population outside the ghetto. Many ghetto inhabitants were subjected to forced labor, either outside the parameters of the ghetto itself or within the community's workshops and industries. Finally, many ghettos in the German-occupied East were the destinations of Jews deported from western Europe, especially from the Third Reich itself. In ghettos such as Riga, Łódź, Minsk, Kovno, and Theresienstadt, these deportees blended with Jews from indigenous communities and contributed to even more drastic overcrowding.²

Most scholars believe that German authorities viewed ghettoization as a provisional measure that allowed Nazi officials to segregate and control Jewish populations while planners in Berlin deliberated the ultimate objectives of their anti-Jewish policy. With the implementation of the "Final Solution," Nazi officials targeted ghetto populations for **deportation** and mass murder. In occupied Soviet territories, units of the **Einsatzgruppen** and their auxiliaries murdered thousands of Jews at killing sites in the vicinity of ghettos, such as Riga, Vilna, Kovno, and Minsk. In Poland, many larger ghettos, such as that in Łódź, maintained their own industries, which supported the German war effort. In these cases, ghetto populations were gradually decimated by a series of "actions" (*Aktionen*) in which **Schutzstaffel (SS)** authorities, often with the aid of the Jewish Order Police, rounded up thousands of ghetto residents for transfer to killing centers. In 1943 and 1944, these larger communities were liquidated through large-scale deportations to extermination camps. The destruction of the Jewish community in Warsaw in April 1943 initiated the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, one of the most ambitious insurrections by Jewish resistance fighters against Nazi authorities.

This chapter explores the roles and reactions of children within the wider context of Nazi ghettoization policy. Children often played unique roles in the ghetto communities. As adept and nimble smugglers, they helped to sustain their fellow ghetto inhabitants with black market goods and contraband from the "**Aryan** side." As forced laborers, those youngsters fit enough to work

2. In some cases, as in the instance of the Riga ghetto, a significant segment of the local population of Jews was murdered in order to make room for deportees from Germany or western Europe. See Gertrude Schneider, *Reise in den Tod: Deutsche Juden in Riga, 1941–1944* (Berlin: Hentrich, 2006).

helped their families survive in a perilous climate of starvation and deportation. Children were manifestly recipients of the ghettos' extensive self-help and social welfare organizations. Yet, for children the ghetto also represented a particularly dangerous environment. Youngsters figured as the likeliest victims of starvation, illness, and destitution. Along with the elderly and sick, children also numbered among the first deported from ghetto settings to killing centers. Łódź ghetto elder **Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski** famously appealed to parents under his jurisdiction to "give me your children" in order to avert wider deportation measures during that ghetto's notorious *Gehsperre*. So-called **children's actions** (*Kinderaktionen*), like the one associated with the *Gehsperre*, occurred in many major ghettos, as Nazi authorities targeted these "useless eaters" for early deportation measures. Likewise, German ordinances strictly forbade pregnancies or live births in many ghettos, forcing parents to make agonizing decisions concerning their future offspring. The following documentation explores these complex experiences of children and adolescents in the world of the ghetto.

INTO THE GHETTO

Beginning in 1939 with the occupation of Poland, German authorities began a systematic concentration of Jewish populations within specially designated sectors of Polish metropolitan areas. The first large-scale efforts at ghettoization began in Łódź, Poland's second-largest city: the Łódź ghetto was created in April 1940 and eventually held 164,000 inhabitants. The largest ghetto of its kind, the Warsaw ghetto, established in October 1940, incarcerated 390,000 Jews. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, German administrators in Soviet territories altered their strategy of ghettoization, initially creating ghettos in order to concentrate Jews for shooting actions as the *Einsatzgruppen* followed **Wehrmacht** forces into the Soviet interior. An illustrative example of such a practice was the formation of the Vilna ghetto in Lithuania in September 1941.

In July 1941, shortly after the German occupation of Vilna, units of the *Einsatzgruppen*, together with local collaborators, rounded up some five thousand Jewish men in the Lithuanian capital and murdered them in the **Ponary** (or Paneriai) woods, some eleven kilometers (seven miles) from Vilna. In early August, Lithuania passed from German military governance to German civilian administration. From August 31 until September 3, mobile killing units attached to Einsatzkommando 9 carried out a more ambitious shooting action, murdering eight thousand Jews at Ponary, including members of Vilna's recently appointed Jewish Council. In the following days, German authorities fenced

off the enclosure that had been used to detain assembled Jews prior to their murder in the recent massacre and created from this space two ghettos, separated from each other by a municipal thoroughfare.³ On September 6, 1941, all surviving Jewish inhabitants of the city of Vilna were ordered into the two areas, which together comprised the Vilna ghetto. Each component ghetto had its own Jewish Council, appointed the following day, and maintained its own Jewish Order Police force and welfare and social services.⁴

We know much about what that tumultuous day in September 1941 looked and sounded like from the diary of **Yitskhok Rudashevski**, an only child born in Vilna on December 10, 1927. Rudashevski lived in the Lithuanian capital with his parents and maternal grandmother. His father was a typesetter for the city's most prominent Yiddish newspaper, *Vilner Tog*, and perhaps this proximity to the world of journalism spurred Yitskhok's interest in writing. He attended high school at the city's prestigious *Realgymnasium*, where he excelled in languages, history, and literature. On September 6, 1941, his small household, like so many others in the city's Jewish community, received orders to move into the Vilna ghetto. Not yet fourteen, Rudashevski recorded the chaos and pathos of that day in his journal. The youngster's poignant account reveals how acutely he felt his sudden loss of freedom, as well as a strong presentiment of tragedy. Once settled, Yitskhok filled his diary with vivid descriptions of the ghetto and the individuals who inhabited it. Prominent in his narrative is a discussion of the vibrant intellectual and cultural world that he and other like-minded youths nurtured there.⁵

That world came to an abrupt end with the ghetto's liquidation in early autumn of 1943. Like many ghetto inhabitants, Yitskhok and his family went into hiding when deportations from Vilna began, but SS officials or their auxiliaries discovered them two weeks later. In early October 1943, Yitskhok Rudashevski, together with all those concealed with him, were transported to Ponary, where they were shot to death.⁶

3. This refers to Niemiecka (German) Street.

4. See Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1982).

5. For a discussion of Yitskhok Rudashevski's interest in literary and cultural events in the Vilna ghetto, see Document 8-4.

6. See Isaac (Yitskhok) Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto, June 1941–April 1943* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1973); Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 190ff.

DOCUMENT 4-1. Diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski, Vilna ghetto, entry for September 6, 1941, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 199–201.

A beautiful sunny day has risen. The streets are closed off by Lithuanians. The streets are turbulent. Jewish workers are permitted to enter. A ghetto is being created for Vilna Jews.

People are packing in the house. The women go back and forth. They wring their hands when they see the house looking as if after a pogrom. I go around with bleary eyes among the bundles, see how we are being uprooted overnight from our home. Soon we have our first view of the move to the ghetto, a picture of the Middle Ages—a gray black mass of people goes harnessed to large bundles. We understand that soon our turn will come. I look at the house in disarray, at the bundles, at the perplexed, desperate people. I see things scattered that were dear to me, that I was accustomed to use.

We carry the bundles to the courtyard. On our street a new mass of Jews streams continually to the ghetto. The small number of Jews of our courtyard begins to drag the bundles to the gate. Gentiles are standing and taking part in our sorrow. Some Jews hire gentile boys to help carry the bundles. A bundle was suddenly stolen from a neighbor. The woman stands in despair among her bundles and does not know how to cope with them, weeps and wrings her hands. Suddenly everything around me begins to weep. Everything weeps. [. . .]

The street streamed with Jews carrying bundles. The first great tragedy. People are harnessed to bundles, which they drag across the pavement. People fall, bundles scatter. [. . .] I walk burdened and irritated. The Lithuanians drive us on, do not let us rest. I think of nothing; not what I am losing, not what I have just lost, not what is in store for me. I do not see the streets before me, the people passing by. I only feel that I am terribly weary, I feel that an insult, a hurt is burning inside me. Here is the ghetto gate. I feel that I have been robbed, my freedom is being robbed from me, my home, and the familiar Vilna streets I love so much. I have been cut off from all that is dear and precious to me.

People crowd at the gate. Finally I am on the other side of the gate. The stream of people flings me into a gate blocked with bundles. I throw down the bundles that cut my shoulders. I find my parents and here we are in the ghetto house. It is dusk, rather dark and rainy. The little streets, Rudnitsker, Shayler, Yatkever, Shpitalne, and Disner, which constitute the [first] ghetto, look like anthills. It swarms with people. The newcomers

begin to settle down, each in his tiny bit of space, on his bundles. Additional Jews keep streaming in constantly. We settle down in our place. Besides the four of us, there are eleven persons in the room. The room is a dirty and stuffy one. It is crowded. The first ghetto night. We lie three together on two doors. I do not sleep. In my ears resound the lamentation of this day. I hear the restless breathing of the people with whom I have been suddenly thrown together, people who just like me have suddenly been uprooted from their homes.

The first ghetto day begins. I run right out into the street. The little streets are still full of a restless mass of people. It is hard to push your way through. I feel as if I were in a box. There is no air to breathe. Wherever you go, you encounter a gate that hems you in. [...]

I decide to hunt up my friends in the courtyard. I have an idea that all of us will be there. I soon find Benkye Nayer, Gabik, and several others. The first day is spent in settling down, hunting up one another. The second evening in the ghetto, people feel a little more at home, calmer. My chums are figuring out how many weeks we shall be sitting here.

While teenagers like Yitskhok Rudashevski lamented the loss of freedom and autonomy that incarceration in the ghetto imposed, very small children, such as Seweryn Dobrecki, found resettlement away from familiar surroundings and cherished possessions confusing and frightening. Born January 26, 1936, in Łódź to the prosperous industrialist Zygmunt Dobrecki and his wife, Róża, young Seweryn was three years old when German troops invaded Poland in September 1939. One of his earliest memories of the war was the loss of his collection of toys when German troops appropriated the Dobreckis' apartment upon their arrival in Łódź. The family attempted to flee with other refugees to unoccupied Warsaw but was turned back by a German advance on the capital. Despite Poland's defeat, Seweryn viewed the ensuing weeks as halcyon days because he had returned to his grandmother's familiar apartment and could play with his toys as if there were no "such thing as Germans."

In November 1939, following the annexation of the Wartheland, the western part of German-occupied Poland, to the Reich, German authorities demanded the evacuation of at least thirty thousand Jews from Łódź, either through voluntary resettlement or forced expulsions.⁷ The Dobreckis presumably traveled to Warsaw

7. This order preceded the establishment of the Łódź ghetto in February 1940 and corresponded with a massive expulsion of Jews and Poles from the Wartheland. See Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lourie et al. (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1984), xxxiv–xxxvi.

in early 1940 and were interned in the Warsaw ghetto. Four-year-old Seweryn found the family's relocation disconcerting. Yet, he discovered to his surprise that he lacked neither companions nor amusements in his new environment—although the games he and his ghetto playmates engaged in differed appreciably from the diversions the youngster had pursued in his nursery in Łódź.⁸

DOCUMENT 4-2. Interview of Seweryn Dobrecki by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, c. 1946, USHMM, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/3611/4-5 (translated from the Polish).

We had scarcely left Łódź when the Germans broke through the Polish front and we had to turn back to Łódź. The whole way was paved with human corpses; I turned my head away and didn't want to look. After three days and nights we returned to Łódź, looked for Mama, and went back to grandmother's apartment. As soon as I was back home, I immediately collected all of my belongings and my toys, fetched a playmate from downstairs, and began to play. I was enormously happy that I was back at home and that I had found all my toys; my playmate from the apartment building came to me, I played and forgot that there was such a thing as Germans.

This domestic tranquility lasted only two months. One day I went with Mama to visit my friend. On the way we saw a large white sign; I asked Mama to read it to me. She didn't want to do it, but I begged and my mother let herself be persuaded and read to me that a resettlement was coming: that all Jews from Łódź had to move to Warsaw. I was sad and I was afraid that I would have to see again the human misery that I had witnessed when we sat in our buggy,⁹ and I burst into tears. I was very sad; I wouldn't even speak to my playmate anymore. I asked Mama to take me back home.

After several days we had to move away. I took my [toy] pony with me, hid it under my coat, and played the whole way with my pony and did not even look at the Germans. So it was the whole way to Warsaw.

In Warsaw we lived in the Jewish quarter [i.e., the Warsaw ghetto]. Mama and Papa went to work, and I stayed at home and played alone; I longed for Łódź and for my old great grandmother, who was 101 years old and who had remained behind in Łódź. I begged Mama to put me in a school where there were a lot of children. I was very happy when Mama

8. For a detailed discussion of children at play during the Holocaust, see chapter 8.

9. That is, on their drive back to Łódź, described at the outset of this document.

agreed to this and brought me to a kindergarten in Chmielna Street. I was very happy; I let my toys lie and played war with the [other] children. (We made rifles and revolvers for ourselves out of sticks and string.) One camp had its headquarters behind a desk, the other behind [a number of] chairs (Germans [against] Jews and Poles). I did not want to play the Germans because I hated them, but the other boys wanted me to be the commander. Every dead person had to lie on the ground and remain lying there until the game was over. Twice the Germans won, and once the Poles and the Jews. Later the two opposing sides asked the other's pardon, each shook the other's hand,¹⁰ and harmony reigned, but the teacher did not let us play that for a long time as we wanted, because we had to eat, wash our hands, converse with each other, and go home.

DOCUMENT 4-3. Two children beg on the streets of the Warsaw ghetto, September 1941, USHMMPA WS# 32327, courtesy of Günther Schwarberg.



10. That is, each boy.

“THE GARDEN OF EDEN”: EDUCATION IN THE ŁÓDŹ GHETTO

When German forces occupied the city of Łódź in early September 1939, among the initial measures taken by occupation officials was the dissolution of all Jewish community organizations. In their place, they appointed a *Judenrat*, which in the newly created ghetto of Litzmannstadt (Łódź),¹¹ established in February 1940, came to be known as the *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders). At its head German authorities placed Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, a former director of the Helenowek Jewish Orphanage in Łódź and a member of the banned Jewish community board. Directly accountable to the German ghetto administration under **Hans Biebow**, Rumkowski wielded extraordinary authority over the internal management of the ghetto, including the appointment of officials, the enforcement of public order, and the administration of goods and services. Rumkowski displayed enormous organizational skill in overseeing the ghettos' workshops and social agencies, but he governed in an autocratic fashion, and contemporaries, like scholars today, viewed him as a controversial and divisive figure.

It remains indisputable, however, that under Rumkowski's leadership, the Łódź ghetto fostered an impressive array of social services. Subordinated under Biebow's jurisdiction, the *Judenrat* controlled the distribution of food, the appropriation of housing, and the management of a functioning postal system, which tied the ghetto to the outside world. Despite a shortage of medical equipment and supplies, the council founded twelve hospitals and clinics and five pharmacies that served ghetto inhabitants until the summer of 1942. Perhaps because of his extensive career as the director of an orphanage, Rumkowski in particular showed a consuming interest in the education and welfare of the ghetto's children. Under his administration, the Jewish Council established some forty-three elementary schools, two high schools, and one vocational-training facility, serving some 63 percent of the ghetto's school-age youngsters. Marysin, the ghetto's “green lung” located in its northeastern corner, was the site of the so-called *Kinderkolonie* (children's colony), which housed sixteen hundred orphans and children of parents with exceptionally limited means. This oasis in the ghetto hosted a library, a cultural center, and a convalescent

11. When the Germans occupied Łódź, they renamed the municipality Litzmannstadt, for long-time Nazi Party supporter Karl Litzmann, the German general who had taken the city during World War I.

home for children. Here, away from the urban misery and despair, children could play in Marysin's open fields, surrounded by trees and wildflowers.¹²

On the eve of the Jewish New Year in September 1941, the students and teachers of the Łódź ghetto presented chairman Rumkowski with an album of Rosh Hashanah greetings. Bound in wood and leather, the album contained the signatures of some fourteen thousand pupils and 715 educators who studied or taught in the ghetto's elementary, secondary, or vocational schools. Students from each school created their own distinctive New Year's greeting, like the one below from the pupils of Marysin, to honor the man who had so tirelessly worked to create an autonomous and functioning educational system in the Łódź ghetto.

12. See Andrea Löw, *Juden in Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), esp. 189–91.

DOCUMENT 4-4. Album page of a New Year's greeting from the children of School No. 25, to Ghetto Elder Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, Łódź ghetto, September 1941, USHMMPA WS# 22473, courtesy of YIVO Institute (translated from the Hebrew).



May You Be Written Down and Sealed,¹³ School 25, Marysin

To you, our dear father, the good angel of children, we the children of School No. 25 wish you a year of happiness and blessing. Our hearts are filled with thanks for the food for the body and the soul which you satisfy us with day by day. And for the wonderful vision, a Garden of Eden, which you grant us.

Ghetto chronicler Josef Zelkowicz was less enthusiastic about the self-sufficiency of the Łódź ghetto as expressed through its social and welfare institutions.

13. This traditional Rosh Hashanah greeting suggests that the names of the righteous are inscribed in the Book of Life and therefore “sealed” to live.

A scholar of ethnography and history and a contributor to efforts to record the lives and fates of ghetto inhabitants, Zelkowicz often laced detailed descriptions of ghetto life with biting satire and an underlying criticism of ghetto leaders and their policies.¹⁴ In his poignant 1941 essay “The Breadwinner,” he pondered the efficacy of an “autonomous” Łódź ghetto whose inhabitants were reduced to such miserable and degrading circumstances. Concerned with the ubiquitous manifestations of child labor, Zelkowicz seized upon the figure of the young “coal miners,” youngsters who rummaged abandoned buildings and fields in the ghetto for materials that might be sold for heating fuel on the black market. These soot-covered children were a common site in Łódź and grew in number as more and more young people found in “mining” an outlet to provide an income for their families. In a ghetto that prided itself on its educational system, Zelkowicz made it plain that not every child was going to school.

DOCUMENT 4-5. Diary essay of Josef Zelkowicz, “The Breadwinner (The Seventh Apartment),” 1941, in Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 63–69.

Do you remember, Ryva Bramson,¹⁵ attending a public rally in the ghetto where a “senior” ghetto official appeared and described in his speech how the “ghetto kingdom” was organized? Surely you also remember how enthusiastic he was when he spoke about “our” police, “our” postal service, “our” factories, and—the main thing, “our” currency. [. . .]¹⁶

Today you know: if the ghetto is a “kingdom” with “our” police, “our” offices, and “our” high-ranking officials, some higher and others highest, if the ghetto is a “kingdom” whose borders are patrolled

14. See Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002).

15. In September 1940, German authorities granted a loan of 3 million Reichsmark for ghetto welfare services. Many ghetto inhabitants applied for relief based on the loan, including dozens who falsified their claims. In order to prevent corruption, Chaim Rumkowski ordered inspectors to interview potential applicants for relief in their homes. Josef Zelkowicz numbered among these inspectors, as did his colleague Ryva Bramson. Zelkowicz wrote a number of vignettes in 1940 and 1941 based on his visits to ghetto residents in this capacity in which Bramson served as a foil for his observations.

16. The Łódź ghetto maintained its own currency, which residents dubbed the “chaimke” or “rumki,” after Chairman Chaim Rumkowski.

and guarded against any trespasser, then the ghetto also has the natural resources that back "our currency" . . .

In the bowels of the ghetto . . . yellow sand is buried, with which housewives cover the splendid abjection of [their] floors. In the bowels of the ghetto is . . . clay, with which they plug the cracks in the walls and ceilings of the apartments and crypts that they inhabit, and . . . in the bowels of the ghetto, one even finds . . . coal!

The "coal mines" in the ghetto are fly-infested heaps of trash. From dawn to dusk the shafts are filled to overflowing with people large and small, elderly and children—burrowing in the muddy soil, plumbing its innards, rummaging, sifting, sorting. . . .

The "coal" that they mine is offered later on to the homes of citizens and sold for forty pfennigs, fifty pfennigs, or even more per kilogram, depending on its quality and size, and, mainly, demand.

The "coal" is excavated in vacant lots and places where buildings, fences or other structures once stood. It is really just the sooty residue of firewood, bones, stones, or rags. This "coal" doesn't burn at all, but when you lay it on the stove over firewood, it makes the wood burn less quickly: it burns slowly along with the coal. After you stand for a few hours, blowing uninterruptedly into the opening of the stove to keep the fire from dying, the pot with the food inside comes to life. [. . .]

A boy or girl sets out from home in the morning, clutching a carefully weighed, rationed slice of bread—the meal—in one hand and schoolbooks in the other hand. Instead of heading for school, the children head for the "coal mines." They're not miners yet, but they keep their eyes open, and slowly but steadily they learn the technique. [. . .] From now on, Moshe, Chaim, or Mendel are recognized "coal miners" who go about this work with their mothers' and fathers' permission.

Such a "miner," officially recognized, finds an old baking pan or some other old container, pokes holes in it with a nail to use as a sieve, and becomes a contractor himself. As this Chaim, Moshe, or Mendel sinks into the mud up to his neck on a summer day and delivers the results of his labor at dusk, he gradually brings into the business his younger or older brother; sometimes the father too—who in any case has nothing more lucrative to do—or even his mother, who would rather rummage through the trash or carry a load on her stooped back than run a household on nothing.

When this Moshe, Chaim, or Mendel becomes an official "coal miner," his upbringing in Jewish values comes to an end. [. . .] Here in

the “coal mine” sit girls who own nothing but the dresses they wear and cannot bear to wear them as they sit in the mud. So they take off their dresses and lay them on the heap. Their unclad bodies are immediately clad with mud and dust. This dusty nakedness, however, is even more alluring. Here, in the “coal mine,” boys aged eleven and twelve and girls aged thirteen and fourteen discover mommy’s and daddy’s secrets. Here, in the coal mine, everyone is equal and everyone sees to nature’s demands under each other’s noses. Why waste time? [. . .]

Where’s Lipa? Twelve-year-old Lipa, does he go to school? [. . .]

No, he doesn’t go to school.

Lipa, why don’t you go to school?

Because I don’t have shoes.

And in the summer, when you could have gone barefoot? Why not?

I didn’t go then either! What for? What did they give me in school that I should run to them barefoot?

Reading, writing, and other things: don’t you think they’re important?

If I knew how to read and write, wouldn’t I still be hungry . . . ?

And when you stayed home from school, were you well fed?

Better than in school. I dug coal!

How much did you make from digging coal?

Well, sometimes, a mark, or a mark and a few pfennigs. You gotta be lucky [. . .].

Lipa, the twelve-year-old “coal miner.”

DOCUMENT 4-6. Children digging for “coal” in the Łódź ghetto, 1941, USHMMPA WS# 61900, courtesy of the YIVO Institute.



“GIVE ME YOUR CHILDREN”: THE “CHILDREN’S ACTIONS”

The Łódź, or Litzmannstadt, ghetto was the longest-lasting entity of its kind in German-occupied Poland. The process of ghettoizing the Jewish communities of Łódź and its surrounding territories began on September 8, 1939, shortly after the German conquest of the city.¹⁷ On April 30, 1940, German civilian authorities under Hans Biebow ordered the enclosure of the ghetto, effectively incarcerating some 164,000 individuals within its walls. Its population experienced a number of harrowing roundups, or **razzias**, in which thousands of Jews and **Roma** were deported to their deaths at the **Chełmno** extermination camp. Yet, even as ghettos in occupied Poland were liquidated one by one—including the largest, the Warsaw ghetto in May 1943—the Łódź ghetto endured

17. See Jochen Boehler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg: Die Wehrmacht in Polen, 1939* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006).

as a working entity, until its last inhabitants were deported to the **Auschwitz** concentration camp in August 1944.¹⁸

The longevity of the Łódź ghetto must be attributed at least in part to the policies of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, chairman of its *Judenrat*. A controversial figure who wielded almost dictatorial power over his fellow Jews, Rumkowski believed from the start that the ghetto's best chance for survival lay in cooperating fully with the German officials. As elder of the Jews, he reported directly to the Nazi administration under Hans Biebow. In return, Biebow allowed Rumkowski almost unlimited authority in shaping the Łódź ghetto into a viable working community. Given the enormous obstacles encountered by Jewish communities in German-occupied Poland, "Rumkowski's ghetto" boasted an impressive array of welfare institutions and social services. Under the chairman's auspices, Łódź flourished in its early stages, with workshops, schools, hospitals, a postal system, and a broad range of self-help organizations. Nevertheless, many Jews saw in Rumkowski not a benevolent administrator of the public trust but a collaborator and an "incomparable tyrant"¹⁹ who used German authority to crush all existing opposition and sacrificed the welfare of his fellow Jews in order to maintain his personal power.²⁰

From the beginning, Rumkowski felt that providing a labor force in ghetto industries and workshops would make the Łódź ghetto indispensable to German authorities. Under the motto "Labor is our only way," Rumkowski argued that only ghetto industry could stave off liquidation of the ghetto population by the

18. For a detailed discussion of the Łódź ghetto, see Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006); Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lourie et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); Alan Adelson and Robert Lapides, eds., *Łódź Ghetto: Inside a Community under Siege* (New York: Viking, 1989); Peter Klein, *Die "Gettoverwaltung Litzmannstadt," 1940–1944: Eine Dienststelle im Spannungsfeld von Kommunalbürokratie und staatlicher Verfolgungspolitik* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009); Löw, *Juden in Getto Litzmannstadt*.

19. This phrase comes from Łódź ghetto survivor Yehuda Leib Gerst in his *From the Straits* (Jerusalem: Safra Fund, 1949), 26.

20. For a discussion of the debate surrounding Rumkowski's role as chairman of the Łódź ghetto, see Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004); Richard Rubenstein, "Gray into Black: The Case of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski," in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 299–310.

German civilian administration.²¹ In early December 1941, as the Chełmno extermination camp began gassing operations, the first deportations to that killing center took place. By May of 1942, some fifty thousand Jews and five thousand Roma²² from Łódź had been deported to their deaths there. In time, word reached the ghetto's *Judenrat* concerning the true significance of this Nazi "resettlement" policy. In similar circumstances, the chairman of Warsaw's *Judenrat*, Adam Czerniakow, took his own life rather than participate in the preparation of deportation lists.²³ In stark contrast, Rumkowski cooperated, stressing even more vehemently the necessity for compliance with Nazi policies and emphasizing the imperative of maintaining a viable forced labor workforce to ensure the ghetto's long-term survival.

Following these initial roundups, the ghetto experienced a brief period of calm. In the late summer of 1942, however, German authorities approached Rumkowski with demands for an additional twenty thousand deportees from Łódź. Following unsuccessful efforts on the part of the *Judenrat* to reverse these orders, Rumkowski seized upon a desperate and terrible solution; he would fill the required quota with the ghetto's least productive members: the ailing, the aged, and children under ten. On September 4, 1942, Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, a man who had spent much of his career advancing the welfare of youngsters, addressed the ghetto's parents in a now infamous speech. "Give me your children!" he pleaded, in order to avert a communitywide deportation.

Rumkowski's appeal preceded the *Gehsperre* (curfew) in Łódź. In the days between September 5 and 12, German forces entered the ghetto and proceeded block by block, brutally seizing those unfit for labor from their homes and from the community's streets. The *Gehsperre* began with the liquidation of the ghetto hospitals, where SS officials apprehended ailing patients in their beds. In the days that followed, police units, with great violence, cleared schoolrooms and orphanages, many of them in Marysin, once a haven for Łódź's youngsters. Of the approximately 15,500 individuals rounded up for deportation, the vast majority were young children and adults over the age of sixty-five. Those attempting to evade arrest were summarily shot. Heartrending scenes

21. See Hanno Loewy et al., eds., "*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*": Das Getto in Łódź, 1940–1944 (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1990).

22. From September 5 to 9, 1941, some five thousand Roma were deported to Łódź and concentrated in their own area of the ghetto, known as the *Zigeunerlager* (Gypsy camp). These individuals were among the first to be included in the initial deportation actions to Chełmno.

23. See Adam Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*, ed. Raul Hilberg et al. (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 1979.)

took place along the length of wire fence at the ghetto's central prison, where family members bid farewell to their loved ones awaiting deportation to their deaths at Chełmno.

Following the bloody week of the *Gehsperre*, no further deportations from Łódź to the extermination camps occurred for the next year and a half. For Rumkowski, the cessation of roundups within the ghetto vindicated his policy of compliance with German demands. However, in the late spring of 1944, Nazi authorities decided to liquidate this last large ghetto existing in German-occupied Poland. From June 23 to July 15, 1944, seven thousand Jews from the Łódź ghetto were deported to Chełmno, which Nazi authorities had reactivated as a killing center in order to support the action. Then, in August, transports carrying the ghetto's remaining seventy-four thousand inhabitants turned toward Auschwitz. Among these deportees was Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, whose moral ambiguity as chairman of the Łódź ghetto continues to engage scholars in the debate concerning collaboration. Rumkowski died, together with his family, in **Auschwitz II–Birkenau** on August 28, 1944.

DOCUMENT 4-7. Speech of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, Łódź ghetto, September 4, 1942, in Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006), 272–75.

A severe blow has befallen the ghetto. They are asking from it the best that it possesses—children and old people. I have not had the privilege to have a child of my own, and therefore I devoted the best of my years to children. I lived and breathed together with the children. I never imagined that my own hands would have to deliver the sacrifice to the altar. In my old age, I must stretch out my hands and beg: Brothers and sisters, give them to me! Fathers and mothers, give me your children! (Tremendous and dreadful weeping among the assembled crowd.)

I had the premonition that something was descending upon us. I anticipated “something” and I stood constantly on alert like a guard, in order to avoid that “something.” But I could not do it, because I did not know what was menacing us. I did not know what is awaiting us.

That the sick were taken away from the hospitals, this was for me totally unanticipated. You have the best sign: I had my own kin and near ones there and I could not do anything for them. I thought that it would end with this, that after that we would be left in peace. This is the peace for which I yearn so strongly, for which I have always worked and striven, but it

turned out that something different was predestined for us. The luck of Jews is of course thus: always to suffer more and worse, particularly in wartime.

Yesterday during the day, I was given a command to send twenty-odd thousand Jews out from the ghetto; if not—"We will do it." And the question arose, "Should we take it over and do it ourselves, or leave it for others to carry out?" But being dominated not by the thought, "How many will be lost," but by the thought, "How many can be saved," we, i.e., I and my closest co-workers, came to the conclusion that as difficult as this will be for us, we must take into our own hands the carrying out of the decree. I have to carry out this difficult and bloody operation. I must cut off limbs in order to save the body! I must take children because, if not, others could also, God forbid, be taken . . . (Frightful wailing).

I have not come today to console you. Nor have I come today to calm you, but to uncover all your sorrow and pain. I have come like a robber to take away from you the best from under your hearts! I tried with all my abilities to get the decree revoked. After trying to get it revoked was impossible, I attempted to moderate it. Just yesterday, I arranged a registration of all nine-year-old children. I wanted to rescue at least that single year, from nine to ten years old. But they did not want to grant this to me. One thing I succeeded [in]—to save the children from ten years and up. Let this be our comfort in our great sorrow. [. . .]

I understand you, mothers. I see your tears quite well. I also feel your hearts, fathers, that tomorrow, immediately after your child will have been taken away from you, you will have to go to work, while just yesterday you still played with your dear kids. I know all of this and I feel it. Since four o'clock yesterday, since I found out about the decree, I am entirely broken down. I am living with your grief and your pain torments me and I don't know how and with what strength I will be able to survive it. I must disclose to you a secret: twenty-four thousand victims were demanded. Through eight days of three thousand people each day, but I succeeded in pushing the number down to twenty thousand, even less than twenty thousand, but on condition that there will be children up to ten years old. Children from ten years and up are secure. Since the children together with the elderly give only a number of approximately thirteen thousand souls, it will be necessary to fill the gap with sick people too.

It is difficult for me to speak. I don't have any strength, I only want to say to you my request: Help me carry out the action! I am trembling. I fear that others will, God forbid, take over the implementation into their hands. . . .

A broken Jew is standing before you. Don't envy me. It is the most difficult decree that I have ever had to carry out. I extend to you my broken, trembling arms and I beg: give the victims into my hands, in order through them to avoid additional victims, in order to protect a congregation of a hundred thousand Jews. They promised me so: if we ourselves will deliver our victims, there will be calm. . . . (Yells are heard: "We'll all go"; "Mr. Chairman, not only-children should be taken—individual children should be taken away from those who have several!" . . .) These are empty phrases! I don't have any strength to conduct discussions with you! If someone will come from the authorities, no one [would] yell. . . .

I understand what it means to tear off a limb from the body. Yesterday, I pleaded on my knees, but it was no use. From small towns that possessed seven thousand to eight thousand Jews, barely a thousand have arrived here. What then is better? What are you asking for? To leave eighty thousand to ninety thousand Jews or, God forbid, to annihilate everybody? . . . Judge as you wish; my obligation is to take care of the remnant of Jews. I am not talking to hotheads—I am speaking to your reason and conscience. I have done everything and will also continue to do everything to prevent weapons being brought into the streets and that blood be shed. . . . The decree did not permit us to get it revoked; it only allowed itself to be reduced.

One needs the heart of a bandit in order to ask for what I am asking of you. But put yourself in my position and think logically and you yourself will come to the conclusion that you cannot act differently, because the number of the portion that can be saved is much larger than the part that must be surrendered.

DOCUMENT 4-8. Children selected for deportation bid farewell to their families through the wire fence of the central prison during the *Gehsperre* action in the Łódź ghetto, September 1942, USHMMPA WS# 30057, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghetaot.



A large percentage of the 15,500 persons deported to Chełmno from the Łódź ghetto in September 1942 were young inhabitants under the age of ten. Because young children were not usually utilized for forced labor, Nazi authorities viewed them as “useless eaters” and targeted them for early deportation measures. So-called children’s actions like the one associated with the *Gehsperre* occurred in many of the major ghettos in German-occupied eastern Europe. In two shooting operations known collectively as the Dünamünde Action, for example, Latvian auxiliaries attached to the *Einsatzgruppen* removed thirty-eight hundred Jews from the Riga ghetto and massacred them in the nearby Bikernieki Forest on March 15 and 26, 1942.²⁴ Young children, the ailing, and the aged represented a majority of these victims. In Vilna and Kovno, large-scale actions against inhabitants and their family members who did not possess work certificates (*Scheine*) radically reduced the number of young persons in each ghetto. In addition a children’s action directed against Kovno’s still significant

24. For a discussion of deportations from the Riga ghetto, see Andrej Angrick and Peter Klein, *Final Solution in Riga: Exploitation and Annihilation*, trans. Ray Brandon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

number of young residents took place on March 27 and 28, 1944.²⁵ On those days, German forces and their auxiliaries sent at least thirteen hundred children to the Auschwitz concentration camp and to the nearby massacre site at the infamous **Fort IX**, where these victims were shot to death. In the Warsaw ghetto, the largest such community in German-occupied eastern Europe, the first large-scale deportation efforts targeted the most defenseless members of that population. Beginning on July 22, 1942, SS troops rounded up thousands of the ghetto's young children and sent them to their deaths at the **Treblinka** extermination camp some eighty kilometers (fifty miles) northwest of Warsaw.²⁶ Many of these first young deportees were homeless and abandoned children or youngsters living with their families in the so-called death houses, where the very poorest strata of Warsaw's Jewish community found shelter. Approximately one week later, the director of the ghetto's **CENTOS** relief agency, Adolf Avraham Berman,²⁷ received word that all orphanage officials under his administration were to prepare their charges to join in the next wave of deportations. The CENTOS organization represented an arm of the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** founded specifically to address the needs of Jewish orphans and children living in impoverished circumstances. Within the context of the Warsaw ghetto, CENTOS operatives, with the aid and good will of *Judenrat* officials, developed a broad network of institutions that provided relief to the ghetto's poorest youngsters. Under its auspices, CENTOS founded soup kitchens, homes, and dormitories for the many hundreds of destitute children who begged, and starved, in the ghetto's city streets. CENTOS also supported educational programs and youth clubs for young people.²⁸

25. See Dennis Klein et al., *A Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1997).

26. For a discussion of the Treblinka killing center, see Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1979); Richard Glazar: *Trap with a Green Fence*, trans. Roslyn Theobald (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995); and Yizhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

27. Adolf Avraham Berman (1906–1978) was a Zionist activist and politician active in the Warsaw ghetto underground. A psychologist by training, Berman served as the director of CENTOS until September 1942. In the midst of the mass deportations of Jews from the ghetto, Berman and his wife succeeded in fleeing to Warsaw's "Aryan side." Passing as a gentile, he survived the war, functioning as a general secretary with the Żegota, the Polish Council to Aid Jews. In 1950, he emigrated to Israel, where he served briefly as a member of the Knesset. In 1961, Berman testified at the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem.

28. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to a Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

After receiving notification that SS officials would begin clearing the ghetto's orphanages, Berman attempted to mobilize ghetto authorities in defense of the children, in vain. Each day Berman witnessed SS troops leading columns of young orphans under his charge to the *Umschlagplatz*, the loading area where deportees boarded freight trains bound for Treblinka.

One of the orphanages under Berman's jurisdiction stood under the management of the famous **Janusz Korczak**, pen name of eminent pediatrician, pedagogue, and children's author Henryk Goldszmit. Korczak was born in Warsaw to assimilated Jewish parents on July 22, 1878. After studying medicine at the University of Warsaw, he set up a pediatric practice at the Berson-Baumann Children's Hospital in the Polish capital in 1904. While working for the Polish Orphan's Society in 1909, he met Stefania Wilczyńska (1886–1942), a gifted pedagogue who would become his closest associate. In 1911, Korczak came to direct his own orphanage, Dom Seriot, which incorporated his innovative approaches to child care. By the 1930s, Korczak was a celebrity in his native Poland. Over the course of his career, he had founded Poland's first national children's newspaper, written influential books on parenting and child psychology, and worked within the juvenile court system to defend the rights of children and adolescents. His most famous children's book, *King Matt the First*, had become a beloved classic in many languages, and Korczak himself hosted a syndicated radio program in which he dispensed advice on child rearing and family matters.²⁹

As director of a Jewish and a Catholic orphanage, Korczak witnessed the occupation of Warsaw by German forces. In 1940 when German authorities established the Warsaw ghetto, Korczak moved with his young Jewish charges inside the ghetto's walls. His many Gentile friends offered to hide him on the "Aryan side," but Korczak refused. "You do not leave a sick child in the night," he said, "and you do not leave children at a time like this."³⁰ Korczak's orphanage within the ghetto remained a model of progressive reform. Even in the midst of the terrible deprivations imposed by ghetto life, Korczak provided a safe haven for hundreds of orphans, protecting them from disease and starvation. In August 1942, however, he could no longer shield his charges from the brutal effects of Nazi policy. On August 5, 1942, SS officials ordered

29. For further discussion of the life and works of Janusz Korczak, see Betty Jean Lifton, *The King of Children: A Biography of Janusz Korczak* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988); Janusz Korczak, *Ghetto Diary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Janusz Korczak, *King Matt the First*, trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986).

30. Lifton, *The King of Children*, 3.

the 192 children living at the orphanage to appear with their caregivers for deportation.³¹ Aides cautioned Janusz Korczak that, as director of the facility, he did not have to join the children, but he and his chief associate, Stefania Wilczyńska, prepared the young children as best they could, ensuring that each had a favorite stuffed animal, book, or toy, and emerged from the building with the youngsters. Many eyewitnesses, including Warsaw CENTOS director Adolf Berman, who recalled the event in testimony at the **Eichmann Trial** in 1961, observed a dignified Korczak, leading with Wilczyńska the solemn procession of children through the ghetto streets to the roundup point, some two miles away. When the group reached the *Umschlagplatz*, Jewish, and by some accounts also German, policemen on the scene attempted to intervene to save the celebrated educator. Korczak refused to abandon the children and, with Wilczyńska, boarded the train with his charges. The group was gassed upon arrival at Treblinka.

DOCUMENT 4-9. Testimony of Adolf Avraham Berman, May 3, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:425–26.

Presiding Judge: What is your full name?

Witness: Adolf Avraham Berman. [. . .]

Q: After the outbreak of the Second World War, you were one of the directors of "CENTOS" in Warsaw?

A: Yes. [. . .]

Q: Tell us what the position was of children in the Warsaw ghetto in those years in which you served as director of the institution?

A: The tragedy of the Jewish children began on 8 September 1939, on the day Hitler's forces entered Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Then the position was such that the authorities conducted a policy of systematic and planned starvation, they conducted a policy which led to epidemics, first of all to typhus and also to the spread of tuberculosis.

Q: Is it true that the incidence of death amongst the Jewish children reached thousands per month?

31. Eyewitness sources differ as to whether the date of this particular deportation action was August 5 or 6; likewise, some contemporary records suggest that 196, not 192, children were affected.

A: Yes. This process of pauperization, of continually increasing poverty of the masses, cast a multitude of children onto the streets. What did they turn into? To street children and little beggars. [. . .]

Q: How many of them needed the help and care of "CENTOS"?

A: Generally speaking, it may be said that within the Jewish population of the Warsaw ghetto, which at its peak period reached almost half a million Jews [. . .]—here were more than 100,000 children. Of these 100,000 children, at least seventy-five percent were in need of aid.

Q: To how many of these did you manage to extend help in the institutions of "CENTOS"?

A: As soon as we saw that a huge disaster was coming, we decided to mobilize ourselves for an extensive operation for the rescue of children, thanks to a great effort on the part of the organized Jewish community in the Warsaw ghetto, thanks to the unity in this matter of all those involved, from the left to the right, we managed to set up a large network of institutions for the aid of children. We had about one hundred institutions and we succeeded in giving help to 25,000 Jewish children.

Q: Amongst these institutions there was one headed by the well-known pedagogue Janusz Korczak—is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: You established tens of dormitories and kitchens for children and day shelters and kitchens for children and youths?

A: We set up thirty orphanages and dormitories also for the street children. In these dormitories and orphanages there were about 4,000 children. Amongst these institutions there was also the well-known orphanage headed by that genius educator and distinguished writer, children's writer, Janusz Korczak, whose name used to be Dr. Henryk Goldszmit, whose books and whose methods were both exceedingly famous in Poland. Apart from this, we established about twenty day shelters, especially for the small children. In addition to this, we set up about twenty kitchens for children. We also established about thirty children's and youth clubs for the children of the refugee houses. We wanted to take advantage of every corner of vegetation for the children who had never known what greenery was, what a forest was, what a flower was.

Q: You maintained a widespread education network in the underground, since education was forbidden?

A: Yes.

Presiding Judge: Was all education forbidden?

Witness Berman: Vocational education was possible to some extent, but general education was banned. Under cover of the children's kitchens and other institutions, we maintained a large network of secret underground schools, of all trends—from the secular to the religious, from the left to the right, in complete unity.³²

Attorney General: You observed children's festivals under the slogan "Give the child a little joy." Is that correct?

Witness Berman: Yes. I would like to say a few words about this. We saw what the situation was, and we wanted to make the melancholy and terrible life of tens of thousands of children easier. We then decided to organize a Month of the Jewish Child in the ghetto and also a Jewish children's festival in the ghetto. The last festival before the awful "action" which commenced on 22 July 1942, we had already celebrated on 5 May. And on that day—I remember this well—in all our institutions, in all the orphanages, in all the dormitories, in all the kitchens, there were celebrations. There were performances of children, on that day the children were given slightly more food, some sweets. And our slogan was "Give our children a little joy."

Q: But all this was in vain, Dr. Berman. You kept the children busy, [but they were to] be the victims of the "actions," isn't that so? And the children were the first victims of the "actions," is that correct?

A: Correct. I would like to say that almost from the outset the tragic race began between the efforts of the Jewish community in the Warsaw ghetto and the policy of mass impoverishment and general decline—the race between social aid and starvation. Our watchword was naturally to save our children from hunger and from death. We did not save them. We did not succeed in saving them.

Q: Do you recall attacks especially directed against children, on the part of German units?

A: Yes.

Q: Which units?

A: First of all, SS units. This I would like to describe somewhat in detail. As is known, the first large "action" of the extermination of Jews [in the ghetto] began on 22 July 1942. On that day, the first victims of the "action" were the Jewish children and I shall never forget the shocking, the frightful scenes, when SS men together with their collaborators cruelly fell

32. For a discussion of clandestine learning in the ghettos of German-occupied Europe, see chapter 8.

upon the children, on the street children, and dragged them onto carts. And I remember how these children defended themselves. To this day I can hear the crying of the children—I hear the screams “Mama, Mama! *Rette, rette!*” [“Save us! Save us!”] They put up a struggle.

Q: Did they burst into your institutions?

A: On the same day also the expulsion from the refugee homes commenced and especially from the death houses, as they called them then, where there was the greatest mortality rate. And amongst them they deported many, many thousands of children to Treblinka. The inferno lasted thus for about a week.

Q: What happened to your institutions, those of “CENTOS?”

A: After one week the SS men and their collaborators began to attack our institutions as well, including the orphanages and the dormitories. We then informed all the institutions in the name of the “CENTOS” management—all the institutions in the ghetto and also Police Headquarters in the ghetto—that the orphans must be saved, the children must be saved. No entreaties on our part, no requests of ours, saved them, and during these days long columns of the children of our institutions, institution after institution, together with their tutors, with their teachers, began to march through the streets of Warsaw.

Q: Where were they marching to?

A: To the *Umschlagplatz*, to the death [cars], and from there to Treblinka.

Q: Do you remember Janusz Korczak marching at the head of the procession?

A: Yes, I remember that well. One of those institutions which they were leading off to the *Umschlagplatz* was this outstanding and exemplary institution, the orphanage of Janusz Korczak. It was a shocking procession.

Presiding Judge: You saw this with your own eyes?

Witness Berman: Yes. He walked at the head of the procession, and next to him there were two small children. Behind him was the chief woman tutor, Stefania Wilczyńska, together with little children. They marched together with the huge crowd of Jews who had been caught in this blockade, in this terrible siege in this quarter. When they reached the *Umschlagplatz*, there were certain policemen there who ran to free Janusz Korczak. He was very well known and beloved.

Attorney General: Polish policemen?

Witness Berman: Jewish. But then he said that he didn't want to be separated from the children whom he had taught. The sole worry of Janusz

Korczak then was that the children who were forced to [come out] . . . at the shouts I remember to this day: “*Alle herunter, alle herunter, schneller, heraus*” [“Everybody out, everybody out, faster, out!”]—this I shall never forget, the “*alle herunter*”; at that time Janusz Korczak’s concern was that the children did not have enough time to get dressed—they were barefooted. Stefania Wilczyńska told the small children that they were going on an outing, that at long last they would see the fields and the forests, and the flowers that they had never seen in the ghetto. And there was a smile, a faint smile on her lips. Of course, after he refused, after several hours, they made them enter the death wagons, and this was the last journey of this great educator.

DEATH AND SURVIVAL IN THE GHETTO

One of the cardinal features of ghetto life in German-occupied eastern Europe was hunger. The general policy of German administrators was to provide ghettoized communities with only a modicum of resources necessary to fulfill their basic needs. Warsaw ghetto inhabitants in 1941, for example, typically received a maximum allocation of 2.5 kilograms (5.5 pounds) of bread each month.³³ The minuscule allotments available through the ration card system meant that residents had to acquire additional food by other means: through legitimate channels, such as soup kitchens, schools, and welfare associations, or illegally, through the omnipresent black market. As the war progressed, ration allowances diminished consistently, with terrible consequences for the captive population. In most ghettos, moreover, the number of ration cards available to each individual was invariably tied to participation in the forced labor pool, so persons unable to work and their dependents soon succumbed to severe malnutrition. Children suffered particularly under these conditions, especially those youngsters who had been orphaned or abandoned by their parents. Hundreds of children begged or sold improvised wares in the streets of ghettos such as Warsaw and Łódź in order to survive or to help subsidize their family’s meager rations. Many died on those streets too, of starvation and neglect.

While malnutrition played an outward and visible role in undermining the ghetto community, it also represented a destabilizing and divisive element in the homes and kitchens of ghetto inhabitants. “The hunger grows stronger,” Łódź ghetto chronicler Oskar Rosenfeld reported in his diary in 1942. “One person becomes the enemy of the other. The son takes the [last] bite away from

33. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 417.

his father. Everyone has lost their feeling for how to live normally.”³⁴ In March 1942, an anonymous diarist captured an image of a family divided by hunger. We know little about the young writer, except that she lived in the Łódź ghetto with her parents and two elder siblings. She was called either Esther or Minia because a passage in her diary cites a letter addressed to herself and her sister using these names. As the only person in her household who did not work, the teenager³⁵ remained home alone for much of the day. In two entries in her journal, dated March 10 and 11, she records her daylong and often futile struggle to refrain from eating the entirety of her daily rations in one sitting—and those of her absent family as well. The teenager’s shame at devouring provisions meant for her entire household was compounded by the perceived restraint and self-sacrifice manifested by her parents. It is unknown whether this young diarist survived hunger and disease in Łódź or perished in the deportations that decimated the ghetto’s population. A fragment of her diary detailing the winter and spring months of 1942 was found in the ruins of the Łódź ghetto in July 1945.

DOCUMENT 4-10. Diary of an anonymous girl, Łódź ghetto, entries for March 10 and 11, 1942, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers’ Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 236–38.

Tuesday, March 10, 1942

My mom, brother, and sister leave for work at seven-thirty in the morning. My father leaves at 8:00. Lying in bed, I noticed that my sister had forgotten her bread. I got dressed very quickly and brought it to her. [. . .] I have no idea why I don’t live more harmoniously with my sister. We fight all the time and scream at each other. I must cause my parents a lot of worry. My sister doesn’t look well. She is like a stranger to me.

The hunger is getting worse. In the morning I want my father to leave as soon as possible. Then I jump up from my bed and consume all the bread my mom has left me for the entire day. My God, what has happened to me? I [don’t] know how to restrain myself. Then I starve all day. I wish I were different. God, take pity on me. During the day I drink tap water and vinegar left from the pickled beets. Eating only this I wait until seven o’clock. I have a stomachache frequently.

34. Diary of Oskar Rosenfeld, quoted in Loewy et al., *Unser einziger Weg*, 235.

35. The diarist had a sister aged seventeen in 1942 and a brother aged sixteen. As the youngest child, the girl in question must have been fifteen years old or younger.

Today they are distributing bread. I stood three hours in the line and got three loaves. When I came back, I just had to take a piece. In the evening I promised myself not to eat, even if my mom offered me some, because I can't have someone else's bread. [. . .]

Everybody is home, except my father. He came back at seven in the evening. We could hardly wait for him. He showed up with his two co-workers. They put two rutabagas on the table and divided each of them into three. It worked out at 70 decagrams (24.7 ounces) each.³⁶ When they left, my father took out [a few] pieces of rutabaga from his pocket. Two rutabagas had been swiped from the kitchen, but some other scraps were given to my father by the women working there. He knew that there was nothing to eat at home, so he didn't eat them on the spot, although he was very hungry. The soup has been thrown out by one of the apprentices. I can't write anymore, my eyes are filled with tears.

Wednesday March 11, 1942

[. . .] When I went out to the street, I heard that there was a food ration for those who were not getting any food in the kitchen. This ration could be eaten only on the sixteenth.³⁷ [. . .]

This ration is much worse than the previous one. Terrible hunger is awaiting us again. I got the vegetable ration right away. There is only vinegar and ice in the beets. There is no food, we are going to starve to death. All my teeth ache and I am very hungry. My left leg is frostbitten. I ate almost all the honey. What have I done? I'm so selfish. What are they going to put on their bread now, what will they say? Mom, I'm unworthy of you. You work so hard. Besides working in the workshop, she also moonlights by working for a woman who sells clothes in the street. My mom looks awful, like a shadow. She works very hard. When I wake up at twelve or one o'clock at night, I see her exhaustedly struggling to keep working at the sewing machine. And she gets up at six in the morning. I must have a heart of stone. I'm ruthless. I eat everything I can lay my hands on.

Today I had a fight with my father. I swore at him, even cursed him. It happened because yesterday I weighed twenty decagrams [7 ounces] of *zacierki*³⁸ and then sneaked a spoonful. When my father came back, he

36. A decagram is 1/1,000 of a kilogram, or 10 grams.

37. That is, on March 16.

38. This is a kind of noodle used in Polish cuisine, usually in soup.

immediately noticed that some *zacierki* were missing. My father started yelling at me and he was right. But since the chairman³⁹ gave out these *zacierki* to be cooked, why can't I have some? I became very upset and cursed my father. What have I done? I regret so much, but it can't be undone. My father is not going to forgive me. How will I ever look him in the eyes? He stood by the window and cried like a baby. Not even a stranger has ever insulted him before [like this]. The whole family witnessed this incident. I went to bed as soon as possible, without dinner. I thought I would die of hunger, because we have our meal only in the evening. I fell asleep and woke up at twelve. My mom was still working at the sewing machine. I couldn't stand the hunger, so I got up and took a piece of meal. We would be a happy family, if I didn't fight with everybody. All the fights are started by me. I must be manipulated by an evil force. I would like to be different, but I don't have a strong enough will. Why isn't there anybody who would guide me, why can't anybody teach me? I hate my sister. She is a stranger to me. God show me what is right.

Starvation was a daily reality of life in the Łódź ghetto and in other communities of its kind. Because the German administration essentially intended to sustain only the ghetto's labor force over the long term, the rationing system favored "productive" members of the community at the expense of the "unproductive." Those who worked in ghetto workshops, industries, or services received a larger allocation of food than those who had no employment. Thus, a place in the ghetto's labor pool often meant more than a stay from deportation, as it literally did for carriers of work certificates (*Scheine*) in ghettos like Kovno or Vilna; a work position, however humble or low paying, also represented a vital lifeline, providing the ghetto's working community with the very sustenance its members needed to survive.

A significant amount of the forced labor carried out in the ghettos of German-occupied eastern Europe was performed by children. Of course such labor provided youngsters with their most basic nutritional needs and helped to lessen the burden on impoverished households. Likewise, in the upside-down world of the ghetto, older children and juveniles often shouldered tremendous responsibilities for the upkeep of their families. In such an environment, these young people might represent their household's sole source of income. In July

39. That is, Ghetto Elder Rumkowski.

1942, writer Oskar Singer⁴⁰ chronicled the life of such a youngster, sixteen-year-old Alfred B. from Prague.⁴¹ Following his deportation from the Czech capital to Łódź in October 1941, Singer joined fellow writers, such as Julian Cukier,⁴² **Josef Zelkowicz**, and Oskar Rosenfeld, in assembling material for their *Ghetto Chronicle*,⁴³ which would collect pertinent data and statistics concerning the Łódź ghetto and portray the lives and deaths of its inhabitants. In one of his most poignant entries, Singer traces the story of a young Czech Jew arriving in the Łódź ghetto in the early winter of 1941 to 1942. Alfred B. is a likeable and capable young man, who immediately finds work with a construction battalion in order to bolster his family's precarious circumstances. All goes well until a minor accident at the worksite causes the teenager to lose his position. Alfred's fate is a tragic example of how Nazi ghettoization policy cost a generation of Jewish youth their lives.

DOCUMENT 4-II. Diary of Oskar Singer, entry for July 28, 1942, in Hanno Loewy et al., eds., “*Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit*”: Das Getto in Łódź, 1940–1944 (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 1990), 221–22 (translated from the German).

With his parents and a sister, Alfred B. came from Prague to the Litzmannstadt [Łódź] ghetto. Just sixteen years old, Alfred has graduated from an agricultural *Hachscharah*⁴⁴ as a member of the Maccabi Hazair.⁴⁵ His comrades loved him for his kindly, helpful ways. Arriving in the ghetto, he is the first in the family immediately to seek work and receives a place in a construction battalion. After him his mother succeeds in getting work in a straw shoe workshop. She puts in honest labor in order to share her soup with her husband and daughter. She comes from a wealthy, respectable family in Prague. Alfred's father was an attorney in Prague. Shortly before the journey here he had a serious operation upon his stom-

40. Born in 1883 in Prague, Oskar Singer was an author and journalist, writing for such Czech and Jewish newspapers as the *Prager Tagblatt* (*Czech Daily*) and the *Jüdische Nachrichten* (*Jewish News*). In August 1944, Singer was deported to Auschwitz where he perished.

41. Singer abbreviated his subject's surname to protect the young man's privacy.

42. Julian Cukier (1900–1943) is better known by his pen name, Stanisław Cerski.

43. See Dobroszycki, *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*.

44. This refers to a vocational-training program aimed at training Jewish youths for emigration to Palestine.

45. This refers to a Zionist youth organization.

ach, and came, so to speak, with half a stomach to the ghetto. He dared not undertake physical labor. [. . .]

Alfred carries heavy burdens. But he is still aided by the reserves of strength he has stored up before his arrival. In a good mood he goes early in the morning to his daily work. Alfred is a strong youth; he will survive this ghetto adventure. The same cannot be guaranteed of his father. He is visibly falling apart, although he only has half a stomach. Alfred suffers from hunger, but he does not complain very much. But his parents observe with deep concern that he is losing so much weight. But everyone in the ghetto is losing weight. Everyone will lose several pounds, but Alfred will survive all that. [. . .]

One day Alfred comes home with a slight injury to his leg. Mother treats the insignificant wound carefully. Nevertheless it becomes infected. In the ghetto no wound will heal properly, and an infection not at all. The body does not have any defenses; the cells are helplessly abandoned to decay. Alfred cannot work for several weeks. Whoever does not work receives no soup, and later when an additional piece of bread replaces the soup ration, receives no bread. That lack is felt acutely. Father searches frantically for work. [. . .]

Alfred suffers terribly from his unemployment. He sees how his mother is overworked and then gives her worker's rations to the children and his father. He pulls himself together and looks for work. Perhaps he can find something easier in one of the many workshops. No, he finds nothing, because now the sixteen-year-olds have to arrange things through the school department. A little patronage helps a bit. Someone puts in a good word for this upstanding young man. Because in Prague he attended the school of the Youth Aliyah and learned metalworking, he finally succeeds in getting a place in a metal workshop. It pays almost nothing, but the main thing is the bread and sausage! Every worker gets that now because there is no longer any soup. That works for a few days. But the department director is no do-gooder. He expects production. Even in the ghetto one wants to get ahead. Alfred cannot get lighter work. He wishes himself back at the lathe in Prague where he learned his trade and where one could just stand and work and did not have to carry heavy pieces of metal up and down the stairs.

It doesn't work. He has to give up all the walking, has to stay at home again, must lie down. In the meantime he loses a frightening amount of weight. The skin clings like a transparent membrane to his forehead and nose. The young man is simply not recognizable anymore. At least

he wants to help with the housework, while Mother works so hard in the workshop and Father looks for work without ceasing. He carries the heaviest water buckets from the courtyard up two flights of stairs to the miserable apartment, stands in the long line before the stores; sometimes he still has enough energy to contend with those behind him in line, who would like to drive him from the queue.

Then at home he must lie quietly. The physician thinks that his heart is not working quite right. Certainly better nutrition would help, but there is nothing to be done about that. Alfred knows for certain. Whoever does not work here must die. He does not want to die! Again he seeks out a benefactor. He manages this with certain difficulty, and obtains a place in a carpentry shop. The director is already well informed. He has seen the young man and will manage to give him very light tasks. The school department does not make any difficulties. Alfred can start already tomorrow morning. But tomorrow . . . tomorrow, that means that today there will be no bread with sausage. And yesterday already he had nothing to eat. That is already two days. But things can't be hurried along. Introduced yesterday and starting tomorrow—what more can one ask? How many in the ghetto are that lucky? Alfred is certainly a rare exception. All right, we will have to wait till morning, then there will be light work and bread with sausage. Good, says Albert, we'll wait, starve until morning, that is only one more night.

But in the morning, he cannot go to work, he cannot begin his easy tasks, and cannot eat his bread with sausage. Tomorrow—there will be no tomorrow for him. Alfred did not wake up. Today he will already lie in Marysin.⁴⁶ Perhaps this would not have happened if yesterday he had just had his bread and sausage.

46. This was the ghetto's "green lung," where the cemetery was located.

DOCUMENT 4-12. Jewish children work at a box-making factory in the Glubokoye ghetto, Belorussia, c. early 1942, USHMMPA WS# 08059, courtesy of Karl Katz.



In ghettos across German-occupied Europe, Nazi persecutory policies decimated a generation of young people, through starvation, disease, deportation, and murder. In many ghettoized communities, German administrators employed an additional measure to ensure the eventual extinction of the “Jewish race”: a ban on Jewish births. The cruel realities of ghetto life surely discouraged couples from reproducing and from forming large families. Moreover, malnutrition and heavy labor caused the onset of amenorrhea⁴⁷ in a large proportion of women of reproductive age. For these reasons, birthrates in most ghettos were already extremely low; in Łódź, only 2,306 babies were born in the ghetto in the four years of its existence (1940–1944), relative to an initial population of 164,000.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in 1942 German authorities

47. This refers to the temporary cessation of menstruation in women of child-bearing age. Deficits in caloric and protein intake often caused this condition, which was also widely reported among women prisoners of reproductive age in the Nazi concentration camp system. Most women with this disorder who survived to liberation found that their normal menstrual cycles were restored on return to a balanced and nutritious diet.

48. Leah Preiss, “Women’s Health in the Ghettos of Eastern Europe,” *Jewish Women’s Archive*, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/author/preiss-leah> (accessed January 22, 2010).

in Lithuania issued a number of decrees prohibiting Jewish births in the ghettos of Vilna, Kovno, and Shavli (Šiauliai). In Kovno, a July 1942 edict forbade both pregnancies and births in that ghetto. Gynecologists such as Dr. Aharon Peretz,⁴⁹ whose chief occupation had been the delivery of babies, now found that his major work consisted in terminating pregnancies. Initially, Peretz reported, the decree, viewed as a propaganda maneuver, had not been taken seriously; thus, a large part of the physician's efforts lay in informing women of the dire consequences that resulted from disobeying the order. The ghetto health administration arranged the medical services for most abortions; ghetto policemen escorted women in advanced stages of pregnancy to the hospital to enforce the procedure. As the prohibition went into effect, German authorities announced that women then in their eighth and ninth months of pregnancy would be permitted to carry their babies to term; all other pregnancies were to be terminated. Peretz suddenly found himself confronted with complicated surgeries for those women who required late-term abortions. In all cases, the ghetto's crowded and unhygienic conditions and the lack of medicine and other supplies compounded his moral and material difficulties. Many women tried to defy the ban and delivered their infants in secret, often with terrible consequences for both mother and child. In May 1961, Peretz testified at the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem concerning the effects of this policy on the Kovno ghetto population.

DOCUMENT 4-13. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478.

Presiding Judge: [...] Dr. Peretz, you are a gynaecologist. Were there births in the ghetto during the occupation?

Aharon Peretz: There were births, obviously, for pregnant women had entered the ghetto—in all the months of pregnancy.

Q: What were the orders regarding pregnant women?

A: In July 1942 an order was issued forbidding women to become pregnant and to give birth.

49. In the postwar period, Dr. Aharon Peretz (b. 1910) became director of the gynecological and obstetrics department at Rambam Hospital and a professor in the medical faculty of the Institute of Technology (Technion) in Haifa.

Q: What women?

A: The women in the ghetto, the Jewish women. And we—I must tell the truth—both the *Ältestenrat* [the Council of Elders] and the doctors, did not take this order too seriously. For each time we received a new blow, some time had to pass for us to believe and get used to this blow. But once, when a woman came to me in the advanced months of pregnancy and told me that an SS man had encountered her in the street, in one of the lanes of the ghetto, had recorded her address and said that he would come in two weeks' time and if she were still pregnant he would kill her—the matter became clear.

And, as the gynaecologist in the ghetto, I received an instruction from the *Ältestenrat* to end each and every pregnancy that came our way. We then made arrangements and received confirmation from the Germans that only those who were in the eighth and ninth months would be permitted to give birth, and up to the eighth month the pregnancy would be terminated. Naturally, as a doctor, I was confronted with very serious medical problems, because to end a pregnancy in the sixth and seventh months involved a difficult operation. The conditions were very bad, for when we left the small ghetto they burned the hospital, and we did not have one. All the operations were performed under difficult conditions—in kitchens, in small attics, amidst terrible congestion, and understandably there were fatalities. But the head of the Jewish Council was at the same time a very well-known physician of Kovno, an internist; he understood these problems, and he told me that we were permitted to end a pregnancy on the grounds of danger to the woman's life, because anyhow the life of the woman was in danger and consequently, "You have to terminate the pregnancy."

We terminated every pregnancy. There were women, I would say, who displayed signs of heroism and who, under no circumstances, wanted to end their pregnancy. And it goes without saying that, in such cases, we encouraged them, although I now feel myself to be guilty. For I, too, would encourage her—I would give her further strength. All kinds of outside events or news items, which described a setback for Hitler, would encourage the women to continue their pregnancy. [. . .]

With every political event women would come and ask, "Perhaps I should wait some while longer before having the abortion." There were also those who took the risk and did not put an end to it. Needless to say their fate was very bitter, afterwards, when the babies were put to death. Women who were forbidden to give birth would cover themselves beneath the pillows, they didn't cry out, they would not utter a sound, so that

nobody would hear any cries. I was also requested only to come to a birth when I was sent for by the midwife or nurse, when there was some complication, and not to go to a normal birth, for by doing so I could arouse the suspicions of the neighbourhood. [...]

Eva Ginzová was born in Prague on February 21, 1930, the daughter of a mixed marriage. Her father, Otto Ginz, came from a liberal Jewish family and worked as a manager at a large textile concern in Prague. His wife, Maria, had been raised a Catholic but left the church in her early twenties. The Ginzes maintained a traditional Jewish home, observing the Sabbath and major holidays and keeping a kosher household, while Eva and her brother, Petr, attended a Jewish school. Eva adored her elder brother and had strong bonds with her large extended family, especially her father's brother Miloš and his two children, Pavel and Hanka.

The fate of Eva Ginzová and her family closely followed the course of Nazi policy in the Czech lands. During the Munich Crisis of September 1938, Great Britain and France forced the Czechoslovak republic to cede the German-speaking borderlands (e.g., the **Sudetenland**) to Nazi Germany. On March 15, 1939, the German army occupied the remainder of rump Czechoslovakia. The region of Slovakia became the quasi-independent Slovak State,⁵⁰ a puppet republic allied to Nazi Germany. German authorities annexed to the Reich the territory roughly encompassing the modern Czech Republic, creating the **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**. With its incorporation by National Socialist Germany, the new Protectorate adopted Nazi antisemitic legislation. As children of a mixed marriage and themselves practicing Jews, the Ginzes were categorized as **Geltungsjuden** according to the tenets of the **Nuremberg Laws** and therefore subject to a number of restrictions. Beginning in September 1941, when all Jews in the Reich had to wear distinguishing badges on their outer garments, Petr and Eva, too, were forced to wear the yellow star.

In December 1941, deportations of Jews from Prague to **Theresienstadt** began. Two months earlier, as planners of the “Final Solution” began to organize the first transports of German Jews to the East, **Reinhard Heydrich**—who once served as chief of the **Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt)** and as governor general of the Protectorate⁵¹—

50. This is sometimes known as the First Slovak Republic.

51. On September 27, 1941, Reinhard Heydrich was appointed deputy Reich Protector (Stellvertretender Reichsprotektor) in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, assuming the effective government of the territory. Konstantin von Neurath, Heydrich’s immediate predecessor in this post, held the official title of Protector until August 20, 1943, but, as Hitler believed him ineffectual in the position, he retained very little power.

suggested that the Theresienstadt site act as the primary way station for Jews in the Czech lands being deported to the camps and ghettos. On November 24, 1941, the first one thousand Czech Jews arrived at Theresienstadt, whose old fortress works, built in the era of Empress Maria Theresa, served as an ideal infrastructure for the new ghetto. Following the **Wannsee Conference** of January 20, 1942, Theresienstadt also became a “settlement area” for German and Austrian Jews over the age of sixty-five and for Jewish war veterans who had been decorated or disabled in combat, those categories of German Jews initially exempted from deportation. Later the ghetto also came to hold prominent Jewish artists, musicians, and other cultural figures whose disappearance might evoke adverse public reaction at home and abroad.

Thus, from the beginning, Theresienstadt served a dual purpose. First, it functioned as a device to help allay criticism of Nazi racial policy at home. Nazi propagandists portrayed Theresienstadt as a kind of model ghetto community for Jews deported from the Reich. This fiction helped to solve a dilemma inherent in Nazi claims that Jews “resettled in the East” were being relocated to labor colonies. Why then, many German citizens wondered, were elderly and disabled Jews included in such transports when they might no longer be deployed as forced labor? The Theresienstadt ghetto helped to put an end to such questions. German authorities also employed the “model Jewish city” to manipulate foreign governments and agencies, as when concentration camp administration officials permitted the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** to visit a highly sanitized Theresienstadt in June 1944.⁵² The reality of Theresienstadt was quite different from the impressions foreign dignitaries gathered on carefully choreographed visits and from those images captured on film, just before the ICRC’s inspection, in the Nazi propaganda piece *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* (*The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*). Theresienstadt was a complex amalgam of Nazi concentration camp, forced labor camp, and ghetto. Of the more than 140,000 Jews transferred to Terezin, 33,500 died there, victims of starvation, disease, and ill treatment. More significantly, Theresienstadt, in its second essential role, functioned as a way station for deported Czech Jews and eventually for Jews deported from the Reich to the **Auschwitz II–Birkenau, Majdanek**, and Treblinka extermination camps. Between December 1941 and the end of war in the spring of 1945, eighty-eight

52. See Birgitt Morgenbrod and Stephanie Merkenich, *Das Rote Kreuz unter der NS-Diktatur, 1933–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 374–91.

thousand individuals passed through Theresienstadt on their way to the East and to almost certain death.⁵³

At least fifteen thousand Jewish children came to Terezin. One of them was Eva Ginzová, who arrived at the ghetto in May 1944, when she was fourteen. Her beloved brother, Petr, had already been transferred to Theresienstadt in October 1942; her paternal grandmother, uncle Miloš, and cousins Pavel and Hanka had preceded her there as well. Eva began keeping a diary on June 24, after spending approximately six weeks in the ghetto. Her father did not arrive at Terezin until the very end of the war, so Eva's central experience at Theresienstadt was one of homesickness and the pain of separation from her parents. Her loneliness intensified in the fall of 1944, when both her brother and cousin Pavel were deported to Auschwitz. Eva's diary entries from this period underscore an elemental feature in the lives of many ghetto inhabitants: the grief, uncertainty, and anxiety felt by those whose loved ones had been deported to an unknown fate. Eva's despondency over the loss of her brother grew with each passing week and increased in the last days of the war as train-loads of Auschwitz prisoners passed through Theresienstadt, telling stories about the horror of death camps in the East.

Units of the Soviet army liberated Eva and her father at Theresienstadt in May 1945. The pair returned home to Prague in order to reunite with Eva's mother and to await news of Petr. Eva Ginzová closed her Theresienstadt diary with the notation "When Petr comes back, I'll write it here." Almost two years later she added a final note: "Petr hasn't come back."⁵⁴ He would not. Petr Ginz perished in the gas chambers at Auschwitz shortly after his arrival.⁵⁵

53. For a more detailed discussion of the Theresienstadt ghetto, see H. G. Adler, *Theresienstadt, 1941–1945: Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960); Vojtěch Blodig, *Terezín in the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” 1941–1945*, trans. Jan Valéška and Lewis Paines (Prague: Památník Terezín/Oswald, 2003).

54. Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*, 167.

55. Petr Ginz also left a diary to posterity; see Petr Ginz, *The Diary of Petr Ginz, 1941–1942*, ed. Chava Pressburger, trans. Eva Lappin (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007).

DOCUMENT 4-14. Diary of Eva Ginzová, entries for September 28, 1944, and April 23, 1945, Theresienstadt, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 180, 187–88.

September 28, [1944]

The train's already here and both boys have already got on it. Petr's number [is] 2392 and Pavel 2626. They're together in the same car. Petr's terribly calm and Uncle is full of admiration for him. I hoped to the last minute that the train wouldn't come, even though I knew it would. But what can be done? Just this morning Hanka and I were with them at the *slojska*.⁵⁶ It was a horrible sight that will stay with me forever. A crowd of women, children, and old men were pressed around the barracks to get a last look at their son, husband, father, or brother. The men leaning out of the windows were pressed one against the other to catch a glimpse of their dearest ones. But the barracks were guarded by police guards so that no one would escape. The *Ghet towachmanns* [ghetto guards] stood by the building and drove back people who came too close to it. The men from the windows waved and said good-bye to their relatives with looks. The sound of crying came from all around. We quickly ran home and brought the boys two slices of bread each so that they wouldn't be hungry. I pressed through the crowd, crawled under the rope that separated the crowd from the barracks, and passed Petr the bread through the window. I had enough time to hold his hand through the bars before a guard drove me away. At least it worked out all right. Now the boys are gone and the only thing left from them here is their empty beds.

April 23, [1945]

[. . .] My God, the things that are happening here now, it's difficult to describe. One afternoon (on Friday, April 20), I was at work when we saw a freight train go past. There were people sticking their heads out of the window. They looked awful. They were pale, completely yellow and green in the face, unshaven, emaciated, with sunken cheeks and shaven heads, dressed in prison clothes . . . and with a strange shine in their eyes . . . from hunger.

56. This is the Czech variant of the German *Schleuse* (sluice), a slang word used in Theresienstadt for the collection point for prisoners arriving and departing upon transports. Here, incoming and outgoing baggage was examined and “contraband” confiscated.

I ran to the ghetto straightaway (we're working outside at the moment), to the railway station. They were just getting off the train, if one can call it getting off. Very few could stand on their feet (bones, covered in nothing but skin), others lay on the floor completely exhausted. They'd been traveling for two weeks with hardly anything to eat. They came from Buchenwald and Auschwitz (Oświęcim). Most of them were Hungarians and Poles. I was so upset I thought I would collapse. I was still looking for our Petr among them since some of those who arrived now were those who had left from here. But our Petr wasn't there.

One transport after another started to arrive now. Hungarians, Frenchmen, Slovaks, Poles (they had spent seven years in concentration camps), Czechs, too. No one from our family. And the number of dead among them! A whole pile in every car. Dressed in rags, barefoot or in broken clogs. It was such a terrible sight that hardly anyone had seen before. I wish I could express on paper all the things that are happening inside me. But I'm not talented enough to do that.

And how the poor people threw themselves at any food they were given, whatever it was. How they fought over it—awful! A woman gave a lump of sugar to a sick boy, he was about seventeen. He burst out crying. He was sobbing terribly, kept looking at the piece of sugar and the bread the woman had given him and kept on crying, “Sugar, sugar, sugar, *weissbrot, weissbrot* [white bread].” Then he ate it. God knows how long it had been since he had seen any. Some have spotted fever [presumably typhus] and many other nasty diseases.

And those who arrived from Litzmannstadt [Łódź] and from Birkenau told us awful things. They said Oświęcim [Auschwitz] and Birkenau were made into one. They used to be two concentration camps right next to each other. Now it has been liberated. Every transport that had arrived in Birkenau had had everything taken away and been divided immediately. Children under fourteen, people over fifty, went straight into the gas chambers and were then burned. Moreover, they always selected some more to be gassed from those who remained. And the food was lousy. Coffee, soup, coffee, and so on. I wouldn't believe any of it if I wasn't told about it by those who themselves experienced it. I'm so worried about Petr and whether he's still alive.



CHAPTER 5

CHILDREN IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP UNIVERSE

In NATIONAL SOCIALIST Germany, the concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager*, or KZ) system was an integral feature of the regime. The very first concentration camps were established soon after the appointment of Adolf Hitler as German chancellor in January 1933. Nazi authorities founded the first regular camp of its kind, **Dachau**, near Munich, in March of that same year to incarcerate political prisoners and ideological opponents. Before World War II, concentration camps served primarily as detention centers for real and perceived enemies of the Reich. One deviation from this policy was the arrest and imprisonment in camps of some thirty thousand German Jewish men, entirely on racial grounds, following the ***Kristallnacht* pogrom** of November 9 and 10, 1938. At the time of the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, six major concentration camps were operating in the Greater German Reich: Dachau (founded 1933); Sachsenhausen, near Berlin (1936); **Buchenwald**, near Weimar (1937); Flossenbürg, in northeastern Bavaria near the former Czech border (1938); **Mauthausen**, near Linz, in Austria (the **Ostmark**) (1938); and **Ravensbrück**, a women's camp established in the province of Brandenburg (1939).

Following the outbreak of World War II, Germany's vast territorial conquests prompted an expansion of the concentration camp system, primarily to its eastern annexed and occupied territories. At first the war did not alter the original function of these camps as detention centers for political prisoners,

resistance figures, and dissidents of belief and conscience. Gradually, however, such sites began to serve as reservoirs for an expanding population of forced laborers deployed in construction and industrial enterprises in support of the German war effort. Nazi policy with regard to the use of concentration camp labor evolved in three discrete phases. In the period between 1933 and 1937, prison labor served a punitive purpose and was limited primarily to the construction and maintenance of the camps themselves. With the coming of war, forced laborers were deployed on large-scale construction projects and in the raw materials industry, largely under the auspices of the **Schutzstaffel (SS)**. After 1942, with the war in full swing, prison labor was utilized extensively in the armaments industry and in weapons manufacture; dozens of subcamps were established for each major concentration camp, often located near production facilities or sites for the extraction of raw materials.¹ Despite a pressing need for forced labor, SS officials and guards deliberately malnourished and mistreated their prisoners so that hundreds of thousands of their number died in camps throughout Europe of hunger, illness, and maltreatment.

The exploitation of prison labor was a significant factor in the expansion of the Nazi concentration camp system. But with the invasion of the Soviet Union and the escalation of Nazi racial policy, a new category of camps emerged, sites designated to facilitate the “Final Solution” and the mass murder of groups and individuals deemed inferior by Nazi ideology and racial theory. German authorities established the first of these killing centers, **Chełmno**, in December 1941. SS officials murdered at least 152,000 individuals, primarily Jews and **Roma**, there between December 1941 and March 1943 and in June and July of 1944. In 1942, the planners of genocide founded the **Bełżec**, **Sobibór**, and **Treblinka** killing centers, known collectively as the **Operation Reinhard (Aktion Reinhard)** camps, to murder the Jews of the **Generalgouvernement (General Government)**. At these extermination camps (*Vernichtungslager*), the SS and their auxiliaries killed approximately 1,526,500 Jews between March 1942 and November 1943. The largest killing center was **Auschwitz**, which by the spring of 1943 deployed four massive gas chambers, known as **crematoria**. At the height of the **deportations** to Auschwitz, up to six thousand Jews were gassed each day in its killing center, **Birkenau**. By November 1944, over 1 mil-

1. See Franciszek Piper, “The System of Prisoner Exploitation,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994); Paul Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labor, and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy* (London: Routledge, 2000).

lion Jews and tens of thousands of Roma, Poles, and Soviet prisoners of war had been murdered at the Auschwitz complex.

Young children had almost no chance to survive in the Nazi system of concentration camps and killing centers. In camps where **selections** took place, German officials almost always dispatched Jewish children directly to the gas chambers. Infants and toddlers who arrived in the arms of their mothers or another relative went immediately to their deaths, often dooming the adults who accompanied them. The very young likewise rarely survived labor and concentration camps settings. When they did so, it was usually with the aid of relatives, adult prisoners, or members of the camp underground, who protected them and shared food and other essentials. Juveniles, particularly those over the age of twelve, often managed to mix in with the camp's adult population because of their fitness and ability to work. The following documentation examines the fates of children and adolescents who lived and died in the concentration camp universe and explores the ways in which the experiences of child detainees paralleled and diverged from those of their adult counterparts.

AT THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

Janina Hescheles² was born in Lvov (then in Polish Galicia; today Lviv in Ukraine) on January 2, 1931. Her father, Henryk Hescheles, a respected journalist with Zionist credentials, served as the editor in chief of the Polish-language daily newspaper *Chwila (The Moment)* and was murdered shortly after German forces occupied Lvov in June 1941. Her mother worked as a nurse and administrator at a local hospital.³ As a young child, Janina had already been drawn to writing, especially to poetry, a form in which she would preserve many of her wartime memories and experiences. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to place the young girl with a Christian aunt on Lvov's "Aryan side," Janina and her mother found themselves incarcerated in the Janowska concentration camp.⁴ This complex was established in the autumn of 1941 to intern forced laborers working in a network of factories belonging to the German Armaments Works (Deutsche Rüstungswerke, or DAW); the first of

2. She is also cited as Jania, or Janka, Hescheles.

3. Janina Hescheles, "Mit den Augen eines zwölfjähriges Mädchen," in *Im Feuer vergangen: Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto*, ed. Johann Christoph Hampe (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), 151–89.

4. See Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 131.

these factories stood along the Janowska Road in Lvov's suburbs.⁵ Owned and operated by the SS, the DAW works deployed thousands of Jewish prisoners as well as Jewish inhabitants of the Lvov ghetto, founded by German authorities in November 1941. In addition to its role as a forced labor camp, Janowska also served as a transit camp for the mass deportation of Jews from the region to killing centers in the context of the "Final Solution." Jews arriving in Janowska on transports, or more commonly from the adjacent ghetto, underwent selections much as they might have experienced upon arrival at Auschwitz. Those found fit to work were absorbed into Janowska's prisoner population. The rest were deported to the Bełżec killing center or shot at the Piaski ravine, a massacre site north of the camp.

By August 1942, some sixty-five thousand Jews from Lvov had been deported to their deaths from Janowska. At this time, the camp was rife with rumors of what awaited these transports at Bełżec, an extermination camp on the Lvov-Lublin axis—one of three facilities, with Sobibór and Treblinka, comprising the camps of Operation Reinhard. These killing centers, which together claimed the lives of some 1.5 million Jews and thousands of Poles, Roma, and Soviet prisoners of war, were tasked principally with the murder of the Jewish population of the General Government.⁶ In 1943, young Janina, who often composed and recited poems for her fellow inmates, turned her thoughts to the deportees bound for Bełżec and the terrible fate that awaited them.⁷

Janina herself did not share the destiny of those Jews who passed through Janowska to their destruction. After the death of her mother, who committed suicide before her eyes, the young girl was spirited out of the camp by Josefa Rysinska (alias "Ziutka"),⁸ an operative of the Polish underground organization

5. See Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Janowska Road* (Washington DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1999).

6. See Yitzhak Arad, *Bełżec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987); Bogdan Musial, ed., "Aktion Reinhardt": *Der Völkermord an den Juden im Generalgouvernement, 1941–1944* (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2004).

7. Robert Kuwalek, *From Lublin to Bełżec: Traces of Jewish Presence and the Holocaust in South-Eastern Part of the Lublin Region*, trans. Adam Janiszewski (Lublin: Ad Rem, 2005); Arad, *Bełżec, Sobibor, Treblinka*.

8. Josefa Rysinska (b. 1922) served as a liaison officer in the Kraków branch of the underground Żegota organization. Among other rescue missions, she helped Jews to escape from the Pustków and Szebnie forced labor camps and provided them with "Aryan" papers. Rysinska was arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo during a rescue attempt and sent to the Płaszów concentration camp in 1943. She was liberated from Płaszów in January 1945. In September 1979, Josefa Rysinska was recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations."

Żegota, which aided in the rescue of Jewish children. Traveling with Ziutka to Kraków in 1943, Janina Hescheles survived the war in hiding. To the vexation of her rescuers, who feared her journal might fall into German hands, she used every available scrap of paper to record her wartime experiences. In 1946, the Jewish Historical Commission of Kraków published her diary under the title *Through the Eyes of a Twelve-Year-Old Girl*.

DOCUMENT 5-1. Janina Hescheles, “*Bełżec*,” Janowska, 1943, published in Michał Borwicz, ed., *Pieśń ujdzie cało: Antologia wierszy o żydach pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw/Łódź/Kraków: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947), 270–71 (translated from the Polish).

Bełżec

How terrible the sight:
 A cattle car filled with people
 And corpses in the corner.
 Naked they stand;
 Their moans roll down in the clatter of the wheels.
 Only the condemned knows
 What the wheel says to him:
 To Bełżec!—to Bełżec!—to Bełżec!
 To death!—To death!—To death!

If you want to live,
 then jump! run! rush! but remember
 The train guards lie in wait
 And whisper to the other condemned,
 “Nevermore will you see your mother.
 Useless to cry, useless to sob,
 Your father, never more shall you see.
 Because the wheel drives you to Bełżec!”
 To Bełżec!—to Bełżec!—to Bełżec!
 To death!—To death!—To death!

The train goes more slowly, ends its travels.
 From a thousand breasts wells up one moan.
 The train has reached its goal,
 the locomotive whistles:
 Here is Bełżec! Here is Bełżec! Here is Bełżec!

DEATH AT AUSCHWITZ

The Auschwitz complex was the largest camp of its kind established by the National Socialist regime. Located near Oświęcim, Poland, some forty miles west of Kraków, the complex comprised three camps: Auschwitz I, established in May 1940; Birkenau (Auschwitz II), built in early 1942; and **Monowitz**, or **Buna** (Auschwitz III), established in May 1942. Auschwitz I, the main camp, was similar to most German concentration camps in that its primary aim was to incarcerate real and perceived enemies of the German Reich; like Monowitz, it also deployed a significant number of forced laborers both on-site and in SS-owned construction and war-related enterprises. Auschwitz II–Birkenau, with sections for men and women and temporary family camps for Roma (Gypsies) and for Jewish deportees from **Theresienstadt**, housed the largest prisoner population and accommodated the complex's killing center. It was Birkenau, with its four massive crematoria, which played a central role in the genocide of European Jewry.⁹

From 1942 through the late summer of 1944, trains carrying transports of Jews arrived at Auschwitz II–Birkenau from every corner of Axis-occupied Europe. In all, some 1.1 million Jews were deported there.¹⁰ Depending upon their point of origin, Jewish transports often traveled many days before they reached their destination. Occasionally, deportees from western European countries came to Auschwitz aboard regular passenger trains so as not to alert unsuspecting individuals to the fate that awaited them. For Jews from eastern Europe, many of whom had experienced years of brutal treatment in ghettos or labor camps, such subterfuge was unnecessary; these individuals reached Birkenau in freight cars. Eighty to one hundred people often crowded into each car, with little or no provisions for a journey of several days. Such neglect was strategic, for exhausted prisoners, driven by extreme hunger and thirst, were more likely to cooperate in the offloading and sorting procedures when promised a shower and refreshment after their long ordeal.

New arrivals on the Birkenau ramp underwent the process of selection. Amid the chaos of disembarkation, Auschwitz prisoner-workers and SS guards separated the deportees by gender and ordered them to form short ranks. SS

9. For a discussion of the Auschwitz complex, see Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz: 1940–1945*, trans. William Brand, 5 vols. (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000); Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990); Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994).

10. See Franciszek Piper, *Auschwitz: How Many Perished There?* (Kraków: Polygraphia ITS, 1992).

medical staff then performed selections of Jewish prisoners, determining from among the mass of humanity who would be retained for work and who would perish immediately in the gas chambers. Young and able-bodied Jews were often chosen for labor and registered as prisoners at the camp. The sick, the weak, and the aged were murdered upon arrival. Young children generally shared the fate of the elderly and unfit in going directly to the gas chamber, often dooming their mothers or other adults who accompanied them.

DOCUMENT 5-2. Jewish women and children from Transcarpathian Rus who have been selected for the death walk to the gas chamber, Auschwitz, May 1944, USHMMPA WS# 77342, courtesy of Yad Vashem.



Magda Szabo¹¹ was a young schoolteacher when she arrived at Auschwitz with her mother, sister-in-law, and two-year-old niece from Udvárhely, then in Hungary, in the late spring of 1944. She was holding the toddler on the ramp when a prisoner approached her and entreated her to hand the child to her own mother. Hoping that such an action would spare the older woman from hard labor and provide supervision for her niece, Szabo unwittingly sealed her mother's fate.

11. Magda Szabo (née Guttmann, b. 1919) survived the Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen concentration camps. Following the war she became a teacher in Sighișoara, Romania. In August 1964, she became a key witness at the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial.

DOCUMENT 5-3. Testimony of Magda Szabo, August 24, 1964, Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, in Fritz Bauer Institute and the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, eds., *Der Auschwitz-Prozess: Tonbandmitschnitte, Protokolle, Dokumente (DVD)* (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2004) (translated from the German).

Presiding Judge: Ms. Szabo, you lived with your parents where, before you were arrested?

Witness Magda Szabo: In Odorhei, Udvárhely. [. . .]

Judge: Did you have a profession at that time?

Magda Szabo: Yes, I was employed as a teacher.

Judge: Employed as a teacher. And when were you arrested?

Magda Szabo: Early May, around May 5, we were taken from Vásárhely into the ghetto at Tírgu Mures, everyone from the area of Odorhei, together with my parents. And in the ghetto I also met my brother, his wife and children, and her parents; and we were transported after about three weeks with the first transport to Auschwitz.

Judge: Then you were first assembled in a ghetto—

Magda Szabo: [interrupting] Yes.

Judge: Near Tírgu Mures, yes?

Magda Szabo: In the brick factory, yes.

Judge: And there you were together with your family?

Magda Szabo: Yes, yes.

Judge: Who belonged to your family?

Magda Szabo: Father, mother, sister-in-law and her children and her sister, the sister-in-law of her sister, and her parents. . . .

Judge: And did you have children? Did you already have at this time—

Magda Szabo: [Interrupting] Myself, no, no. I was still unmarried.
[. . .]

Judge: Now when were you sent to Auschwitz?

Magda Szabo: At the end of May. I think it was May 29th, 30th, 1st of June or so. My sister-in-law had a little child, two years old: she had her birthday in the cattle car. It was—I don't know—the last day in the car or so.

Judge: So you think the end of May?

Magda Szabo: In any case at the end of May, early June, to the 1st of June. I can't remember exactly any more. [. . .]

Judge: Do you know approximately how many people were in your transport? Naturally you didn't count them, but . . .

Magda Szabo: I didn't count, but we were eighty people in that car, and that was a very long . . .

Judge: Very long train.

Magda Szabo: Transport. Forty, fifty cars there were at least.

Judge: Tell me, please, during this transport, did you receive any provisions?

Magda Szabo: No. As we got into the car, we got a small piece of bread, every person, no water, nothing. We climbed in. We brought some food with us, but we ate it sparingly—we thought that we were going somewhere to work, [and] the children should have some of it.

Judge: Did you at least receive anything to drink?

Magda Szabo: No. Once it rained, I remember very well, and we caught the water in a glass.

Judge: Some rainwater.

Magda Szabo: A little water so that we could give the children in the car at least a little water.

Judge: When you arrived in Auschwitz, do you know who opened your cars and had you get out?

Magda Szabo: There were prisoners there who helped us. And they said we should leave our baggage there. We should get out. And then immediately five to a row . . .

Judge: They lined you up?

Magda Szabo: Women separately, yes, lined us up. And I was with my sister-in-law; she had a small child, two years old. I took it in my arms because she was still younger and weaker [than I was]. And as we stood there in the row, a prisoner came to me and asked me if the child belonged to me. "No," I said. He said, "Give it to the mother." And I understood that I should give the child to my mother. Perhaps she would get lighter work. And so I gave it to her. Probably he meant that I should give it to an older . . .

Judge: Woman.

Magda Szabo: [An older woman], yes. And I also said to my mother, "Mother, say that you are old. Perhaps you can stay there, if you are older, so you could care for the children when my sister-in-law goes to work."

Judge: Yes.

Magda Szabo: And because this officer, the SS officer who was there, spoke so nicely to me and even spoke in Hungarian,¹² I said, "Oh

12. The individual in question was pharmacist Victor Capesius, a Transylvanian ethnic German (*Volksdeutsche*) who was a defendant in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial.

Mama, how good it would be if you could be with the children. Say that you are old."

Judge: Yes.

Magda Szabo: And I was taken out of the row, and I never saw her again. [. . .]

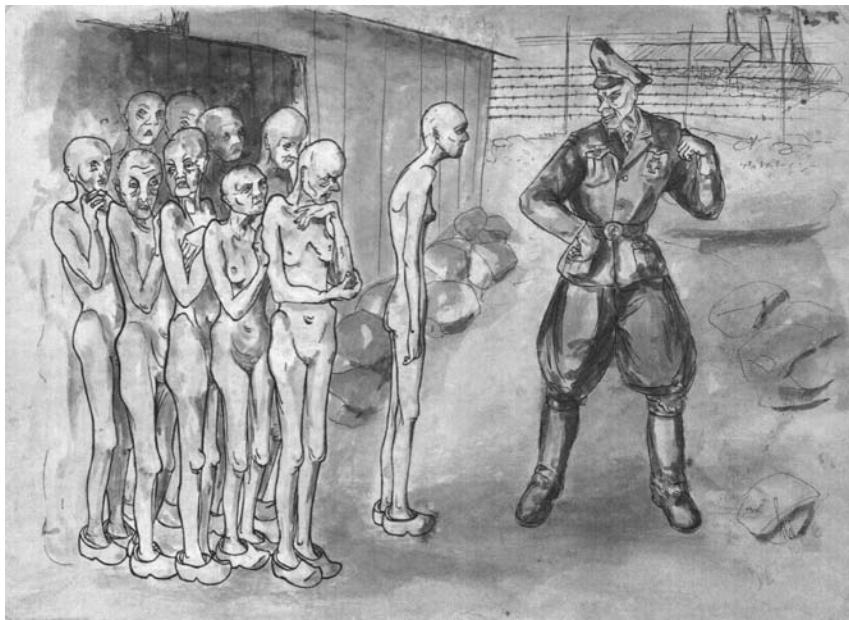
Fifteen-year-old Helga Weissová faced selection at Auschwitz with her own mother. In December 1941, shortly after her twelfth birthday, Helga and her parents, Otto and Irena Weiss, arrived with one of the first transports of Czech Jews to **Theresienstadt**. The girl would remain in the **Terezin** ghetto for three years, during which time she honed an early talent for drawing and painting. Enjoined by her father to paint what she observed around her, Helga completed over one hundred drawings and illustrations during her tenure at Theresienstadt, most of them portraying the bleak and often surreal aspects of ghetto existence.

In late 1944, Helga and her mother were deported to Auschwitz. Helga was fifteen, an age at which Birkenau camp officials often selected adolescents for forced labor. Moreover, mother and daughter arrived at Auschwitz shortly before the camp's liquidation and, amid the chaotic conditions, were transported almost immediately to camps in the German interior. In the last days of the war, the pair found themselves in the Mauthausen concentration camp, where American forces liberated them and their fellow prisoners on May 5, 1945.

Helga and her mother returned to Prague, where they learned of the death of Otto Weiss and of most of their family members and friends. At this time, Helga began to draw again, eager to capture images of her experiences, which, after her deportation to Auschwitz, she had had no opportunity to put down on paper. In late 1945 or early 1946, Helga Weissová depicted her vision of the ramp at Birkenau, where many of her fellow deportees had met their end. Wrote Weissová of her illustration, "Selection," "Prisoners were classified immediately on arrival to Auschwitz and subsequently from time to time. It was determined that the young and the strong should work, while the old, the weak, and the children were sent to the gas chambers. Children under fifteen had no chance of survival."¹³

13. Helga Weissová, *Zeichne, was Du siehst! Zeichnungen eines Kindes aus Theresienstadt/Terezin*, ed. Niedersächsischer Verein zur Förderung von Theresienstadt/Terezin, e.V. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998), 138.

DOCUMENT 5-4. Ink drawing by Helga Weissová, "Selection," 1945–1946, in Helga Weissová, *Zeichne, was Du siehst! Zeichnungen eines Kindes aus Theresienstadt/Terezin*, ed. Niedersächsischer Verein zur Förderung von Theresienstadt/Terezin, e.V. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998), 139.



Although historians have long understood the process of gassing human beings at killing centers such as Auschwitz, we know little of the anguish these victims experienced in those terrifying minutes before they perished in the gas chamber. Survival of such an ordeal, either at stationary facilities or in **gas vans**, miraculously did occur, but it was extremely rare; in the majority of cases, attending guards subsequently murdered any surviving victims. Thus, few eyewitnesses have been left to recount what they endured.¹⁴

14. Survival in the less technologically complex gas vans did occasionally occur. Drivers often halted the gassing procedure as soon as the screams of the victims had ceased, which did not necessarily guarantee that all individuals within the van were dead. Eyewitness testimony indicates that SS guards routinely shot those victims who survived the gas vans at Chełmno. Famously, a Soviet civilian survived a gassing of mental patients in a gas van at Krasnodar on the Kuban River in present-day Russia and testified concerning his experience at the 1943 Krasnodar Trial, the first war crimes proceedings against Axis criminals and their accomplices.

In his 1946 memoir, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, Hungarian prisoner-physician **Miklós Nyiszli** gives us an idea of how such a gassing must have seemed to a child in Auschwitz in 1944. In June of that year, Nyiszli was deported with his wife and young daughter from Oradea, in present day Romania,¹⁵ to Auschwitz. Volunteering to work as a physician in the prisoner barracks, Nyiszli came to the attention of Birkenau camp physician **Josef Mengele**, who commandeered the young doctor to aid in his own "research." Forced to assist Mengele with his experimentation, Nyiszli was quartered in Birkenau's Crematorium III, which he shared with the Jewish **Sonderkommando** responsible for the removal and disposal of corpses after gassing. In this context Nyiszli encountered a young girl who emerged alive from the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

DOCUMENT 5-5. Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (Hungarian ed., 1946; New York: Frederick Fell Publishers, 1960), 114–20.

In Number One Crematorium's gas chamber 3,000 dead were piled up. The *Sonderkommando* had already begun to untangle the lattice of flesh. The noise of the elevators and the sound of their clanging doors reached my room. The work moved ahead double time. The gas chambers had to be cleared, for the arrival of a new convoy had been announced.

The chief of the gas chamber [commando] almost tore the hinges off the door to my room as he arrived out of breath, his eyes wide with fear or surprise.

"Doctor," he said, "come quickly. We just found a girl alive at the bottom of the pile of corpses."

I grabbed my instrument case, which was always ready, and dashed to the gas chamber. Against the wall, near the entrance of the immense room, half covered with other bodies, I saw a girl in the throes of a death-rattle, her body seized with convulsions. The gas *Kommando* men around me were in a state of panic. Nothing like this had ever happened in the course of their horrible career.

We removed the still-living body from the corpses pressing against it. I gathered the tiny adolescent body into my arms and carried it back into

15. Oradea had, along with northern Transylvania, been ceded by Hungary to Romania in the 1919 Treaty of Trianon. Hungary regained the territory in 1940 but was forced to return it to Romania in 1947.

the room adjoining the gas chamber, where normally the gas *Kommando* men change clothes for work. I laid the body on a bench. A frail young girl, almost a child, she could have been no more than fifteen. I took out my syringe and, taking her arm—she had not yet recovered consciousness and was breathing with difficulty—I administered three intravenous injections. My companions covered her body which was as cold as ice with a heavy overcoat. One ran to the kitchen to fetch some tea and warm broth. Everybody wanted to help, as if she were his own child. [. . .]

She looked around her with astonishment, and glanced at us. She still did not realize what was happening to her, and was still incapable of distinguishing the present, of knowing whether she was dreaming or really awake. A veil of mist clouded her consciousness. Perhaps she vaguely remembered a train, a long line of boxcars which had brought her here. Then she had lined up for selection and, before she knew what was happening, been swept along by the current of the mass into a large, brilliantly lighted underground room. Everything had happened so quickly. Perhaps she remembered that everyone had had to undress. The impression had been disagreeable, but everybody had yielded resignedly to the order. And so, naked, she had been swept along into another room. The second room had also been lighted by powerful lamps. Completely bewildered, she had let her gaze wander over the mass huddled there, but found none of her family. Pressed close against the wall, she had waited, her heart frozen, for what was going to happen. All of a sudden, the lights had gone out, leaving her enveloped in total darkness. Something had stung her eyes, seized her throat, suffocated her. She had fainted. There her memories ceased.

Her movements were becoming more and more animated; she tried to move her hands, her feet, to turn her head left and right. [. . .] I received the first reply to my questions. Not wanting to tire her, I asked only a few. I learned that she was sixteen years old, and that she had come with her parents in a convoy from Transylvania. [. . .]

What could one do with a young girl in the crematorium's *Sonderkommando*? I knew the past history of the place: no one had ever come out of here alive, either from the convoys or the *Sonderkommando*.¹⁶

Little time remained for reflection. [Oberscharführer] Mussfeld arrived to supervise the work, as was his wont. [. . .] I calmly related

16. After several months at their ghastly labor, members of the *Sonderkommando* were routinely murdered and replaced in their duties by a fresh detachment of prisoners.

the terrible case we found ourselves confronted with. I described for his benefit what pains the child must have suffered in the undressing room, and the horrible scenes that preceded death in the gas chamber. When the room had been plunged into darkness, she had breathed in a few lungfuls of [Zyklon B] gas. Only a few, though, for her fragile body had given way under the pushing and shoving of the mass as they fought against death. By chance she had fallen with her face against the wet concrete floor. That bit of humidity had kept her from being asphyxiated, for [Zyklon B] gas does not react under humid conditions.

These were my arguments, and I asked him to do something for the child. He listened to me attentively, then asked me exactly what I proposed doing. [. . .] One solution would have been to put her in front of the crematorium gate. A *Kommando* of women always worked there. She could have slipped in among them and accompanied them back to the camp barracks after they had finished work. She would never relate what had happened to her. The presence of one new face among so many thousands would never be detected, for no one in the camp knew all the other inmates.

If she had been three or four years older that might have worked. A girl of twenty would have been able to understand clearly the miraculous circumstances of her survival, and have enough foresight not to tell anyone about them. She would wait for better times, like so many other thousands were waiting, to recount what she had lived through. But Mussfeld thought that a young girl of sixteen would in all naiveté tell the first person she met where she had just come from, what she had seen and what she had lived through. The news would spread like wildfire, and we would all be forced to pay for it with our lives.

"There's no way of getting round it," he said, "the child will have to die."

Half an hour later the young girl was led, or rather carried into the furnace room hallway, and there Mussfeld sent another in his place to do the job. A bullet in the back of the neck.

IN A LIVING HELL: SURVIVAL IN CAMPS

Beginning in the autumn months of 1943, prisoners resident in Birkenau, the camp that housed Auschwitz's killing center, were privy to a strange and puzzling sight. Those venturing near the area of the camp designated "B II b" could see young children—hundreds of them—playing, performing calisthenics, and

engaging in study in the company of their teachers and guardians. With the exception of those youngsters—many of them twins—whom camp physician Dr. Josef Mengele had selected for medical experimentation and housed in Block 10, there were, practically speaking, no Jewish children in Birkenau.¹⁷ The vast majority of young persons arriving at Auschwitz perished immediately in the gas chambers. To Auschwitz prisoners, the image was jarring: unshorn and relatively well-fed youngsters gamboling about their blocks in civilian clothes. Where had these children come from, and what were they doing in Birkenau?

The children in question belonged to a unique group of prisoners from the Terezin ghetto who for nearly a year formed the **Theresienstadt family camp**. In September 1943, five thousand Czech Jews, among them over one thousand youngsters and adolescents,¹⁸ arrived at Auschwitz from Theresienstadt. Spared the customary selection, they were brought directly to a special part of the Birkenau quarantine area close to the main entrance gate. Placed within a separate barracks network, designated “B II b,” these Jews were processed as special prisoners with the designation “SB6.” Although they received tattooed prisoner numbers upon their arms, their hair remained unshorn, and they were allowed to retain their civilian clothing. Men and women were housed in separate blocks, but prisoners could move freely within the small camp, and children could remain with their parents.¹⁹ These Jews were not assigned to labor brigades and were allowed, even encouraged, to write letters as well as to receive correspondence and parcels from outside Auschwitz.

At the time, no one understood the purpose of the family camp or why its inhabitants received such preferential treatment. When a further transport of five thousand Jews from Theresienstadt arrived at Birkenau that December and were added to their ranks, residents of the little camp could only infer from their privileged existence that they had been spared for a reason and that their fate would be essentially different from that of other prisoners. However, on the night of March 7, 1944, exactly six months after their arrival from Theresienstadt to the family camp, prisoners from the first transport of Jews were assembled and taken to the gas chamber without a selection. Gradually,

17. Nili Keren, “The Family Camp,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 431.

18. See Helena Kubica, “Children,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 415.

19. In the late spring of 1944, shortly before the liquidation of the family camp, a separate block was designated for children so that they no longer slept in their parents’ barracks.

the significance of the notation “SB6” in the Czech Jews’ prisoner records became clear. The code implied *Sonderbehandlung* (special treatment)²⁰ in six months, suggesting that six months after their arrival, surviving Jews from the December transport would share the fate of earlier family camp members.

But what could explain the curious delay between the arrival and gassing of these deportees, and why were those ultimately doomed to perish in the crematoria detained under such privileged circumstances? Most historians believe that the answer to this question lies in the correspondence between Nazi authorities and officials of the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**. Succumbing to pressure following the deportation of Danish Jews to Theresienstadt, German administrators arranged to allow representatives of the ICRC to inspect the Theresienstadt ghetto on June 23, 1944. Originally Nazi officials had planned to include a Red Cross visit to Birkenau in the ICRC’s itinerary in order to deflect allegations that camps like Auschwitz represented industrialized killing centers that were claiming the lives of thousands of Jews and other persecutees. Just as Theresienstadt became a sanitized “model ghetto” for ICRC visitors, the Theresienstadt family camp would “give the lie” to rumors of the mass murder of European Jewry. International Red Cross members, however, were satisfied after their visit to Theresienstadt that Jews transferred there remained in the ghetto and were relatively well cared for. Correspondence from Birkenau to relatives and friends in Theresienstadt, relating the satisfactory conditions at the camp, furnished further evidence that speculation about the systematic murder of Jews in Auschwitz was “unfounded.” After ten months, the family camp in Birkenau had served its purpose. In July 1944, survivors of the camp’s December transports were put to a selection. The majority was gassed, while the camp itself was liquidated.

Thirteen-year-old **Michal Kraus** arrived at Auschwitz with his parents from Theresienstadt in December 1943. The teenager had been raised in the Bohemian town of Nachod, where his father, Karl Kraus, was a physician. In December 1942, the Krauses, like many Czech Jews, were deported to Theresienstadt. One year later, the small family came with a transport of five thousand Jews from the Terezin ghetto to Birkenau and was absorbed within the family camp. For six months the Krauses lived there in relative safety. Then, in June 1944, Kraus’s mother, Lotte, was transferred to the Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig (Gdańsk), where she perished in January 1945. In early July, camp officials moved to eliminate the family camp and subjected its residents to the selection process. Michal numbered among the eighty-nine young boys, aged fourteen to sixteen, spared by Auschwitz camp physician Josef Mengle for

20. This was a Nazi euphemism for execution or killing.

reasons that remain unclear. These “Birkenau Boys,” as they came to be known, were removed to the men’s camp (*Männerlager*) and initially settled in the punishment block there. From this vantage point, the young Kraus could observe the gassing and incineration of friends and loved ones in the family camp, including his father, who was killed on July 11. Michal eventually lodged in the *Unterkunft-Verwaltung*, the housing administration. He survived Auschwitz as a runner (*Läufer*), a messenger assigned to convey communications and supplies among officials in the heart of the extermination camp.

In the early months of 1945, the fourteen-year-old endured a series of forced marches from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz and then to several camps and subcamps of the Mauthausen concentration camp system. On May 5, 1945, he was liberated by American forces at the Gunskirchen *Lager* in Upper Austria. Returning orphaned to Czechoslovakia, the teenager reconstructed his Holocaust experiences in a three-volume chronicle, completed in 1947. Michal’s postwar diary, which he dedicated to his slain parents, yields unique insight into the experiences and viewpoints of children during the Holocaust. Punctuated by remarkable illustrations, such as the images included here of the blazing crematoria, the journal is an extraordinary story of survival in the charnel world of the death camp.

DOCUMENT 5-6. Diary of Michal (Michael) Kraus, handwritten with illustrations, 1945–1947, 54–60, USHMM, Acc. 2006.51, Michael Kraus Collection (translated from the Czech).

At that time—in the summer of 1944, at the beginning of July, I saw my dearest parents for the last time. It is hard for me to describe how I felt at the time.

Generally speaking, with every transport, new names appeared: [Blechhammer], Belsen, Buchenwald. Mother left on the 5th or the 8th to Stutthof from the *Frauenlager* [women’s camp] together with Vera Loewenbach, with whom she has been together since the first.

I did not know that we would never, never see each other again. Maybe it was better. And then they selected us, eighty-nine boys. The others had to stay behind and . . . it is a horror to think about it. Leaving father was terrible. I see him in front of me, emaciated, sick. How he cried, he who had always been so good to everyone, and now I left him behind, left him to die. I can’t think about this because it was the most horrible moment of my life.

They led us to the gate, in the direction of the Sauna²¹—the crematorium lay nearby. We were surprised that they took us to the Sauna in the Gypsy Camp and then to Block 13, the men's camp.

It is painful to remember all those who at that time remained in B II b, so that they could be gassed later on—hundreds of acquaintances and comrades, those who never returned from the transports. [. . .]

We came to a block where the *Sonderkommando* lived. In the beginning we fared well. From the Hungarian [name illegible], we stole a lot of food that was destined for the men's camp. There I became a *Läufer* [runner or messenger] in the *Unterkunft*. I met a lot of people there, good ones and bad ones. I didn't have too bad a time.

On July 11, I did not sleep. The night was bright, the sky red. Of that—I cannot talk about it. On July 11, they killed my father. I balled my fists, I cried, and I promised to avenge him. Many of us lost their loved ones that day. [. . .]

The sky was burning!

Yes, it really was! At night the windows of the block were completely red. All the crematoria worked in full swing. The gas chambers continuously choked their victims. It was a slaughterhouse such as the world had never seen. Tens of thousands went daily to the gas. They hounded them out of the cattle cars directly to their deaths. And sometimes directly into the flames. And that was what we were supposed to see in the camp!



21. In Birkenau, this building housed shower and steam rooms for the disinfection of registered prisoners.

In its brief months of existence, the Theresienstadt family camp at Birkenau was a haven for children who might otherwise have gone directly to the gas. Among the first arrivals to the family camp from Theresienstadt in September 1943 was **Fredy Hirsch**, a well-known educator and a youth leader in the Terezin ghetto. Hirsch used his privileged circumstances at the camp to improve the lot of hundreds of children assigned there. He arranged with camp officials to create a separate children's block (Block 31) where youngsters might receive educational instruction, engage in structured play, and obtain more appropriate and nutritious meals.

The **Kinderblock** was the “one oasis in our camp,” recalled Hanna Hoffmann, a young and idealistic instructor in the children’s block. The children spent most of their waking hours in this area of the camp. Here they took their meals and washed themselves, even in the coldest weather. Prisoners in the family camp were not exempt from the monotonous roll calls conducted twice daily in Auschwitz, but Hirsch arranged for his charges to report to **Appell** inside their block, a relative luxury, especially in inclement weather. Calisthenics were generally held before instruction began, and children were also allowed time for games, sport, and recreation. Youngsters spent the evening hours with their parents and slept in the barracks of their father or mother, depending on their gender.²² The difficult conditions that prevailed in the family camp created special challenges for the young educators who sought to improve the lot of their pupils. Yet, as instructor Avi Fischer later recounted, when the children came together to play or sing in the afternoon, “the barracks became a safe ship sailing through the vast spaces,”²³ even in the heart of Birkenau.

DOCUMENT 5-7. Personal testimony of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, c. 1960, in Inge Deutschkron, *Denn ihrer war die Hölle: Kinder in Gettos und Lagern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), 49–52 (translated from the German).

There was one oasis in our camp, a place in which one could forget the present, in which one was still a human being. That was the children’s home [*Kinderheim*], an undertaking of Fredy Hirsch. Fredy, whose demeanor and bearing the Germans approved of and were even impressed by right from the start, was at the first *Lagerkapo* [camp **kapo**]. From the SS *Lagerleiter* he had succeeded in obtaining an area of the block in

22. Keren, “*The Family Camp*,” 431–33.

23. Avi Fischer, quoted in Keren, “*The Family Camp*,” 435.

which could be set up a day care home for children between eight and fourteen years of age. Before this time, children had been divided among the various blocks, among the old and sick, and no one had taken care of them. Their only activity was roll call [*Appell*]; anything else would have destroyed the “discipline” of the camp.

Fredy then looked for several young people among the prisoners who had already worked as educators in Theresienstadt. With their help he assembled, according to age and language, 700 children who up till this time were only “numbers.” He managed to acquire better food for them and was even successful in requisitioning for the *Kinderblock* a portion of the parcels which came to the concentration camp and whose recipients were no longer alive. (These parcels came only for “Aryan” Germans and Poles.) The caregivers for the various groups of children were above all responsible for the cleanliness of their charges. Daily, all articles of clothing were searched for lice; care was taken that hands, fingernails, ears, eating utensils, and so on were clean. Fredy even made spot-checks himself. And when a child was not completely clean, the whole group lost its special rations.

Each day there were five hours of lessons. Most of the children could not speak German. Fredy had convinced the SS that lessons in the German language would be in their best interest. Naturally, these German lessons were limited to drilling the children in a few phrases, to be used in the event that a German guest would visit the home.²⁴ The classroom lessons took place under difficult conditions. The tables of the various groups stood close together, so that it was difficult for the children to concentrate. They were noisy, and it was difficult to keep them in their seats; the nagging hunger troubled both the children and their caregivers. Then we had neither paper nor pencils, not to mention any books. Few of us were trained as teachers, who might at least have some special skills at our disposal. Nevertheless, we attempted to teach the children, many of whom had not yet had any schooling, the fundamental basics.

The distribution of food at noon and in the evenings demanded a great deal of moral fortitude on the part of the caregivers. The children received better food than we did and got extra rations in addition; and

24. Auschwitz authorities were expecting a visit of officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross, as had been organized at Theresienstadt, an event that never transpired.

they kept a sharp lookout because they knew that we should not keep anything back for ourselves. The caregivers were placed in an especially difficult position when the children, out of compassion, offered them something from their own rations. Fredy had also strictly forbidden this, and we would also have lost the respect of the children. Some who could not resist the temptation—especially the young men, who already suffered edema²⁵ from hunger—were barred without leniency from the home.

Because we came from the Zionist movement, we tried as hard as we could to give the children some understanding of the things which we wanted to live for. We assembled everything we knew about Israel, portrayed to them life on a kibbutz, tried to get them enthused about collectives in Israel. But this was very difficult. The children, stemming mostly from assimilated Czech families were, in experience, as old as we were, and therefore more skeptical, even cynical. They certainly had had very little opportunity in their short lives to learn about goodness and beauty. They couldn't believe in anything; no, there was one thing in which they believed: the omnipotent power of the crematorium chimney, which they saw smoking before them. When it spewed forth flames, they only remarked drily that another transport must have come in. And if we sometimes believed to have ignited a spark in them, then it came time to distribute the food again, and the youth leader was once again a poor sucker and the [Israeli] collective forgotten.

Of the 231,640 children deported to Auschwitz, some 650 young persons under the age of seventeen remained at the camp to witness its liberation by Soviet forces on January 27, 1945.²⁶ Hundreds more of their number survived brutal forced marches from Auschwitz to an array of camps in the German interior in the weeks proceeding the liquidation of that complex. As meager as these survival rates appear, they are significant when compared to

25. Edema is the abnormal accumulation of fluid beneath the skin or in one or more cavities of the body. Edema caused by severe malnourishment (hunger edema) often appears in the extremities, especially the lower legs.

26. See Helena Kubica, "Children and Adolescents in Auschwitz," in *Auschwitz, 1940–1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, ed. Tadeusz Iwasko et al., trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 2:201–90. Jewish children represented a majority (93 percent) of this figure, but the statistic also includes Roma and other non-Jewish children, especially from Poland, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.

corresponding figures for the remainder of the National Socialist extermination camps. Unlike Auschwitz, these killing centers did not have genuine selections. The overwhelming majority of Jews and other deportees arriving at these centers went directly to their deaths in the gas chambers. Only a few hundred individuals among the 1.5 million Jews deported to the Operation Reinhard camps of Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka survived the war, and even this survival rate resulted largely from prisoner revolts at the latter two facilities. Four prisoners survived to tell of their experiences at Chelmno, the first extermination camp of the “Final Solution.” In each of these instances, only a tiny fraction of the surviving prisoners were children.

Berel Dov Freiberg (or Fraiberg)²⁷ was one of the very few youngsters to survive the Sobibór killing center. The small village of Sobibór lies five kilometers (three miles) west of the Bug River, near Włodawa, on the eastern border of today’s Poland. During World War II, the town fell within occupied Poland’s Lublin District; due to its location in a wooded and thinly populated region at a point along the Chelm-Włodawa railroad line, Sobibór was chosen as a site for the second of those extermination camps operating under the auspices of Operation Reinhard, the campaign to murder the Jews of the General Government.²⁸

The camp personnel at Sobibór comprised twenty to thirty German SS and police officials, as well as some one hundred Ukrainian and Polish civilians recruited as auxiliary guards. Although each German functionary nominally belonged to the SS, the core of the German staff formally remained personnel of **Operation T4**, the mass-murder program that targeted disabled patients in killing centers on German soil. The directors of this “**euthanasia**” program had loaned these operatives to the planners of the “Final Solution” during the halt in their killing operations beginning in the summer of 1941. Sobibór’s first commandant, Franz Stangl, had been a former T4 administrator at the Hartheim “euthanasia” facility before his transfer to the East in the spring of 1942. In August of that year, Stangl was transferred to the Treblinka camp to replace

27. Berel Dov Freiberg wrote a memoir of his experiences at Sobibór; see Dov Fraiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2007).

28. For a discussion of the Sobibór killing center, see Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor: A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, trans. Karin Dixon (Oxford: Berg in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007); Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*; Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibor, Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980).

its ineffectual commandant, Dr. Irmfried Eberl,²⁹ and Stangl's deputy, Franz Reichleitner,³⁰ succeeded him at Sobibór.³¹

The Sobibór killing center comprised three separate camps consisting of an administrative area for camp offices, another area for guard residences, and a third area containing barracks for the small prison labor force. Camp II accommodated a receiving area, adjacent to the railroad siding. Beginning in May 1942, when regular gassing operations began at the killing center, transports consisting of forty to sixty freight cars arrived at the Sobibór railway station, several hundred yards away. Twenty cars at a time approached the siding, where camp guards ordered deportees to descend from the train to the platform, enjoining them to leave their luggage behind. The camp's reception area held barracks where the new arrivals were forced to undress and surrender any last valuables and other possessions. Now guards forced their victims down a narrow enclosed footpath, known as the "Tube" (*Schlauch*), which connected the receiving area to Camp III, the part of the complex that housed the gas chambers. In a special barracks inside the Tube, a handful of veteran prisoners sheared the hair of the Jewish women. Thereafter, the victims were driven, often with brutal

29. Graduating with a degree in medicine from the University of Innsbruck, Austrian psychiatrist Irmfried Eberl (1910–1948) was the director of the Brandenburg and Bernburg "euthanasia" (T4) facilities. Following a temporary halt in T4 operations, Eberl served as the first commandant of the Treblinka killing center. At the end of August 1942, gross disorganization at the complex resulted in Eberl's replacement by Franz Stangl (1908–1971). Eberl was arrested by American authorities in early 1948 and committed suicide in custody on February 16, 1948.

30. Franz Reichleitner (1906–1944), like Franz Stangl, was a member of the Austrian criminal police and served with his colleague as an official at the Hartheim "euthanasia" (T4) facility. When Stangl became commandant at the Treblinka killing center in September 1942, Reichleitner, his deputy, assumed his role as commandant at Sobibór. Following the liquidation of the Reinhard camps in November 1943, Reichleitner joined other T4 personnel for the so-called *Aktion R* (Operation R) on the Adriatic coast, where at least a portion of the group's responsibility was to carry out the deportation and murder of Italian Jewry. Reichleitner was killed by partisans near Fiume in January 1944.

31. In the immediate postwar period, Franz Stangl procured a fictive Red Cross passport and fled abroad. He lived hidden in Syria for three years and in 1951 joined his wife in São Paulo, Brazil, where he found work in a Volkswagen automobile plant. Although he had registered with consular officials under his own name and his crimes were known to Austrian justice officials, Stangl continued to live unencumbered in Brazil. Spurred by Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, Brazilian police arrested him in 1967. In 1970, a Düsseldorf court sentenced Stangl to life imprisonment in proceedings against former officials of the Treblinka killing center. Stangl died of heart failure while incarcerated on June 28, 1971. For an intensive discussion of Stangl's activities in the T4 and Operation Reinhard programs, see Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

force, into gas chambers disguised as shower facilities. Once the doors were sealed, powerful engines from adjacent rooms pumped deadly carbon monoxide gas into the chambers, killing all inside. This process was repeated until the entire transport had been murdered.

German SS and police officials conducted gassing operations at Sobibór from May 1942 until the fall of 1943, when revolts by Jewish prisoners here and at Treblinka spurred the liquidation of both killing centers.³² In all, at least 167,000 individuals perished at the Sobibór extermination camp.

On the ramp of Sobibór, no elaborate selection process separated individuals physically fit for labor from the bulk of deportees destined for immediate gassing. Often whole transports were sent directly to their deaths in the gas chambers. Occasionally, as the need arose, guards in the reception area chose from among the new arrivals a handful of prisoners who seemed physically robust or possessed specific skills to round out the camp's prison labor force. A number of these individuals worked as tailors or cobblers, serving the needs of the German or auxiliary guards. This force also typically included several women who cooked, cleaned, and laundered for camp personnel. Most of the prisoners, however, served in so-called *Sonderkommandos* (special detachments). As at Auschwitz and other extermination camps, these forced laborers worked in the reception area to facilitate the processing of each transport to the camp; others worked in Camp III, hurrying the victims along the Tube or shearing the hair of female prisoners. After each transport, these veteran Jewish prisoners were forced to burn or bury the corpses of murdered victims, to sort and store their abandoned possessions, and to clean the freight cars for the next round of deportations. Camp officials regularly murdered members of these labor brigades and filled their ranks with prisoners from newly arriving transports.

Berel Dov Freiberg was fourteen when he arrived at Sobibór. When he was a young child, he and his family had left their native Łódź for the **Warsaw ghetto**. In 1942, he and other family members had escaped the ghetto but were caught in a roundup in the town of Turobin, near Lublin in eastern Poland. Berel and his uncle were deported to Sobibór in May 1942. From his long experience as a youth in the ghetto, Berel immediately recognized an opportunity for survival when camp officials announced that they were looking for artisans and skilled laborers. Although he had neither training nor experience, the young boy was chosen from among the prisoners and soon found himself a member of the camp's *Sonderkommando*. Freiberg endured brutal treatment, hunger, and disease in his first months at Sobibór. Hard physical labor and

32. For a discussion of the Sobibór prisoner uprising, see chapter 9.

the heart-wrenching nature of his new tasks quickly took their toll. Suicide was common among *Sonderkommando* units, and the teenager tried to hang himself on at least one occasion.³³ Memories of his loved ones helped steel his resilience, as did his decision to join the growing underground resistance movement among veteran Jewish prisoners at the camp. Freiberg participated in the Sobibór Uprising on October 14, 1943, and was one of nearly seventy Sobibór prisoners to survive the war.³⁴ In 1945, he gave an account of his arrival at the killing center to former *Oneg Shabbat* chronicler **Bluma Wasser**, herself a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto.

DOCUMENT 5-8. Oral history of Berel Dov Freiberg, recorded by Bluma Wasser, 1945, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 268–78.

After traveling on the train for a few hours, we suddenly stopped—we'd arrived in Sobibór. A platform on both sides of the tracks in the middle of a forest, with a tower ahead of us covered by barbed wire and vines through which the tracks led deeper into the woods. [. . .]

After our train moved in, the doors were thrown open and armed Germans and Ukrainians, cracking whips, drove us out of the wagons. We had bloody welts all over our bodies. The day we came to Sobibór was May 5, in the year [19]42. We were led through a second tower to an assembly point which was ringed by barbed wire fences, with posts on the wire perimeters capped by some sort of metal hoods. They split us up here—men to one side, and women and children to the other. Soon, SS squads came in and led the women with the children away. Where they were being taken to we didn't know, but off in the distance we heard screams of people being beaten and stripped and then we heard the rumblings of motors being started. It was the women and children being killed. We could sense in the air that, locked up like this between the wires, we'd be slaughtered right here. Night fell and we fell into a panic. We'd been told that in Bełżec, people were burned alive in pits. We wouldn't believe this while we were in the ghetto, but here, when we saw

33. See Berel Dov Freiberg's complete account in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 268–87.

34. For an account of Berel Dov Freiberg's actions in the Sobibór prisoner revolt, see chapter 9.

a fire in the distance, we were sure they were burning people. We were overcome with fear and started saying our *viduyim*.³⁵

It was a nightmare. The Ukrainians beat us and wouldn't let us out to relieve ourselves. People evacuated on the spot. Later, they told us they wouldn't do anything to us, that the women had only been taken off to work. In the morning, SS men came and selected craftsmen and artisans to work as shoemakers, carpenters, locksmiths. I felt they'd let these people live. I also wanted to join these *baleymlukhe* [artisans], but I'd never been a worker and was afraid that if they ordered me to saw off a small piece of wood even, I'd bungle it and then would be worse off. So I sat and wondered—what can I do? Then the SS man pointed out all the healthy young men and ordered them to step forward, so I jumped up and squeezed in among these towering youths and sturdy craftsmen. I pleaded with my uncle to come with me, but he wouldn't move and I went alone. He was afraid, and something in my heart told me he wouldn't survive anyway. It took a long time to carry out this [selection]. We were led through still another tower, again to an assembly area, but there were no barracks here yet, only lean-tos and frames. The others were immediately sent away and we never saw them again.

There were thirty men in our group. They divided us up right away. Some [of us] were used to sort our belongings. The bundles were lying in ditches surrounded by wires and vines, with the same metal-hooded perimeter posts. The whole camp looked like this. I was taken into the second group and set to work digging a latrine. I never held a shovel in my life and a German who guarded us at work noticed my "skill" and let fly such a blow over my head that he nearly split my skull. That was when I learned how to work.

We worked from daybreak till nine, then they gave us breakfast. Bread and fingerbowls of fat [were] all we got and afterwards, they put us to work till late evening. As night fell, we were all lined up and an SS man informed us nothing would happen to us if we behaved well. If we didn't—they'd "make us a gift" of a bullet to the head. For the time being, they say, we work here, and in a week they'll take us to where the women are working. They'd already reached their destination and we'll be able to correspond with them soon. Their belongings which [were] still lying in the ditch were left behind because [they had been given] new work clothes at the labor site, so we could go ahead and help ourselves to their

35. In the Jewish liturgy, these are public prayers of confession.

coats and cover ourselves up and even sleep in the work shacks nearby. Then, simply, because he had the urge, he picked two men out—one who had stomach pains and the other who just wasn't to his liking—and led them off into the woods where he shot them. Most of the time the men returned from work beaten, bloodied, and injured all over the body. We knew what was in store for us now and everyone just limped off to go to sleep. [. . .]

Wagner³⁶—he was the worst murderer—[once] broke a shovel over my head. My face was completely disfigured. The eyes were pulp. No matter on which side I tried to lie down, I couldn't. I stayed up whole nights and howled and wept in pain. They tortured us unbelievably. I looked like death itself. Everyone said I was a candidate for the *Lazarett*³⁷ because, in the beginning, I was never completely conscious. I was young, so they kept beating me. We had to keep working like this for two weeks without stop, because what seemed like an endless number of transports were arriving then from Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany, and afterwards, from Poland. [. . .]

While we cut their hair, we stole some conversation with the women—as long as no German was watching, of course. They asked, “Tell us, can you? Will this death be painless? Does it last long?”

They asked us how we were still able to work for “them” while everyone else was dead. We answered, “You have it better. You’re going to die soon—but we have to keep working, getting beaten all the time, till we’re finally exterminated too.”

Many told us where they hid their gold and jewels so that we could save ourselves, and they begged us to take revenge against the murderers. They couldn’t part with their children—if to die, then together, together till the last moment. While we cut their hair, they clutched their children to their bodies to be together like this till the end. And many women wouldn’t let their hair be cut! They were shot at and beaten, but it was no use. They sat down and refused to move, not letting the barbers cut their

36. SS-Oberscharführer Gustav Wagner (1911–1980) served as an official at the Hartheim T4 facility and as deputy camp commandant at the Sobibór killing center. In the postwar years, Wagner fled to Brazil with T4 colleague Franz Stangl. A survivor of Sobibór identified Wagner in 1978, and German justice authorities applied for his extradition, a request Brazilian authorities denied in June 1979. Wagner committed suicide in São Paulo on October 3, 1980.

37. At Sobibór, this was a site disguised as an infirmary, where guards shot prisoners too elderly or weak to walk to the gas chambers under their own power.

hair, and refusing to walk on into the “bath” [i.e., the gas chamber]. They were either shot on the spot, or such a hail of blows rained down on them that they were driven [alive] into the furnaces. . . .

Many times, we planned dropping poison into the soup kettles so we’d die—but what would it have accomplished? We wanted to achieve a death that would take some of “them” along with us. But some of us must survive so the world would learn of us. There were countless times we planned rebelling and sabotaging the work. Enough! But then what? They’d shoot us and get others. It was senseless. We had to do something which would really change things and hit at them: arson, assassinations. As long as one person survived to tell the world!

Thousands of children survived the war years in concentration and forced labor camps throughout German- and Axis-controlled Europe. While young Jewish children were almost inevitably sent immediately to the gas chambers upon their arrival at killing centers such as Auschwitz, some adolescents, particularly those in their late teens, did survive such selections. Life for young people in concentration camp settings was fraught with danger, particularly if those youngsters were separated from their parents. Young prisoners suffered the same deprivation, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions as adult detainees did, but children often proved less resourceful than their grown-up counterparts and were more vulnerable to duplicity and abuse both from their guards and from their fellow prisoners. In many camps, such as Auschwitz, children under the age of fourteen could not officially be assigned to forced labor details, although in practice this regulation was seldom observed.³⁸ Those who did not or could not work found themselves continually at risk of deportation to a killing center in the frequent selections that took place in forced labor and concentration camps. Children proved especially vulnerable to these *selektsyes*, as prisoners called them, and several camps experienced genuine “children’s actions” aimed at culling very young prisoners from the camp population.

Youngsters who survived such hellish conditions needed an equal share of courage, stamina, and good fortune. Adolescents often did manage to mix in with the camps’ adult populations because of their fitness or ability to work, and many succeeded in enduring the harsh conditions and grueling labor through the help of adult prisoners. One such lucky youngster was Janka Avram.³⁹ Born in Kraków in 1931, she was just ten years old when Nazi authorities estab-

38. Kubica, “Children and Adolescents in Auschwitz,” 249.

39. The name of the interviewee cannot be established with certainty; a pseudonym has been used instead.

lished a ghetto for Jews in her native city in March 1941. In June 1942, Janka hid amid rubbish in a garbage can near the local **Judenrat** headquarters as SS officials and members of the **Jewish Order Police** searched nearby buildings, rounding up children for deportation. Nearly half of the Kraków ghetto's population—four thousand Jews—was transported to the Bełżec extermination camp as a result of this deportation action, including most of the ghetto's remaining children.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the **razzia**, Janka's mother paid *Judenrat* officials to supply her young daughter with a fictive birth certificate so that she might be spared in any future children's actions. "I was eleven, looked like I was five, and was passing for a sixteen-year-old," recalled Janka, who worked for the next year in a ghetto factory.⁴¹

On March 13 and 14, 1943, SS units under SS-Untersturmführer Amon Göth liquidated the Kraków ghetto. Some three thousand Jews were deported to Auschwitz, while two thousand other residents were murdered directly within the ghetto walls in the course of the roundups themselves. Janka, along with her mother and father, numbered among the remaining two thousand Jews who were deemed fit to work and transferred to the nearby Płaszów forced labor camp. Separated from her parents, Janka again survived an extensive culling of the camp's children by sheer pluck and determination. Ultimately spared by Göth, Płaszów's universally feared commandant, twelve-year-old Janka was restored to her mother and survived the war at her side.⁴² In February 1955, the twenty-four-year-old university student recounted her remarkable escape from Płaszów guards—immortalized in the Academy Award-winning film *Schindler's List*—to oral historian Icek Shmulewitz.

DOCUMENT 5-9. Testimony of anonymous girl (Janka Avram), interviewed by Icek Shmulewitz, New York, 1955, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 117–19.

The Kraków Ghetto was liquidated at the start of 1943. Most of the people still left inside the ghetto were taken to the death camps. Those who could still work were interned in the Płaszów concentration camp. [. . .]

40. An initial deportation action in the Kraków ghetto, on May 30, 1942, claimed seven thousand inhabitants.

41. J. A., quoted in Trunk, *Jewish Responses*, 117.

42. Avram and her mother survived a brief stay at Auschwitz and a series of forced marches into the German interior. In the midst of one such "death march," American units liberated the women near the village of Husinec on the Czech border.

There, my mother and I were put in the women's camp and my father was separated from us along with the men.⁴³ The 100 of us were taken to work at the factory from Płaszów just like we'd been taken from the Kraków Ghetto. After two months in Płaszów, I was no longer allowed to work at the factory because the Germans said my strength was failing and I could no longer do the work right. They had me work at the brush factory in Płaszów for the time. I could no longer see my parents, either, because the 100 Jews who worked at the factory were locked up inside and never let out—they were no longer part of Płaszów as they had been till now. [. . .]

Selektsyes [selections] took place all the time now, and the people were sent either to other labor camps or to Auschwitz. The most tragic [selection] was the one in August 1943. Children, sick people, and the aged were hunted down, herded together, and packed off to Auschwitz.

There was a children's home in Płaszów where the workers left their children for the day. The children of the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst [Jewish Order Service] were also kept there. I was put inside this home with many other children while the big [selection] I just mentioned was going on.

The head of the Jewish police in Płaszów had been a suspected informer, but said he'd only been a milkman in Kraków. His name was Chilewicz. He knew I was going by a false birth certificate, that I was still a child. His wife was the head inmate of the women's camp. Soon, during an [*Appell*], Chilewicz's wife took me out of line and sent me to the children's home where all the other children were being gathered for deportation. She said I was also a child and belonged with them.

There were about 500 to 600 of us inside the children's home. The building was sealed behind barbed wire and guarded by Gestapo agents and not the sentries of the Ordnungsdienst. I spent only one night inside this children's home. The following morning, they started loading the children into trucks headed for Auschwitz. I felt sure they were leading us away to die and I decided to escape. As they were pushing me toward a truck with the other children, a German guard stopped a moment to light his cigarette. He stood [with his legs apart]. In a second, me [*sic*] and three other children—a boy and two girls—dropped out of line and, running low on the ground, we shot through the German's spread long legs. We

43. After a brutal beating by the commandant of the Płaszów concentration camp, Amon Göth (1908–1946), Avram's father was transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he died in the summer of 1944. Infamous today, partly because of his portrayal by Ralph Fiennes in the movie *Schindler's List*, Göth was found guilty of war crimes by a Polish court in Kraków and executed in 1946.

broke for the latrine. The German whirled around and fired, but he didn't hit anyone because we dropped to the ground as soon as we heard the first of his many shots. He couldn't come after us because he was afraid if he left the other children, they'd break away too.

The camp latrine in which the three children and I hid was exposed. As we stood there, we could be seen from all sides and we were afraid they'd spot us. So I quickly ripped out one of the boards covering the pit and jumped right into the hole, into all the excrement. The children jumped down after me. The last child dragged down the board I had ripped out with him, and this saved us. The latrine ditch was very deep because they dug the waste out every few days. We edged the board in between the two walls of the pit and sat over the feces on it for six long hours, not knowing what to do or how to get out.

When the [action] had finished, after the children and the old people were gone, the Jewish women started coming into the latrine to relieve themselves in the ditch we were in. The excrement was dropping all over us. We screamed and yelled to them for help, but no one could hear us because we were down so deep. So we dug our feet into the pit wall, and holding each other up, we used the board to bang on the floor above our heads. The Jewish women finally heard our screams and knocking; they yanked the boards out of the floor and pulled us up. Two children were half-faint from the stench they'd breathed in during the long hours at the bottom of the pit and collapsed. There were now no other children left in the camp—we were the last four Jewish children of Płaszów.

The women brought us inside their barracks and hid us in the top bunks. We were separated—each one of us to a different barrack. The women got one of the Jewish doctors in the camp to come see us, and he gave us shots against cholera—this was all done secretly, of course. We were hidden inside the four separate barracks for a week. The women took very good care of us and brought us food. Finally, the head of the women's camp—Chilewicz's wife—found out about us and informed the camp commandant, Göth. This German said to her that if we four children had the guts to jump into the waste to save ourselves, then we should be spared and not deported like the other children. This is how we were able to remain in the camp legally. We were the only children there and were really well taken care of—this was because the thousands of Jewish women who lost their children to the death camps treated us like their own.

My mother no longer believed I was alive—she again thought I'd been taken away with the other children when they cleared out the

children's home. Someone who took food to the factory where my mother was locked up let her know I was alive and that I was still inside the camp. When my mother heard I'd survived, she went straight to the factory supervisor and begged him to let me come to her, to let me work by her side. The supervisor was a German, Captain Fischer—a decent man. This German gave in to my mother's pleas and went to the Płaszów Gestapo chief himself to take out a permit that would let me work in the factory with my mother. Captain Fischer then sent his adjutant, Hilbig, also a German, to bring me to my mother by auto. My mother had no idea this would happen—she didn't even believe they had really listened to her at all. But Captain Fischer and his aide were kind—it's because of them that I'm alive. [As the witness recounts this episode, she's noticeably moved when speaking of the two Hitlerite officers.—I. S.] From then on, I stayed at the plant with my mother and the others—we worked together past the summer of 1943.

DOCUMENT 5-10. Following the liberation of Auschwitz, child survivors display their tattooed arms, January 1945, USHMM PA WS# 12110C, courtesy Wytwórnia Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych.



In late 1941, the National Socialist regime established the first stationary killing center to murder Jews within the context of the “Final Solution.” German SS and police authorities chose the small village of Chełmno (German: Kulmhof) on the Ner River because of its location along a central road linking the nearby town of Koło to the city of Łódź. An abandoned manorial estate (the *Schloss*, or “palace”) and an adjacent forest formed the nexus of the camp, which was planned as a killing site for the Jewish population of the **Wartheland**,⁴⁴ including the inhabitants of the **Łódź ghetto**.

Mass-murder operations began at Chełmno on December 8, 1941.⁴⁵ From that time until the spring of 1943, almost daily transports of Jews arrived at the “palace,” where SS officials informed the deportees that they were to be

44. This region in Poland was annexed by the Third Reich.

45. For a discussion of the Chełmno killing center, see Shmuel Krakowski, *Chełmno, A Small Village in Europe: The First Nazi Mass Extermination Camp*, trans. Ralph Mandel (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Łucja Pawlicka-Nowak, ed., *The Extermination Center for Jews in Chełmno-on-Ner in the Light of the Latest Research*, trans. Arkadiusz Kamiński and Katarzyna Krawczyk (Konin: District Museum, 2004).

transferred as foreign laborers to Germany but must first undergo disinfection. After the unsuspecting Jews had undressed and surrendered their valuables, SS and police personnel led them to the well-lit cellar; there they forced the naked prisoners down a sloping ramp that led into the rear of a large cargo van parked outside. The vehicle in question was a gas van, like those already used successfully by the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) to murder Jews and other victims on the killing fields of the Soviet Union. Once the cargo room was filled to capacity, the doors of the van were closed and sealed, and an SS driver diverted the carbon monoxide fumes from the exhaust into the interior of the van, asphyxiating those inside. Once the victims were believed dead, the van drove from the so-called *Schlosslager* (palace camp) to the seclusion of the *Waldlager* (forest camp), where any surviving Jews in the van were shot and the bodies buried in mass graves by a handful of Jews forming a special labor detachment, or *Sonderkommando*.⁴⁶ In the summer of 1942, when the smell of decomposing bodies could be detected in the surrounding villages, the *Sonderkommando* was enlisted to burn freshly murdered and buried bodies in crematory pits, while a smaller Jewish unit, the so-called *Hauskommando* (housework detail), sorted the victims' clothes and belongings and catered to the needs of camp officials. As at other killing centers, camp guards periodically murdered the members of each *Sonderkommando* and replaced them with a new detail selected from the incoming transports.

At the camp's inception, the small number of SS and police functionaries united under the command of SS-Standartenführer Herbert Lange; although his tenure was brief, the detachment would ever after be described in German documents as "Sonderkommando Lange"⁴⁷ even after SS-Standartenführer Hans Bothmann⁴⁸ replaced Lange in the spring of 1942. By this time, Chełmno had already claimed the lives of five thousand Roma from Austria, among the first transports arriving at the killing center from the Łódź (or Litzmannstadt)

46. Note that the term *Sonderkommando*, literally meaning "special detail or detachment," was applied equally to certain special SS units, such as the Sonderkommando Lange above, and to those details of Jewish prisoners who disposed of victims' bodies and belongings in Nazi killing centers.

47. In 1939 and 1940, before his tenure at Chełmno, Herbert Lange (1909–1945) had been responsible for the deaths of thousands of institutionalized disabled patients in the Wartheland. His unit, already styled as the Sonderkommando Lange, employed an early, ad hoc version of the gas vans used at Chełmno; see Volker Riess, *Die Anfänge der Vernichtung "lebensunwerten Lebens" in den Reichsgauen Danzig, Westpreussen und Wartheland, 1939–1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995). Lange is believed to have died in Berlin on April 20, 1945.

48. Hans Bothmann (1911–1946) committed suicide in British custody in 1946.

ghetto. From mid-January 1942 until March 1943, thousands of Jewish ghetto inhabitants, as well as indigenous Jews from the surrounding districts, were murdered at Chełmno. In the spring of 1943, these deportation actions ceased, and SS personnel dismantled the camp, demolishing the so-called palace and shooting the last detachment of Jewish workers. In the spring of 1944, however, German authorities decided at last to liquidate the Łódź ghetto. Thus, for a brief period, trains again rolled along the Koło-Łódź line from Litzmannstadt, bringing Jewish transports to Chełmno until mid-July 1944, when the last Łódź ghetto inhabitants were deported to Auschwitz.

In all, at least 152,000 persons, the vast majority of them Jews, were murdered at Chełmno. Only four people are known to have survived the killing center,⁴⁹ one of them a teenage boy. Szymon Srebnik (Simon Srebnik) was thirteen when he arrived at the camp from Łódź. His father had recently been shot before his eyes in the ghetto; his mother perished in Chełmno's gas vans. Once at the killing center, he was assigned to the *Hauskommando*. Nicknamed "Spinnefix"⁵⁰ for his swiftness and agility, the boy became something of a mascot among the German camp personnel, especially for gas van driver Walter Burmeister,⁵¹ who insisted he would take the youth home with him after the war. Prized for his beautiful voice, Srebnik endured frequent beatings and humiliations at the camp, but he was continually spared in the numerous selections, during which other *Sonderkommando* Jews were put to death.⁵² On January 17, 1945, two days before the arrival of Soviet troops, Bothmann ordered Chełmno's liquidation and, with it, the shooting of the Jewish *Sonderkommando*. Among the first to be shot, Srebnik miraculously

49. Like Simon Srebnik, Max Żurawski survived the second phase of gassings at Chełmno and gave testimony to Polish authorities in June 1945. Mordechai (Michael) Podchlebnik, from a village near Kolo, arrived at Chełmno in January 1942, during the first killing phase, and as a member of the *Sonderkommando* managed to escape the camp, spending the rest of the war in hiding. He was a witness at the Eichmann Trial in 1961. A fourth individual, Szlamek Bajler, served in the so-called *Waldkommando* with Podchlebnik and escaped some two weeks after his arrival at Chełmno. He made his way to the Warsaw ghetto, where Emmanuel Ringelblum, director of the secret ghetto archive *Oneg Shabbat*, encouraged Bajler to write an account of Chełmno. Bajler was later deported to Bełżec and murdered there.

50. Literally meaning "quick little spider," this German term of endearment usually applies to slim, nimble youngsters.

51. Walter Burmeister was sentenced to thirteen years in prison at the 1962–1965 West German Chełmno Trial.

52. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, RG 60.5024 (Claude Lanzmann Shoah Collection), Outtakes, Interview with Simon Srebnik, Tape 3279, Transcript, 8.

survived, as the bullet missed both spine and skull, instead propelling through the oral cavity and exiting through the nose. Quickly regaining consciousness, the youngster made his way to a nearby farmhouse, where he hid until the arrival of Soviet forces. Treated by a Red Army physician, Srebnik gave testimony concerning his experiences to Polish authorities in June 1945, as did fellow prisoner Max (Mordechai or Mordka) Żurawski, the only other known survivor of Chełmno from this period. In the early 1980s, Srebnik, then in his forties, appeared in the haunting opening sequence of Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary film *Shoah*. Simon Srebnik died in September 2006 in Ness Ziona, Israel, aged seventy-six.

DOCUMENT 5-II. Testimony of Szymon (Simon) Srebrnik before the examining judge of the district court in Łódź, Władysław Bednarz, June 29, 1945, in Archives of the District Museum in Konin, *Chełmno Witnesses Speak*, ed., Łucja Pawlicka-Nowak, trans. Juliet D. Golden (Konin: Council for the Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom in Warsaw/District Museum in Konin, 2004), 125–29.

Up to March 1944, I had been in the Łódź ghetto, from where I was then driven off to Chełmno. In Łódź, I worked in the ghetto in the so-called "metal department." In March 1944, the Germans organized a roundup. They caught me while I was on a streetcar and led me to Bałucki Square where there were some cars from Chełmno. We were loaded inside and driven off. Besides me, there were fifty other Jews on the truck. [...] The Germans took us to a granary on the grounds of the Chełmno palace. There were no other Jews. We found out that we were in the *Sonderkommando* camp. An hour later the prisoners were divided into two groups. The stronger and better workers were sent to the woods; they formed the so-called "*Waldkommando*." Weaker and younger ones, I was among them, were left to work in the so-called "*Hauskommando*." The *Waldkommando* chief was Lenz. Other Germans employed in the woods were Runge and [Kretschmer].⁵³ The *Hauskommando* chief was [Häfele]. The *Waldkommando* consisted of about forty Jews; the remainder was assigned to the *Hauskommando*. We were all shackled. The shackles prevented us from walking in a normal way. We had to take very short steps. The shackles on our ankles were also chained to our waists. We slept in the granary on a cement floor. It was very cold. The members of the *Waldkommando* told us that they were building two furnaces in the woods.

53. Misspelled in original text; names in brackets are the correct spellings.

They did not know what purpose they would serve, but they expected the furnaces might be used to make charcoal. The furnaces were very primitive. [. . .] Jews building the furnaces were sometimes killed for entertainment. Lenz and *Sonderkommando* chief commissioner Bothmann showed extreme cruelty. At times, out of thirty workers sent to the woods, only fourteen returned. The groups of workers were constantly supplied with new men brought from Łódź. [. . .] The workers were given 200 grams (7 ounces) of bread a day, some coffee in the morning, and one-half liter (one pint) of soup for dinner. Only after the first transport had arrived did we get any blankets. We were constantly beaten during work. They hit us with their hands or spades. Obviously, blows from a spade resulted in death or mutilation, which actually equaled death, as those unable to work were finished off. [. . .]

The first transport came at the beginning of April from Łódź. In the morning Bothmann ordered the *Hauskommando* out of the granary. We were ordered to move baggage that had been unloaded near the narrow-gauge railroad track, in the place where it met the road. The prisoners were already locked in the church. We carried their belongings to the park, where two barracks had been built, one larger than the other. The confiscated clothes were sorted in the smaller building. Suitcases were put on one side and the sorted items on the other. The belongings were sorted by the *Hauskommando*. The most valuable items, new suits, etc., were kept in the smaller building. Valuables were given to Burmeister. The transported prisoners were taken to the woods by trucks at six in the morning. But before that the *Waldkommando*, consisting of about thirty people, had already left for the woods. The Jews did not expect any danger on the way. Three trucks transported prisoners to the woods. They were not allowed to take any baggage. In the evening fellow prisoners from the *Waldkommando* told us what had happened in the woods. After the trucks arrived the Jews were ordered to go to one of the barracks in the woods. The Germans told them to take off their clothes and put them in a separate pile, because they would put them back on after bathing. The underwear also had to be removed. Women could leave their panties on. Signs on the walls of the barracks read: "to the bathhouse" and "to the doctor." The Jews were driven out of the barracks and loaded into a van of a special type. If they refused to get in, the Germans used force. There were three vans: [a] larger one and two smaller ones. The larger van could hold up to 170 people, while the smaller ones, 100–120. The van doors were locked with a bolt and a padlock. Then the engine was started. The exhaust fumes entered

the interior of the van and suffocated those inside. [. . .] Shouting and banging on the door lasted about four minutes. The van was not moving at that time. After the shouting faded, the vehicle started moving in the direction of the crematoriums. When the van reached its destination, its door was unlocked to let the fumes out. Then two Jews went inside and threw out the bodies. The gas coming out had all the characteristics of exhaust fumes (color and smell). I cannot be mistaken here. The corpses, having been searched through, were placed in the furnace. [. . .] It took approximately one hour for the corpses to burn. Then a new pile of bodies was added. There were a few instances of unintended self-incineration: a Jew trying to set fire to a pile of bodies died in the flames himself. The bones were ground with the use of a hand-operated grinder on a cement surface near the woods. [. . .]

[Srebnik reports that transports arrived in Chełmno every second day for two months, until July 1944.]

The camp was liquidated and the barracks dismantled. Machines for shredding clothes and underwear were sent back. The furnaces were also dismantled. In the granary there were still eighty-seven Jewish workers. Those were tailors and shoemakers. They lived upstairs. The number of workers decreased and finally there were forty-seven of them left—twenty-two tailors and twenty-five courtyard workers. Bothmann wanted to kill me several times, but [Häfele] liked me and this partly helped save my life. [. . .] When the Soviet army was advancing quickly, one night we were ordered to leave the granary in groups of five. I cannot remember the date. The area was lit with car headlights. I went outside in the first group of five. Lenz ordered us to lie down on the ground. He shot everybody in the back of the head. I lost consciousness and regained it when there was no one around. All the SS-men were shooting inside the granary. I crawled to the car lighting the spot and broke both headlights. Under the cover of darkness, I managed to run away. The wound was not deadly. The bullet went through the neck and mouth and pierced the nose and then went out. I hid in Wieczorek's barn (he knew about it). They did not find me. Later I learned that while killing the Jews, Lenz and [Haase] also died (I saw their bodies). When the two went inside, the Jews hung one of them and shot the other one with his own weapon. Apart from me, one other person managed to save his life that night. It was Max Żurawski, who pushed his way past the gendarmes and escaped.

Unlike the teenage survivors we have encountered, very young children had almost no chance to survive in the Nazi system of concentration camps and killing centers. In camps where selections took place, the very young shared the fate of the elderly and unfit in going directly to the gas chambers. Small children likewise rarely survived labor and concentration camp settings, although some succeeded in doing so, usually with the complicity and aid of adult prisoners or the camp underground. This was certainly the case with young Stefan Jerzy Zweig, whose rescue by members of the socialist and communist underground resistance movement at Buchenwald formed the basis for the celebrated East German novel *Nackt unter Wölfen*, written by Bruno Apitz in 1958.⁵⁴

Stefan Jerzy Zweig, born in Kraków, Poland, on January 28, 1941, was the second child of Zacharias Zweig, a prominent young attorney, and his wife, Helena.⁵⁵ Less than one month after Stefan's birth, the family went into hiding to escape deportation to Lublin.

Moving into the newly created Kraków ghetto, Zacharias Zweig promised his small family that he would do his utmost to see that they all remained together. Miraculously surviving the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto and several work camps, the Zweig family, still intact, learned in July 1944 that they would all be sent to a HASAG⁵⁶ armaments factory camp in Leipzig, in the German interior. Upon their arrival in Leipzig, Zacharias and his son were separated from Helena and Stefan's eleven-year-old sister, Sylvia. Zacharias never saw his wife or daughter again; their train was bound for Auschwitz, where the two were murdered upon arrival. Zacharias, concealing his three-year-old son from German guards, reached the Buchenwald concentration camp, near Weimar, Germany, on August 5, 1944. Once at Buchenwald, the elder Zweig explained to camp authorities that he had received permission to bring the toddler along on the transport, and Stefan was officially registered as a camp prisoner. His personal information index card, shown in Document 5-12, indicates that camp authorities recorded the grounds for the three-year-old's incarceration as "Political [Prisoner], Pole—Jew" and gave him the prisoner number 67509.

54. A successful German film by the same name premiered in 1961.

55. Biographical information concerning Stefan Jerzy Zweig and his family is drawn from Zacharias Zweig's, "*Mein Vater, was machst Du hier?*" *Zwischen Buchenwald und Auschwitz: Der Bericht des Zacharias Zweig* (Frankfurt: Dipa-Verlag, 1987).

56. This is an acronym for Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft—Metallwarenfabrik, Leipzig, one of the largest privately owned German industrial companies, which utilized concentration camp prisoners for armaments manufacture.

Buchenwald had existed as a concentration camp complex since 1937, and over the years, a strong underground resistance movement flourished there. A large percentage of its detainees were German political prisoners: communists and socialists arrested in the early 1930s and long established among the prisoner population. Many held influential positions as the heads of forced labor brigades or played vital roles within the camp prisoner administration. A circle of these prisoners, led by Willi Bleicher⁵⁷ and Robert Siewert,⁵⁸ decided that protecting the small boy would represent an act of resistance to camp authorities. These political prisoners worked to record the toddler in official records as a regular inmate and settled him in their barracks, providing him with food, clothing, and toys. In the fall of 1944, Zweig's prisoner guardians averted the young boy's deportation to Auschwitz by hiding him in the camp infirmary and replacing his name on the transport list with that of a sixteen-year-old Roma boy, Willy Blum, who tragically died in the gas chambers upon arrival at Birkenau.

Stefan Jerzy Zweig and his father were liberated by American troops at Buchenwald on April 11, 1945. The toddler was one of several hundred "Buchenwald Boys"⁵⁹ who survived the camp, although at four years of age, he was certainly one of the youngest of their number. Father and son were reunited with their chief benefactor, Willi Bleicher in 1963. Stefan Jerzy Zweig settled in Vienna, where he worked as a cameraman for Austrian public television (ORF).

57. Arrested by the Gestapo in 1934 for endangering state security, young trade unionist Willi Bleicher (1907–1981) was sentenced to two and a half years in prison. After serving his full sentence, he was transferred in 1938 directly to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he was liberated in April 1945. After the war he continued his efforts as a trade unionist in West Germany. From 1959 until his retirement in 1972, he served as regional director of the trade union IG Metall in northern Baden and northern Württemberg. In 1977, Bleicher was awarded the Carl von Ossietzky prize for achievements in human rights.

58. Following the war, Robert Siewert (1887–1973) rejoined the Communist Party in East Germany, becoming the first vice president of the East German state of Saxony and later minister of the interior of Saxony-Anhalt. In 1950, the official Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei) of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) fostered a series of campaigns to discredit its more moderate members, and Siewert's career suffered as a consequence. Following Stalin's death in 1953, Siewert was rehabilitated. Until the end of his life, he was an important voice within the GDR's Union of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime.

59. For a discussion of the "Buchenwald Boys" in the postwar period, see chapter 10 of this volume.

DOCUMENT 5-12. Prisoner personal information card of Stefan Jerzy Zweig, Buchenwald, August 5, 1944, USHMM ITS Digital Collection, Buchenwald—Individual Documents, Male Section, R. 1.1.5.3, 7503616 1.

<u>KL: Buchenwald</u>		<u>Jude - Juvenilisch</u>	<u>MMI-M.-Nr.</u> <u>67509 P</u>
Häftlings-Personal-Karte			
Fam.-Name:	<u>Zweig</u>		
Vorname:	<u>Stefan, Jerzy</u>		
Geb. am:	<u>18.1.41 in Kraków</u>		
Stand:	<u>led.</u>	Kindern:	<u>+</u>
Wohnort:	<u>Kraków, Burgstr. 4</u>		
Strasse:			
Religion:	<u>mos. Staatsang.: Pole</u>		
Weinort d. Angehörigen:	<u>Mutter: Helena Z., Schönnewald b. Leipzig</u>		
Allg. Schneider A.Ges.			
Eingewiesen am:	<u>5.8.44</u>		
durch:	<u>RSHA</u>		
in KL:	<u>Buchenwald</u>		
Grund:	<u>Pol. Pole - Jude</u>		
Verstrafen:			
Überstellt am:	an KL.		
Entlassung: am:	durch KL.		
mit Verfügung v.:			
Strafen im Lager:			
Grund:	Art:	Bemerkung: <u>I.T.S. Foto</u> <u>No 000929</u>	
Sicherheit b. Einsatz: _____			
Körperliche Verfassung: _____			

Concentration Camp: Buchenwald [handwritten:] Jew and Juvenile

Prisoner Personal Information Card

Family name: Zweig	Transferred	Personal description:
First name: Stefan Jerzy	[blank]	Height: 97 centimeters (3 ft., 1 in.)
Born on: January 18, 1941, in Kraków	Figure: slender	
Civil status: single	Children? No	Face: oval
Residence: Kraków, Burgstr. 4	Eyes: brown	
Street:	Nose: gen[eral]	
Religion: [Jewish]	Citizenship: Pole	Mouth: gen[eral]
Address of relatives: mother	Teeth: complete	
Helena Z., Schönnewald near Leipzig	Ears: _____	
Concentration camp, H. Schneider AG ⁶⁰	Hair: blond	
Admitted: August 5, 1944	Language: Polish	
Through: RSHA ⁶¹	Distinguishing features: none	
Admitted to: Buchenwald		
Grounds: Political Pole—Jew		

60. This refers to Hugo Schneider, Aktiengesellschaft (HASAG).

61. The Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office).

DOCUMENT 5-13. Survivors of Buchenwald walk through the liberated camp with Stefan Jerzy Zweig, a four-year-old Jewish boy protected by the camp's underground resistance, between April and June 1945, USHMMPA WS# 19041, courtesy of the Fédération Nationale des Déportés et Internés Résistants et Patriotes.





CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN IN THE WEB OF RACIAL HYGIENE POLICY

A SIGNIFICANT SEGMENT of Nazi persecutory policies stemmed from **racial hygiene** or **eugenic** theories prevalent among the international scientific community in the first decades of the twentieth century. The movement's leading American advocate, Charles B. Davenport, described eugenics as the "science devoted to the improvement of the human race through better breeding."¹ Eugenicists believed that the ravaging social ills that attended modern society—mental illness, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, criminality, and even poverty—derived from hereditary factors. Eugenics proponents championed three primary objectives: to discover and enumerate "hereditary" characteristics that contributed to societal ills, to develop biological solutions for these dilemmas, and to campaign actively for public measures that might combat these dangers. Throughout western Europe and the United States, where the movement was eagerly embraced in the 1910s and 1920s, adherents lobbied for "positive" eugenic efforts: public policy that aimed to maintain physically, racially, and hereditarily "healthy" individuals through social welfare for "deserving" families, marriage counseling, and motherhood training. Through these efforts, proponents hoped to encourage "better" families to reproduce. Dovetailing with these endeavors to support the "productive," however, followed negative eugenic measures: initiatives to exclude and hinder society's "unproductive" elements and to redirect social and economic resources from these "less valuable" to the "worthy." Many members of the

1. Charles Davenport, quoted in Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 4.

eugenics community, in Germany as well as in the United States, promoted strategies that sought to marginalize segments of society with limited mental or social capacity—the “feeble-minded,” the mentally ill, and persons with disabilities—and to limit their reproduction through voluntary or **compulsory sterilization**. Eugenicists targeted the mentally ill and cognitively impaired, arguing a direct link between diminished capacity and depravity, promiscuity, and criminality. They viewed as a menace the racially “inferior” and “shiftless poor” who transmitted their dependency on the public through the modus of heredity. Tainted through inherited deficiencies, these groups endangered the national hereditary community, eugenicists maintained, and placed a financial burden on the society that sustained them. More often than not, eugenicists’ “scientifically” drawn conclusions about disabled individuals or ethnic and racial minorities did little more than incorporate popular prejudice. Yet, by employing “research” and “theory” in their efforts, they could assert their own notions of human inferiority and superiority as scientific fact.²

German eugenics pursued a terrible and separate course after 1933, but before 1914, the German racial hygiene movement did not differ appreciably from its British and American counterparts.³ A genuine radicalization of the German eugenics community began shortly after World War I. Here, the conflict’s unprecedented carnage, coupled with the economic dislocation of the interwar years, underscored in popular discourse the division between hereditarily “valuable” Germans who had died on the battlefield and the “unproductive” Germans institutionalized in prisons, hospitals, and welfare facilities, who had remained behind to reproduce and to draw their sustenance from the slender resources of the state. An allegory of the “stab-in-the-back” legend, such argumentation resurfaced consistently in the Weimar and early Nazi eras to justify eugenic sterilization and an abrogation of social services for the disabled and institutionalized. By 1933, the theories of racial hygiene had embedded themselves into professional and public conception and influenced the thinking of Adolf Hitler and many of his supporters and followers. Embracing an ideology that blended racial antisemitism with eugenic theory, the Hitler regime provided both the context and the latitude for the realization of eugenic measures in their most concrete and radical manifestations.

2. See Patricia Heberer, “Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. John Roth and Peter Hayes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 39–53.

3. See Sheila Faith Weiss, “Die rassenhygienische Bewegung in Deutschland, 1904–1933,” in *Der Wert des Menschen: Medizin in Deutschland, 1918–1945*, ed. Christian Pross and Götz Aly (Berlin: Edition Henrich, 1989), 153–73.

Children and adults of diverse backgrounds became victims of Nazi racial hygiene policy. This chapter discusses the compulsory sterilization of youngsters on the basis of presumed hereditary disorders, and—in the case of the so-called “Rhineland Bastards” (“*Rheinland-Bastarde*”) (see Document 6-2)—of “mixed” and “inferior” blood. It examines the much understudied German policy of **Lebensborn** (Fount of Life), an organization that in Germany worked to sustain unwed mothers and their children but in occupied countries, particularly in Poland, located and abducted “racially valuable” indigenous children for **Germanization** and adoption by German families. It explores the National Socialists’ only killing campaign that specifically targeted children: the child **“euthanasia” program**, which claimed the lives of five to seven thousand disabled German infants, toddlers, and juveniles. The following documentation also traces Nazi policies directed against European **Roma and Sinti (Gypsies)**, targeting both settled and nomadic Romani populations for mass murder. Finally, it considers children as victims of medical “research,” deployed in agonizing and often lethal experimentation to further the careers of unethical researchers or to underpin the racialist and ideological tenets of the Nazi worldview.

COMPULSORY STERILIZATION

One of the first racial hygiene measures employed by the National Socialist government when it came to power in 1933 was compulsory sterilization—an effort that stood at the core of broad-based plans to forge a new and utopian population policy in Nazi Germany. Such a strategy proved a double-edged sword. In a positive vein, German authorities would soon implement several complementary pronatal strategies, such as marriage loans (*Ehestandsdarlehen*), expanded marital and prenatal counseling, and child-support allowances (*Kindergeld*), meant to reverse Germany’s dwindling birthrate⁴ and to promote the increase of racially “valuable” children.

Compulsory sterilization was the other edge of the sword—an antinatal measure aimed at proscribing the propagation of “hereditarily compromised” Germans. Nazi ideologues portrayed individuals with mental, physical, or social disabilities as a “fifth column” within their “racial community”

4. The birthrate in Germany had been on the decline since 1870 but hit an all-time low in 1932. This was in part a consequence of the heavy losses among young men in World War I, but it also resulted from the demographic changes that came with urbanization in German lands and with women’s efforts at enfranchisement and emancipation.

(*Volksgemeinschaft*), corrupting Germany's national gene pool and burdening its social welfare network.⁵

Nazi authorities resolved to intervene in the reproductive capacities of such persons. On July 14, 1933, at the injunction of Germany's leading eugenicists and racial theorists, the Hitler cabinet promulgated the **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases** (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*). Also known as the **Hereditary Health Law** (*Erbgesundheitsgesetz*), the new legislation ordered the compulsory sterilization of persons suffering from specific diseases or impairments. Five of the disabilities designated in the ordinance represented psychiatric or neurological disorders, including schizophrenia, manic-depressive (bipolar) disorder, hereditary epilepsy, Huntington's chorea,⁶ and "hereditary feeble-mindedness."⁷ Four physical conditions also warranted sterilization under the new law: hereditary deafness, hereditary blindness, serious hereditary physical deformity, and severe alcoholism, which many physicians and scientists believed to have a genetic component. Medical professionals, including doctors and midwives, were now obliged to report patients with these illnesses or disabilities in the exercise of their duties. Directors of hospitals, mental institutions, schools, prisons, workhouses, and concentration camps also proposed candidates for sterilization, as did teachers, social workers, and public welfare agencies. Denunciation by ordinary citizens—by employers, employees, neighbors, and even family members—was not uncommon.

After a petition to sterilize an individual had been proposed and processed, the suit came before a special hereditary health court (*Erbgesundheitsgericht*), a Nazi legal innovation superimposed on the existing German juridical structure. By 1936, there were approximately 230 hereditary health tribunals throughout Germany, each constituting two physicians and one jurist. If a particular court ruled for sterilization, the individual in question had four weeks in which to appeal the verdict, for it was a legal process. In the absence of an appeal—or if a

5. See Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 271–96.

6. This incurable neurodegenerative disease causes a cumulative decline in mental and physical abilities, often leading to institutionalization. The disease results from a dominant mutation; any offspring of an affected parent incurs a 50 percent risk of inheriting the malady.

7. This ambiguous diagnosis today might include a wide spectrum of disorders, ranging in scope from various learning disabilities to mild and severe forms of cognitive and developmental impairment.

higher court turned down a standing appeal—the implementing decree for the 1933 law demanded execution of the sterilization procedure within two weeks’ time at the hospital or clinic designated in the verdict. Paragraph 12 of the legislation sanctioned the use of force on unwilling victims. Those attempting to circumvent the procedure might be escorted by police guard to the facility in question. Gisela Bock, whose work still represents the seminal study of the topic, suggests that from January 1, 1934, when the legislation took effect, until the end of World War II, some four hundred thousand Germans were forcibly sterilized under the auspices of the Hereditary Health Law.⁸

The terms of the law allowed for sterilization of children as young as ten with parental consent and compulsory sterilization, mandated by hereditary health courts, for adolescents aged fourteen and older.⁹ One youngster subjected to the procedure was Gerda E.,¹⁰ a teenager from Freienwalde, a village 50 kilometers (31 miles) northeast of Berlin. Gerda was deaf and, like many hearing-impaired children at the time, had been institutionalized in order to receive a special education. In this period, school authorities made little effort to integrate blind or deaf pupils with their seeing and hearing classmates. Moreover, some medical professionals associated the inability (or unwillingness) to speak—then labeled “deaf-mutism”—with mental retardation, and many profoundly deaf children and adults who lacked oral development found themselves confined to a mental health facility or institution for the deaf.¹¹ Gerda E. was sterilized in early August 1936. The following correspondence, written by the director of the State Institute for the Deaf and Mute to Gerda’s mother, speaks to the thoroughness of this process.

8. Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986). See also Paul Weindling, “Compulsory Sterilization in National Socialist Germany,” *German History* 5 (1987): 10–24. This figure does not include individuals sterilized extralegally, either experimentally in the Nazi concentration camp system during the war or as a result of anti-Roma regulations surrounding the December 1942 Auschwitz Decree, by which German Roma and Sinti exempted from deportation to Auschwitz were subject to compulsory sterilization.

9. Martin Rudnick, *Aussondern, Sterilisieren, Liquidieren: Die Verfolgung Behinderte im Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Edition Marhold, 1990), 97.

10. This individual’s surname has been abbreviated in order to protect her privacy and that of her family.

11. For a discussion of the German deaf community in this period, see Donna F. Ryan and John S. Schuchman, eds., *Deaf People in Hitler’s Europe* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002); Horst Biesold, *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany*, trans. William Sayers (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999).

DOCUMENT 6-1A. Letter of Dr. Gotthold Lehmann, director of the State Institute for the Deaf and Mute and Teaching Institute for Teachers of the Deaf and Mute, to Frau E., Freienwalde, c. July 1936, USHMM, RG-10.320, Horst Biesold Collection (translated from the German).

On the basis of the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases, your child Gerda was required to be registered with the local district physician [*Kreisarzt*] because it is suspected that she suffers from hereditary deafness. As you are certainly aware, hereditarily ill persons must, according to law, be sterilized in order to hinder the further spread of hereditary diseases.

I attach a leaflet containing instructions concerning the sterilization procedure for your information. You are asked to seek out your physician as soon as possible in order to discuss with him, in presentation of this letter, the case of your child and to ask him for oral clarification concerning the nature and consequences of sterilization. You will then ask him to confirm with his signature on the attached form that this instruction [concerning the sterilization procedure] has taken place.

I encourage you yourself to put in an application for the sterilization of your child. A form for the same is attached. The application does not imply that your child will be sterilized. It should serve instead to lead to an accurate examination of the case before the Hereditary Health Court. Sterilization will only occur when the Hereditary Health Court reaches the conclusion that your child is hereditarily ill.

You will lessen the work of the court appreciably and at the same time serve the interests of your child if you give accurate information concerning any cases of deafness or other illnesses among your family members. We attach a chart for a family tree, and ask you to fill in the details as fully as possible.

Heil Hitler!

[signed Lehmann]

DOCUMENT 6-1B. Letter of Dr. Gotthold Lehmann, director of the State Institute for the Deaf and Mute and Teaching Institute for Teachers of the Deaf and Mute, to Frau E., Freienwalde, July 31, 1936, USHMM, RG-10.320, Horst Biesold Collection (translated from the German).

To Frau E., Freienwalde on the Oder

[address obscured]

By order of the Public Health Officer [*Amtsarzt*] of [Berlin-]Neukölln, your daughter Gerda, now resident at the State Women's Clinic Neukölln, Mariendorfer Weg, must be transferred for sterilization. Because Gerda is over fourteen years of age, a special declaration of consent from you is not necessary. Any objection would not alter this course.

Gerda will be transferred on Monday.

Heil Hitler!

[Signed Dr. Lehmann]

The Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases targeted Germans who suffered from certain mental, physical, or social disabilities. Yet even as the measure represented an endeavor to purify the German racial community by curtailing the reproductive capacity of its “hereditarily compromised” members, racism ensured that persons whom Nazi authorities considered outsiders to that community were also incorporated in the measure. For the most part, German Jews sterilized legally under the Hereditary Health Law tended to be included under the legislation because of perceived biological deficiencies, not solely on the grounds of racial antisemitism. **Sterilizations** of Jewish citizens were most common in large Jewish communities like Berlin, particularly where there was a concentration of poorer, eastern European Jews. As with German working-class victims, the grounds for sterilization in these cases lay predominantly in socioeconomic factors rather than in overt racism.¹² So-called Gypsies (Roma and Sinti), African Germans, and a segment of the Polish minority in Upper Silesia, however, figured as targets for sterilization on purely racial bases.¹³ This was especially true for the so-called “Rhineland Bastards,” the children of German women and French colonial troops who had occupied the left and right banks of the Rhine directly following World War I and again when Germany defaulted on its foreign loans in the 1920s.

12. Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 283. In the case of both Jews and “Aryans,” the sterilization law tended to affect the lower economic strata of society.

13. Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 283.

By the early 1930s, there were approximately five hundred of these children between the ages of four and fifteen, many of them living in such Rhenish urban areas as Cologne, Koblenz, and Mainz. The Allied occupation of the German Rhineland was a source of national humiliation during the Weimar and Nazi periods, and these youngsters—some the offspring of consensual relations with occupying soldiers but also, in considerable numbers, the product of rape—had emerged as a living symbol of Germany’s disgrace. Many of the children bore the physical features of their French African¹⁴ and Indochinese fathers and were marginalized by the local populace. Police and medical officials had registered a large percentage of these “Rhineland Bastards” in the Weimar era, and several German public health administrators had urged their sterilization in the 1920s. By July 1933, with compulsory sterilization now a legally sanctioned measure, Nazi authorities refocused their attention on this tiny racial minority. On February 28, 1934, the Prussian Interior Ministry underscored the danger that these “mixed breeds” (*Mischlinge*) represented to the German population and recommended their sterilization. This 1934 memorandum warned officials in Germany’s Foreign Office of the difficulty of sterilizing the children under the terms of the current legislation, for, with few exceptions, they did not suffer from the mental or physical ailments mentioned in the regulation. Ultimately, because the 1933 Hereditary Health Law contained no provisions for implementation of the procedure on racial bases, Hitler authorized the *Gestapo* and certain hereditary health court officials to carry out sterilization of these juveniles in a secret action in 1937.¹⁵ This clandestine effort applied only in the Rhineland. Other African Germans, although marginalized as second-class citizens throughout the Nazi period, remained unaffected by the measure.¹⁶ The wider fate of the “Rhineland Bastards” remains largely unknown: scholars researching this particular topic were unable to locate more than a few members of this minority still alive in the last decades of the twentieth century.¹⁷

14. The French Republic at the time had colonies in North Africa, including Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia; French Equatorial Africa, including Chad, Gabon, Middle Congo (now the Republic of the Congo), and Ubangi-Chari (now the Central African Republic); and French West Africa, including Côte d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Dahomey (now Benin), French Guinea (now Guinea), French Sudan (now Mali), Mauritania, and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).

15. See Reiner Pommerin, *Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde: Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1979).

16. See, for example, Hans Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001).

17. Christian Pross and Götz Aly, *Der Wert des Menschen: Medizin in Deutschland, 1918–1945* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1989), 196.

DOCUMENT 6-2. Memorandum of the Prussian Minister of the Interior to the German Foreign Office, March 28, 1934, Political Office of the German Foreign Office, R99166, Partei, 84/4 (translated from the German).

Copy

The Prussian Minister of the Interior

Berlin, February 28, 1934

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As a result of the assertions repeatedly raised in the press, as well as in the petitions to the Minister President and the Ministry of the Interior, that a serious danger in the form of racial degeneration of the German population is to be expected from the mixed-breeds [*Mischlinge*] produced by colored¹⁸ occupying troops and German women and girls, I requested in April 1933 an inquiry and a report from the appropriate *Regierungspräsidenten*¹⁹ (Koblenz, Cologne, Aachen, Trier, Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf) concerning the resident mixed-breeds resident in their areas of jurisdiction. According to the information reported to me, a total of 145 authenticated cases of children produced by colored troops were discovered (administrative district of Koblenz: twenty-four; Cologne: six; Aachen: six; Trier: sixteen; Wiesbaden: eighty-nine; Düsseldorf: four). These were born in the years between 1919 and 1930, and are therefore today between the ages of four and fifteen. This figure may, however, be considerably lower than the actual number because, for obvious reasons, the mothers keep silent about their racially foreign [*fremdrassig*] offspring or deny that they are such, and therefore an exact figure remains elusive. Further, in my experience the mixed-breeds often appear to be of a pure European type, and therefore cannot be distinguished from the rest of the German population, even by racial experts. This is especially true for those mixed-breeds produced by white Frenchmen who themselves derive from African blood; these are represented even today in a significant number among the French people. If, therefore, all of the children produced by these soldiers could be surveyed, then even the figure of 500 to 600 estimated by experts in the field may not be too high.

In order to ascertain an unimpeachable judgment regarding the physical and mental state of the bastard children and concerning the racial

18. This term was used at the time to designate persons of color—above all, in this context, black Germans. The term is seen as pejorative today.

19. These were the local chiefs of administration.

significance of this intermingling of foreign blood in our western borderlands, I have, with the consent of the Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics in Berlin-Dahlem, Eugen Fischer,²⁰ tasked his assistant, Dr. Abel—a recognized expert in the field of racial studies—with a thorough investigation of an easily recognizable segment of the bastard children. Dr. Abel²¹ undertook this assignment in July 1933, and with the help of state and communal authorities, as well as schoolteachers, examined all known mixed-breeds in the cities of Wiesbaden and [Biberach], in total thirty-eight persons. These results, briefly summarized, are as follows:

The fathers of the thirty-eight children produced for inspection were twenty-six Moroccans, six Vietnamese,²² presumably two Turks, one Scot, and one Frenchman. A further father is a cross between an Englishman and an Indian; the latter, unknown, was in any case not of colored origin.

In outward appearance, the children of the Moroccans and the Vietnamese—the others are irrelevant to these comments—were mostly readily distinguishable as such. It must, however, be stated that the children produced by Moroccan fathers often display a completely European appearance: a fact which has the natural explanation that many Moroccans possess no negro blood, but on the contrary in a racial sense are fully

20. A prominent German anthropologist and physician, Eugen Fischer (1874–1967) made his name in 1913 with the publication of research concerning the so-called Rehoboth Bastards, the offspring of unions between Dutch colonizers and Hottentot tribeswomen in southwestern Africa. His contribution to the seminal two-volume work *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (*The Foundations of the Study of Human Heredity and Racial Hygiene*), coauthored with Fritz Lenz and Erwin Baur in 1921, established Fischer as a preeminent German eugenicist. Fischer directed the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics from 1927 to 1942. In this capacity, he strongly influenced Nazi racial and eugenic policies. Fischer retired from his academic appointments in 1942.

21. Wolfgang Abel (1905–1997), an Austrian anthropologist and racial hygienist, served at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, beginning in 1931. In 1942, Abel succeeded his mentor, Eugen Fischer, as chair of racial biology at the University of Berlin. In conjunction with Fischer, Abel was involved in efforts to Germanize, expel, and liquidate segments of the Soviet population in conjunction with the *Generalplan Ost* (General Plan East). Following the war, he lived as a private citizen in Austria until his death in 1997.

22. The original German texts refers to “Annamites,” indicating a mountain chain in the former French region of Indochina, including areas of Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Annam itself was a former kingdom and French protectorate in central Vietnam on the South China Sea.

comparable to certain members of the southern Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese populations.

However, a large number of Moroccan mixed-breeds displayed a pronounced negroid appearance. The physical development of these mixed-breeds can in certain cases be designated as quite poor. Much more striking, however, was the inferior mental and emotional predisposition of these children, as was established through the examinations of Dr. Abel and through the questioning of teachers and social workers. With few exceptions, they show themselves to be possessed of an insolent temperament, exhibited through disobedience, slovenliness, a predilection for street life, and an inclination for pilfering. Great excitability, rising to the point of violence, makes education extremely difficult or fully impossible.

The children of Vietnamese extraction are to be categorized very differently. Even when the Mongoloid traits are clearly in evidence, they showed very satisfactory physical development, were easy to rear, and learned well in school. [. . .]

While the estimated number of 500 to 600 mixed-breeds within a population of 60,000 is not very large in itself, it must still be stated that these mixed-breeds now resident in the western borderlands, and the anticipated offspring, represent a racially foreign element among the local population. It must certainly be made clear from a social standpoint that the native population avoids contact with these mixed-breeds, that these individuals are held back from gainful employment, and that as a result, they will decline to a socially inferior segment of the population which feels no sense of belonging to the German people. In France there are already today half a million colored persons, and with the low birth-rate among the French people, the mixed-breeds will make up half of the population within four to five generations. Therefore there is the obvious danger that, with the passage of time, the racial differences in the Franco-German border areas will increasingly be obscured through the propagation of the Moroccan descendants, and that the present racially predicated wall of protection will be leveled.

Certainly this danger has an excellent chance of being counteracted with a systematic population policy. Such efforts, however, must also be carried out with all energy because at this time they appear to be the only measures which can be undertaken. Because voices from many sides suggest a sterilization of the upper-age cohorts of those mixed-breeds soon to reach reproductive age, it must be countered that, according to the provisions of the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases,

only those mixed-breeds can be sterilized who are hereditarily ill in the sense of the law. If one were to deviate from this standpoint or adopt a special law allowing the possibility of sterilizing all mixed-breeds, then there may be the danger of highly unwelcome international implications. The French would probably view such a measure as directed against their colored French citizens, as the Japanese would view the sterilization of the Vietnamese offspring as directed against the Mongol race. Furthermore, a special law would have to encompass all of the numerous progeny of Negroes, Chinese, and members of other races produced through legitimate marriages with German women, and who are not present in large numbers in Germany. Such a measure on the part of Germany could then provide a pretext for other peoples, for example, the Japanese, to sterilize half-Germans living among them through legal measures. One must also reflect upon the fact that over half of the women made pregnant by colored soldiers during the time of the occupation are today married to German men and through these marriages have legitimated their mixed-breed children. [. . .]

Nevertheless, one must reason on the basis of the results of recent research that among the mixed-breeds of Moroccan origins there are certainly a large number who are of inferior material, to whom the Law of July 14, 1933,²³ is applicable without further question. If the pertinent agencies were to be advised in the implementation of this law, to direct especial attention to these mixed-breeds, then it may be expected that a not inconsiderable number of these carriers of unwelcome hereditary traits [*unerwünschte Keimträger*] can be eliminated from the reproductive pool within the framework of the existing law. Perhaps at some later date the Reich government will approach the idea of a law forbidding marriage between Germans and those of foreign [*artfremd*] races, as the United States of America has already considered, so that further legal grounds are available to protect us from the indubitably degenerative impact of racially foreign blood.

THE MANY FACES OF LEBENSBORN

Lebensborn (Fount of Life) was a Nazi organization established on December 10, 1935, in an effort to reverse Germany's dwindling birthrate and to increase the number of racially valuable offspring according to National Socialist

23. That is, the compulsory sterilization law.

principles.²⁴ Instigated by Reichsführer-SS **Heinrich Himmler**, Lebensborn represented an office of the **Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA)** until 1938, when it became part of the Main Office of the Personal Staff of the Reichsführer-SS.

In part, Lebensborn extended the 1932 **Schutzstaffel (SS) Marriage Ordinance**, through which the *Reichsführer-SS* granted SS members permission to marry based on the racial and hereditary health of potential couples. In September 1936 a further Lebensborn statute enjoined every SS man to produce at least four children, whether in or out of wedlock. Partly as a result of this injunction, Lebensborn gained notoriety in the postwar based on the false assumption that it represented a “breeding program” that forced unmarried German women into sexual unions with selected SS men. Lebensborn was nothing of the sort. The organization did function within the context of Nazi pronatal policy in that it carefully screened its participants according to strict racial and eugenic criteria and furnished advanced health care to the select mothers and children in its charge. In simple terms, the effort provided financial assistance and maternity care to the wives of SS men and also to unmarried mothers, a group that concerned Nazi racial hygienists and population planners. Illegitimacy still carried a strong social stigma in Nazi Germany, but to National Socialist ideologues, the reproduction of racially valuable children trumped traditional mores and religious values. Under the motto “Bear a Child for the Führer,” such policy makers hoped to encourage racially “pure” German women to reproduce regardless of their marital status and undertook serious efforts to make single motherhood appear more respectable. Furthermore, as the termination of pregnancies was generally prohibited for “Aryan” women,²⁵ Lebensborn was seen as a measure to reduce the significant number of illegal abortions. Lebensborn homes, the first of which opened in 1935, provided a safe environment in which unwed mothers could spend the time of their

24. For a comprehensive discussion of the Lebensborn program in all its aspects, see Georg Lilienthal, *Lebensborn, e. V.: Ein Instrument nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik: Forschungen zur neueren Medizin- und Biologiegeschichte* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1985); Dorothee Schmitz-Köster, *Deutsche Mutter, bist du bereit? Alltag im Lebensborn* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1997).

25. A May 1933 German law prohibited the availability of abortion facilities and services and effected a stricter enforcement of existing antiabortion laws. Nazi anti-abortion policies forbade medical abortions even to women who had experienced two Caesarean sections, but they allowed eugenic abortions for women whom hereditary health courts had ruled must be sterilized and who were pregnant at the time of the decision. See Bock, “Racism and Sexism,” 277; Lothar Gruchmann, “Euthanasie und Justiz im Dritten Reich,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 20 (1972): 239.

confinement and delivery away from the prying eyes of neighbors and family members. Here they might receive excellent pre- and postnatal care and gain a chance to rebuild their lives after childbirth. The Lebensborn organization constructed a sophisticated support system, offering the mothers secrecy, aid in finding employment, and assistance in altering their civil status to that of divorcee or widow in public records if they wished to retain their child.²⁶ Lebensborn administrators encouraged unwed mothers to give up their infants after birth, and the organization managed both orphanages and adoption services that placed Lebensborn children in “good German homes.” In the end, the organization established nine such homes on German soil and several more in German-occupied Europe. Many of the latter flourished in Norway, where local women who had conceived children with German occupying troops faced severe social ostracism. Georg Lilienthal, an authority on the Lebensborn effort, estimates that some seven thousand children were born in the organization’s homes in Germany between 1936 and 1945²⁷; 60 percent of these were the offspring of unwed mothers.

**DOCUMENT 6-3. Letter of Frau A.²⁸ to Lebensborn, e.V., October 7, 1938,
Bundesarchiv Berlin, NS 19/1064 (translated from the German).**

Copy

October 7, 1938

T.B. 58, Straubing

Poste Restante

I read your address in the newspaper and now turn to you in confidence in my great desperation. I am expecting a child from a man I cannot marry. Because I don’t know where I should go for the delivery—the matter must not be known either within my household nor here in Straubing (I am a social worker)—I would like to ask if you have a home where one can go long before the delivery date. The father of the child and I are both healthy “Aryan” individuals, and I would look forward to the birth of my child in a quiet place, away from the turmoil of my professional

26. See Michelle Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Women and Nazi Family Policy, 1918–1945* (Cambridge/Washington, DC: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute, 2007), 212–32.

27. See Lilienthal, 242ff. This statistic revises an earlier figure of twelve thousand children, introduced at the 1947–1948 Nuremberg Greifelt (RuSHA) Trial, whose data have in the last two decades become a matter of dispute.

28. This individual’s surname has been abbreviated to protect her identity.

responsibilities. Do you guarantee secrecy? What are conditions like at your home; how high are the costs? I am a member of the Barmen private insurance benefits program: could this insurance company pay for my costs without all of this becoming known? Please send me your reply quickly. Because I do not know if I copied your address down correctly and the letter might come back as undeliverable, I'm asking that you send your response poste restante.²⁹ I am now in my third month and would like to go into a home in December or January, because by that time my condition will be apparent.

Heil Hitler!

P. S. Does your institution also help with the accommodation of a child after birth?

The Lebensborn program represented a positive eugenic strategy, even as the measure confined itself to a small number of racially “valuable” mothers and their children and excluded those deemed unfit or undesirable. But the effort also had a much darker side. With the German invasion of Poland, Heinrich Himmler added to his already formidable number of domains the Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of German Ethnicity (Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, or RKFDV).³⁰ The RKFDV had as its mission the Germanization of “racially desirable populations” in territories occupied by German forces. In part its task was to discover ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) among the indigenous Slavic populations and to relocate, or “repatriate,” them. Under the auspices of Germanization, administrators from the Race and Settlement Main Office also conducted broad-based racial screenings of children in Slavic territories, searching for “racially valuable” children from among the local populace.³¹ German authorities seized those youngsters whom they believed possessed sufficient Germanic background or “appropriate racial features” and passed them on to Lebensborn officials. These administrators in turn processed the children and placed them for adoption with German

29. This refers to a postal service in which a piece of mail is held at a locality's central post office until the recipient retrieves it; in the United States, the terms *poste restante* and *general delivery* are employed for international and domestic mail, respectively.

30. See Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939–1945: History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

31. See Isabel Heinemann, “Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut”: *Die Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

families. As seen in the case of the children of **Lidice**,³² those young persons rejected for Germanization were generally not returned to their homes and families but instead murdered or sent to labor or reeducation camps.

DOCUMENT 6-4. German medical personnel examine Polish children at an internment camp set up by the Reich Commissariat for the Strengthening of German Ethnicity in Łódź to select youngsters “acceptable” for Germanization and adoption by German families, 1941, USHMMMA WS# 90416, courtesy of the Instytut Pamieci Narodowej.



Because of the destruction of Lebensborn records during the war years, it is difficult to establish where the responsibility of agencies like the RuSHA or RKFDV ended and where Lebensborn's accountability began with regard to these crimes. In the eighth Subsequent Nuremberg Trial—the so-called RuSHA, or Greifelt, Case—Lebensborn officials succeeded in shifting culpability for the abduction of several thousand non-German children onto the various organs of the SS. Yet, as the following testimony from that trial makes clear, the collaboration of Lebensborn in the Germanization effort left a considerable number of victims: the children abducted from their homes, the bereft parents and relatives left behind, and, in many cases, the unsuspecting German families who adopted the youngsters.

32. For a discussion of the children of Lidice, see chapter 2.

DOCUMENT 6-5. Testimony of Otto Uebe, November 4, 1947, *United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt et al.* (Subsequent Nuremberg Case No. 8, RuSHA Trial), in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 14 vols. (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., 1997), 4:1060-62.

Q: When did you first think of adopting a child?

A: In 1942, before my son was killed in combat, he requested that if he were to be killed in the war, I was to adopt a child and that I was to bring him up [in remembrance of] him and devote myself again to living with my wife.

Q: When did you first apply to Lebensborn for an orphan child?

A: As far as I know, early November 1943.

Q: With whom—

A: Just a minute, please. I must correct myself. It was 1942. [. . .]

Q: Did you continue to correspond with Lebensborn after this?

A: Yes, I repeatedly requested that a child be assigned to me. Later on I asked an acquaintance in Munich to personally speak to [the] Lebensborn [organization] and thereupon both he and Lebensborn informed me that I was again to go to Kohren-Sahlis,³³ and there were two children available there, not two years of age yet, one a boy and one a girl. My wife and I, therefore, on the 7th of June [1942] went there because just on this day I was anxious to take over the child, this being my son's birthday, and there together with my wife I took the boy.

Q: Witness, what were you told about those two children and about their parents and what nationality they were?

A: I was told that those children came from South Carniola.³⁴ I wasn't interested any further in the girl, but I was told about the boy that his parents had probably been murdered by Serbian bands; that this was a full orphan.

Q: Witness, is the child sitting at the prosecution table the child you selected?

A: Yes.

Q: Witness, would you have taken this child if there would have been any doubt in your mind that the parents of this child were living?

A: No, I desired to adopt the child and this could only be done if it was a full orphan.

33. This was a Lebensborn home and adoption center in Saxony.

34. This is currently part of the country of Slovenia.

Q: Witness, did you ask Lebensborn to have the name of the child changed?

A: Yes. I was asked whether I was anxious that the child bear my name immediately. This could be done, I was told, and then I replied in the affirmative, and in Kohren-Sahlis the child was signed out under the name of Wolfgang Uebe, and registered again in that name in Bayreuth.

Q: Did you have any further correspondence with Lebensborn after that?

A: All I did was to request Lebensborn to confirm for me that I was taking care of the child myself, so that I could get a tax deduction and furthermore that I would get a child's allowance from the place where I worked.³⁵ I received another letter thereupon in which it was confirmed that the child Mathias Potucnik, now called Wolfgang Uebe, had been taken into my family and that I alone was responsible for the welfare of the child, as there were no other people alive responsible for taking care of it.

Q: After that did Lebensborn ever let you know that anyone else or the parents of this child were living?

A: Yes. At the end of 1944, I was notified that the father had been found and wanted the child returned to him. I was informed about it, and asked if and when I was willing to turn over the child to him. On that point I replied that I loved the child, that it was in our family and had become used to us, and would they kindly give me the address of the father so that I could contact him personally. In answer to this, I received a letter that I was to do nothing whatsoever; the matter would be submitted to The Reich Leader SS [Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler] personally for his decision. Thereupon I heard nothing further from Lebensborn on the subject.

Q: Witness, after the war did you register this child as a foreign child adopted by you?

A: Yes. When the order was issued that children were to be registered, I made the notification that I had such a child which was actually not adopted; it is a foster child still in the care of my family, but the adoption had not formally taken place.

35. During the Nazi era, individuals received a financial lump sum annually for each child (*Kindergeld*) and a possible percentage reduction of any existing marriage loans (*Ehestandsdarlehen*) contracted by the parents; the former practice continues to the present day in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Q: Did you later hear from Mr. Mathias Potucnik?

A: Yes, I was told by the municipal administration at Oberhausen, where I live, that UNRRA³⁶ by order of Mr. Potucnik at Klagenfurt, St. Veiterstrasse 77, was inquiring as to the welfare of the child, and thereupon knowing that Potucnik was the father, I wrote to him; months passed before a Mr. Fahrenberger notified me that Mr. Potucnik was the father and he demanded that the child should be returned to him; as a matter of fact the letter was very nice. The father himself did not know German well and therefore the gentleman, an uncle and relative, was taking up negotiations with me; [the child's] father and mother had been in a concentration camp and the mother had died there, while the father had come back and now wished to have the child.

Q: Witness, where are you taking the child from here?

A: I am going to take the child to the German-Austrian frontier and there I will hand it over to Mr. Fahrenberger, who will turn it over to the father.

“EUTHANASIA”

The “euthanasia” program was one of many radical racial hygiene measures that aimed to restore the racial “integrity” of the German nation. The effort was National Socialist Germany’s first program of mass murder predating the “Final Solution,” or the genocide of European Jewry, by approximately two years. It endeavored to eliminate what Nazi authorities considered “life unworthy of life”—those individuals who, because of their severe psychiatric, neurological, or physical disabilities, were seen to represent both a genetic and a financial burden upon German society and the state. Hitler’s authorization of the policy, signed on his personal stationery in the autumn of 1939, decreed that those judged incurably ill by medical science “could be granted a mercy death.”³⁷ But “euthanasia” was a euphemism. The program systematically targeted disabled children as well as disabled adults living in institutions in Germany and in German-annexed territories. Historians estimate that two hundred thousand

36. This acronym stands for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency.

37. This was Hitler’s authorization for the “euthanasia” program; reprinted in Ernst Klee, *Dokumente zur Euthanasie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), 85.

patients, some 60 percent of Germany's institutionalized population, perished as a result of the "euthanasia" program.³⁸

In the spring and summer months of 1939, a number of planners, led by Philipp Bouhler,³⁹ director of the Führer Chancellery,⁴⁰ and **Karl Brandt**, Hitler's attending physician, began to organize a secret killing operation targeting disabled children. Bouhler's trusted subordinates Viktor Brack⁴¹ and Hans Hefelmann⁴² joined them in this endeavor, as did Dr. Herbert Linden⁴³ from the Reich Interior Ministry's Department IV, which enforced public health policy. The group enlisted the aid of four physicians: Hellmuth Unger,⁴⁴ Ernst Wentzler, Hans Heinze, and Werner Catel. The latter three men were

38. Hans-Ludwig Siemen, *Menschen blieben auf der Strecke: Psychiatrie zwischen Reform und Nationalsozialismus* (Gütersloh: Jan van Hoddis Verlag, 1987), 214. For a detailed discussion of the "euthanasia" (T4) program, see H. Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*; Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany, 1900–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Winfried Suess, *Der Volkskörper im Krieg: Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhältnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland, 1939–1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003); Ernst Klee, "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat: Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens" (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985).

39. Philipp Bouhler (1899–1945), the director of the Führer Chancellery, was one of the earliest members of the Nazi Party: he held NSDAP membership number twelve and participated in the Beer Hall Putsch. With Karl Brandt, he was a leading planner of the "euthanasia," or T4, program. Bouhler and his wife committed suicide on May 19, 1945, shortly after their capture by American authorities.

40. This was Hitler's private chancellery, a small office that managed his private affairs as head of state and responded to correspondence and petitions directed to the Führer personally.

41. Viktor Brack (1904–1948) ran the Führer Chancellery's Main Office II and, in this capacity, became involved in the clandestine "euthanasia" program. Until 1942, when he transferred to the front with his Waffen-SS unit, Brack served as T4's chief administrator, managing its daily organizational operations. Convicted by an American military commission in August 1947 as a defendant in the Nuremberg Medical Trial, Brack was executed at Landsberg Prison on June 2, 1948.

42. Hans Hefelmann (1906–1986) was the administrative director of the child "euthanasia" program. Although he was originally included in the indictment of several major T4 perpetrators in February 1964, the Limburg court ruled that Hefelmann was physically unable to stand trial and closed proceedings against him definitively in 1972; he died in 1986.

43. Herbert Linden (1899–1945) directed the Reich Interior Ministry's section responsible for state sanatoria and nursing homes and, as such, played an essential planning role in the "euthanasia" program. Linden committed suicide on April 27, 1945.

44. An ophthalmologist by profession, Hellmuth Unger (1891–1953) penned the novel *Sendung und Gewissen (Mission and Conscience)*, which, adapted as a feature film, appeared as the 1941 "euthanasia" propaganda vehicle *Ich klage an (I Accuse)*.

pediatricians with excellent credentials; Heinze had established a practice at Brandenburg-Görden, a pediatric clinic renowned for its modern facilities and advanced therapies, while Wentzler was the inventor of an incubator for premature infants ubiquitously known as the Wentzler Warmer. A fundamental concern of the planners was to develop a mechanism by which disabled youngsters—who often were not institutionalized until they reached school age—might come to the attention of public health authorities. On the basis of their recommendations, the Reich Ministry of the Interior on August 18, 1939, circulated a decree compelling all physicians and midwives to report newborn infants and children under the age of three who showed signs of severe mental or physical disability. Under the auspices of a front organization, the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Disorders (Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung von erb- und anlagebedingten schweren Leiden), “euthanasia” operatives convinced or cajoled parents to surrender their severely disabled youngsters to one of the committee’s many “special pediatric units” (*Kinderfachabteilungen*) throughout Germany and Austria. The clinics were in reality children’s killing wards where specially recruited medical staff murdered their young charges by administering lethal overdoses of medication or by starving them.

At first, medical professionals and clinic administrators incorporated only infants and toddlers in the operation, but as the scope of the measure widened, they included juveniles up to seventeen years of age. Conservative estimates suggest that at least five to seven thousand physically and mentally disabled German children perished as a result of the child “euthanasia” program during the war years.

DOCUMENT 6-6. Circular decree of the Reich Minister of the Interior, re obligatory registration for “Deformed, etc., Newborns,” etc., August 18, 1939 (Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 1501/5586, Reichsinnenministerium) (translated from the German).

The Reich Minister of the Interior
IV b 3088/39
1079 Mi

Berlin, August 18, 1939
NW, 40 Königsplatz 6.
Telephone: Depts.
Z, I, II, V, III 12 00 34
III, IV, VI (Unter den
Linden 72) 12 00 34
Top Secret

Re: Obligatory Registration for Deformed etc., Newborns

1. For the clarification of scientific questions in the area of hereditary deformity and of mental underdevelopment, a registration of relevant cases is necessary at the earliest possible instance.

2. I therefore order that the midwife who has rendered assistance in the birth of a child—even in the case in which a physician is present at the delivery—must submit a registration to the public health office within whose jurisdiction the birthplace of the child lies, upon the attached form, available at the individual public health offices, if it is suspected that the newborn child is afflicted with the following serious hereditary ailments:

- 1) Idiocy, as well as Mongoloidism⁴⁵ (especially in cases combined with blindness or deafness);
- 2) Microcephaly;
- 3) Hydrocephaly in severe or progressive stages;
- 4) Deformation of every kind, especially the absence of limbs, severe malformation of the head and the spine, etc.
- 5) Paralysis, including Little’s Disease [cerebral palsy].

In the case of birthing centers and maternity wards of hospitals, the midwife has the obligation to register only when a chief physician (para. 5) is not available or is unable to complete the registration.

3. Furthermore, all physicians are to register children who are afflicted with one of the conditions named in para. 2, items 1–5 and have not yet reached their third year in those instances where physicians discover such cases in the practice of their profession.

45. Considered pejorative today, this term refers to Down’s syndrome.

4. The midwife will receive a compensation of 2 RM [Reichsmark] for her efforts. The payment of this sum is to proceed through the public health office. In addition, she will be reimbursed for any postal fees she has incurred.

5. On the basis of §46, para. 2, items 3 and 4 of the Reich Physicians' Order of December 13, 1935 (*Reich Law Gazette I*, p. 1433), the Reich Health Leader [*Reichsgesundheitsführer*] requires all chief physicians of birthing centers and maternity wards to give the required notification for those children born in their institution or ward to the public health office in whose jurisdiction the child's place of birth lies.

All physicians are further required to send notification of registration to the responsible public health officer [*Amtsarzt*] at the child's place of residence in those cases in which children fall under para. 2 of this circular decree and have not yet reached their third year, and who have come to the attention of the physician in the exercise of his duties. In the possible event of a prolonged stay in an institution, the notification of registration is to be sent to the public health office in whose jurisdiction the institution lies.

6. For the filer of the registration suit (physician, midwife), the obligation to report, in accordance with article 3, para. 4 of the First Ordinance for the Implementation of the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases⁴⁶ of December 5, 1933 (*Reich Law Gazette I*, p. 1021), is fulfilled with this registration. Further obligatory registrations, especially according to the Prussian Law for the Welfare of Cripples⁴⁷ of May 6, 1920 (Law. S., p. 280), remains, as before, in effect.

7. For each incoming registration, the public health officer is personally required promptly to satisfy himself as to the accuracy of the registration form presented to him. In the event that he is unable to do so personally, the public health officer may appoint a physician with a full-time or part-time appointment to the public health office as his proxy.

8. The public health officer must confirm the completeness of the data in the registration forms which he receives and, after supplying any requisite supplementary information, is to send the form, together with an accompanying findings report from him or his representative, promptly to the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Disorders [*Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen*

46. This refers to the compulsory sterilization law; see a discussion of the law and its ramifications in the first section of this chapter.

47. In German, the law was called *Krüppelfürsorgegesetz*.

Erfassung von erb- und anlagenbedingten schweren Leiden] in Berlin W 9, Post Office Box 101.

9. The funds (compensation for special registrations, waiver of fees) paid out by the public health offices (including the communal offices) are to be requisitioned monthly from the Government Central Treasuries [Regierungshauptkassen] [. . .] On January 2 and July 1 of each year, the sums of funds paid out by the Government Central Treasuries [. . .] are to be reported to me in accordance with the appended example. The sums will be reimbursed by me through Reich funds. Negative data reports [*Fehlanzeigen*]⁴⁸ are required.

10. A copy of this decree is to be prepared for the public health officer of each district. From these, a copy of this decree with the enclosed example is to be prepared together with a certificate of receipt for all midwives [and] chief physicians of birthing centers and maternity wards of hospitals in the district of the public health office. A corresponding number of carbon copies of the decree abstract will be sent to you by separate cover. With reference to the licensing of new midwives and the establishment of new installations of the aforementioned institutions, the same procedures should be followed.

At every opportunity, the public health officers should make midwives cognizant of the registration procedure.

11. The necessary registration forms are to be requested by the public health offices from the higher administration offices, whose needs will be covered by the Reich Printing Office. The forms will be dispensed from this source at no cost. A larger number of carbon copies for the first instance of usage will be sent to the higher administration offices by the Reich Printing Office by order of this decree. The shipping costs will be paid from this office in advance, and accounts of the same should be sent to me with the calculated balances as discussed in para. 9.

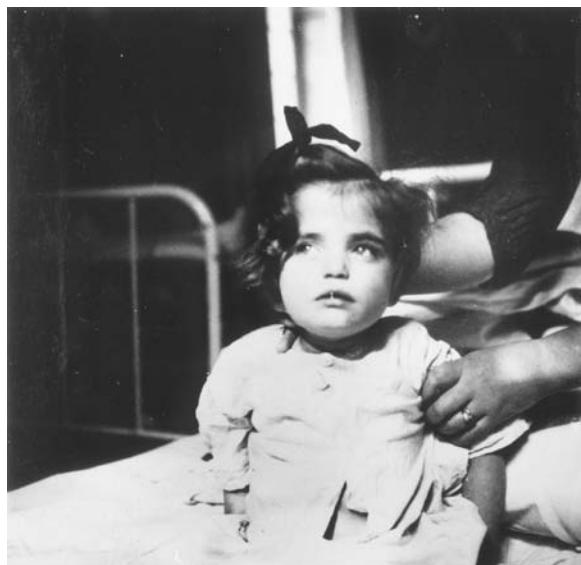
By Proxy,

[Signed W. Stuckart⁴⁹]

48. Such a statement, usually from a regular recording post, indicates that there is no data to convey within a given time frame.

49. Wilhelm Stuckart (1902–1953), state secretary in the Reich Ministry of the Interior, was a legal advisor for the fledgling Nazi Party. Stuckart was heavily involved in the early persecution of Jews, cowriting the Nuremberg race laws imposed in 1935. A representative for the Interior Ministry at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, Stuckart supported forced sterilization for *Mischlinge* instead of deportation. Stuckart was convicted by an American military commission at the Nuremberg Ministries Trial, but his sentence was reduced to time served, and he was released in April 1949.

DOCUMENT 6-7. Annamarie R., a young disabled girl born in Kassel, Germany, on January 30, 1935. She was murdered, likely by an overdose of medication, in the Eichberg "euthanasia" facility c. June 27, 1941, USHMM WA# 58297/HHStAW Abt. 3008 Picture collection, courtesy of the Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden.



"Euthanasia" planners quickly envisioned extending the killing program from young children to adult disabled patients living in institutional settings. In the autumn of 1939, Adolf Hitler signed a secret authorization in order to protect participating physicians, medical staff, and administrators from prosecution; this authorization was backdated to September 1, 1939, to suggest that the effort was related to wartime measures.⁵⁰ "Euthanasia" functionaries called their

50. "Euthanasia" functionaries differ in their testimony concerning the exact dating of the Hitler authorization. T4 plenipotentiary Karl Brandt suggested that Hitler signed the document in late October 1939; see testimony of Karl Brandt, *Trials of War Criminals before Nuremberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951–1952), 1:893. According to "euthanasia" physician Horst Schumann, the document was signed in mid-October. The most reliable evidence may come from Viktor Brack, perhaps the person most clearly in a position to know, as the text was written and transcribed in his office. Brack placed the time of Hitler's written authorization at late 1939 or early 1940, when the first killings began. In this way the authorization clearly laid an extralegal basis for the measure that protected participating doctors and administrators; see Ernst Klee, *"Euthanasie" im NS-Staat: Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens"* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), 100.

secret enterprise T4. The operation took its code name from the street address of the program's coordinating office in Berlin at Tiergartenstrasse 4. According to Hitler's directive, Philipp Bouhler, the director of Hitler's private chancellery, and Karl Brandt, Hitler's attending physician, undertook leadership of the killing operation. Under their auspices, T4 operatives established six gassing installations for adults as part of the "euthanasia" action: Brandenburg, on the Havel River near Berlin; Grafeneck in southwestern Germany; Bernburg and Sonnenstein, both in Saxony; Hartheim, near Linz on the Danube in Austria (then the *Ostmark*); and Hadamar in Hessen.⁵¹

Utilizing a practice developed for the child "euthanasia" program, T4 planners began in the autumn of 1939 to distribute carefully formulated questionnaires to all public health officials, public and private hospitals, mental institutions, and nursing homes for the chronically ill and aged. The limited space and wording on the forms, as well as the instructions in the accompanying cover letter, combined to convey the impression that the survey was intended to gather statistical data. The form's sinister purpose was suggested only by the emphasis that the questionnaire placed on the individual patient's capacity to work and by the categories of patients that the inquiry required health authorities to identify: those suffering from severe psychiatric disorders or physical disabilities, those not of German or "related" blood, those committed to a mental health facility on criminal grounds, and those who had been confined to the institution in question for more than five years. Secretly recruited physicians and psychiatrists—many of them of significant reputation—worked in teams of three to select patients for the program, often without seeing the individuals in question. On the basis of their decisions, T4 functionaries began in January 1940 to remove designated patients from their home institutions and to transport them by bus or rail to one of the central gassing installations for killing. Within hours of their arrival at such centers, the victims were murdered in specially designed gas chambers, disguised as shower facilities, utilizing chemically produced pure carbon monoxide gas. Thereafter, "euthanasia" personnel burned the bodies in crematoria adjacent to the gassing facilities. Other workers took the ashes of cremated victims from a common pile and placed them in urns to send to the relatives of the victims. The families or guardians of the victims received such an urn, along with a death certificate and other documentation, listing a fictive cause and date of death.

51. Only four centralized gassing installations operated at any one time from January 1940 until August 1941. In late 1940 the Brandenburg and Grafeneck T4 facilities were closed down and replaced with killing centers at Bernburg and Hadamar.

Because of the program's clandestine nature, T4 planners and functionaries took elaborate measures to conceal its deadly designs. Even though, in every case, physicians and institutional administrators falsified official records to indicate that the victims had died of natural causes, the "euthanasia" program quickly became an open secret. In view of widespread public knowledge of the measure at a critical juncture in the war effort, Hitler ordered a halt to the "euthanasia" operation in late August 1941. According to T4's own internal calculations, the "euthanasia" effort claimed the lives of 70,273 mentally and physically disabled adult patients at the six gassing facilities between January 1940 and August 1941.

Hitler's call for a halt to the T4 action did not mean an end to the "euthanasia" effort. The child "euthanasia" program continued throughout the year-long pause in T4 killing operations. Moreover, in the late summer of 1942, German medical professionals and health-care workers resumed the killing of adults, albeit in a more carefully concealed manner than before. More decentralized than the initial gassing phase, the renewed effort relied closely on regional exigencies, with local authorities determining the pace of the killing. T4 functionaries now employed drug overdose and starvation, methods already successfully utilized in child "euthanasia," as a more covert means of killing. Resuming at a broad range of custodial institutions throughout the Reich, the "euthanasia" program continued until the last days of World War II. Historians estimate that Operation T4 and its ancillary operations claimed the lives of two hundred thousand individuals, among them five to seven thousand children.

During the second phase of "euthanasia" operations, T4 facilities often participated in the murder of both juvenile and adult patients. Institutions such as Eichberg in Hessen, Langenhorn in Hamburg, Stadtroda in Thuringia, and Kaufbeuren, near the Bavarian city of Augsburg, housed adult killing wards as well as the "special pediatric units"⁵² of the child "euthanasia" program. At each of these facilities, "euthanasia" operatives, functioning through a fictive organization, the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Disorders, arranged the transfer of disabled children from the parental home or from another pediatric institution to a participating T4 facility for killing. One of their victims was four-year-old Anita Hart.⁵³

52. The German *Kinderfachabteilungen*, literally meaning "children's wards," is translated in this context as "special pediatric units" to denote a killing center of the child "euthanasia" program.

53. This individual's surname has been changed to protect her privacy and that of her family.

Anita Rosemarie Hart was born into a Catholic family in Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart in southwestern Germany, on September 1, 1938. The infant girl was healthy, and Albert Hart, a skilled metalworker, and his wife, Erika, happily welcomed their first child. In early childhood, however, Anita contracted meningitis, a life-threatening infection that causes an inflammation of the protective membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. The toddler recovered from the disease, but the resulting encephalitis⁵⁴ had caused blindness and permanent brain damage.

As the child grew, medical professionals advised the Harts that severe cognitive impairment would likely leave her uneducable and that the youngster would probably require institutionalization. Yet, as with many young children with disabilities, Anita remained with her parents until she approached school age. At this time, Albert Hart had been drafted into military service and was serving with **Wehrmacht** forces at the front. Erika Hart was in the early stages of a new pregnancy. Alarmed by the prospect of caring as a single parent for a newborn and a severely disabled child, she yielded to the pressure of local public health authorities and agreed to place Anita in a pediatric institution. Representatives of the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Disorders—in reality operatives of the child “euthanasia” program—arranged Anita Hart’s committal to the Kaufbeuren Sanatorium and Nursing Home (Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Kaufbeuren) on March 30, 1943. The facility’s chief medical director, Valentin Faltshauser,⁵⁵ informed the Harts that their daughter’s prognosis for recovery was “extraordinarily bleak” but indicated that the child was “trusting and good-natured” and presented few difficulties for the nurses who managed her care. Anita lived at the facility for three months, during which time her mother, despite wartime travel restrictions, journeyed the 140 kilometers (89 miles) from Ludwigsburg to visit her child. Abruptly, on June 22, 1943, Erika Hart received a telegram that her daughter had died of pneumonia. In reality, Anita Hart, aged four years and nine months, had been murdered with a lethal overdose of medication. She

54. This is an acute inflammation of the brain.

55. Valentin Faltshauser (1876–1961) served as the medical director for the Kaufbeuren institution from 1929. He not only directed both the adult and child “euthanasia” programs at the facility but also served as a consultant who selected adult patients for the “euthanasia” effort. Arrested in 1945 and tried by an Augsburg court in 1949, Faltshauser was convicted on the relatively minor charge of abetting manslaughter and sentenced to three years in prison. For the fate of “euthanasia” perpetrators in the postwar period, see Ernst Klee, *Was sie taten—was sie wurden: Ärzte, Juristen und andere Beteiligte am Kranken- und Judenmord* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 198–99.

is one of 209 infants, toddlers, and juveniles who perished at the Kaufbeuren "euthanasia" facility between December 1941 and May 1945.⁵⁶

DOCUMENT 6-8. Excerpts from the patient file of Anita Hart, March 30, 1943, to June 22, 1943, File No. 13029, USHMM, RG-14.030M, Bezirkskrankenhaus Kaufbeuren (translated from the German).

Kreis Association Ludwigsburg (Württemberg)	Mathildenstrasse 8 Telefon 4857–4859 February 12, 1943
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Juvenile Office

Re: Accommodations for the child Anita Hart, born September 1, 1938, from Ludwigsburg, Wernerstrasse 62.

The Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Disorders in Berlin W9 reported to me in a letter of October 19, 1942, that admittance of the above mentioned child to your institution has come into question. Because her mother is five months pregnant, time is of an essence in placing this child.

I therefore ask a response at your earliest convenience as to when and under what conditions this child can be admitted there. What must be sent with [the child] in terms of clothing? The cost of care and lodging will be undertaken by the City Office for Family Support in Ludwigsburg, as the father at this time has been inducted into the army.

[signature]

Mr. Albert Hart
Ludwigsburg/Württemberg

Dear Mr. Hart! April 8, 1943
Your child Anita has adjusted very well to the pediatric unit. She is causing no trouble. The condition of the child remains the same as before, as you are already aware.

The planned eye examination here has shown that at least in the right eye, some vision has been retained. In the left eye, the optic nerve has

56. Michael von Cranach, Martin Schmidt, and Robert Kuhlmann, "Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Kaufbeuren," in *Psychiatrie im Nationalsozialismus: Die Bayerischen Heil- und Pflegeanstalten zwischen 1933 und 1945*, ed. Michael von Cranach and Hans-Ludwig Siemen (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 295. Approximately 1,350 adult patients were also murdered at the facility during the war years.

completely disappeared, while in the case of the right eye, some of the nerve has been left intact.

When the child is assisted in time, she does not soil her bed. The child is for the most part very trusting and good-natured; only on occasion is she temperamental for a short while and somewhat more difficult.

Given the nature of the illness, frankly there is unfortunately very little hope for the future.

Heil Hitler!

Signed Faltlhauser
Director

Dear Mr. Hart!

May 15, 1943

In the case of your child Anita, she suffers from blindness caused by encephalitis and meningitis contracted in early childhood. The blindness is caused by an atrophy of the optic nerve, which is in any case the consequence of the aforementioned illness. The brain damage resulting from a swelling of the brain during this illness unfortunately cannot be reversed. As regrettable as it is, the prospects for the future of your child are extraordinarily bleak. Here the physician's arts are at an end.

Heil Hitler!

Signed Faltlhauser
Director of Kaufbeuren

Telegram

Erika Hart

Wernerstrasse 62

Ludwigsburg/Württemberg

Anita dead. Burial, unless other arrangements are indicated by you, on Friday, 11:00 a.m. at Kaufbeuren.

Mental Health Facility

June 22, 1943.

Death Certificate

Copy 1

Register No. 86 Month: June Year: 1943

Place of Death: Kaufbeuren District Police: Kaufbeuren

Street: Kermatherstrasse House No.: 16

Parish: Kaufbeuren County Registry

District: Kaufbeuren

Place of Residence:

Ludwigsburg

Surname: Hart

Rank or Occupation: Child

Age: 4 Yrs. 9 Months

District Police: Ludwigsburg

Street: Wernerstrasse House No.: 62

First Name: Anita Rosemarie

Civil Status: Single

For children under the age of 15, it is to be specified whether legitimate or illegitimate: Legitimate

Religion: Catholic

Date and Hour of Death: June 22, 1943

11:45 a.m.

Duration of Illness: Since early childhood

Name of Illness (Main Cause): Consequences of early childhood meningitis-encephalitis

Secondary Conditions: Idiocy,⁵⁷ atrophy of the optic nerve

Complications: Pneumonia

Cause of Death: Pneumonia as a result of influenza (33a)

According to Whose Diagnosis: Dr. med. Faltlhauser

If Suicide, by What Means: _____

Probable Cause: _____

By Deadly Accident, Cause of Accident: [. . .]

Labor or Industrial Accident: _____

Probable Burial Time: June 24–25, 1943, 11:45 a.m.

Notations: Autopsy June 25, 1943

THE DANGER OF “GYPSY BLOOD”: ROMA AND SINTI

Without question, Jews represented the most significant “enemy” within the National Socialist worldview and the chief target of their racial policy. Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) figured as another group of “biological enemies” singled out by Nazi authorities for persecution. Although the scope, dimension, and course of the two campaigns differed appreciably, the convergence of eugenic and racialist motivations formed a common link between anti-Jewish and anti-Roma policies.⁵⁸ The proposed solution to the “Gypsy problem” varied not only among administrators in different regions but among top Nazi policy makers

57. In the German- and English-language contexts, “feeble-mindedness,” that is cognitive impairment, was defined medically in three grades: *Schwachsinn* (moronism), its mildest form; *Imbezilität* (imbecility); and *Idiotie* (idiocy), the severest degree.

58. See H. Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*.

themselves, who divided sharply into those who saw Roma in unequivocally racial terms and those who believed Gypsies represented a criminal element best left to police officials.⁵⁹

The year 1936 marked a turning point in the Nazi persecution of Roma and Sinti. By this time, German officials had begun to concentrate German Sinti and Roma in so-called Gypsy camps. Furthermore, in November of that year, psychologist Dr. Robert Ritter assumed directorship of the newly established Eugenic and Population Biological Research Station attached to the Reich Public Health Office in Berlin. Ritter's primary task was to register persons of "Gypsy blood" in the German Reich and to classify them in terms of their racial makeup and "purity." In one sense, this was not a new phenomenon. Roma and Sinti had been registered in Germany since 1899, when the Bavarian State's Ministry of the Interior created an Information Service for the **Security Police** in Reference to Gypsies. Certainly in pre-Nazi times, there had been ethnographical study of Roma and Sinti language, culture, and traditions that predated, however subtly, the racial concepts of the Nazi era. The innovative nature of Ritter's efforts lay in categorizing Sinti and Roma according to a specifically eugenic worldview; in doing so, medical professionals and scientists could provide "evidence" of each individual's racial inferiority through the lens of "science."⁶⁰ Ritter employed a team of trusted researchers, among them the nurse Eva Justin, who served as Ritter's right hand and profited from her work with the Research Station by including a portion of its findings in her 1943 dissertation.

As Ritter's work increasingly became the basis for implementing a radicalizing Nazi policy toward Gypsies, his office was absorbed into the Reich Office of the Criminal Police (Reichskriminalpolizeiamt, or RKPA),⁶¹ and in 1941, Ritter came to direct the Criminal Biological Institute of the Security Police. Ritter and his researchers continued to register and classify Roma and Sinti by charting genealogical data, tracing members of extended families, documenting marriages to "outsiders," and recording information on physical health, education, criminal activity, and social interaction. In the field, the researchers exploited their knowledge of Sinti culture, speaking fluent Romani, distributing candy

59. See Michael Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1996).

60. See Patricia Heberer, "Roma and Sinti in Light of Nazi Medical and Eugenic Policy," in *The Genocide of Roma during World War II*, ed. Jana Horváthová (Prague: Office of the President of the Czech Republic and the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, 2004), 132–38.

61. This was Office V of the Reich Security Main Office, or Reichssicherheitshauptamt.

and trinkets to youngsters, and coaxing information from suspicious adults and guileless children. When their subjects arrived at the Research Station for blood samples, assessment of body features, and anthropometric measurement, team members were often less genial, using humiliation and threats to elicit responses to their numerous questions.⁶²

In the end, the findings of Ritter and his team were a matter of life and death. On December 16, 1942, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler issued his infamous Auschwitz Decree, ordering the **deportation** of all German “Gypsy mixed-breeds” (*Zigeunermischlinge*) to **Auschwitz**. There were, of course, exceptions to Himmler’s directive: “racially pure” Gypsies were exempt from the decree, as were Roma and Sinti who could show consistent employment and fixed residence,⁶³ those serving in the German army,⁶⁴ and those laborers whose employers could demonstrate that they were essential to the war effort. The decree provided specifically that all those individuals above the age of twelve who remained in Germany should be immediately sterilized. Most of the deportation lists for the twenty-three thousand German Sinti and Roma transferred to Auschwitz were compiled on the basis of Ritter’s “scientific” efforts. Ritter and his team were conscientious in their task until the end: in the days before deportation of Sinti from Magdeburg began, Ritter and Eva Justin were seen at the Gross Silberberg and Sülze Gypsy camps, dutifully verifying their classification against transport rosters. Justin also spent the busy month of March 1943 doing similar work at the Feldberg and Marzahn camps, in southwestern Germany and outside Berlin, respectively.⁶⁵

Because, in the course of his research, Ritter had concluded that most of the Roma and Sinti he had categorized did not represent “racially pure” Gypsies but “mixed-breeds” who continued to intermarry among themselves, the vast majority of German Sinti registered by the Ritter team were deported to Auschwitz, where nineteen thousand perished from starvation, disease, or gassing during the liquidation of the Gypsy family camp in **Auschwitz II**—

62. See Reimar Gilsenbach, “Wie Lolitschai zur Doktorwürde kam,” in *Feinderklärung und Prävention: Kriminalbiologie, Zigeunerforschung und Asozialenpolitik*, ed. Götz Aly et al. *Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik* 6 (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1988), 101–34.

63. The overwhelming majority of Sinti and Roma did not meet this criterion, even if they once could have, for by the time of the deportations, most were already in collection camps, which did not count as a form of permanent or fixed residence.

64. Veterans and decorated individuals were also exempted.

65. Gilsenbach, “Wie Lolitschai,” 110.

Birkenau on August 2, 1944.⁶⁶ One group of *Mischlinge*, however, was spared the 1943 deportations: forty “Gypsy hybrid” children housed at the Catholic orphanage Sankt Josefspflege in Mulfingen in southwestern Germany. These youngsters figured as the subject of Eva Justin’s dissertation research and so were carefully shielded from transfer. By safeguarding them at the orphanage, Justin meant to preserve her living test subjects while she defended her doctoral thesis at the University of Berlin. In May 1944, shortly following the publication of her dissertation—the juncture at which a German doctoral title is officially awarded—the children were registered by local officials and likewise deported to Auschwitz.⁶⁷ Three of the older children were retained and sterilized as a condition of their deferment. All but four of those transferred to Auschwitz met their deaths in the gas chamber in Birkenau.

DOCUMENT 6-9. ITO/ITS Report of Johannes Meister, children's search officer, regarding Gypsy children of Sankt Josefspflege in Mulfingen, c. 1948, USHMMMA, RG-07.004*01, Zigeunerkind aus der Sankt Josefspflege in Mulfingen (translated from the German).

Inventory

The following children, examined by Dr. Ritter of Racial Hygiene Institute Berlin, in association with Dr. Eyrich, were transferred from St. Josefspflege to the camp at Auschwitz.⁶⁸

On January 20, [19]44:

Steck, Siegfried	b. 01/19/1929	in Wiesbaden
Steck, Luana	b. 05/04/1934	in Wiesbaden
(Parents: Franz Leonard and Johanna Dorf)		
Dorf, Rudolf	b. 08/12/1935	in Wiesbaden
Dorf, Maria	b. 11/12/1937	in Wiesbaden
(Mother: Johanna Dorf)		

66. H. Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 252; Reimar Gilsenbach, “Die Verfolgung der Sinti—ein Weg, der nach Auschwitz führte,” in *Feinderklärung und Prävention: Kriminalbiologie, Zigeunerforschung und Asozialenpolitik*, ed. Götz Aly et al. *Beiträge zur nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik* 6 (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1988), 32. After the war both Ritter and Eva Justin were employed by the Frankfurt Public Health Office. In 1948, the Frankfurt prosecutor’s office opened an inquiry into Ritter’s Nazi-era activities but closed the case on the grounds of insufficient evidence in 1950. Ritter died in 1951. Eva Justin died of cancer in Offenbach, near Frankfurt, in 1966.

67. Gilsenbach, “Wie Lolitschai,” 110–17.

68. The surnames of these individuals have been replaced by pseudonyms to preserve their privacy.

On May 9, [19]44:

Engel, Fritz	b. 08/14/1928	in Schmalfelden
Engel, Martin	b. 10/14/1931	in Odenheim
Engel, Amandus	b. 07/11/1933	in Busenbach near Ettlingen
		(Parents: Johann Engel and Beate Pfeiffer)
Gross, Rosa	b. 10/28/1927	in Weiler in den Bergen
Gross, Sofie	b. 07/04/1934	in Wilsingen
Gross, Ferdinand	b. 09/11/1935	in Gigen
		(Parents: Ferdinand Reiner and Friderike Gross)
Kolb, Johanna	b. 05/22/1928	in ?
Kolb, Franz	b. 04/30/1930	in ?
Kolb, Olga	b. 11/06/1933	in ?
Kolb, Anton	b. 09/19/1932	in ?
Kolb, Elis	b. 05/28/1935	in ?
Kolb, Johann	b. 07/12/1936	in ?
		(Parents: Josef and Hilda Kolb)
Kolb, Anton	b. 12/07/1934	in Ravensburg
Kolb, Josef	b. 01/03/1936	in ?
		(Mother: Elisabeth Kolb, tradeswoman)
Kern, Otto	b. 06/06/1934	in Stuttgart
Kern, Sonia	b. 10/02/1935	in Stuttgart
Kern, Thomas	b. 02/21/1937	in Stuttgart
		(Parents: Otto and Franziska, née Pfeiffer)
Mann, Luise	b. 08/20/1929	in Baltringen
Mann, Martha	b. 11/08/1932	in Dorndorf
Mann, Karl	b. 1933	in ?
Mann, Elisabeth	b. 07/29/1936	in Ittenhausen
		(Mother: Ludwina Mann)

Reiner, Amalie	b. 01/18/1929	in ?
Reiner, Scholastika	b. 08/02/1933	in ?
Reiner, Anton	b. 04/04/1931	in ?
Reiner, Adolf	b. 03/10/1936	in Kirchdorf/Iller (Parents: Josef and Amalie Reiner)
Reiner, Ottolie	b. 12/16/1930	in ?
Reiner, Klara	b. 08/11/1933	in ? (Parents: Paul Reiner and Christine, née Gut)
Wand, Karl	b. 01/03/1933	(Mother: Katharina Wand)
Walther, Rosina	b. 03/11/1933	in Oberndorf
Walther Maria	b. 07/24/1932	in Hohentengen
Walther, Josef	b. 10/30/1936	Reinstetten (Parents: Franz Walther and Maria, née Kolb)
Gross, Wilhelm	b. 02/28/1929	in ?
Reiner, Andreas	b. 08/16/1929	in ?
Gross, Patriska	b. 06/26/1925	in Baldern
Came to the Braun family in Markelsheim on June 5, 1941, and were collected from there and sent to Auschwitz.		
Of these, the following children returned [from Auschwitz]:		
Reiner, Amalie	b. 01/13/1929	[here or above a mistake in the original]
Mann, Luise	b. 08/20/1929	
Gross, Rosa	b. 10/28/1927	
The following were sterilized:		
Gross, Josef	b. 03/09/1922	
Pfleger, Alfons	b. 08/24/1930	
Pfleger, Mathilde	b. 10/28/1927	

DOCUMENT 6-10. Sinti children pose with a nun at the St. Josefspflege home at Mulfingen, ca.1943–1944. The children, spared as “research material” from immediate deportation, were later transferred to Auschwitz, USHMMPA WS# 08632, courtesy of the Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma.



In Germany, Roma policy followed a meandering, but ultimately, deadly course. In contrast to within Nazi Germany proper, Roma policy in German-occupied and Axis Europe varied from country to country and depended largely on local conditions. For example, authorities in Romania, a German ally, did not undertake a systematic killing of its Roma inhabitants per se. Instead, they deported some twenty-five thousand Roma to the Transnistrian Reservation, a section of southwestern Ukraine placed under Romanian administration, where eleven thousand Gypsies perished due to starvation, disease, and ill treatment.

beside deported Romanian Jews. Conversely, the Independent State of Croatia, an Axis satellite of Nazi Germany, virtually annihilated its national Roma population, murdering some twenty-six to twenty-eight thousand Gypsies, many at the infamous Jasenovac concentration camp complex.⁶⁹ In the occupied Soviet Union, including the Baltic States, the mobile killing units of the *Einsatzgruppen*, together with German police, SS units, and indigenous auxiliaries, shot members of local Gypsy communities beside Jews and political commissars, claiming the lives of at least thirty thousand Soviet and Baltic Roma. It is not known precisely how many Roma were killed in the Holocaust. While exact figures cannot be ascertained, historians estimate that the Germans and their Axis allies murdered 195,000 to 225,000 Gypsies, or some 25 percent of Europe's Roma and Sinti population.

On the eve of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, some nine hundred Roma lived in the small Baltic nation of Estonia.⁷⁰ In the first months of German occupation, no clear policy existed regarding this largely assimilated community, and the few Roma murdered in that period died at the hands of indigenous collaborators. This situation changed throughout 1942 as nomadic Gypsies fell prey to mobile killing units. In early 1943, all remaining Roma, without distinction to assimilation, were concentrated in camps in and around Tallinn, the Estonian capital. Here, Roma fit for work were mobilized for forced labor. In March 1943, a transport of "unfit" Roma—mainly the elderly, the ailing, and young children—found themselves transferred to the Jägala camp, 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) from Tallinn. Upon their arrival, Ain-Ervin Mere,⁷¹ chief of the Security Police in Estonia, supervised a further **selection**, as he had recently done in the case of two previous transports of German and Czech Jews from the **Theresienstadt ghetto**. As in the case of the Jewish deportees, Mere and three colleagues—Jägala camp commandant Aleksander Laak, deputy commandant Ralf Gerrets, and camp guard Jaan Viik—drove the fifty Roma

69. See Marc Biondich, "Persecution of Roma-Sinti in Croatia, 1941–1945," in *Roma and Sinti: Understudied Victims of Nazism. Symposium Proceedings of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2002).

70. For an examination of the fate of Estonian Roma during the Holocaust, see Anton Weiss Wendt, *Murder without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland, 1941–1944: Eine Studie zur Kollaboration im Osten* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006).

71. Following the war, Ain-Ervin Mere (1903–1969) fled to Great Britain. In 1961, the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic tried several Estonian collaborators in Nazi crimes in the Baltic countries. Mere was tried in absentia and sentenced to death for his actions, but British officials refused to extradite him, and he died a free man in Leicester, England, in 1969.

prisoners by bus to nearby Kalevi-Liiva.⁷² Here camp authorities had dug a large burial pit, now filled with an early spring snow. Half of the captives were Roma women; the remainder were children under the age of five. In proceedings before the Supreme Court of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic in March 1961, Ralf Gerrets described to the state prosecutor the murder of the Roma children. Prominent in Gerret's recollection of that day is the hesitancy of his commander, the bloodthirsty Lieutenant Laak, to shoot the youngsters.

DOCUMENT 6-II. Trial proceedings of *Supreme Court of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic v. Ain-Ervin Mere (in absentia), Ralf Gerrets, and Jaan Viik (Mere Trial)*, USHMMA, RG-06.026.12, Estonian State Archives of the former Estonian KGB State Security Committee, Records Relating to War Crimes Investigations and Trials in Estonia, 1940–1987.

Prosecutor: By whom were [the Roma] shot?

Gerrets: By Lieutenant Laak.

Prosecutor: All alone?

Gerrets: Yes, all alone. The last to be slain was an invalid, an old woman who had no legs. The warders were drunk; they seized her and dragged her, like a sack, along the ground. It was only when she gave them her gold ring and some money that they lifted her up and threw her "gently" into the pit. [...] When Gerrets opened the door of the second car, it turned out that there were small children there.

Prosecutor: How old were they?

Gerrets: Something between three and five, not more. They were crying.

Prosecutor: What was done with them?

Gerrets: The warders came and took them away.

Prosecutor: Where?

Gerrets: To the pit. There were seven men, each of them carrying two children. Two children were left in the bus. I took them. I was about five or six meters [sixteen to twenty feet] from the pit when the warder Purka ran to meet me and took the children from me. I myself did not get quite near to the pit.

72. Following his stint as commandant at the Jägala camp, Aleksander Laak served as commandant of the Tallinn central prison until September 1944. He ultimately fled to Canada after the war, where all evidence suggests he committed suicide in Winnipeg in 1960. His colleagues Ralf Gerrets and Jan Viik received death sentences in the Mere Trial in 1961 and were executed. See Birn, *Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland*, 232ff.

Prosecutor: But you took the children out of the car?

Gerrets: Yes. A warder wanted to help me, but I said it was not necessary, I'd manage by myself.

Prosecutor: Who shot the children?

Gerrets: When I took a glance at the pit, I saw that Laak was standing on the right, Viik on the left, both with automatic guns in their hands. When we got back to the camp, we sat down to dinner and the commandant brought a bottle of vodka. Viik, too, came there, having already emptied his bottle. Laak praised him: "You were a brave man, Viik, to be the first to shoot!"

CHILDREN AS "RESEARCH MATERIAL"

As we have seen in the case of Eva Justin, Romani (Gypsy) children figured not only as the objects of racial discrimination and persecution but also as "research material," gathered and studied in order to further the career of a woman who had played such a vital role in the enforcement of anti-Gypsy policy. German medical professionals and scientists performing human experimentation under the Nazi aegis felt little compunction about utilizing "inferior" individuals of every category to develop pharmaceuticals and treatment methods, to promote Nazi racial goals, or to advance their own academic or professional standings, even when the "test subjects" for that research were children. SS physician Kurt Heissmeyer, whose consuming ambition was to find a cure for tuberculosis, serves as a case in point.

Born in 1905, Heissmeyer received his physician's license in 1933 and shortly thereafter took up a position at the Hohenlychen sanatorium, 120 kilometers (about 75 miles) north of Berlin.⁷³ By 1944, after nearly ten years at this post, he still aspired to become a professor of medicine, a goal supported by his superior, Dr. Karl Gebhardt, Hohenlychen's head clinician and the author of a series of grisly medical experiments conducted on female prisoners at the nearby **Ravensbrück** concentration camp. As a topic of research

73. During the war years, the Hohenlychen clinic for tubercular patients acquired an unsavory reputation in light of its designation as a health resort for SS officers in 1942 and as a result of the grisly experimentation by its director, Karl Gebhardt (1897–1948), at the sanatorium and at the nearby Ravensbrück concentration camp. In August 1947, Gebhardt was convicted and sentenced to death by an American military tribunal in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial; he was executed on June 2, 1948. See Birgitt Morgenbrod and Stephanie, Merkenich, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz unter der NS-Diktatur, 1933–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 139ff.

for his *Habilitation*, Heissmeyer proposed to combat primary tuberculosis (tuberculosis of the lung) by the artificial introduction of cutaneous tuberculosis (tuberculosis of the skin) in an ailing patient. As the nephew of influential SS general August Heissmeyer,⁷⁴ the thirty-eight-year-old physician gained entrée into the highest SS circles and, with Gebhardt's intervention, obtained permission from Reich Physician Leader (Reichsärztekörperführer) Leonardo Conti⁷⁵ and from Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler to test his hypothesis on concentration camp prisoners. Unfortunately, pulmonologists had long rejected Heissmeyer's theory, first suggested by Austrian physicians a decade earlier; it says much about Heissmeyer's professional competence that he was not sufficiently acquainted with his own field to be aware of these earlier findings. In early June 1944, Heissmeyer began experimentation with several dozen Russian and Polish prisoners at the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg. In the autumn of that year, he himself came to the conclusion that the theory was erroneous when the condition of the adult male prisoners manifestly worsened as a result of his treatments. Desperate to fulfill the requirements for his *Habilitation*, however, Heissmeyer decided to press on with his last cohort of "test subjects," juveniles, and ordered the transfer of twenty Jewish children from the Auschwitz concentration camp.⁷⁶

On November 27, 1944, the youngsters, ten girls and ten boys, arrived at Neuengamme. They were mainly Polish, Dutch, and French Jews, entrusted to the care of French prisoner-physicians René Quenouille and Gabriel Florence

74. August Heissmeyer (1897–1979) served provisionally as Theodor Eiche's successor as inspector of concentration camps in November 1939. With the outbreak of war, Heissmeyer received his own bureau (Dienststelle Obergruppenführer Heissmeyer) through which he was responsible for the military training of students of the National Political Education Institutes (Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten). In 1940, he married Reich Women's Leader (Reichsfrauenführer) Gertrud Scholtz-Klink. After the war he received a three-year prison sentence from a denazification court in the French zone of occupation.

75. Replacing his rival Gerhard Wagner as Reich Physician Leader in 1939, Leonardo Conti (1900–1945) was initially involved in the T4 "euthanasia" program, although Hitler's choice of Karl Brandt and Philipp Bouhler to spearhead the clandestine operation meant that Conti would ultimately play an auxiliary role in the measure. Conti committed suicide while in Allied custody in 1945.

76. Michael Kater, "Criminal Physicians in the Third Reich: Toward a Group Portrait," in *Medicine and Medical Ethics in Nazi Germany: Origins, Practices, Legacies*, ed. Francis Nicosia and Jonathan Huener (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 84–85; Günther Schwarberg, *Der SS-Arzt und die Kinder: Bericht über den Mord von Bullenhuser Damm* (Hamburg: Stern Verlag, 1979), 11–15, 30–34.

and two Dutch male nurses, Anton Hölzel and Dirk Deutekom.⁷⁷ The eldest children of the group were twelve years old, the youngest just five. Shortly after their appearance at the camp, Heissmeyer made incisions in the skin of each child and infected him or her with tubercular bacillus cultures. By Christmas 1944, the children were severely ill with tuberculosis, but their ordeal was not over. In mid-January, Heissmeyer, himself not a surgeon, ordered a Czech prisoner-physician to remove the youngsters' axillary lymph nodes, located in the underarm area, in order to determine how each child's lymphatic system reacted to tubercular infection. Throughout the winter, the children remained bedridden. They quickly attracted the sympathy and solidarity of their fellow prisoners, who, in violation of regulations, came in significant numbers to visit the young patients and to supplement their diet from their own meager rations.

By mid-April 1944, British troops stood only a few miles from Hamburg. Everyone knew that occupation was close at hand, and Heissmeyer, still based at Hohenlychen, had not dared to visit Neuengamme or his test subjects for several weeks. On April 20, guards of the Neuengamme camp received orders to murder the children before the arrival of Allied forces. At ten that evening, prisoner-physicians Florence and Quenouille and male nurses Deutekom and Hölzel were instructed to wake their young charges and dress them. Shortly thereafter, SS physician Alfred Trzebinski and a handful of Neuengamme guards drove with the prisoners to the Rothenburgsort district of Hamburg, to a large school building on the Bullenhuser Damm. The area had been bombed out since 1943, and the ruins of the facility had since served as a Neuengamme satellite camp. Improvising, because he did not have a sufficient supply of sedatives to murder the children, Trzebinski injected the children with morphine. While they slept, Obersturmführer Arnold Strippel and SS men Johann Frahm and Ewald Jauch hanged the children from coat hooks in the school's abandoned cloakroom. The group also murdered their four adult attendants, as well as several other Soviet detainees newly transferred to the satellite camp. In October 1946, British authorities executed Trzebinski, Jauch, and Frahm for their part in crimes at the Neuengamme complex. Imprisoned for other crimes, Strippel was charged in 1983 by the Hamburg prosecutors' office for his role in the deaths of the twenty children, but after several years of legal wrangling, Strippel was finally adjudged unfit to stand trial. Kurt Heissmeyer, author of the tuberculosis experiments, eluded arrest for nearly twenty years, working as a lung specialist in Magdeburg. In 1966, an East German court finally sentenced

77. The four men had been arrested for resistance activities in their native countries. The four female Polish nurses who had accompanied the children on the transport from Auschwitz were murdered in Neuengamme shortly after their arrival.

the physician to life imprisonment.⁷⁸ In 1980, the city of Hamburg established a memorial in the former schoolhouse to the Children of Bullenhuser Damm.

DOCUMENT 6-12. Testimony of Johann Frahm, March 3 to June 18, 1946, UK v. Max Pauly, et al. (Curio-Haus Case) March 29, 1946, USHMM, RG-59.016M, Reel 4, Judge Advocate General's Office, United Kingdom, War Crimes Case Files, Second World War, 1945–1953, Public Record Office.

Defense Counsel Dr. Lappenberg: I must ask you whether you have not withheld something from the court?

Johann Frahm: Not that I know of.

Lappenberg: You said that the children fell asleep. What happened after that?

Frahm: They were all bedded down in one room.

Lappenberg: Did you see them lying in the room?

Frahm: Yes, they slept and did not wake up again.

Lappenberg: How did you know that those children were dead?

Frahm: One could see that.

Lappenberg: What kind of an injection did they get?

Frahm: I cannot say.

Lappenberg: Did those children die as a result of those injections, or did they die because of anything else?

Frahm: They died as a cause of the injections. Some of the children were hanged on top of that.

Lappenberg: And when did that hanging happen?

Frahm: Immediately afterwards.

Lappenberg: Who was taking part in that?

Frahm: Dr. Trzebinski and I myself helped.

Lappenberg: You said immediately afterwards. What do you mean by that?

Frahm: I mean if they had still a breath of life in them after a quarter of an hour, but I cannot say for certain about a quarter of an hour, whether it was shorter or longer.

President of the Commission: Do you mean that after about a quarter of an hour, if they had any life in them, they were hanged?

Frahm: Yes.

Lappenberg: Who put the rope around the neck of the children?

78. Kurt Heissmeyer died in custody fourteen months later of a heart attack.

Frahm: I [did]. [. . .]

Lappenberg: Where did you get your orders from to go into the cellar with these children?

Frahm: From Oberscharführer Jauch.

Judge Advocate⁷⁹: Was he the senior of the SS personnel in this out-station or was there an SS officer in charge of this outstation?

Frahm: He was responsible for that working party or for that detachment, but there was an officer responsible for several detachments, and he was of course senior.

Judge Advocate: Do you know the name of that officer?

Frahm: Obersturmführer [Strippel].⁸⁰

Judge Advocate: [. . .] How long did this hanging of the children take?

Frahm: They were left hanging for about ten minutes, but I am not sure about the time.

Judge Advocate: Did anybody explain to you why it was necessary first of all to inject these children and then afterwards to hang them?

Frahm: No. [. . .]

President: You said just now that [the children] were injected one by one; if that was so, were the rest who were waiting to be injected all in one room in the cellar or not?

Frahm: Yes, that is correct.

President: Were the children in your opinion ill and all lying down in this room and waiting to be injected or did they appear to be fairly healthy?

Frahm: I believe that the great majority were slightly sickly—not ill and not healthy.

President: Were they able to walk?

Frahm: Yes.

President: Who brought each child in to be injected in this one room?

Frahm: They were called in.

President: Did each child walk in?

Frahm: Yes; some of them were fetched.

President: Who fetched them?

Frahm: I fetched them also. [. . .]

79. This was the chief prosecutor in British and American military proceedings.

80. Throughout the transcript of this very early postwar crimes trial, Obersturmführer Arnold Strippel is incorrectly identified as Strible.

President: Am I right in saying that only those who were still alive after the injections, after a certain period had elapsed, only this certain number were hung?

Frahm: That is correct.

President: Is it correct that you said about ten were hung?

Frahm: I am not quite sure about the number.

President: Is it correct to say that only one was hung at a time?

Frahm: Sometimes two at a time.

President: You mentioned just now the pipe over which the rope had been put to hang these children. Do you say there were two?

Frahm: It is correct [that] the grown-ups⁸¹ were hung with this rope over the pipe. The children were hung at a wall where some ropes were passing over some [coat] hooks.

President: What was the largest number of children hanging at any one time?

Frahm: There were two hooks and two children were hanging at a time. [...]

During World War II, German physicians and scientists engaged in unethical and often deadly human medical experimentation upon thousands of concentration camp prisoners. Within the context of Nazi policy, physicians and scientists received full license to perform painful and dangerous experimentation upon prisoner populations without their consent. Test subjects often died as a result of the experiments or were murdered in order to facilitate postmortem examination.

Unlike the Nazi sterilization and “euthanasia” programs—crimes also perpetrated by members of the German medical community—human experimentation using concentration camp prisoners was not a matter of state policy. It was, rather, with few exceptions, a crime of opportunity carried out by various agencies for the enhancement of the war effort or by individual physicians and scientists for personal gain, either through pursuit of research interests or for the attainment of university degrees, career positions, or higher civil service status. Generally speaking, inhumane medical experimentation under Nazism may be divided into three categories. The first consists of experiments aimed at facilitating the survival of German military personnel in the field. In **Dachau**, for instance, physicians and scientists of the German air force (Luftwaffe)

81. This refers to the two prisoner-physicians, René Quenouille and Gabriel Florence, and two Dutch male nurses, Anton Hötzl and Dirk Deutekom, who served as caretakers for the children.

conducted high-altitude (low-pressure) experiments in order to determine the maximum altitude from which crews of damaged aircraft might parachute to safety. At the same camp, German scientists conducted so-called freezing experiments to develop an effective treatment for hypothermia and tested various protocols for making seawater potable. The second category of experimentation embraced similar aims in the testing and production of pharmaceuticals and treatment methods to combat or prevent diseases and injuries German military and occupation personnel encountered in the field. In this context German scientists and physicians tested immunization compounds and sera for the prevention and treatment of diseases such as **typhus**, tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid fever, and infectious hepatitis. Karl Gebhardt, director of the famed Hohenlychen clinic, conducted grisly sulfa drug and bone-grafting experiments using female prisoners at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, while scientists at the Natzweiler and Sachsenhausen concentration camps subjected detainees to poisonous gasses in order to test possible antidotes.

The third category of experimentation, however, elicits the greatest attention and abhorrence from contemporary audiences. To this group belong those medical experiments that sought to advance National Socialist racial policy or to underpin the racialist and ideological tenets of the Nazi worldview. For example, Carl Clauberg⁸² and Horst Schumann⁸³ undertook experimentation, primarily at Auschwitz, to develop effective and inexpensive methods of mass sterilization that might in time be used to limit the reproductive capacities of “racially inferior” populations. The most infamous experiments founded on ide-

82. Carl Clauberg (1898–1957), a gynecologist by training, began experimentation in Auschwitz in 1942 at the suggestion of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. As the Soviet army approached the complex, Clauberg fled to Ravensbrück concentration camp, where he briefly continued his “research.” Soviet troops captured him there at the war’s end, and Clauberg received a twenty-three-year sentence for war crimes from a Soviet court in 1948. The physician returned to Germany as a result of a prisoner exchange in 1955. West German prosecutors immediately filed criminal charges against him for crimes committed during the Nazi period, but Clauberg died of a heart attack in confinement before proceedings could commence.

83. Horst Schumann (1906–1983) participated in the “euthanasia” program as a physician at the Grafeneck and Sonnenstein T4 killing centers. Following the halt in the “euthanasia” program, he transferred to Auschwitz, where he conducted sterilization experiments upon male and female prisoners from July 1941 until September 1944. Although arrested by American troops in January 1945, Schumann was released and gradually made his way to Sudan, where he functioned as a hospital director. From 1962 to 1966 he lived in Ghana under the protection of the country’s dictator, Kwame Nkrumah. Following his extradition to Germany in 1966, West German prosecutors attempted to open murder proceedings against Schumann, but these were ultimately put aside in 1972; Schumann died on May 5, 1983.

ological bases, however, were those conducted by **Josef Mengele** at Auschwitz after his arrival in the spring of 1943. Mengele had a variety of research interests, including investigation of the disease Noma, a type of gangrene that destroys the mucous membrane of the mouth and other tissues, most common in malnourished children. As there were plenty of these at Auschwitz, the physician was never without interesting “research material.” Mengele also had a fascination with heterochromia, a condition in which a person’s two irises differ in coloration, and pursued the topic with a passion, collecting the eyes of hundreds of dead subjects in the hope that he could unlock the secret of changing eye color. Mengele is most notorious for his research on twins at Auschwitz. The young physician had become interested in this field through Otmar von Verschuer, a leading figure in twin research. Verschuer experimented with identical and fraternal twins in order to trace the genetic origins of diseases.⁸⁴ At the time, twin research was seen as an ideal tool in weighing the variant factors of human heredity and environment. Mengele, with his mentor, had performed a number of legitimate research protocols using twins as test subjects throughout the 1930s. Now, at Auschwitz, with full license to maim or kill his subjects, Mengele performed a broad range of agonizing and often lethal experiments with Jewish and Roma twins, most of them children.

84. A leading German eugenicist, Otmar von Verschuer (1896–1969) directed the newly founded Institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene at the University of Frankfurt am Main beginning in 1935 and succeeded Eugen Fischer as director of the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology in 1942. An advocate of compulsory sterilization and the inclusion of racial hygiene instruction in German medical school curricula, he wrote extensively on the “Jewish issue,” calling in 1941 for a “complete solution to the Jewish Question.” Adjudged lightly by a denazification court in the postwar period, Verschuer assumed a covered position as professor of genetics at Münster, which he succeeded in making a leading center for genetic research in the new Federal Republic of Germany.

DOCUMENT 6-13. Relief workers lead child survivors from Birkenau following the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet forces. Leading the ranks (beside the nurse) are Miriam and Eva Mozes, survivors of Josef Mengele's infamous experimentation with twins, January 1945, USHMMPA WS# 88591, courtesy of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej.



Mengele firmly endorsed National Socialist racial theory and engaged in a wide spectrum of experiments that aimed to illustrate the lack of resilience among Jews or Roma to various diseases. He also attempted to demonstrate the “degeneration” of Jewish and Gypsy blood through the documentation of physical oddities and the collection and harvesting of tissue samples and body parts. Many of his test subjects died as a result of the experimentation or were murdered in order to facilitate postmortem examination. Like most scientists at work in the concentration camp setting, Mengele enlisted the aid of trained medical professionals among the prisoner population to perform the more grisly or mundane tasks and to carry out autopsies on his dead victims. We owe much of our early knowledge of Mengele’s activities at Auschwitz to Dr. Miklós Nyiszli, a prisoner-physician who assisted Mengele under duress and published his experiences, initially in his native Hungarian, in 1946. In Document 6-14, Nyiszli tells the story of a Jewish father and son from the Łódź ghetto whom Mengele had targeted for his research purposes.

DOCUMENT 6-14. Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (Hungarian ed., 1946; New York: Fell, 1960), 175–78.

When the convoys arrived, Dr. Mengele espied, among those lined up for selection, a hunchbacked man about fifty years old. He was not alone; standing beside him was a tall, handsome boy of fifteen or sixteen. The latter, however, had a deformed right foot, which had been corrected by an apparatus made of a metal plate and an orthopedic, thick-soled shoe. They were father and son. Dr. Mengele thought he had discovered, in the person of the hunchback father and his lame son, a sovereign example to demonstrate his theory of the Jewish race's degeneracy. He had them fall out of ranks immediately. Taking his notebook, he inscribed something in it and entrusted the two wretches to the care of an SS trooper, who took them to number one crematorium.

It was around noon. [. . .] The SS soldier on duty came in and asked me to report to the gate. The father and son, accompanied by the SS guard, were already there. I took the message sent me, which read, “Dissecting room, number one crematorium: that these two men be examined from a clinical point of view; that exact measurements of the two men be made; that clinical records be set up including all interesting details, and most especially those relative to the causes which provoked the bodily deformities.”

A second note was enclosed for Oberscharführer⁸⁵ Mussfeld. Even without reading it, I knew what it said. I entrusted it for transmission to a *Sonder* man.⁸⁶

Father and son—their faces wan from their miserable years in the Litzmannstadt [Łódź] ghetto—were filled with forebodings. They looked at me questioningly. I took them across the courtyard, which at this hour of the day was filled with sunlight. On our way to the dissecting room I reassured them with a few well-chosen words. Luckily there were no corpses on the dissecting table; it would have indeed been a horrible sight for them to come upon.

85. This German word is misspelled in the English translation.

86. That is, to a member of the *Sonderkommando*, meaning, literally, “special commando” but in this context referring to a specially selected group of prisoners tasked with processing and cremating victims murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

To spare them I decided not to conduct the examination in the austere dissecting room, which reeked with the odor of formaldehyde, but in the pleasant, well-lighted study hall. From our conversation, I learned that the father had been a respected citizen of Litzmannstadt [Łódź], a wholesaler in cloth. During the years of peace between wars he had often taken his son with him on his business trips to Vienna, to have him examined and treated by the most famous specialists.

I first examined the father in detail, omitting nothing. The deviation of his spinal column was the result of retarded rickets. In spite of a most thorough examination, I discovered no symptom of any other illness.

I tried to console him by saying that he would probably be sent to a work camp.

Before proceeding to the examination of the boy I conversed with him at some length. He had a pleasant face, an intelligent look, but his morale was badly shaken. Trembling with fear, he related in an expressionless voice the sad, painful, sometimes terrible events which had marked his five years in the ghetto. His mother, a frail and sensitive creature, had not been able to long endure the ordeals which had befallen her. She had become melancholic and depressed. For weeks on end she had eaten almost nothing, so that her son and husband might have a little more food. A true wife and Jewish mother, who had loved her own to the point of madness, she had died a martyr during the first year of her life in the ghetto. So it was that they had lived in the ghetto, the father without his wife, the son without his mother.

And now they were in number one crematorium. Once again I was struck by the horrible irony of the situation. I, a Jewish doctor, had to examine them with exact clinical methods before they died, and then perform the dissection on their still warm bodies. [. . .]

By an immense effort of self-control, I got ahold of myself and examined the boy. On his right foot I noticed a congenital deformity: some of the muscles were lacking.

The medical term used to describe this deformity is hypomyelia. I could see that extremely expert hands had practiced several operations on him, but as a result one foot was shorter than the other. With a bandage and orthopedic socks, however, he could walk perfectly well. I saw no other deformity to be indicated.

I asked them if they wanted something to eat. "We haven't had anything to eat for some time," they told me.

I called a man from the *Sonderkommando* and had some food brought for them: a plate of stewed beef and macaroni, a dish not to be found outside the confines of the *Sonderkommando*.⁸⁷ They began to eat ravenously, unaware that this was their "Last Supper."

Scarcely half an hour later Oberscharführer Mussfeld appeared with four *Sonderkommando* men. They took the two prisoners into the furnace room and had them undress. Then the *Ober's* revolver cracked twice. Father and son were stretched out on the concrete, covered with blood, dead. Oberscharführer Mussfeld had faithfully executed Dr. Mengele's orders.

Now it was my turn again. The two bodies were brought back into the dissecting room. So sickened was I by what had just happened that I entrusted the dissection to my associates and confined myself to recording the data. The dissection revealed nothing more than I had previously ascertained in my *in vivo* examination. The cases were banal but could nevertheless very easily be utilized as propaganda in support of the Third Reich's theory concerning the degeneracy of the Jewish race.

During his nefarious tenure at Auschwitz, Josef Mengele was not the only physician at the Auschwitz complex. Nor was he, as common wisdom often maintains, the highest-ranking physician at the camp; this distinction belonged to SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr. Eduard Wirths,⁸⁸ whose position as garrison physician made him responsible in all medical matters for the entire camp complex. Mengele began his career at Auschwitz in the spring of 1943 as the medical officer responsible for Birkenau's Gypsy camp; several weeks after its liquidation, he undertook a new position as chief camp physician of Auschwitz II–Birkenau, in November 1943, still under Wirths's jurisdiction. Even after his arrival at Auschwitz, he kept in close contact with his mentor Otmar von Verschuer, a prominent German scientist in the field of hereditary pathology. Since September 1937, Mengele had served as Verschuer's assistant in Frankfurt, and even at his new post in Birkenau, he continued to serve his old professor in singular

87. Because of the particularly grisly tasks assigned their members, *Sonderkommando* units at Auschwitz regularly received food of good quality and sufficient quantity.

88. Eduard Wirths (1909–1945) was the chief SS physician (SS-Standortarzt) at the Auschwitz concentration camp complex from September 1942 to January 1945. At Auschwitz, Wirths was involved in medical experimentation, particularly in gynecological and typhus-related experimental tests. Historians believe that Wirths never directly participated in such experiments but rather delegated these procedures to subordinates. Captured by the Allied forces at the war's end, Wirths committed suicide in British custody on September 20, 1945.

fashion. In 1944, with a deteriorating war effort, Verschuer was encountering difficulties in obtaining biological materials for his pathological research, but he discovered an unlikely solution in the form of his former graduate student. On March 20, 1944, Verschuer wrote the German Research Society (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, or DFG), "My assistant Dr. Mengele . . . has joined me in this branch of research. He is at present assigned as SS-*Hauptsturmführer* and camp physician at the Auschwitz concentration camp. With the permission of SS-Reichsführer [Heinrich Himmler,] anthropological investigations of the most diverse racial groups are being conducted, and the blood samples sent for processing to my lab." Mengele's notorious human experimentation at Auschwitz was funded in part by the DFG, while the young and ambitious physician sent his mentor a vast variety of "research material," including the skeletons of murdered Jews, the internal organs of Roma (Gypsy) victims, the severed heads of Roma children, and blood samples of various prisoners, including twins that Mengele had infected with typhus. There is no question that Verschuer, in Berlin, knew the origin of this "genetic material" and the circumstances of its procurement.

DOCUMENT 6-15. Hygiene-Bacteriological Research Station of the Waffen SS, Southeast, delivery slip for the head of a corpse, signed by Dr. Josef Mengele, June 29, 1944, USHMMMA WS# 00592, courtesy of the Auschwitz Memorial Museum (Państwowe Muzeum w Oświęcim-Brzezinka) (translated from the German).

Hygiene-Bacteriological Research Station of the Waffen SS, Southeast
Auschwitz, Upper Silesia, June 29, 1944

The following accompanies this document:

Material: Head of a corpse (12-year-old child)

Taken on: _____

To be examined as: microscopic tissue samples histological slices

Surname, first name: _____

Rank, unit: see attached

Clinical diagnosis: _____

Address of the transmitting agency: (C)entral infirmary, Gypsy camp,
Auschwitz II [Birkenau] B II e

Notations _____

Senior SS Physician

Concentration Camp Auschwitz II

[signed] Dr. Mengele

SS-Hauptsturmführer



CHAPTER 7

THE LIVES OF OTHERS

“ARYAN” CHILDREN AND THE NAZI REGIME

THE BULK OF documentation featured in this book focuses on the lives and fates of children who fell victim to the policies of the National Socialists or their European Axis allies. This chapter reflects on the experiences and viewpoints of “Aryan” children growing up in Nazi Germany. The National Socialist government hoped to capture the imagination and loyalty of Germany’s younger generation. Accordingly, Nazi strategists shaped their youth policy in a way calculated to win young people to their principles and policies. Quite early in its development, the Nazi Party had initiated official organizations for the young, the **Hitler Youth** and the League of German Girls, which served as conduits to ideological indoctrination and political mobilization. Both formal education and structured extracurricular activities were designed to cultivate the new “civic” virtues of obedience, self-sacrifice, and race consciousness. Nazi propagandists also hoped to win the hearts and minds of German youngsters. In an effort to inculcate an unreflecting political loyalty among the German public, young people became a particular focus of ideological instruction. Nazi propaganda confronted German children everywhere: in the classroom, on the playground, in their bedtime reading. And yet, even as Nazi authorities demanded subservience and allegiance from their youngest citizens, a segment of German youth clearly rejected their complete integration into the Nazi state. The nonconformity of many teens, such as the Edelweiss Pirates (Documents 7-4 through 7-6), suggests that the history of German children and adolescents under the swastika is less a story of uniformity than one of divergence and

contradiction. The following documentation illustrates that German youth were at once the benefactors of Nazism and the heirs to its terrible legacy. Young Germans engaged in the daily activities of a country at war: they were its combatants and its targets. They were perpetrators and victims. German “Aryan” children experienced a radically different aspect of National Socialism than did young persecutees of its racialist policies; yet, as witnesses to its national transformation, its conquests, and its defeat, their views and perspectives have much to tell us about life under the Nazi dictatorship.

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE THIRD REICH

From the movement’s inception, leaders of the National Socialist Party placed a high priority on winning the hearts and minds of German youth, whom they viewed as the future of the nation and hoped to mold to their purposes. The Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend, or HJ) represented the party’s second oldest paramilitary organ, after its adult counterpart, the Storm Division (**Sturmabteilung**, or **SA**), upon which it was modeled. The organization began its existence as the Youth League of the Nazi Party (Jugendbund der NSDAP) in March 1922; it was restructured as the Greater German Youth Movement (Grossdeutsche Jugendbewegung) in 1924. In July 1926, this now official youth organization of the Nazi Party became the Hitler Youth, League of German Worker Youth (Hitler-Jugend, Bund Deutscher Arbeiterjugend), and was officially incorporated into the SA.

By 1930, the Hitler Youth had already recruited twenty-five thousand members. Following the Nazi assumption of power, the new Reich youth leader (*Reichsjugendführer*), **Baldur von Schirach**,¹ assumed control of the HJ and began to promote the program in earnest, organizing a general membership of boys from fourteen to eighteen and a corresponding junior branch, the German Young Volk (**Deutsches Jungvolk**). Hitler Youth members received both physical and paramilitary training and ideological indoctrination. A key component of Schirach’s strategy was to create from the Hitler Youth’s ranks competent and loyal soldiers for future wars and citizens ideologically committed to the Third Reich and its policies. On December 1, 1936, the Law Concerning the Hitler Youth (Gesetz über die Hitlerjugend) called for the assimilation of all German youth into the appropriate youth organizations. Although the law made membership obligatory, compliance was not universal, and two ancillary decrees issued in March 1939, making youth service compulsory and nonmembership

1. In 1940, Artur Axmann replaced Baldur von Schirach as Reich youth leader; Schirach himself became *Gauleiter* of the Reichsgau Vienna from 1940 until war’s end.

a punishable offense, were ultimately necessary to ensure thoroughgoing conformity with the initial legislation.²

DOCUMENT 7-1. A young boy leaps into the clasped arms of his schoolmates during outdoor physical education exercises at the Hitler Youth training facility in Memmingen, Germany, USHMMPA WS# 30590, courtesy of the Holocaust Museum Houston.



Concerned with the conspicuous lack of compliance with the December 1936 law in the Reich capital region, the director of Berlin's Deaf Athletes' Association used the popular youth supplement to the association's monthly newsletter to cajole young athletes belonging to his organization to join the now obligatory Hitler Youth. "The highest achievement in sports does not shield you from the fact that service to Hitler's Reich is the highest service of all," Director Werner Thomas³ reminded his young charges.

2. For a discussion of the Hitler Youth organization, see Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

3. Werner Thomas (b. 1908) joined the Nazi Party in May 1930. No information is available on his postwar fate.

Thomas's enthusiasm for the Nazi movement contained an element of irony. As deaf individuals, members of his athletic organization, both young and old, already represented potential targets of the regime's thoroughgoing **eugenic** policies.⁴ Since January 1934, they had been subject to the **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases**,⁵ legislation mandating **compulsory sterilization** for specific disorders and disabilities, including hereditary deafness. In October 1935, the Marital Hygiene Law (Ehegesundheitsgesetz) further prohibited the marriage of "Aryans" with persons possessing "diseased, inferior or dangerous genetic material,"⁶ among them the hereditarily deaf. A staunch National Socialist, Director Thomas may have felt that he and his associates belonged intrinsically to Germany's **Volksgemeinschaft**, but a segment of Nazi policy makers certainly thought otherwise.

DOCUMENT 7-2. Editorial of W. Thomas, director of the Berlin Deaf Athletes' Association, *Youth Supplement of the Newsletter of the Berlin Deaf Athletes' Association*, May 1, 1937, USHMM, RG-10.320, Horst Biesold Collection (translated from the German).

My dear young comrades!

A sorry circumstance compels me to express my opinion on the Hitler Youth question. [I understand that] nearly 100 percent of the youth from the Leipzig and Dresden sports associations render their services in the Hitler Youth with a joyful heart. It is simply humiliating that so many young athletes from the Berlin community are still opposed to joining. As an old SA man of many years standing, I have early on been able to have many valuable experiences which demonstrated to me that the education afforded by the Hitler Youth and SA is very useful: because there our youth will learn iron discipline, comradeship, and the will to sacrifice. There they will ripen into splendid and proper men—better said, into the best National Socialists.

4. See Horst Biesold, *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany*, trans. William Sayers (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999); Donna Ryan and John Schuchman, eds., *Deaf People in Hitler's Europe* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002).

5. For a broader discussion of the Nazi sterilization law and its ramifications, see chapter 6.

6. Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 175.

As deaf persons, we will never be called into the Labor Service, into the Wehrmacht, and so on, and service in the Hitler Youth offers you your last opportunity to go through a rigorous training.

The highest achievement in sports does not shield you from the fact that service to Adolf Hitler's Reich is the highest service of all!!!

In accordance with the proclamation of our Reich Sports Leader von Tscharmer u. Osten⁷ and that of the leader of our association, Pg. [Party Comrade] Siepmann, I enjoin you for the last time, dear comrades: those of you who are not yet eighteen should report to the leader of Troop G/2, Scharführer Müller, before May 12. Otherwise you will be excluded from our excellent sports association.

At this opportunity, I would like to make all Hitler Youth members cognizant that when one of you is dishonorably discharged from your troop, you will also automatically forfeit your membership in this sports association.

In conclusion I appeal to all the esteemed parents and also to my association comrades to show their complete understanding for my actions, which are necessary for the future of our nation.

Everything for Germany!

For many youngsters in the regime's early years, membership in the Nazi youth associations proved neither an irksome obligation nor a burdensome chore. In many ways, the HJ extended to adolescents many of the same leisure and outdoor activities formerly afforded by earlier exponents of the German youth movement, such as the **Scout Movement** (Pfadfinder) and the Youth Leagues (Bündische Jugend), both banned after 1933. Likewise, the well-appointed uniforms, the carefully orchestrated pageantry and ritual, and the ubiquitous competition among units for sport and service awards combined to give youngsters a sense of belonging, unity, and purpose. For youths in remote or rural areas, moreover, the Hitler Youth often provided an initial opportunity to come into contact with children from diverse regions, to erect an official

7. Hans von Tscharmer und Osten (1887–1943) had held the position of Reich Sport Leader (Reichssportführer) since 1933. As such he played a major role in the planning and organization of the 1936 Winter and Summer Olympic Games, held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Berlin, Germany, respectively; during these competitions he supported a ban of non-Aryan competitors on Germany's Olympic team, a policy widely condemned in the international press. Von Tscharmer died of pneumonia in 1943 and was succeeded as Reichssportführer by Arno Breitmeyer.

clubhouse or sporting field in their small hamlets, or to visit new places on weekend or camping expeditions.

The emancipatory possibilities that came with the Nazi youth movement were potentially even greater for German girls and young women. Through the League of German Girls (**Bund Deutscher Mädel**, or BDM), girls could escape from the narrow confines of home and family and participate in the kinds of activities and outings usually reserved for boys. Although its ideological aim was to prepare German females for their future roles as wives, mothers, and home-makers, the BDM also offered young women an outlet for experiences outside the spheres of school and the parental home and presented further educational and vocational opportunities that they were unlikely to derive elsewhere. The organization also afforded its paid and unpaid functionaries a conduit to participation in political activity, albeit within a limited context.

Like the Hitler Youth, the BDM had its origins in the 1920s, first as the Mädchenschaften (Girls' Organizations), then as the Schwesternschaften (Sisterhood Organizations) of the HJ. In 1930, the **Bund Deutscher Mädel** in der Hitler-Jugend (League of German Girls within the Hitler Youth) was founded as the official female branch of the Hitler Youth organization. Before the Nazi rise to power in January 1933, the BDM did not attract a mass following, but membership expanded rapidly throughout the 1930s, until participation for eligible girls became compulsory in 1936. The BDM's core constituency consisted of girls from fourteen to eighteen years of age, with a corresponding junior branch, the Jungmädel (Young Girls' League), for girls aged ten to fourteen. In 1938, a third component, the BDM Union for Belief and Beauty (BDM-Werk Glaube und Schönheit), offered a voluntary association for young women aged seventeen to twenty-one that served as a bridge to membership in the National Socialist Women's League (NS-Frauenschaft, or NSF).⁸

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, especially before World War II, the BDM enjoyed a great deal of popularity among German girls and elicited far more eager participation among its young female cohorts than did the Hitler Youth among boys, not least because of the latter's rigorous paramilitary training. For some, no doubt, the League of German Girls exerted an unsettling influence, as when its ideological indoctrination or stance on religion and traditional authority figures clashed with deeply held values. Enthusiasm for the league likewise declined during the war years as public service duties increasingly replaced outings and recreational activities. BDM members ran charity and collection

8. See Gisela Miller-Kipp, ed., *"Auch Du gehörst dem Führer": Die Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Mädel (BDM) in Quellen und Dokumenten. Forschungsreihe Materialien zur Historischen Jugendforschung* (Weinheim: Juventa Verlag, 2001).

drives, volunteered as nurse's aides, and organized care packages for troops at the front. After 1943, older members might be conscripted to work in armaments factories or other industries or to aid in the war effort as auxiliaries in civilian air defense. Whatever their role, for many young women the League of German Girls presented both difficult challenges and rewarding experiences, as three long-term members recalled in 1946.

DOCUMENT 7-3. Young women remember the League of German Girls, 1946, in Gisela Miller-Kipp, ed., *"Auch Du gehörst dem Führer": Die Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Mädel (BDM) in Quellen und Dokumenten. Forschungsreihe Materialien zur Historischen Jugendforschung* (Weinheim: Juventa Verlag, 2001), 315–16 (translated from the German).

Ursula G., 19 years old

I have, perhaps because I am an only child, always sought the companionship of persons my own age, and always felt drawn to my circle of schoolmates as well as to those of the National Socialist youth movement. I participated in many camping trips and outings, as well as several training courses. Each time I had the good fortune to have genuine "leaders" [to follow]. Never did I have the feeling that I was being "educated" or directed towards certain thought processes. More often than not, I encountered people who guided me in a very subtle manner really to reflect upon things that up to that time had remained a mystery to me. Those were people who—as far as I may judge—had a real understanding for us girls and were truly examples to us. I didn't just take pleasure in earnest discussions with my comrades, but also enjoyed taking part in play, sports, camp life, and in both solemn and festive ceremonies. Often in these instances I had the task of writing reports concerning the experiences in our young circles for school and camp journals as well as for newspapers and magazines; and this always made me so happy that for a long time it was my wish to build my later career on such activities.

During the year 1944 our school was almost completely closed because we were so often utilized for wartime public service. I helped in agricultural work, in our canning factory, was a temporary mail delivery girl for two months and from time to time dug trenches. [. . .] After three months in the Erzgebirge,⁹ we came to E. Here I witnessed Germany's col-

9. This refers to a small mountain chain in eastern Germany.

lapse, and with it, the collapse of everything I lived for in terms of belief, enthusiasm, ideals. [. . .]

Karin K., 20 years old

Besides school there came to us a new form of social interaction: at ten years of age there began the compulsory membership in the Young Girls' League [Jungmädelbund]. I will not lie when I say that we all greeted this at first with a great deal of enthusiasm. They appealed to us with those things that gave us pleasure. We played together, learned songs, or our leader read fairy tales to us which we acted out on parents' nights. Everything ideological was still quite foreign to us. Certainly, we each received a uniform, but this appealed to our pride, and all that marching was certainly not at odds with our disposition—belonged to that part of us that was young, anyway as I imagine it. Perhaps it was wrong to make this urge stronger in us, instead of instilling maidenly virtues in us. They also knew how to goad our ambition. Wasn't it tempting to be a pennant bearer or a leader [*Führerin*¹⁰] oneself? We could not recognize at the time that the truly good thing—namely the sincere striving and the readiness to give one's complete effort—would be misused. For us Berliners there was so much enthusiasm! What we all saw, what we experienced! The Hitler Youth was always on hand.

Elisabeth K., 19 years old

My home is East Prussia. I was born in L., a small town nestled between clear lakes and dark forests in Masuria.¹¹ In 1937, at the same time that I was transferred to a secondary school [*Oberschule*] for girls, I was accepted into the Jungmädelbund. This new environment overwhelmed me, and I changed much as a result, became more self-sufficient, more self-confident. I was motivated by all the playing, singing, and sports, and at first I took pleasure in the strict discipline and order. This time brought me many wonderful hours in the company of people of my own age, and I never thought of the work in political terms. But with all this came the first serious conflict in my life. I grew up in a strict Christian household and had never encountered other kinds of beliefs or convictions. Now there was this thing which brought me great pleasure, but which clearly stood in complete contrast to my earlier way of life. I suffered very much

10. That is, a low-level leader of the BDM.

11. This area of East Prussia, famed for its lakes, was ceded to Poland in 1945.

from this dichotomy, and always tried to unite the two opposites until I realized that this was not possible if I did not wish to deceive myself. Later, when my father was drafted into the military and my mother experienced difficulties in running our store, I withdrew completely, except for the demands which school imposed.

NONCONFORMITY AND DISSIDENCE: THE EDELWEISS PIRATES

As the late German historian Detlev Peukert ably demonstrated, Nazi leaders' assertions that their organizations successfully assimilated and mobilized German youth portrayed only one facet of the Third Reich's social reality. The more readily the Nazi Party exerted coercion to bring German adolescents into its ranks, the more conspicuous became the pattern of nonconformity.¹² By the late 1930s, a surprising number of German teenagers, chiefly males, were rejecting the discipline and regimentation of party youth organizations in favor of the free and spontaneous lifestyle of informal clubs and gangs. Growing in numbers during the war years, these youths, aged fourteen to eighteen, particularly vexed Nazi authorities, for most belonged to precisely that age cohort whose chief socialization had taken place under the all-pervasive influence of the Nazi state. Some of these teens stemmed from the upper middle classes, such as the well-documented "Swing Kids" (*Swingjugend*), youths of both sexes who doffed their Hitler Youth and BDM uniforms for English-cut suits and defied the ban on public assembly to gather in illegal clubs and at the homes of consenting (or absent) parents to listen to jazz and swing numbers and dance the jitterbug.¹³ Perhaps more numerous and unconventional, at least in Nazi eyes, however, were those working-class youths from western Germany who styled themselves as "Edelweiss"¹⁴ Pirates." Throughout the industrial Rhine and Ruhr regions, teenage boys gathered in loose associations to spend their evenings and

12. See Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); also Detlev Peukert, "Youth in the Third Reich," in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 30–37.

13. This term used to describe a number of swing dances popular in the United States in the late 1930s. Jitterbugging first made its appearance in African American clubs and, like the musical forms of jazz and swing that inspired it, was viewed as "degenerate" by Nazi authorities.

14. Edelweiss is a woolly white perennial flower common to alpine regions of German-speaking Europe.

weekends together, away from the probing gaze and controlling grasp of the Hitler Youth. Although they organized in small groups of a dozen or more under various epithets—the Kittelbach Pirates from Düsseldorf, the Cologne Navajos, or the Essen Roving Dudes—each group identified itself as belonging to the network of Edelweiss Pirates, recognizable to each other and to the experienced observer by their costume: the invariable checkered shirt, neck scarf, short trousers, white socks, and clogs. Many of these young men had once been members of the Scout Movement (*Pfadfinder*) or the Youth Leagues (*Bündische Jugend*¹⁵), now banned in Nazi Germany, and many of their activities—camping, hiking, singing ballads—mirrored the activities of the Weimar-era German youth movement.¹⁶ Unlike these organized associations, however, the Edelweiss Pirates came together spontaneously because they knew each other: as neighbors, schoolmates, teammates in local sports associations, or coworkers. Most had finished their formal schooling¹⁷ but were not yet of draft age; many were apprentices or, during the war years with their shortage of manpower, already earning a steady wage as unskilled laborers. In eschewing the activities organized by Nazi Party associations, these young people had sufficient free time to meet at a nearby street corner, bar, or park and venture weekend outings in the surrounding countryside, despite wartime restrictions on travel and tight police controls. Teenaged girls often accompanied the group on excursions, a factor that distinguished Pirate bands from the gender-segregated Nazi youth organizations. Female companionship also afforded young members an opportunity for uninhibited romantic and sexual encounters eagerly embraced by developing teens but associated with indecency and delinquency by Nazi officials.

Historians often locate the Edelweiss Pirates within that gray area between nonconformity and dissidence. That these adolescents did not adhere to the image of German youth envisioned by the Nazi regime is clear. Moreover, nonfascist sentiments stood out clearly in the groups' words and deeds. For Edelweiss Pirates, the Hitler Youth embodied the visible enemy. More often than not, the HJ was the object of their invective and the target of their

15. *Bündische Jugend* was a German youth movement of the interwar years that combined elements of the *Wandervögel* (romanticism, a desire to return to pristine nature, and a culture of hiking and touring) with those of the International Scouting movement. Like all other competing youth movements, the youth leagues of the *Bündische Jugend* were banned by the Nazis in the summer of 1933 in order to facilitate the integration of German youth into the Hitler Youth and its auxiliary organizations.

16. See Peter Statura, *The German Youth Movement, 1900–1945: An Interpretative and Documentary History* (London: MacMillan, 1981).

17. This happened at age fourteen, provided the individual in question did not intend to go to university or vocational school.

aggression: assaults on individual Hitler Youth members and attacks on HJ street patrols proved an enduring group pastime. But the Pirates' motives for dissent were complex. Clearly most members of this loose confederation came from working-class milieus and stemmed from neighborhoods and communities where, before 1933, the German Communist and Social Democratic parties maintained traditional strongholds. But unlike their cousins, the *Leipziger Meuten* (Leipzig Gangs), groups who shared many of the Pirates' characteristics but manifested a clear class consciousness and harbored communist and socialist sympathies, the Edelweiss Pirates demonstrated no clearly politicized identity. Rather, these Rhenish teenagers seemed principally determined to flout the norms of conventional working life and to enjoy an independent and autonomous existence away from the state's ever-present interference. The endless training and mindless drilling experienced in the Hitler Youth organization did not appeal to them, and as the war progressed, more and more of these young men feared, as doubtless their more traditional colleagues did, that they might end as cannon fodder in an increasingly ruinous conflict. It is difficult to classify the Edelweiss Pirates as an unambiguous resistance group. Yet several bands certainly did perform acts of outright resistance, such as rescuing downed Allied fliers,¹⁸ aiding German deserters, and surreptitiously distributing Allied propaganda leaflets. Moreover, many youths also involved themselves in more organized resistance efforts. The **Gestapo**, police, and Hitler Youth employed a number of strategies to disperse and suppress the Edelweiss Pirates, with limited success. In November 1944, thirteen anti-Nazi activists, among them six young ringleaders of the Cologne Navajos, were publicly hanged without trial in Cologne-Ehrenfeld.¹⁹

18. Allied pilots who crash-landed in Germany were in particular danger. Toward war's end, the Nazi regime encouraged the population to assault or murder downed airmen, whom they held responsible for the mounting death toll from Allied bombings.

19. The six included Bartholomäus Schink, sixteen; Günther Schwarz, sixteen; Gustav Bermel, seventeen; Johann Müller, sixteen; Franz Rheinberger, seventeen, and Adolf Schütz, eighteen.

DOCUMENT 7-4. Report of the Gestapo, Düsseldorf, December 10, 1937, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 28–30 (translated from the German).

In the last few years a generally loose confederation of youths has been detected in most western regions and particularly in the Ruhrgebiet,²⁰ whose activities exceed the usual parameters (standing around on street corners during the evening hours, etc.). The development of these groups in a political and moral context can no longer be viewed as a so-called local incident. It is expanding ever more strongly in a direction which demands not only that we observe it, but also that we combat it.

In most cases the issue concerns youths who earlier were in the HJ and were expelled or, because they did not like the strict discipline there, withdrew their membership. These expulsions resulted in almost every case from discipline violations or from a lack of enthusiasm for service. In our experience, the latter case can be traced to the fact that various members of the HJ—who perhaps because of their earlier upbringing or because they naturally find it difficult to subordinate themselves to others—observe that their comrades of the same age who do not belong to the Hitler Youth lead an independent lifestyle. It can also be determined in many cases that these individuals meet with nonmembers of the HJ in the various places where youths congregate or join them on their outings. Here of course they learn a lifestyle that has nothing in common with the discipline and order that must necessarily hold sway in the HJ. One must add to this the fact that in isolated instances, the leaders of the HJ do not know how to reach out to young people. The disinterest in service which emanates from these circumstances is further compounded by those who have never fostered an interest in the current state. The result then is that these youths are ever more firmly bound to the circles in question. Even if these [groups] can rarely be considered organizationally cohesive, there still exists the potential that they will bond more closely together and thus constitute an instrument that would become, in the hands of enemies of the state, a danger to the youth and thus to the nation.

Throughout the entire time frame—from the seizure of power [*Machtergreifung*] to the present—there is among the majority of groups

20. This refers to a large metropolitan area in western Germany bordered by the Ruhr, Rhine, and Lippe rivers and encompassing the industrial cities of Duisburg, Bochum, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund, and Hamm.

an unmistakably negative attitude toward the HJ. They see their “freedom” infringed upon if they are once detained by the patrols of the HJ or even by the police. This finds expression in their conversations concerning the HJ or concerning the Movement,²¹ in songs, and in actual attacks upon individual members of the HJ. They have parodied many [popular or party] songs. They now sing, among other things, “Break the Youth League Free,” “Rend the Hitler Youth in Two,” “The Wickinger [*sic*] Flag Belongs under the KP,”²² “The Kittelbach Pirates’ Flag Must Not Perish,” “We Remain True to the Polar Bears,” etc.²³

At the various gatherings, the spirit of the former members of the banned Youth Leagues [Bündische Jugend] shows through more and more. It is sometimes true today that he who can say that he was a former member of a Youth League is “seen with different eyes.” It often happens that young people claim to have been members of the banned Youth Leagues even when they have not. They want to “be someone” among like-minded youths.

As an outward sign, and in order to contrast themselves with the Hitler Youth, the so-called outing costumes are worn, which for the most part look similar to the uniform of the banned Youth Leagues or have been adopted from the latter. The preferred modes of dress are the plaid (tartan) shirt—also called ski shirts—short pants, boots with turned down socks, clogs, neck scarves, and string ties on which are to be found every possible ornamentation. This outfit ensures that like-minded individuals on outings or in other places can recognize each other, and although unknown to each other, may strike up a friendship. In most instances, it is the case that the youths do not know each other by a surname at all, but only by first name or nickname. The universal greeting, used when these youths meet each other underway, and even if they do not know each other but recognize their camaraderie from their similar outfits, is “Ahoy.” On other occasions, [they use] the greeting “Heidewitzka,”²⁴ which, according to the experiences we have had, represents a substitute for “Heil Hitler.”

The youths in question prefer to call themselves Kittelbach Pirates [KP]. This association has existed since 1933 in Düsseldorf and its

21. That is, the Nazi movement.

22. That is, the Kittelbach Pirates.

23. All are lines from Nazi Party songs or slogans that have been altered, sometimes to humorous effect.

24. This is a nonsense word, based on a popular song.

environs. Even when these members became conspicuous in general through their boorish conduct, there was nothing about them to object to within a political context. After the seizure of power, this association certainly gathered a large influx of those elements who did not wish to assimilate with the National Socialist front. When even at this time no cohesive organization can be established, a good number wear the attire of the KP, sing their songs, and greet each other with the KP greeting, "Ahoy." Besides this, the badge of the KP—a death's head—is commonly worn. One finds the death's head motif on tie clasps, pocket books, rings, and even gym equipment. The majority of these youths have never belonged to this association. For those reasons already mentioned, these persons happily boast that they do belong to the KP.

While in past years the youths were generally given a warning, recent developments show that stricter measures must be undertaken to curb the danger that this group poses to the young.

DOCUMENT 7-5. Handwritten flyer distributed by the Wuppertal troop of the Edelweiss Pirates, "To the Subjugated German Youth," c. 1942, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 81 (translated from the German).

To the Subjugated German Youth

German Youth:

Think of the old, golden age of the Boy Scouts, think back to the sunny days of outings and camping. All of this is denied to us today. Why? Because today's Nazi Germany wants to stick you all in the "Hitler Youth." Where you will be trained militarily and technically in marching, shooting, map reading, and topography, etc. The goal of all that leads back to this: cannon fodder for Hitler's insatiable greed for power!²⁵

German youth, rise up to fight for freedom and right, for your children and your children's children, for if Hitler wins this war, Europe will be in chaos; the world will be subjugated unto the Judgment Day. Make an end of this slavery before it is too late.

Lord, make us free!

25. Emphasis is in the original.

DOCUMENT 7-6. The “Cologne Navajos’ Fight Song,” c. 1944, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 51 (translated from the German).

Hitler’s power makes us small.

We still lie in chains.

But one day we’ll be free again.

We will break our chains.

Because our fists, they are strong,
And our knives hang by our sides.

For the freedom of our youth,

We’re the fighting Navajos.

*Des Hitlers Zwang, der macht
uns klein.*

Noch liegen wir in Ketten.

Doch einmal werden wir wieder frei,

Wir werden die Ketten schon brechen.

*Denn unsere Fäuste, die sind hart,
Ja, und die Messer sitzen los.*

Für die Freiheit der Jugend

Kämpfen Navajos.

HEARTS AND MINDS: NAZI PROPAGANDA

Children, perhaps more than their parents, were particularly susceptible to the appeal of National Socialist propaganda. Already in the 1920s, the fledgling Nazi Party viewed young people as an important target for ideological indoctrination. Nazism portrayed itself as a young and dynamic movement, and its ideologues saw particularly in German youth a malleable audience for its messages. The content of Nazi propaganda varied over time. During the party’s early years—in its so-called Time of Struggle and its first years in power—much emphasis was placed on the iniquitous peace that followed World War I and the need to revise the **Versailles Treaty**, which had forced Germany to concede territory in Europe and abroad, imposed an ignominious “war-guilt clause,” and saddled Germany with ruinous reparation payments. Propagandists railed against the political Left—communists and the still influential Social Democratic Party in Germany—which had, in Nazi estimation, “stabbed Germany in the back” by accepting the “shameful” peace terms and ostensibly aligned with the powers in the newly formed Soviet Union, exposing Germany to the dangers of bolshevism. National Socialist ideologues promised a better Germany: a nation restored to full sovereignty, economic security, and political stability. Following German rearmament and the remilitarization of the Rhineland, Nazi propaganda stressed even more consistently the National Socialists’ goal of expansion and *Lebensraum*, the German *Volk*’s claim to “living room” in eastern Europe. Their messages invariably struck a martial tone, extolling the virtues of a disciplined and militaristic society. They portrayed the

German armed forces as the defenders of Western culture and its purveyors to the “uncivilized” East, underscoring the military’s fundamental role as a bulwark against the Soviet threat. Virulent antisemitism and an aggressive racism remained enduring themes of Nazi propaganda, which sought to marginalize Jews and other “racial” enemies and to prepare the public for persecutory measures against them.

Nazi propagandists hoped to foster in the German population, as well as in **ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*)** living in the occupied territories, an unreflecting political loyalty and a strong “race consciousness.” They aimed to groom their populace to be obedient and self-sacrificing citizens and to be active or passive participants in Germany’s war for “race and space.”²⁶ Naturally, Nazi ideologues did not confine their efforts to adults but also sought to win the hearts and minds of German youngsters. Much of the propaganda to which young people were exposed came through structured events and settings. Children and adolescents received ideological training as a result of their participation in youth organizations, such as the Hitler Youth or the League of German Girls. Yet, by far the largest arena for the indoctrination of German youth was the classroom. In April 1933, the **Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service** purged the public school system, as well as other civil service posts, of Jews and “politically unreliable elements.” The majority of instructors who remained—some 97 percent of educators—joined the National Socialist Teachers’ League in the regime’s early years. Indeed, teachers also joined the Nazi Party in greater numbers than did members of any other professions. Instructors inducted their pupils into the cult of Adolf Hitler and imparted to them the tenets of Nazi doctrine. While Nazi authorities burned the books of “un-German” and “degenerate” authors and removed “unreliable” texts from the classroom, German educators introduced new textbooks that subtly or transparently instilled the party values of militarism, antisemitism, and racism.²⁷

Document 7-7 provides two examples of this phenomenon, both in support of the ongoing National Socialist eugenics policy. In 1933, the Hitler cabinet had promulgated the Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary

26. This phrase succinctly defining Nazi Germany’s political mission was coined by Gerhard Weinberg; see, for example, Gerhard Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36.

27. See Jeffrey Herf, *Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006); David Welch, *Politics and Propaganda*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge Press, 2002); David Welch, ed., *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations* (London: Barnes & Noble, 1983).

Diseases, which mandated **sterilization** of individuals with specific psychiatric, neurological, or physical disorders and disabilities.²⁸

Some four hundred thousand Germans were forcibly sterilized under this legislation between January 1934, when the law went into effect, and the war's end in May 1945. The measure proved genuinely unpopular, especially in Catholic regions where it clashed with traditional church doctrine. By the mid-1930s, Nazi medical and racial hygiene authorities headed by Walter Gross,²⁹ director of the Information Office for Population Policy and Race Cultivation (Aufklärungsamt für Bevölkerungspolitik und Rassenpflege), had initiated a full-scale propaganda campaign to shore up support for the effort. "Documentary" films—usually shorts shown to cinema audiences before feature films—such as *Das Erbe (The Inheritance)* (1935), *Erbkrank (Hereditarily Ill)* (1936), and *Opfer der Vergangenheit (Victims of the Past)* (1937) sought to dehumanize and marginalize the severely mentally and physically disabled in the eyes of their fellow Germans.³⁰ In the same instance, complementary material began to appear in children's textbooks and teaching materials. In Jakob Graf's *Biology for Secondary Schools*, published in 1943, the illustration "*Hier trägst Du mit!*" taught students that German taxpayers shouldered the financial responsibility for the hereditarily ill and disabled. The inset depicts a "racially valuable" and healthy German standing before the silhouette of an asylum or mental health facility. Upon his back the man balances two "degenerate" and impaired individuals. The caption reads, "A hereditarily ill individual who has reached his sixtieth year costs 50,000 **Reichsmark**." "You are carrying the load," the text enjoins, reminding its young readers that they will ultimately bear the burden of society's "ballast existences," its "useless eaters." A mathematics primer for seventh and eighth graders takes a similar tack, employing the familiar story-problem construction to drive home an ominous message. "How many homesteads or farms could be financed with the funds now dedicated to the upkeep of the hereditarily ill and institutionalized?" the textbook asks. While such propaganda clearly aimed to garner grassroots support for the Nazi sterilization campaign, these messages also represented an effort to undergird the foundation for more

28. For a closer examination of Nazi sterilization policy, see chapter 6.

29. Walter Gross (1904–1945) died in combat during the Battle of Berlin on April 25, 1945.

30. For a thoroughgoing discussion of Nazi films in support of sterilization, "euthanasia," and other eugenic measures, see "Killing Films of the Third Reich," in Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance*, 183–219; Ulf Schmidt, *Medical Films, Ethics, and Euthanasia in Nazi Germany: The History of Medical Research and Teaching Films of the Reich Office for Educational Films, Reich Institute for Films in Science and Education, 1933–1945* (Husum, Germany: Matthiesen, 2002).

radical eugenics policies and to prepare the public, including young children, for such measures.

DOCUMENT 7-7A. Excerpt from a children's textbook in the Third Reich: "You Are Carrying the Load!" ("Hier trägst Du mit!"), in Jacob Graf, *Biologie für höhere Schulen* (*Biology for Secondary Schools*) (Munich: Lehmann Verlag, 1943), table 25.

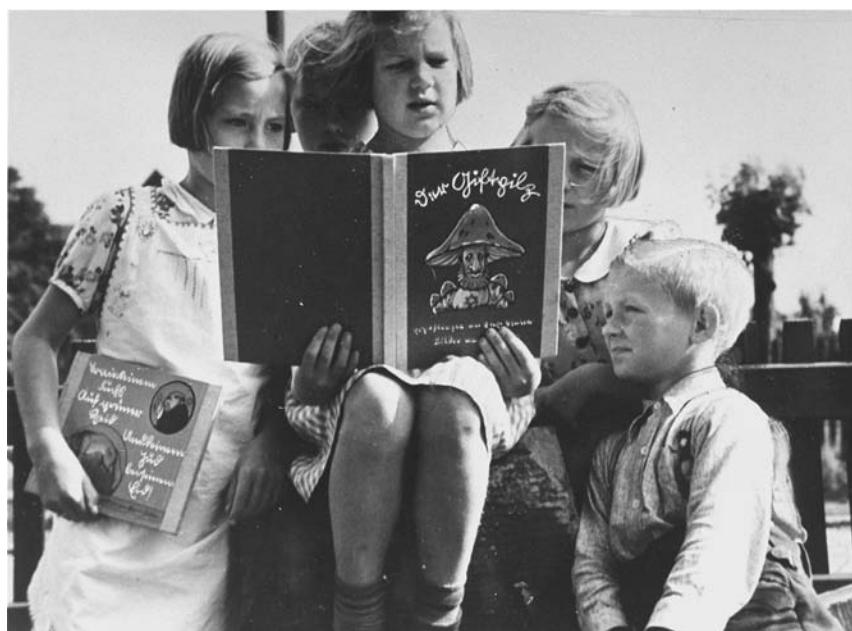


DOCUMENT 7-7B. Excerpt from a children's textbook in the Third Reich: A story problem in *Arithmetic for Volksschulen: Governing District Cologne and Aachen, School Years in Seven and Eight*, 1941, quoted in Ute Hoffmann, *Todesursache "Angina": Zwangssterilisation und "Euthanasie" in der Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Bernburg* (Magdeburg: Eigenverlag des Ministeriums des Innern des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, 1996), 24 (translated from the German).

The costs for one hereditarily ill patient today amount to 4.5–6 RM per day. Calculate the total sum of the cost per day, per month, per year. In the year 1930, approximately 1 billion RM were spent for the hereditarily ill. In contrast, only 730 million RM were spent for the German army in 1930 and only 713 million RM for the whole Reich administration. How many farm settlements, of which each should cost 32,000 RM, could have been constructed with the amount used for the hereditarily ill? How many homesteads could have been erected with this sum, if the aggregate building cost was 6,000 RM per house?

Few facets of German life remained free of the propagandists' gloss. Reich Minister **Josef Goebbels** and his propaganda ministry used every available venue—the news media, film, radio, and the popular press—to convey the party's ideological message. Even the arts and sciences were harnessed to help proclaim the virtues and principles of the National Socialist state. To reach young audiences, Nazi propagandists employed particular means to convey their ideological agenda. Children's books served as a ready conduit to distill the Nazi worldview for young people. Story books such as *Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom)* and *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud bei seinem Eid (Trust No Fox in a Green Meadow Nor a Jew by His Oath)*, both distributed by **Julius Streicher's** ***Der Stürmer*** publishing house, elaborated the regime's antisemitic tenets in such a way that young minds might accept and adopt them.

DOCUMENT 7-8. German school children read the antisemitic children's story *Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom)*, c. 1938, USHMM WA# 69561/E 39 Nr. 2381/7, courtesy of the Stadtarchiv Nürnberg.

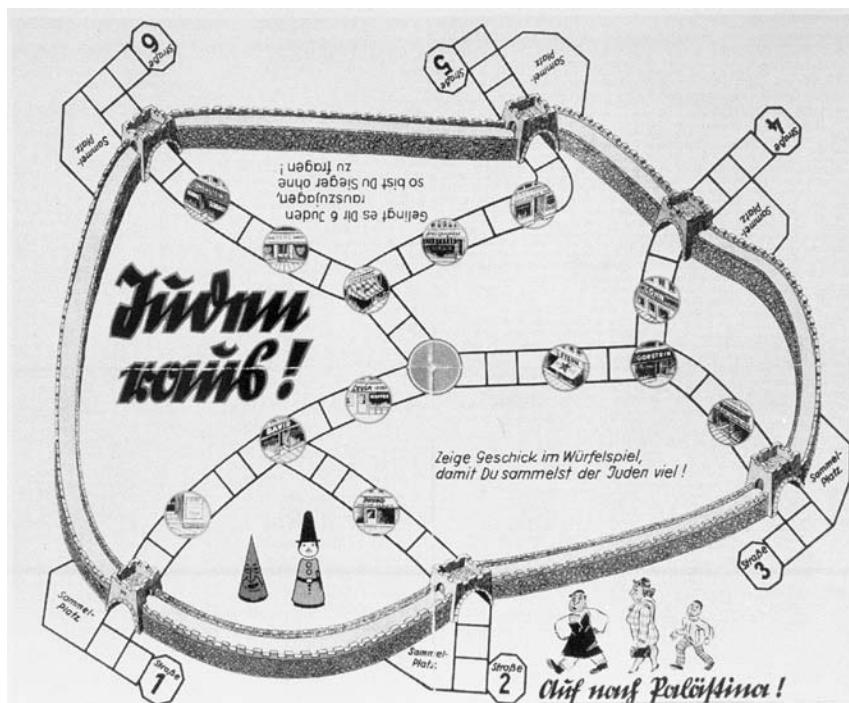


Another successful vehicle that Nazi propagandists employed to direct their ideological values to young people included children's toys and games. Toy figurine enterprise OM Haussler Elastolin experienced a burgeoning business not

only in its traditional production line of toy soldiers and military paraphernalia but also in figurines from every major Nazi Party paramilitary organization, including the **Schutzstaffel (SS)**, SA, and Hitler Youth. Figurines representing personalities of the Third Reich, such as Adolf Hitler, **Heinrich Himmler**, and **Hermann Göring**, also proved popular items. One German stuffed animal manufacturer created a version of its Teddy Bear dressed in full Nazi regalia.³¹ In 1936, the Dresden-based concern Günther & Co. produced and distributed a board game called “*Juden raus!*” (“Jews, Get Out!”). Based on the classic game Parcheesi and representing a variant of today’s American versions, “Sorry!” and “Trouble,” “*Juden raus!*” clearly intended to instill in young children the basest tenets of Nazi antisemitism. According to the roll of the dice, children moved their play pieces the designated number of spaces along the game board, illustrated to depict the walls and streets of a medieval city. The wooden game pieces themselves represented highly caricatured “Jewish” figures with exaggerated features. The first person to drive all six of his or her “Jews” from the city and to the area ominously termed the “collection point” was the winner. “Show skill in rolling the dice,” the instructions enjoined, “so that you collect many Jews!” In most editions, the game board bore the caption “*Auf nach Palästina*” (“Off to **Palestine!**”), reflecting the Nazis’ then current policy of encouraging Jewish emigration from Germany. The game reportedly sold well in 1938, the year in which an accelerated antisemitic policy ended in **Kristallnacht**.

31. German toy manufacturers are credited with popularizing the world-famous “Teddy Bear,” named for Theodore Roosevelt, in 1902.

DOCUMENT 7-9. Game board "Juden raus!" ("Jews, Get Out!"), Günther & Co., 1938, USHMMPA WS# 11894, courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute.



PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS

Through propaganda, Nazi leaders attempted to capture the imagination and loyalty of Germany's younger generation. Fully exposed to the suggestive force of Nazi ideology, young people were highly susceptible to Nazism and its message and accepted its influence perhaps more uncritically than did their adult counterparts. Early antisemitic propaganda efforts often aimed at the marginalization of Jews in their own communities and regularly stressed popular participation in circumscribing their participation in economic, professional, and social spheres. Especially in the early years of the regime, local leaders of the Nazi Party and its auxiliary organizations, such as the SA and the Hitler Youth, instigated acts of violence and aggression against Jewish citizens and Jewish-owned property. Sometimes, too, "wild" boycotts of Jewish-owned stores and businesses, vandalism of Jewish cemeteries, and other antisemitic excesses sprang from individual initiative, spurred on by deep-seated personal or professional antagonisms or fanned by concentrated regional or national

propaganda campaigns. Children often followed where adults led, introducing themes of exclusion and prejudice within their own milieus. Before legislation in November 1938 definitively banned them from attending “German” schools, Jewish pupils endured public humiliation, scorn, and bullying from many of their classmates. Adults too could figure as the objects of children’s malice. At a trade and vocational school for boys in Frankfurt, one Jewish instructor, exempted from the civil service purge by dint of his military service in World War I, remained among the faculty in the autumn of 1935. Heightened antisemitic rhetoric had flooded the media since the promulgation of the **Nuremberg Laws** the month before, reminding German citizens of the need to root out Jewish influence from public life. When the school’s administration seemed oblivious to this imperative, members of the student body decided to take matters into their own hands.

DOCUMENT 7-10. Letter from the director of the Trade and Vocational School for Boys to the Department of Education, Frankfurt am Main, October 1, 1935, in Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, eds., *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1963), 111 (translated from the German).

Yesterday, September 30, [1935,] Herr Fröhlich alerted me that in the classroom of Herr Kromer, in which he has been assigned to teach shorthand, someone had hung a sign with the inscription, “Jews are not wanted here” [*Juden sind hier unerwünscht*]. So I went alone to the class, explained to the students that the swiftest solution to the “Jewish Question” for our school would emanate from school officials and until then, unauthorized actions must remain prohibited. Then I had the sign with the aforementioned slogan removed.

Today, on October 1, many pupils appeared conspicuously in uniform, and I learned that “something was planned.” “When the school director takes Jews under his protection, then we’ll proceed against him as well!” After recess the boys did not go back to their classrooms. A large throng collected in the hallways, and one could see that a demonstration was underway. I had already spoken with the municipal councilor, Mr. Beiling, and school inspector Müller on the telephone and received permission from the latter to suspend Mr. Fröhlich immediately if necessary. Mr. Fröhlich had already told me yesterday that he would rather be pensioned off. He promised, on my counsel, to put in a request for retirement

today, as well as a suspension with pay in the meantime, upon which I released him provisionally from his duties.

I announced this measure to the pupils who had gathered in the gymnasium, reminded them of the dangers that may arise in our foreign policy when we undertake such arbitrary and unauthorized actions, and admonished them to abide by order and discipline. I succeeded in restoring calm to the situation, and the instruction could go forward until the end of the day as planned.

When properly motivated, children could prove a formidable force for National Socialist agitation. Such was the case with a group of Deutsches Jungvolk (German Young Volk), the division of the Hitler Youth created for ten- to fourteen-year-old boys, ubiquitously known as *Pimpfe*.³² When a handful of *Pimpfe* became involved in an altercation with a Jewish shop owner in Schivelbein, a small city in Pomerania, the youths in question used the incident to ignite public sentiment against the town's Jewish residents. Enlisting the aid of their Hitler Youth cell and the local citizenry, the boys succeeded in precipitating the arrest of the "offending" shopkeeper and the closure of the municipality's Jewish businesses. In a report to the Berlin office of the Centralverein (Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, or CV),³³ a local CV administrator gave an account of the proceedings.

32. The word "*Pimpf*" (pl. *Pimpfe*) has an interesting etymology. It actually derives from an onomatopoetic device for audible flatulence. Just as English speakers might use the colloquial expression "little fart" for a young child, German speakers used "*Pimpf*" humorously to describe a prepubescent boy. In the 1920s, the word came to denote the youngest members of the German Youth Movement. The term migrated to the Hitler Youth organization in the 1930s and was used semiofficially to describe members of the Deutsches Jungvolk.

33. The CV was founded in 1893 to defend the rights of German Jews while fostering the "cultivation of German sentiment" among its members. The radicalization of the German political landscape in the final years of the Weimar Republic prompted the use of more aggressive means for combating the Nazi threat, an effort coordinated from the CV head office in Berlin. The CV spearheaded the formation of the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland in September 1933 and played a leading role in that organization's practical work. Renamed in September 1935 as Centralverein der Juden in Deutschland and one year later as Jüdischer Centralverein, the organization was abolished by the Gestapo in the wake of *Reichskristallnacht*.

DOCUMENT 7-II. Report of the Centralverein Landesverband Pommern (Pomerania), signed Michelsohn, to the Central Office of the Centralverein, in re Schivelbein, August 16, 1935, USHMM, RG-11.00, Osobyi Archive Moscow, 721-1-3019, Centralverein Records, 91 (translated from the German).

Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, e.V.³⁴

Provincial Association [*Landesverband*] Pomerania

Stettin, August 15, 1935

Re: Schivelbein

To the Central Office Berlin

The recently reported occurrences in Schivelbein may be reported as follows:

On Sunday the 10th (August) a *Pimpf* purchased a pound of flour from the store owner Kronheim in Schivelbein. The *Pimpf* was in uniform. As he left the store, he was accosted by five *Pimpfe* who had ascended the three steps to the store; these boys demanded to know why he was buying goods at a Jewish-owned store. Kronheim saw this through the windowpane and yelled to the boys, "Get out of here!" ["*Macht, dass Ihr hier wegkommt!*"]. A member of the SA Sports School in Schivelbein, who was coincidentally standing on the other side of the street, yelled something at Kronheim and threatened him. K[ronheim] as a consequence immediately shut the door.

As a result of the menacing tone which Kronheim had taken with the boys, an enormous agitation immediately manifested itself among Schivelbein's local cell of the Jungvolk (*Pimpfenschaft*). Approximately forty *Pimpfe* assembled outside Kronheim's store. The police came. The crowd pushed its way into the building, took hold of Kronheim, who had hidden himself, dragged him out, hung a placard around his neck which read, "The Jew Kronheim wanted to strike a *Pimpf*," and took him off to the police station. In the end the gang of *Pimpfe* forced the closure of all the Jewish businesses [in town]. A unit of *Pimpfe* came into the store of Mr. Fritz Jacobus, intending to provoke him, and one of them yelled to him, "Come on and hit me, come on and hit me!" But Fritz Jacobus restrained himself.

The forced closure of Jewish-owned businesses occurred in full view of the police.

34. The abbreviation "e.V." indicates a registered (nonprofit) society.

Towards evening a large protest demonstration was called. Large posters were hung with the announcement "Gathering of *Pimpfe* and Jungvolk. Protest demonstration against the Jew Kronheim, who wanted to strike a *Pimpf*. All residents are invited."

The assembly then took place with significant participation from among the local population. A high school student [*Unterpriminar*³⁵], a local leader of the Hitler Youth, addressed the crowd. That night several windowpanes were shattered at the homes of Jewish residents.

Kronheim spent the night in protective custody.³⁶ On the next day he was sent for a physical examination to the Johanniter Hospital in Bad Polzin. On Wednesday he was again brought from there under policy custody to Schivelbein, interrogated, and released early on Thursday. His business is closed; a large placard has been nailed to the metal blinds of the store window so that it cannot be opened. The family has gone to stay with relatives in the area.

Early yesterday I reported the incident to the State Police³⁷ in Köslin. They were already informed there from the interrogation protocol taken by the police department in Schivelbein. I shared with them the inside facts of the matter. Because neither the mayor of Schivelbein nor the incumbent district magistrate [*Landrat*] will extend permission for the business to be reopened and for Kronheim to return to Schivelbein, it was my goal to secure this permission, which I succeeded in doing. Since yesterday morning the shop was open again; Kronheim may return to Schivelbein on the evening of the 18th. It remains to be seen whether a renewal of such incidents will occur.

During its twelve years in power, the Nazi dictatorship targeted individuals whom its ideology defined as biological enemies—most significantly Jews but also **Roma and Sinti** (Gypsies)—for discrimination, for

35. This denotes a high school student, usually sixteen to eighteen years of age, equivalent to a pupil in the sixth form in British secondary schools or a senior in high school in the United States.

36. In German, the term is *Schutzhaft*; it is by definition a type of police custody used to protect an individual from harm, either from outside sources or, if the individual is already in custody, from other prisoners. In Nazi Germany, the term was increasingly employed euphemistically to describe the practice of extralegal arrest and confinement of Jews and other real or perceived "enemies" of the Reich. Here the legal fiction suggested that the custody was necessary to protect the individual in question from the "righteous anger" of the German population.

37. This is the *Staatspolizeistelle*, or *Stapostelle*, the local branch of the Gestapo.

disenfranchisement, and finally for systematic destruction. Yet, even within their own *Volksgemeinschaft*—the German racial community envisioned by Nazi ideologues—National Socialist authorities identified real and perceived enemies of the regime whom they singled out for persecution. Among these were Jehovah’s Witnesses, a religious group whose members, from religious conviction, refused to swear loyalty to any temporal government, to participate in its civic activities, or to serve in its armed forces. Founded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by American religious leader Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) in 1872, the International Bible Study Society began missionary work in Europe in the 1890s. A first German branch of the group’s Watch Tower Society was established in Elbersfeld in Westphalia in 1902. In 1931, the international association changed its name to Jehovah’s Witnesses. By 1933, when the Nazis came to power, some thirty thousand Germans were Witnesses.³⁸

Even before the establishment of the Third Reich, Jehovah’s Witnesses figured as objects of prejudice. Germany’s mainstream Catholic and Protestant churches disparaged the movement as a cult, while many ordinary citizens found the Witnesses’ house-to-house proselytizing intrusive. Individual German state jurisdictions often enforced strict bans on such solicitation and prohibited the distribution of Witness literature, such as the movement’s official journal, *The Watchtower*. While the Weimar period brought broader official acceptance of religious minorities, the National Socialist regime revived old prejudices and intensified persecution of the Earnest Bible Students (*Ernste Bibelforscher*), as the group was known in Germany. The international tenor of the Witness movement inspired immediate distrust among Nazi authorities. The Witnesses’ reliance on Old Testament texts suggested to them a connection to international Jewry, the bête noire of Nazi ideology. National Socialist officials perceived as treasonous the Witnesses’ refusal to swear allegiance to the Nazi regime or to demonstrate the outward manifestations of that loyalty through the Hitler salute (the so-called German greeting) or through the singing of the national anthem. When the Nazi state reintroduced conscription in 1935, most Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to enlist or serve. German authorities prosecuted all Witnesses failing to report for the draft or declining to join the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, or DAF) whose membership became mandatory

38. For a broader discussion of Jehovah’s Witnesses under National Socialism, see Detlef Garbe, *Between Resistance and Martyrdom: Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Third Reich*, trans. Dagmar G. Grimm (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008).

for all salaried employees following the Nazi ban on trade unions. Nazi authorities often incarcerated Jehovah's Witnesses in concentration camps following service of their prison terms. The vast majority of Witnesses refused to abandon their faith, despite persecution, the imposition of prison sentences, and confinement in the Nazi concentration camp system. Of thirty thousand members of the sect in Germany in 1933, some 10 percent languished in camps during the war years. Approximately one thousand of their number perished during their imprisonment, as did four hundred Witnesses from other nations. In addition, some 250 German Witnesses were executed, most under the authority of military tribunals, for refusing to serve in the German armed forces.

The children of committed Jehovah's Witnesses also faced persecution under the Nazi regime. Refusing, like their parents, to give the "German greeting" or to participate in patriotic or school ceremonies, young Witnesses often found themselves expelled from school. During the Nazi era, 850 Witness children were removed from their parental homes and placed in reformatory schools or foster homes. One of these youngsters was Willi Seitz, a young follower of the movement born in Karlsruhe on March 11, 1923. At age fourteen, school authorities expelled him from the local *Volksschule* for repeatedly failing to give the Hitler salute and refusing to take part in Nazi-inspired classroom activities. His father, Franz Josef Seitz, was a devout and active Witness. His fervent belief had come at a price, for in 1936 he was removed from his civil service post with the municipal waterworks administration; in July of that year he received a four-month sentence from a Mannheim court for his continued religious activities. Wishing to make an example of Seitz, local officials sued him in juvenile court in January 1937, shortly after his release from prison, in order to remove fourteen-year-old Willi Seitz from parental custody. On April 6, the district court ruled that the young boy should be transferred to a reformatory school and eventually placed with a German family that might inculcate in the youngster the proper respect for his country and its principles. Franz Josef Seitz appealed this decision, but on April 15, 1937, a superior court in Karlsruhe upheld the earlier judgment. The Seitz family ultimately succeeded in removing Willi from the reformatory school and sending him to Strasbourg in Alsace, beyond the reach of local authorities. Through the help of Swiss Witnesses, the youth settled with a family in Bern, in neutral Switzerland, where he remained until the end of the war. Shortly after his appeal to the juvenile court in Karlsruhe, Franz Josef Seitz refused to appear for a physical examination conditional for military service and was arrested shortly thereafter for distributing "subversive" literature. After he had served an eighteen-month sentence,

Gestapo officials transferred Seitz to **Buchenwald**, where he was incarcerated until the liberation of that camp in April 1945. He and Willi were reunited after the war, having been apart for eight years.³⁹

DOCUMENT 7-12. Decision of the State Court, Karlsruhe, concerning the appeal of Franz Josef Seitz against the removal of parental custody, Karlsruhe, April 15, 1937, USHMM, RG-32.008*01, Willi Seitz Collection (translated from the German).

State Court [Landgericht] Karlsruhe, April 15, 1937
Civil Court I
1 ZFH 33/37 Parental authority concerning Willi Josef Seitz, born
March 11, 1923

Decree

The appeal of the stoker Franz Josef Seitz in Karlsruhe, Kriegsstrasse 171, against the decision of the District Court [*Amtsgericht*] B III Karlsruhe of April 6, 1937 is dismissed with costs [to plaintiff].

Grounds

On April 6, 1937, the District Court B III Karlsruhe removed from the stoker Franz Josef Seitz parental custody of his son Willi Josef and ordered in the same instance that the boy be removed temporarily to the observation station of the Schloss Flehingen reformatory school. Concerning the circumstances which led to this measure, a detailed statement of the district court is appended to this decree.

The father appealed against this ruling with the petition that the judgment be reversed. He disputes that the criteria for an infraction according to §1666 of the Civil Code [Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch] are not met. He insists that he has not endangered the emotional or physical well-being of his son or abused the rights of parental custody vested in him. The son had a strict upbringing and is deeply religious. Since his expulsion from school, he has taken up an apprenticeship. There have been no complaints against his son either during his schooling or during his apprenticeship. He does not deny that his son refused to take part in patriotic school festivals, refuses to give the “German greeting,” and refuses to salute the flag. But this purportedly does not stem from [the father’s] influence.

39. Franz Josef Seitz, "Meine Erlebnisse im Dritten Reich," U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-32.008*01 (Willi Seitz Collection).

He says he did not prevail upon his son in any manner and left it up to him as to how he should behave. He himself formerly belonged to the Association of Earnest Bible Students and still belongs today to the confession of Jehovah's Witnesses. Reference to the circumstances of the case and the charge made by the complainant will be made in detail in the file.

According to the findings, whose correctness is not disputed by the father, the boy refused to participate in patriotic ceremonies at school, [refused] to salute the flag, to give the "German greeting," and to sing the national anthems.⁴⁰ He explained to the school director that he would not become a soldier and, besides this, set down in two essays his opinion of current events. Consistent with his entire manner of behavior and according to opinions expressed in his school essays, the minor is not able to feel himself a German or even to evince respect for the great German men and their deeds or consciously to dedicate himself to his duties to his people [*Volk*] and his country. It is the specific duty of the parents to bring their children up in a way which does not alienate them from their German nature, to raise their children according to German customs and precepts, and to educate them spiritually and morally in the spirit of National Socialism in the service of the people [*Volk*] and the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Preamble and §2, Law Concerning the Hitler Youth of December 1, 1936, *Reich Law Gazette* I, p. 993). An offense against this duty must be seen as a subjective failure of the parents in the interpretation of §1666 of the Civil Code. Contrary to the statements of the father, the court is convinced that the attitude of the son can be traced to the influence of the parents. The father is still a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses. He was released from his post because of his activities as a Jehovah's Witness and also served a jail term for this [offense]. The mother holds the same opinions as the father. It is obvious that a youth at this age does not think for himself but adopts the convictions of his parents. In consideration of his behavior, he has additionally been expelled from school. [Because of this] it would therefore be impossible for him to receive the necessary further education in order to attain any career position. For all of this, [the court] acknowledges and rules with the district court that there exist the necessary preconditions to take legal measures according to §1666 of the Civil Code. Because those measures ordered by the district court do not

40. This refers to the official German national anthem, the so-called "*Deutschlandlied*" ("*Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles*"), followed by the "Horst Wessel Song" ("*Horst-Wessel-Lied*"), a song composed by early Nazi Party martyr Horst Wessel and embraced as the Party anthem.

exceed the requisite mandated by the unusual circumstances, the appeal must be rejected.

GERMAN CHILDREN AND THE WAR

Marion Lubien⁴¹ was one of many young Germans who kept a wartime diary. Like most of her adult contemporaries, the fourteen-year-old seemed fascinated by firsthand accounts of distant battles and intoxicated by the string of early victories. For Marion and her generation, the war was a source of genuine excitement. While grown-ups may not have shared their enthusiasm, youngsters often relished the exciting novelties that the new conflict ushered in: blackouts, gas mask and civil defense drills, letters and presents from absent fathers post-marked from Poland and France. Besides the sense of sacrifice that rationing and conservation engendered in young patriots, wartime privation also produced its own small dividends. As school buildings began to perform double duty as first aid stations, military registration centers, and distribution points for ration coupons, school hours were altered or curtailed, while early shortages in coal and fuel products produced lengthy “coal holidays” for school children in the coldest winter months. Wartime infused the structured activities of the Nazi youth organizations with a greater sense of purpose. Young people did their part for the Fatherland by participating in scrap-metal and rubber recycling campaigns and collecting clothing and donations for the National Socialist Winter Relief (Winterhilfe) association. Young boys felt connected to troops in the field through their own paramilitary training and drilling with the Hitler Youth. Under the auspices of the League of German Girls, teenage girls ran charity drives, wrote letters to convalescent soldiers, and assembled care packages for frontline troops.

41. Marion Lubien (a pseudonym to protect the child diarist's privacy) was born in 1928 in Essen. In 1943, she was evacuated with her Realschule class to Bad-Bohdanetsch (today Lázně Bohdaneč), near Prague, in order to escape Allied bombing. She returned home to Essen in February 1945 and survived the war.

DOCUMENT 7-13. Members of the Hitler Youth practice donning gas masks during an air raid drill, c. 1937, USHMMPA WS# 31512, courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.



Although many youngsters felt themselves engaged in some manner in the war effort, from their vantage point on the home front, the war—at least in its initial stages—still seemed so far away. Marion Lubien dutifully recorded in her diary the stream of military developments and ringing victories as these played out in the early years of the conflict. Her journal entries often emulated the news accounts of the day with their terse and authoritative prose. Lubien's tone remained neutral and unemotional, and she made little reference to her personal experiences—until British Royal Air Force (RAF) bombs began to rain down on the teenager's home city of Essen.⁴²

For most German youngsters, the Allied bombing of German urban centers and industrial sectors often represented their first genuine encounter with

42. See Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

the realities of warfare. With the vital exception of those children who had lost fathers, brothers, or other male relatives in the Polish or western campaigns, many young people faced for the first time the immediate possibility of loss of home and family as the aerial raids literally brought the war home to them.

The RAF implemented the first significant strategic bombing of a German city, Berlin, on September 24, 1940. As was the case in Great Britain, the Nazi regime responded to the threat of future air raids with a plan to evacuate school-age children from areas potentially threatened by Allied bombardment. Since the late nineteenth century, various German governments had promoted the transfer of youngsters from urban centers for extended recreational stays in rural settings (*Kinderlandverschickung*, or KLV). The purpose of these endeavors—to provide youths from Germany's polluted industrial areas the opportunity to spend their school and summer holidays in the fresh air and wholesome environment of the countryside—was immediately adopted as a policy by the National Socialist People's Welfare Organization (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, or NSV⁴³) shortly after the Nazis came to power in 1933. On September 27, 1940, three days after the first intensive bombing of the capital, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann,⁴⁴ head of the Nazi Party Chancellery, issued a confidential circular decree ordering that children resident in regions threatened by Allied air raids might be temporarily relocated to safer areas within Reich territory.⁴⁵ In its initial stages, this measure was completely voluntary and scheduled to continue for a period of only six months. To allay public fears of a potential prolonged assault by Allied air forces on German population centers, Bormann specifically forbade mention of an "evacuation" of German children. Rather officials were to couch the action in terms of an "expanded transfer of children to the countryside" (*Erweiterte Kinderlandverschickung*), suggesting an extension of the earlier social welfare program.

43. The NSV became the official welfare organization of the Nazi Party in 1933. Absorbing all non-Nazi charity organizations, it became the second-largest Nazi group organization by 1939, after the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, or DAF).

44. Martin Bormann (1900–1945) served as head of the Party Chancellery (Parteikanzlei) and Hitler's private secretary. As the Führer's closest aide, he gained enormous bureaucratic power and influence through Hitler's implicit trust and by controlling access to the German leader. On May 1, 1945, the day following Hitler's suicide, Bormann, with other German personnel, fled the Führerbunker during the Battle of Berlin; he was never seen alive again. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg convicted Bormann in absentia and sentenced him to death. In 1972, remains thought to be Bormann's were uncovered in Berlin; these findings were confirmed by DNA testing in 1998.

45. By 1941, German children were also being relocated to German-occupied territories, such as Denmark, and to territories controlled by German allies, such as Slovakia and Hungary.

The former leader of the Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach, in his capacity as Reich Leader of Youth and Education of the Nazi Party, undertook the coordination of state, public, and party agencies participating in the effort. The NSV assumed responsibility for youngsters under the age of ten. Mothers generally accompanied infants and toddlers in these relocations⁴⁶; together with elder siblings, they were usually housed with host families, who received a subsidy from the state. The NSV also settled children aged six to ten with foster families in locations where they might continue their elementary school education. Young people aged ten to fourteen fell under the jurisdiction of the Hitler Youth organization. Divided by gender, pupils in this age cohort traveled with their teachers from target cities such as Berlin, Essen, and Düsseldorf to rural areas in Bavaria, Austria, Saxony, and East Prussia. A majority of these children lodged in so-called KLV camps, which integrated classroom instruction and structured play with ideological indoctrination. The measure formally remained voluntary, although as the air war intensified, many students were compulsorily relocated to KLV camps to compensate for the closure of schools in bombed-out neighborhoods. Despite the hardship of separation, many German parents welcomed the chance to remove their children from harm's way. The KLV effort did ensure its participants a safe environment, uninterrupted schooling, and access to better nutrition. The state absorbed all substantial costs for the program and, particularly in the last difficult years of the war, relieved hard-pressed families from the responsibility of child care. From October 1940 until war's end, the Reich Office (Reichsdienststelle) KLV evacuated 2 million German children to safety and accommodated 850,000 school-age pupils between ten and fourteen in its nine thousand camps. In a class essay written in 1946, an eleven-year-old girl remembered her evacuation from her home city of Nuremberg to the Bavarian countryside.⁴⁷

46. So-called mother-and-child transfers (*Mutter-und-Kind-Verschickungen*) were initially intended for small children aged three and younger; in later years, however, they encompassed children up to age six.

47. See Gerhard Koch, *Der Führer sorgt für unsere Kinder: Die Kinderlandverschickung im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1997); Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, esp. 229–88.

DOCUMENT 7-14. School essay of an eleven-year-old girl, Nuremberg, 1946, in Emmy E. Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents: Children Witness World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 49.

We suffered several devastating air raids. My parents made up their minds to send me (aged 9) and my brother to the countryside. My mother packed our belongings. Then [. . .] on September 1, 1943, we departed. There were thirty of us, varying in age from six to fourteen, from the first to eighth grade. We were accompanied by a teacher from our school. We travelled by train to Weissenburg. There we were picked up by a bus and travelled to the village of Bergen. There we all stood around, waiting to get a number. That was the number of [the] house. When it was called, someone from the family came to meet us. My brother and I ended up on a large farm, with strangers. But they were very friendly to us. They fed us frequently and well. We helped on the farm and stayed nearly one and a half years in the village. Then our parents brought us back home.

On June 7, 1944, the German public awoke to read a terse dispatch from the Military High Command in their morning papers: "In the night just past," it announced, "the enemy began their long-planned invasion of western Europe, an attack which we have been expecting."⁴⁸

It was D-day. In the early-morning hours of June 6, 1944, some 175,000 Allied troops stormed ashore on the beaches of Normandy in northern France. Thousands of British, American, Canadian, and Free French reinforcements would follow in the coming weeks. By late summer, Allied troops had liberated Paris and reached the Siegfried Line, the so-called Western Wall (*Westwall*) of Germany's fortified defense system. Their armies now pressed toward the German frontier, while in the East, Soviet forces pushed to the borders of East Prussia.

In the context of these mounting military defeats, Hitler decreed the creation of the Volkssturm, a home guard consisting of previously unconscribed men between the ages of sixteen and sixty.⁴⁹ Individual *Gauleiters* were responsible for the organization and command of local units, while Reichsführer-SS

48. This announcement of the D-day invasion is quoted in Emmy E. Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents: Children Witness World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 120.

49. The Führer decree establishing the Volkssturm proceeded on September 25, 1944, but was first made public on October 18, 1944, the anniversary of the Battle of Nations (*Völkerschlacht*), fought near Leipzig, in which Napoleon was decisively routed in 1813.

Heinrich Himmler and Reichsleiter Martin Bormann undertook military and political leadership of the troops, respectively. Tasked with the defense of the immediate homeland, nearly 6 million men were drafted into this service. Three separate age cohorts were affected: those born between the years 1884 and 1924, who had previously been excluded for reasons of age or health; those men currently eligible for conscription but whose occupations had exempted them as essential to the war effort (*Unabkömmlichstellung*, or *UK-Stellung*); and those teenagers born between 1925 and 1928, who were not yet of draft age. In the last desperate months of World War II, young boys in their early teens were drawn into action as well.

Lacking necessary materiel and qualified instructors, Volkssturm formations were poorly trained and inadequately armed. Germany had a long tradition of compulsory military service, so most older members of the Volkssturm would at least have received some military training when they previously served with the army. This was not true of conscripted teenagers, who received minimal basic training from the Hitler Youth organization or from the Reich Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst).⁵⁰ Actual weapons training was often so deficient that Volkssturm members had to familiarize themselves with their firearms in the field. Chronically short of arms and ammunition, Volkssturm units fought with captured weapons, as well as with portable antitank rocket launchers (bazookas) and improvised light rifles, such as the *Volksgewehr* (people's rifle); often they were armed with little more than picks and shovels. It was common to deploy such forces in digging antitank ditches and entrenchments and in building makeshift shelters and dugouts, but many units saw heavy combat. Although individual regiments were initially intended to operate in their home districts, numerous divisions were sent directly to the front. These ragtag forces were used extensively in the Battle of Königsberg (today Kaliningrad) (April 6 to 9, 1945) and in the Battle for Berlin (April 20 to May 2, 1945), one of the war's bloodiest battles. Ill-equipped and inadequately provisioned, they suffered enormous casualties. Tens of thousands died in action. Nearly 1 million Volkssturm soldiers were prisoners of war at war's end, while 175,000 were officially listed as missing.

Volkssturm formations often fought with desperate courage, but the military value of their deployment remained insignificant. The Nazi leadership believed that the formation and presence of a home guard would bolster plummeting public morale, but the sight of ragged boys and graybeards marching

50. For further discussion of the Volkssturm, see David K. Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm: The Nazi Militia and the Fall of Germany, 1944–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

into combat presumably did little to restore citizens' belief in ultimate victory. Nevertheless, *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official newspaper of the Nazi Party, often carried stories heralding the valor and tenacity of young boys dispatched to the defense of their embattled Fatherland. In early 1945, it printed an interview with fifteen-year-old Harry Bahrmann, whose courage and quick action halted the entry of a Soviet tank into a village in eastern Germany.

DOCUMENT 7-15. Interview with Harry Bahrmann, *Völkischer Beobachter*, c. March 1945, in Franz Seidler, *Deutsche Volkssturm: Das letzte Aufgebot, 1944–1945*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Herbig, 1991), 322.

Harry Bahrmann, Hitler Youth member, fifteen years old:

I lie in the roadside ditch in the middle of the village. In the area before me, the street comes to an end to my right. I lie where the road makes a sharp bend. The ditch is not deep, but I duck down. I can see for about fifty meters [164 feet] down the street, then the corner of the adjacent house cuts off my view. I hear the tank coming and duck down even lower. He must not see me first. He shoots and [the shots] resound in my ear, but I think, "He cannot see me and is shooting over me." I want to let him come up very close. I'm almost lying completely on my stomach on the embankment, releasing the safety catch of the bazooka and pressing it against me. I try to decide how I will do it. The roar of the turret gun almost knocks me over. Then I see [the tank] and quickly duck my head away. I didn't think any more, except that it was almost directly upon me. I see it suddenly, although I keep my head low. It is no more than six meters [twenty feet] away. I really wanted to shoot from a prone position, but I spring up halfway and discharge the weapon, and I cannot miss. There was immediately a dense cloud of smoke about the tank, from which a cascade of bright lights appeared as if someone were doing welding. The tank half turned, blocked the street, and burned out. I was completely dirty and wet from the culvert. I thought, "Now you can really come out of the ditch." From the entryway of a nearby house, someone ran out to me and said, "You shot the tank."

"Yes," I said.

On January 12, 1945, the Red Army launched its last major offensive against German forces, beginning from its start positions on the Vistula River in Poland and fanning out along a broad front. On the fourth day of the endeavor,

Soviet army groups broke German lines and advanced rapidly westward at the rate of approximately thirty to forty kilometers (twenty-five miles) per day. In swift succession, Soviet forces captured the German territories of East Prussia, East Pomerania, Upper Silesia, and Posen (today Posnań) before halting on a line along the Oder River some seventy kilometers (forty-four miles) from Berlin. The German **Wehrmacht** had lost more than 1 million troops since the Allied invasion of western Europe in June 1944, and it lacked sufficient men and material to adequately defend the capital. As the Soviets pushed toward the gates of Berlin, the U.S. Army Air Force launched a number of devastating daytime air raids upon the city, while the RAF rained bombs on the capital for thirty-six consecutive nights before the arrival of Red Army forces. Soviet artillery units began shelling the metropolitan area on April 20, 1945, and did not halt their efforts until the city's surrender.

The Battle for Berlin had begun. By April 24, units of the First Belorussian Front⁵¹ and the First Ukrainian Front completed an encirclement of the capital. The German defenses consisted of some forty-five thousand disorganized and ill-equipped Wehrmacht and **Waffen-SS** troops, as well as police, Volkssturm, and Hitler Youth units. Following one of the most fiercely fought battles of World War II, Soviet troops reached the Reichstag and the adjoining government district at the city's center on April 30. That afternoon Germany's Führer, Adolf Hitler, committed suicide in his subterranean bunker beneath the New Reich Chancellery building on the nearby Voßstrasse. On May 2, Berlin capitulated, although fighting continued on the city's outskirts until Germany's official surrender on May 8, 1945. While precise mortality statistics are difficult to attain, scholars estimate that as many as 125,000 civilians perished in the Battle for Berlin.⁵²

Seventeen-year-old Lili G. experienced the collapse of the Third Reich in Germany's capital. From her home in the Kaiserallee in Berlin's Tempelhof district, the teenager recorded in terse journal entries the arrival of Soviet forces and the intense aerial and artillery bombardment that confined her and her family to their cellar as fighting raged through the streets. As the Red Army took possession of the city, vengeful Soviet troops spread terror throughout the capital, looting homes, arresting anyone in uniform, and sometimes murdering civilians in cold blood. As in Vienna, which had fallen to the Soviet army on February 13, some 10 to 20 percent of Berlin's female population was raped in

51. The term front described a major military organization in the Soviet army during World War II; it was roughly equivalent to an Allied army group.

52. See Earl Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1968).

the first days of occupation,⁵³ among them Lili's mother. On May 1, the family fled to Lichterfelde in the city's southern suburbs to escape the chaos of the battle's final days and the excesses of Soviet soldiers. Following the city's capitulation on May 2, Lili, her mother, and her younger sister, Margit, returned to their shell-ravaged neighborhood to await the war's end and to begin picking up the pieces of their shattered lives.

DOCUMENT 7-16. Journal of Lili G., entries for April 15 through May 9, 1945, in Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion, 1941–1945: Eine Dokumentation zum 50. Jahrestag des Überfalls auf die Sowjetunion* (Berlin: Argon-Verlag, 1991), 257–58 (translated from the German).

April 15, [1945]: Air raid siren! The British are in Magdeburg, the Russians have reached Frankfurt [an der Oder].

April 16: Air raid siren! Digging around for things [in the old house] in the Jagowstrasse.

April 17: Air raid siren! Was paying off accounts with our ration coupons.

April 18: Air raid siren! Retrieving things in the Jagowstrasse.

April 19: Air raid siren! Retrieving things in the Jagowstrasse. Can already hear shooting.

April 20: Air raid siren! Little water, no electricity. The siren no longer sounds during air raids.

April 21: The train doesn't go out to the Jagowstrasse anymore.

April 22: We are now sleeping in the cellar. The Russians have reached Berlin. Uncle Willi is now a refugee and has come to stay with us.

April 23: Went out to the Jagowstrasse with Uncle Willi. Visited Papa. He had got drunk from his alcohol rations.

April 24: Five people dead through a grenade blast in the Trautenaustrasse.

April 25: No water! No gas! No light!

April 26: Artillery fire!

April 27: The enemy is at the Kaiserplatz.

April 28: Our house was hit for the fourth time by artillery!

April 29: Our house was struck about twenty times [by artillery fire]. It is very difficult to cook anything because of the constant danger to life and limb when one leaves the cellar.

53. See Stargardt, *Witnesses of War*, 316–20.

April 30: I was standing up on the stairs of the cellar with Mrs. Behrendt during a bombing raid. The Russians are here. They are completely drunk. There are rapes at night. Not me. Mama yes. Some five to twenty times.

May 1: The Russians go in and out [of our house]. All of our clocks and watches are gone. Their horses lie in the courtyard on our bedding. They have broken into the cellar. We have all fled to Stubenrauchstrasse 33.⁵⁴

May 2: The first night of quiet. We have moved from hell to heaven. We cried when we discovered the lilacs blooming in the courtyard. Everyone must give up their radios.

May 3: Still in the Stubenrauchstrasse. Can't go to the window, lest you are seen by the Russians. We've heard that there are rapes everywhere.

May 4: No news from Father in the Derfflinger Strasse.

May 5: Back to the Kaiserallee. Complete chaos!

May 6: Our building took twenty-one hits! Cleared things away and packed all day. Attack at night. Crept under the bed for fear the Russians were coming. But the building was just rattling because of the shelling.

May 7: The street has been cleared of rubble. I got numbers for our bread ration, cleaned things up, washed up.

May 8: Cleared rubble in the street. Stood in line for bread. Got news that Father is alive.

May 9: Armistice. There is milk for Margit.

54. This refers to a street in Lichterfelde, a quiet, affluent neighborhood in southern Berlin and thus away from the chaos of the city center.

DOCUMENT 7-17. A German mother shields the eyes of her young son as American troops force her and other townspeople to view the bodies of Soviet civilians from a mass grave near Sutrop, Germany, May 3, 1945, USHMMPA WS# 08197, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.





CHAPTER 8

THE WORLD OF THE CHILD

UNDERSTANDABLY, children and adults contended with the persecutory policies of the Nazi period in markedly different ways. Child victims and survivors of genocide were, after all, still children. This chapter reflects the events of the Shoah, or Holocaust, through their eyes and explores the ways in which youngsters coped with the menacing world in which they found themselves.

Learning and play are two elemental activities associated with childhood. During the Holocaust, children used both to adapt to their difficult circumstances and to restore a sense of normalcy to their disordered lives. In many ghettos throughout eastern Europe, Nazi authorities forbade formal educational instruction for Jewish children. Yet, thousands of school-age children defied such bans by attending a network of clandestine schools organized by education and welfare agencies in many ghetto communities. For young people, such secret study was a means of transcending the narrow walls of the ghetto and fulfilling important intellectual and emotional needs. Teenagers also took pleasure in participating in extracurricular educational and cultural events, such as literary circles, exhibitions, and musical recitals, which offered an important conduit for creativity and artistic collaboration within a captive community.

Play provided children with another powerful outlet to give the terrifying world about them safer contours. Entering a realm of daydream and imagination allowed youngsters to escape their harrowing and uncertain existence and eschew the fear and hunger that tormented them. With a creativity and ingenuity that surprised adult observers, youngsters invented new toys and games

with the very limited resources available to them. Often children incorporated the macabre realities of their camp or ghetto surroundings. Integrating the horrors and tragedies that they witnessed into their play may have helped young children to absorb and assimilate the traumatic events that punctuated their everyday existence.

Like learning and play, innocence is another element closely associated with childhood. But were children in Nazi camps and ghettos innocent of the dangers that awaited them? Could children comprehend the malignant forces that they faced? Documentation concerning innocence and knowledge examines the degree to which children lived aware or unaware of their perilous circumstances. In most cases, youngsters matured quickly, gaining experience beyond their years, witnessing unimaginable horrors, and shouldering grown-up responsibilities. With a flexibility that many adults lacked, children often found highly creative ways to cope with the difficulties they confronted. Through imagination, play, and their dreams for the future, young people managed to transcend the physical and emotional traumas they experienced and cling to their hopes for survival.

ESCAPE INTO LEARNING

Learning is an essential and indispensable feature of childhood, the school years being part of a youngster's evolution to adulthood. Yet, during the war years in German-occupied Europe, a majority of Jewish children were denied the possibility of a formal education. In November 1939, just weeks after the Polish army capitulated, German officials in the **General Government** banned Jewish children from all public and private schools. In the Polish capital alone, forty thousand Jewish youngsters of school age were barred from attending classes.¹ With very few exceptions, as in the case of the **Lódź ghetto**, which boasted an impressive array of officially sanctioned educational institutions,² prohibitions or severe restrictions upon formal instruction for Jewish children remained in effect when Jewish populations were ghettoized in Poland and other German-occupied territories in eastern Europe. When the largest of these communities, the **Warsaw ghetto**, was enclosed in November 1940, German authorities imposed a ban on the establishment of schools, citing the threat of contagion.

1. Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to a Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 343.

2. For a discussion of education in the Lódź ghetto, see chapter 4.

Only a select number of vocational-training courses were permitted in August 1940, and only in September 1941 did German officials countenance the opening of a number of elementary schools for ghetto pupils.³

According to available statistics, some 48,207 school-age children between the ages of seven and fourteen lived in the Warsaw ghetto⁴; to this figure we must add thousands of adolescents who, under normal circumstances, would have attended secondary or college-preparatory schools (*Gymnasia*). Yet, only a small fraction of their number had access to formal instruction. In such a setting, how was it possible to provide an education to the youth of the Warsaw ghetto? Clearly, a certain number of children were educated within their own homes, by parents, older siblings, or relatives. Several thousand orphaned or severely disadvantaged youths who lived in **CENTOS** homes or orphanages presumably also received at least limited informal instruction from caregivers. Yet, already in the summer and autumn of 1940, representatives of Jewish educational and welfare organizations had begun working to construct a network of clandestine schools for youngsters and adolescents. Many underground classrooms gathered in soup kitchens and care institutions for young people. In these instances, instructors and administrators pursued the dual goal of feeding hungry children and providing them a basic educational foundation. Other less formally organized "schools" met secretly in the private homes of instructors or their pupils. From the autumn of 1940 until the summer of 1942, a wide range of underground centers offered educational instruction to ghetto youths. In addition to kindergartens and elementary schools, there existed a number of high schools, *Gymnasia*, vocational-training institutions, and *cheder* schools for religious instruction.

Clandestine classes for very young children incorporated lessons through stories, songs, and games. Parents and educators often described such gatherings as "play groups" in order to conceal covert learning activities and to prevent youngsters from inadvertently revealing their illicit schooling to others. Teachers stressed the importance of *Beschäftigung* (engagement in useful activity) as a way to combat boredom and delinquency among young children and

3. Barbara Engelking-Boni, "Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto," in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 34–35.

4. Engelking-Boni, "Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto," 34.

to prepare them for the proficiency necessary from primary education.⁵ For elementary school children, educators stressed reading and writing, fearing that such skill sets might be lost to a generation of Jewish youth. For older children, clandestine *Gymnasia* and secondary schools also thrived in ghetto communities. The first underground *Gymnasium* in Warsaw, established under the auspices of the Dror youth organization, sheltered seventy-two pupils in its first year and employed as its teachers intellectuals such as the famed Jewish writer Isaac Katzenelson.⁶ Because many instructors and sponsoring organizations were Zionist in political orientation, curricula often stressed Judaic and Zionist themes and offered theoretical and practical preparation for a new Jewish future in **Palestine**. Covert secondary schools in the ghetto maintained high standards, devising enrollment criteria for prospective pupils, offering advanced courses in literature, the arts, and the sciences, and issuing degrees. As secrecy was an important issue, students did not receive certificates on graduation; examination records were preserved in hiding and legitimized by a special education commission after the war.⁷

According to calculations made by chroniclers of the **Oneg Shabbat** archive, some ten thousand children and adolescents attended clandestine classes in the Warsaw ghetto between 1940 and 1942.⁸ One of those students was fifteen-year-old Miriam Wattenberg, whose family had fled Łódź in late 1939. Mary's mother was an American citizen, a connection that provided some security to Mary and her fellow pupils who engaged in a series of

5. See Lisa Anne Plante, "Transition and Resistance: Schooling Efforts for Jewish Children and Youth in Hiding, Ghettos, and Camps," in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 45ff.

6. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 346. Isaac Katzenelson (1886–1944) was born in Korelichi in Belorussia (now Belarus) and moved to Warsaw as a small boy. For many years he directed a Hebrew-Polish school in Łódź; writing in Hebrew, he produced many well-received plays, including *The Prophet* and *The White Life*. When German forces invaded Poland, Katzenelson began to write his works in Yiddish. In November 1939, he fled to Warsaw, where he was active as a writer and educator until 1943. In April 1943, during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Katzenelson escaped and succeeded in making his way to France on false papers; he was interned, however, in the Vittel detention camp and in 1944 deported to Auschwitz, where he perished. After the war his manuscript titled *The Song of the Slaughtered Jewish People* was discovered at Vittel and published in several languages.

7. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 349.

8. Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 344.

Gymnasium-level courses in the Wattenberg home.⁹ In her diary/memoir, published in February 1945, Wattenberg described how the clandestine nature of the instruction inspired a “strange earnestness” in pursuing an education among like-minded teachers and classmates.

DOCUMENT 8-1. Diary/memoir of Miriam Wattenberg, entry for July 12, 1940, in Mary Berg, *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary by Mary Berg*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman, trans. Norbert Guterman and Sylvia Glass (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945), 32–33.

There are now a great number of illegal schools, and they are multiplying every day. People are studying in attics and cellars, and every subject is included in the curriculum, even Latin and Greek. Two such schools were discovered by the Germans some time in June [1940]; later we heard that the teachers were shot on the spot, and that the pupils had been sent to a concentration camp near Lublin.

Our Łódź *Gymnasium* too has started its classes.¹⁰ The majority of the teachers are in Warsaw, and twice a week the courses are given at our home, which is a relatively safe spot because of my mother's American citizenship. We study all the regular subjects, and have even organized a chemical and physics laboratory using glasses and pots from our kitchen, instead of test tubes and retorts.¹¹ Special attention is paid to the study of foreign languages, chiefly English and Hebrew. Our discussions of Polish

9. Miriam Wattenberg was born in Łódź on October 10, 1924. She began a wartime diary in October 1939; in November 1940, Miriam, with her parents and younger sister, was compelled to live in the Warsaw ghetto. The Wattenbergs held a privileged position there because Miriam's mother, Lena Wattenberg, was an American citizen. On July 17, 1942, shortly before the first large deportation of Warsaw Jews to Treblinka, German authorities detained the Wattenbergs and other residents with foreign passports in Warsaw's infamous Pawiak Prison. In January 1943, the family was transferred to the Vittel internment camp, then one year later was allowed to emigrate to the United States. Wattenberg's diary was published in English in February 1945, three months before the end of World War II in Europe; to protect friends and relatives still in Nazi hands, the author employed the pen name “Mary Berg.” The resulting volume, *The Diary of Mary Berg*, was one of the very few eyewitness accounts of the Warsaw ghetto available to American audiences before the end of World War II. See Susan Lee Pentlin, ed., *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman, trans. Norbert Guterman and Sylvia Glass (Oxford: Oneworld Publishers, 2006).

10. Many of Mary Wattenberg's classmates and teachers from Łódź had also gone to Warsaw. A portion of this class now reassembled for clandestine schooling in Mary's house.

11. These are vessels often used in chemistry to distill or decompose substances over heat.

literature have a peculiarly passionate character. The teachers try to show that the great Polish poets Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Wyspianski prophesied the present disaster. [. . .]

The teachers put their whole heart and soul into their teaching, and all the pupils study with exemplary diligence. There are no bad pupils. The illegal character of the teaching, the danger that threatens us every minute, fills us all with a strange earnestness. The old distance between teachers and pupils has vanished, we feel like comrades-in-arms responsible to each other.

For Warsaw ghetto teenager Pola Rotszyld, meeting with her clandestine study group gave her a sense of identity and purpose. “From this moment the most beautiful period of my life began,” she later recalled, “which lasted for more than a year. It was a time when I was really alive. I knew why and what I lived for.”¹²

Teenagers like Pola came to feel that emotional and intellectual survival was integral to their physical survival. Clandestine learning provided a sense of fellowship and camaraderie, which had evaporated elsewhere among a desperate community, and allowed young students, at least temporarily, to transcend the deprivation and misery of ghetto life. Such secret study was quite literally an escape into learning. For sixteen-year-old Pola and her circle of fellow pupils,¹³ these clandestine classes represented a central and transforming experience, as she recounted in 1945.

DOCUMENT 8-2. Diary entry of Pola Rotszyld (Yad Vashem Archives, sign. 03/438) in Barbara Engelking-Boni, “Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington DC: USHMM, 2004), 35.

These lessons were our happiness, our oblivion. Outside there was a war-storm[;] the groans of people dying of hunger, and the animal-like screams of Germans beating up people on the street were heard. And somewhere in

12. Pola Rotszyld, quoted in Engelking-Boni, *Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 35. Born in 1926, Rotszyld survived the Warsaw ghetto and the final deportations and emigrated to Palestine in 1945.

13. This circle included Andzia Adler, Luba Bursztyn, Sara Fajfer, Estera Gutgold, Dorka Jelén, Henia Majzlic, Gucia Rozenstrauch, and Guta Wołowicz. With the exception of Pola Rotszyld, none of these young girls survived the Holocaust. See Engelking-Boni, *Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto*, 34–35.

the corner of the room on Pawia or Nowolipki Street, some girls between thirteen to fifteen years of age were sitting around the table with a teacher, engaged in studying. They all forgot about the whole world, even about the fact that they were a bit hungry, maybe more than a bit.

DOCUMENT 8-3. Three girls study at a clandestine Jewish school in Prague, c. 1942, USHMMPA WS# 37424, courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Prague Photo Archive.



Particularly for older children and adolescents, the chance to engage in educational and cultural activities was a means to regain the normal opportunities of intellectual enrichment and advancement available to most school-age youths but inaccessible to those living within the finite borders of the ghetto. In many ghettoized communities, child-welfare associations attempted to provide youngsters with academic and vocational training, as well as a variety of organized educational and leisure activities. Sometimes, too, the impetus for creative and cultural endeavors sprang from young people themselves.

Yitskhok Rudashevski lived in the Vilna ghetto from the time of its inception until its final liquidation in the autumn of 1943. His father was a typesetter for Vilna's most prominent prewar Yiddish daily newspaper, *Vilner Tog*, and from a young age, young Yitskhok showed a pronounced gift for writing. In

September 1941, when he and his family were forced to settle in Vilna's newly established ghetto, the fourteen-year-old began to keep a diary.¹⁴ The teenager filled his journal with vignettes of ghetto life, penning sketches of its teeming streets and its diverse and colorful inhabitants. Yet, the young man's chronicle focused primarily on his own efforts and those of like-minded individuals to forge an intellectual life for the youth of the Vilna ghetto. In addition to his studies, at which he excelled, Rudashevski dedicated himself to the activities of two youth organizations, the first of which endeavored to compile a history of the ghetto and its residents in order to leave a record for future generations. The second club collected ghetto folklore: its stories and tall tales, jokes and curses, songs and literature. "Our youth works and does not perish,"¹⁵ Rudashevski wrote on October 22, 1942, suggesting that his activities and those of his colleagues represented a means to transcend the narrow limitations of their confinement and to defy both the physical and spiritual repression that persecution embodied. For the young Rudashevski, efforts such as those to create an exhibition honoring the Yiddish poet Yehoash¹⁶ provided a way to escape the moral and material barrenness of the ghetto and to create a space and time in which beauty and enlightenment could continue to exist.¹⁷

DOCUMENT 8-4. Diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski, Vilna ghetto, entry for March 14, 1943, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 223.

Today the Yehoash celebration as well as the opening of the Yehoash exhibition took place in the club. The exhibition is exceptionally beautiful. The entire reading room in the club is filled with material. The room is bright and clean. It is a delight to come into it. We are indebted for the exhibition to Friend Sutzkever, who smuggled into the ghetto from

14. See Yitskhok Rudashevski's description of his family's relocation to the Vilna ghetto in Document 4-1.

15. Yitskhok Rudashevski, quoted in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 192.

16. This is the pen name of Lithuanian-born Solomon Blumgarten (1870–1927), one of the most celebrated Yiddish poets of the early twentieth century. Immigrating to the United States in 1890, Blumgarten was responsible for translating many of the classics of world literature into Yiddish; his two-volume translation of the Bible is widely regarded as one of the great masterpieces in that language.

17. Yitskhok Rudashevski was shot to death with members of his family in the Ponary Woods in October 1943, during the dissolution of the Vilna ghetto.

the YIVO where he works a great deal of material for the Yehoash exhibition. [. . .]

People entering here forgot that this is the ghetto. Here in the Yehoash exhibition we have many valuable documents that now are treasures: manuscripts from Peretz to Yehoash, Yehoash's original letters. We have rare newspaper clippings. In the section—Bible translations into Yiddish—we have old Bible translations into Yiddish from the seventeenth century. Looking at the exhibition, at our work, our hearts swell with enthusiasm. We actually forget that we are in a dark ghetto. The celebration today was also carried out in a grand manner. The dramatic circle presented Yehoash's tableau *Saul*. The members read essays on the writings of Yehoash, on Yehoash the poet, on beauty, sound, and color.

The mood of the celebration was an exalted one. It was indeed a holiday, a demonstration on behalf of Yiddish literature and culture.

AT PLAY DURING THE HOLOCAUST

The juxtaposition of child's play with the tragic events of the Holocaust presents the reader with a striking contradiction. Popular imagination associates play with the carefree world of merriment and simple delights. Instinctively, we balk at the suggestion that mass murder and the games and amusements of youth could exist side by side. And yet, scores of contemporary documents and the vivid recollections of survivors and bystanders make it plain that they did.¹⁸

What can account for the existence of such activities in the midst of such catastrophic circumstances—in the desolate streets of the ghetto, in the bleak and dangerous world of the concentration camp? The most logical explanation for such a phenomenon is that play in every place and time is an instinct of childhood. Child survivor Nechama Tec recalled that her stay in the Majdan Tatarski ghetto in Lublin in 1942, though fraught with danger, was a happy time for her, for after a long period of isolation, she at last had the opportunity to play with other children.

The children formed a small minority. As a matter of policy, the Nazis were concentrating on the extermination of Jewish children. Because we were thus in special danger, adults looked upon us as a special commodity.

18. See George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Yad Vashem, *No Child's Play* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

We came to expect our elders to treat us with special indulgence, and they did. No Jew would have thought of mistreating a child, and almost all of them refrained from even the mildest form of discipline.

And so we were free of adult supervision. We had no special duties. It was summer. Because there were few of us left, we felt close to each other. We relied on each other for entertainment, and for enlightenment. [...] We children managed to be happy as we roamed the little dirt roads in search of adventure. We spent our days outdoors, constantly on the move. In the evenings we took turns visiting each other's houses. In the process, we made many exciting adventures about life, love, and our fellow mortals.¹⁹

To run and frolic with their playmates, to act out their fantasies, and to explore the world about them gave children a powerful way to escape the harsh realities that surrounded them. Play also represented a way for youngsters to adapt to the difficulties and traumatic circumstances they confronted and to reshape their environment through daydream and imagination. As in the pre-Holocaust world, children also used such activities in order to develop needed skill sets and to socialize themselves for future mature roles and responsibilities.²⁰

19. Nechama Tec, *Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 22–23.

20. See Catherine Wheeler, *Representing Children at Play in the Literature of the Shoah* (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2003).

DOCUMENT 8-5. Children at play in a field in Marysin, Łódź ghetto, c. 1941, USHMMPA WS# 33844, courtesy of the Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, sygn. 1120, fot. 27-832-6.



For many adults, the sight of children at play in the camp barracks or among the rubble of the ghetto alley was a heartening sight. While the misery and deprivation of their surroundings told a story of destruction and loss, child's play prefigured life, continuity, and collective survival. One such encouraged individual was Oskar Rosenfeld (1884–1944),²¹ a Czech-born writer and

21. Living in Vienna in the interwar period, Moravian-born Oskar Rosenfeld worked as a journalist and author, publishing a series of novels under the title *Tage und Nächte* (*Days and Nights*); from 1929 he was the editor in chief of the Viennese illustrated weekly *Die Neue Welt* (*The New World*). Following the *Anschluss*, Rosenfeld and his wife moved to Prague. Unable to emigrate to England, the couple was deported to the Łódź ghetto in November 1941, where Rosenfeld became active in writing for *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*. Upon the liquidation of the ghetto, Rosenfeld was deported to Auschwitz in August 1944, where he perished. See Oskar Rosenfeld, *In the Beginning There Was the Ghetto: Notebooks of Łódź* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002).

novelist who had been active in Vienna until the *Anschluss*. Deported to the Łódź ghetto from Prague in November 1941, Rosenfeld soon numbered among the authors who contributed essays and commentaries for *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*,²² an effort to document the history of the incarcerated community. In July 1943, Rosenfeld captured ghetto youngsters' enduring love of play and pastimes in an essay for the official chronicle titled "The Ghetto Children's Toys." A month later, Rosenfeld took up this theme again, announcing to his readers that the children of the Łódź ghetto had invented a new plaything.

DOCUMENT 8-6. Oskar Rosenfeld, entry in *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, August 25, 1943, in Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lourie et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 373–74.

For several days now, the streets and courtyards of the ghetto have been filled with a noise like the clatter of wooden shoes. The noise is disturbing at first, but one gradually gets used to it and says to oneself: this is as much a part of the ghetto as are cesspools. The observer soon discovers that this "clattering" is produced by boys who have invented a pastime, an entertainment. More precisely, the children of the ghetto have invented a new toy.

All the various amusing toys and noisemakers—harmonicas, hobby horses, rattles, building blocks, decals, etc.—are things our youngsters must, of course, do without. In other ways as well, as ghetto dwellers, they are excluded from all the enchantments of the child's world. And so, on their own, they invent toys to replace all the things that delight children everywhere and are unavailable here.

The ghetto toy in the summer of 1943: two small slabs of wood—hardwood if possible! One slab is held between the forefinger and the middle finger, the other between the middle finger and the ring finger. The little finger presses against the other fingers, squeezing them so hard that the slabs are rigidly fixed in position and can thus be struck against one another by means of a skillful motion. The resulting noise resembles the clattering of storks or, to use musical terms, the clicking of castanets. The harder the wood, the more piercing and precise the clicking, the more successful the toy, and the greater the enjoyment. Naturally, the artistic talents of the toy carver and performer can be refined to a very high level.

22. Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lourie et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

The instrument imposes no limit on the individual's musical ability. There are children who are content to use the primitive clicking of the slabs to produce something like the sounds of a Morse code transmitter. Other children imitate the beating of a drum, improvising marches out of banging sounds as they parade with their playmates like soldiers.

The streets of the Litzmannstadt ghetto are filled with clicking, drumming, banging. . . . Barefoot boys scurry past you, performing their music right under your nose, with great earnestness, as though their lives depended on it. Here the musical instinct of eastern European Jews is cultivated to the full. An area that has given the world so many musicians, chiefly violinists—just think of Hubermann, Heifetz, Elman, Milstein, Menuhin²³—now presents a new line of artists.

A conversation with a virtuoso: "We get the wood from the Wood Works Department, but only the hardest wood is good enough."—"What is the toy called?"—"It's called a castanet. . . . I don't know why. Never heard the name before. We paint the toy to make it look nicer. That guy over there," he pointed to a barefoot boy who was sitting in the street dust, ragged and dirty, "doesn't know how to do it. You have to swing your whole hand if you want to get a good tune out. Hard wood and a hefty swing—those are the main things." A few boys gathered, clicked their castanets, and all hell let loose. It was the first castanet concert I had ever attended.

The chronicler assumes that the clicker music will vanish "after it's run its course" and be replaced by some other sort of music. But he may be wrong.

O[skar] R[osenfeld]

Youngsters in camp and ghetto settings lived in a kind of exile from childhood. With the loss of their homes and belongings, young children felt the absence of their favorite playthings acutely. With forced ghettoization, families brought to their cramped quarters only what they could carry; personal items, among them children's toys and games, were necessarily limited. Possession of material goods became even more severely circumscribed with an individual's transfer to concentration and forced labor camps, and where young children survived in these circumstances, as in the so-called **Theresienstadt family camp** in **Auschwitz**, playthings were a rare commodity. With a creativity and ingenuity that often impressed their adult contemporaries, young people forged new

23. All are famous contemporary Jewish violinists.

toys from cardboard, bits of wood, scraps of metal and cloth—the refuse of the captive society that surrounded them. Children played with what was at hand. When her interviewer expressed incredulity that she had been able to entertain herself at Auschwitz, a young survivor from Kielce exclaimed adamantly, “But I played! I played there with nothing! With the snow. With balls of snow.”²⁴

For those children fortunate enough to retain a cherished toy or childhood possession, a doll or stuffed animal might figure as the center of the youngster’s existence. Playthings were rare and precious, and their young owners often clung to them with a fierce possessiveness. Such toys offered not only an opportunity for amusement but also a source of emotional stability and security. In a menacing world of upheaval and change, material items remained steadfast and unchanging. Toys were good listeners in the way that harried and exhausted adults were not. Even broken and damaged playthings retained their currency; they did not wither away from hunger or face **deportation** as parents or siblings did. A toy might also transport its small owner into an imaginary world, far away from the miserable surroundings of the camp or ghetto.

In the formative years of the **Theresienstadt ghetto**, a prisoner employed as a carpenter in a joiner’s workshop in the Small Fortress created the remarkable pull toy in the shape of a butterfly shown in Document 8-7. Affixed to a wheeled base, the brightly painted butterfly “takes flight,” fluttering its wooden wings, when it is rolled across a floor or flat surface. The butterfly motif has long been associated with the children of Theresienstadt, thanks largely to the discovery and widespread publication of Pavel Friedman’s poem “I Never Saw Another Butterfly,” written shortly after the young man’s arrival in the Theresienstadt ghetto in April 1942. Friedman died at age twenty-three in the gas chambers at **Birkenau** in late September 1944, but his poem is one of the most famous in the genre of Holocaust poetry:

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun’s tears sing
against a white stone [. . .]
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.

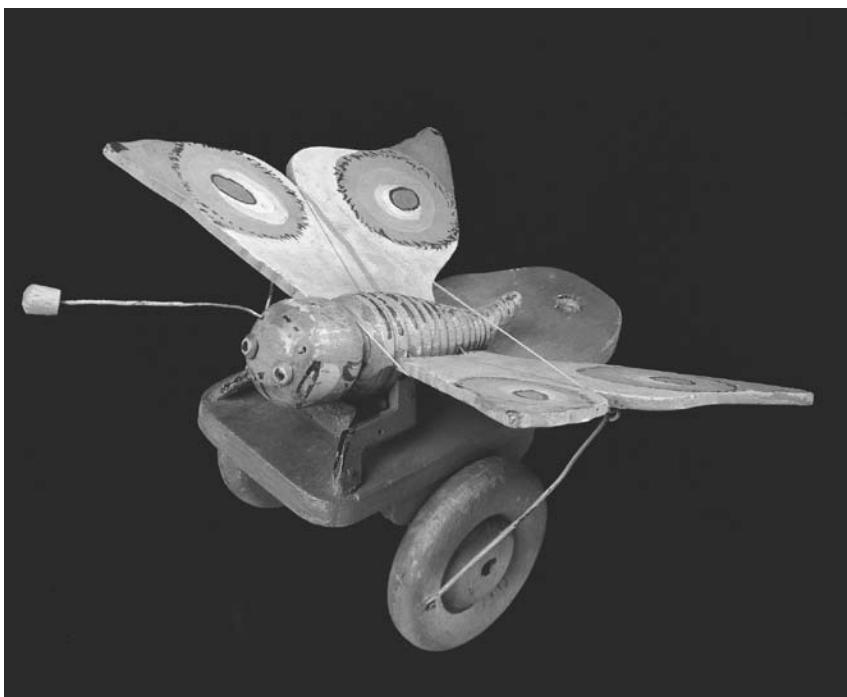
24. Quoted in Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, 72.

Only I never saw another butterfly.
That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live here in the ghetto.²⁵

The butterfly was an evocative symbol not only because it represented an element of natural beauty long inaccessible to Theresienstadt's incarcerated community but also because the winged creature had the ability literally to transcend the confining walls of the ghetto and to escape the barrenness and despair of the prisoners' existence. Of course, the craftsman who constructed the pull toy in question is unlikely to have been aware of Friedman's poem, and it is doubtful that a concrete connection lies between the artifact and the young writer's famous verse. The maker of the small wooden toy is unknown, as are the identity and fate of its young recipient. But the object is a poignant reminder of children's need for the tangible vestiges of childhood in the harrowing world of the Holocaust.

25. Pavel Friedman, "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942–44*, ed. Hana Volavková, exp. 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993), 39.

DOCUMENT 8-7. Painted wooden butterfly toy, Small Fortress, Theresienstadt ghetto, 1941–1945, USHMM PA WS# N00049, original reposed in Památník Terezín Narodní Kulturní Památky.



As we have seen, children often invented new modes of play in order to accommodate their difficult circumstances and the limited resources available to them. Sometimes, too, youngsters adapted traditional children's games to incorporate their radically altered environment.²⁶ To the horror of many adult witnesses, who had experienced normal childhoods, youngsters modified such conventional children's games as tag and hide-and-seek with the macabre trappings of their camp or ghetto existence. At the 1961 **Eichmann Trial**, Dr. Aharon Peretz, a physician who survived the Kovno ghetto, recounted how the play of ghetto children came to reflect the frightening reality of the Holocaust.

26. See Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, esp. 76–80.

DOCUMENT 8-8. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478–79.

Witness Peretz: I think that possibly the greatest tragedy the Jewish people underwent was the tragedy of the children. The children in the ghetto also used to play and laugh, and in their games the tragedy of the Jewish people was reflected. They used to play at graves, they would dig a pit, place a child in it, and call him Hitler. They used to play as if they were at the gate of the ghetto, some would be Germans and others Jews. The Germans would shout and strike the Jews. They used to play at funerals, and all such games.

Children's "new" games accurately depicted the dramas and tragedies of ghetto life. Many Jewish youngsters had never known a park or a playground, had never owned a doll or stuffed animal, had never frolicked amid trees and flowery meadows. Thus, they constructed their make-believe worlds from the only existence they knew. Starvation and deprivation were a part of their quotidian lives. Words from the ghetto vernacular, such as *Aktion*, "deportation," and "transport," became a part of their daily vocabulary. While play that incorporated camp or ghetto life was unconventional and shocked adult observers, such activities presumably helped young children to process the perplexing circumstances in which they found themselves and offered them a kind of "buffered learning," as George Eisen suggests—a way to rehearse a dangerous situation within a secure sphere, as within the parameters of a game or play activity.²⁷ Into their imaginary world, children integrated the cruelty, irony, and pathos that they observed around them. In personal testimony given in the 1960s, Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, a young and idealistic educator, recalled the unsettling games played by her young charges at the Theresienstadt family camp in Birkenau.

27. Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, 79.

DOCUMENT 8-9. Personal testimony of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, c. 1960, in Inge Deutschkron, *Denn ihrer war die Hölle: Kinder in Gettos und Lagern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), 52–55 (translated from the German).

Even in the next block, with the smaller children, we had enormous difficulties. We could not teach them according to a lesson plan, but we told them of the kind of life that we wished for ourselves. But if we were not careful, they played the kind of life's games that they had experienced themselves. They played "Camp Elder and Block Elder," "Roll Call," with "caps off!"²⁸ They played the ailing prisoners who would faint during roll call and receive a thrashing, or the "Doctor" who took away patients' rations and who refused to give treatment if they could not give him anything in return. Once they even played the game "Gas Chamber." They made a trench into which they pushed in one stone after another. These were supposed to be people who went into the crematorium, and they imitated their cries. They came to me for advice, asking me to show them where they should put the crematorium chimney.

Children's games incorporated the harrowing reality of the camp or ghetto environment. This kind of play was not an escape into fantasy or imagination but a way of assimilating the dangerous world that surrounded youngsters during the Holocaust. Role-playing in particular represented a creative means of accommodating and coping with the tremendous challenges youngsters confronted. Naturally, such play grew in part from children's natural impulse to emulate the actions of adults. As in the normal realm of childhood, the enactment of adult behaviors often followed gender lines. Predictably, as in other places and times, young boys' play frequently took the shape of war games. Ghetto lads of six or seven engaged in make-believe combat as Germans and Russians or pretended to join in the adventures of the **partisans** of whom they had heard so much. Closer to their own experience, preteenage boys in Vilna or Warsaw played "Going through the Gate" in which young "**Gestapo** men" searched returning "forced laborers" for smuggled food and contraband.²⁹ Girls could and did participate in such games, but their play more often embraced

28. In German, "*Mützen ab!*" is the command SS guards inevitably gave prisoners at roll call.

29. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478.

female roles in the ghetto. Small girls who had perhaps once nursed their dolls now imitated their mothers in an eerily realistic form of playing house. Standing in queues before an imaginary shop window, little girls clutched make-believe ration cards, jostling their neighbors and bickering with the shopkeeper over goods and wares. The young housewives could be heard to wonder aloud where their next piece of bread would come from or how, with their few rotten potatoes, they might manage to feed their families.³⁰

One activity that perhaps best exemplifies the tragedy of Jews during the Holocaust was a favorite of both genders. The game “Jews and Germans” wed aspects of cops and robbers with the traditional hide-and-seek. In Document 8-10, an eight-year-old inhabitant of the Vilna ghetto explains how youngsters masqueraded as members of the **Schutzstaffel (SS)** or **Jewish Order Police** and sought to round up their playmates for deportation. Document 8-11, a photograph capturing children at play in the Łódź ghetto, illustrates that the game Jews and Germans was popular in almost every ghetto in German-occupied eastern Europe.

DOCUMENT 8-10. An eight-year-old resident of the Vilna ghetto describes the game “Jews and Germans” (Genia Silkes Collection, YIVO Institute), quoted in George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 72.

Part of the children became “policemen” and part “German.” The third group was comprised of “Jews” who were to hide in make-believe bunkers; that is under chairs, tables, in barrels and garbage cans. The highest distinction went to the child who played Kommandant [Kittel], the head of the Gestapo [*sic!*].³¹ He was always the strongest boy or girl. If a dressed-up “policeman” happened to find “Jewish” children, he handed them over to the “Germans.”

30. Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust*, 77.

31. Oberscharführer Bruno Kittel, a member of the Security Police, was later responsible for the liquidation of Vilna ghetto.

DOCUMENT 8-11. In the Łódź ghetto, children, one dressed as a ghetto policeman, play a peculiar version of cops and robbers, 1943, USHMMPA WS# 80401, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghettaot.



INNOCENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Innocence is a characteristic closely associated with childhood. And yet, as the testimony of Aharon Peretz and the anecdotes of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel show, most Jewish children did not long remain in ignorance of the perilous circumstances in which they found themselves during the Holocaust. As a rule, innocence suggests a kind of purity that stems from the ignorance of evil and an absence of worldliness and guile. Yet, living in the upside-down world of the ghetto or in the charnel atmosphere of the concentration camps, many children had become well acquainted with evil and understood from their own limited experience that guilelessness and naiveté could prove a deadly combination. Here youngsters grew up quickly. At a tender age, many had witnessed unimaginable horrors and shouldered adult responsibilities. Łódź ghetto chronicler **Josef Zelkowicz** noted this premature maturation during that ghetto's notorious *Gehsperrre*. In the late summer of 1942, German authorities approached ghetto elder **Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski** demanding twenty thousand deportees. Faced with an ultimatum, Rumkowski settled upon a desperate and terrible solution; he would fill the prescribed quota with the least productive members

of the community: the severely ill, the aged, and all children up to the age of ten. From September 5 through 12, 1942, German forces entered the ghetto, seizing those unfit for labor from their homes and from the community's streets. The *Gehsperre* began with the liquidation of the ghetto hospitals, where SS officials apprehended patients in their beds. In the days that followed, police units cleared schoolrooms and orphanages, many of them in Marysin, once a haven for Łódź's youngsters. Approximately 15,500 individuals were rounded up for deportation; the vast majority of these victims were young children and adults over the age of sixty-five.³²

Josef Zelkowicz recorded the events of the *Gehsperre* in a 1942 anthology of essays he called *In Those Terrible Days*.³³ Amid the chaos of the September roundups, Zelkowicz noted that most youngsters were well aware of the terrifying implications of the **razzias**, although parents often chose not to share the news of the upcoming tragedy with their youngsters.

Some children [...] have caught on. And that is because ten-year-olds in the ghetto are already adults. They know and understand the fate that awaits them. They may not, for now, know why they are being torn from their parents; this may not have been explained to them. For now it suffices to know that they are being separated from their trusted guardians, their devoted mothers and fathers. [...] They already rove alone in the street. They already cry their own tears, and these tears are so bitter and stinging that they pierce the heart like poisoned arrows. . . . The ghetto hearts, however, have ossified. They wish to break but cannot. This may be the cruelest curse of all.³⁴

Of course very young children could not fathom—as their parents might—the terrible significance of the roundups or the fate that awaited them at the **Chełmno** killing center. As Zelkowicz observed that autumn, some youngsters stood in carts bound for the collection point, bemused by the cacophony and the laments of adult bystanders, eager for the “game” to continue.

32. See Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans., Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006).

33. See the essay in its entirety in Josef Zelkowitz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Łodź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 249–381.

34. Zelkowitz, *In Those Terrible Days*, 265–67.

DOCUMENT 8-12. Excerpt from Josef Zelkowicz's essay "The Optimist in the Potato Queue," Łódź ghetto, September 5, 1942, in Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 306–7.

A cart stands on Rybna Street. Several children are standing in the cart, their eyes wide, as if they were lost. They have already been "nabbed"—*gekhapped*. They do not know what all these people want from them. Why are all these people standing around them and gazing at them sadly? Why are they crying? Why are they pounding their chests in despair?

These children see no reason to cry. They are quite content: they have been placed on a wagon and they are going for a ride! Since when have children in the ghetto had such an opportunity? If it were not for all those wailing people, if their mothers and fathers had not screamed so as they placed them in the cart, they would have danced to the cart. After all, they are going for a wagon ride. But all that shouting, noise, and crying upset them and disrupted their joy. They jostle in the elongated wagon bed with its high barriers, as if lost, and their bulging eyes ask: What's going on? What do these people want from us? Why won't they let us take a little ride?

DOCUMENT 8-13. Young children from the Marysin colony wait to be conveyed to the deportation assembly point during the *Gehsperrre*, Łódź ghetto, September 1942, USHMMPA WS# 50334, courtesy of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej.



"Draw what you see!" Inspired by her father's injunction, Helga Weissová began to sketch her observations of ghetto life shortly after her arrival in Theresienstadt in December 1941.³⁵ Helga was born on November 10, 1929, to Otto Weiss, a state bank official, and his wife, Irena. The family led a comfortable middle-class existence in the Czech capital, and from an early age young Helga occupied much of her free time with drawing and painting. Exactly one month after her twelfth birthday, Helga arrived with her parents on one of the first transports of Czech Jews to Theresienstadt. The youngster would remain at **Terezín** for almost three years, during which time she completed over one hundred drawings and illustrations. In late 1944, Helga and Irena Weissová were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Due to the continuing advance

35. For a more extensive view of Helga Weissová's life and Holocaust-era drawings, see Helga Weissová, *Zeichne, was Du siehst! Zeichnungen eines Kindes aus Theresienstadt/Terezín*, ed., Niedersächsischen Verein zur Förderung von Theresienstadt/Terezín, e.V. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998).

of the Soviet army, the two women were transported almost immediately to a series of camps in the German interior. In the last days of the war, the pair found themselves in the **Mauthausen** concentration camp, where American forces liberated them and their fellow prisoners on May 5, 1945. Mother and daughter returned to Prague, where they learned of the deaths of Otto Weiss and most of their nearest relatives and acquaintances. Helga Weissová pursued a career in graphic arts at the National Academy of the Arts and in 1954 married Czech musician Jiří Hošek. She became an internationally celebrated artist, settling in her native Prague.

Helga began to ply her artistic talents in Terezin shortly after settling into *Mädchenheim L-410*, one of the ghetto's homes for young girls, in December 1941. Using art supplies that she had packed with her at the time of her deportation, Weissová initially sought to ease her loneliness by drawing upon the happy images of her girlhood in Prague. After painting a nostalgic winter scene in which small children built a snowman, she persuaded fellow prisoners to smuggle the picture to her father in the men's barracks. Otto Weiss, who had constantly championed his daughter's artistic endeavors, admonished Helga instead to draw what she observed around her. "That snowman was actually my last genuine drawing as a child," Weissová later recalled. "Through this sentence of my father's, and through my own inner motivation, I felt called from now on to capture in my drawings the everyday life of the ghetto. The impressions that from this point in time would affect me, ended my childhood."³⁶

Twelve-year-old Helga clearly comprehended the dangers of her new environment in Theresienstadt and resolved to record them on paper and canvas. For the next several years, she created paintings and illustrations that captured the quotidian incidents and tragedies of ghetto life. "We all did the same things, with the exception of Helga—who, when she was not working, used to sit on her bed and draw and paint constantly," Charlotta Verešová,³⁷ a child diarist of Theresienstadt, remembered of her friend and bunkmate. "We all admired her because she was able to depict our plight."³⁸ With an unsettling candidness, the young teenager faithfully portrayed the wrenching arrivals and departures of

36. Weissová, *Zeichne, was Du siehst!* 13.

37. Charlotta Verešová was born on December 13, 1928, in Litoměřice, Czechoslovakia, the daughter of a mixed marriage. At age fourteen she was separated from her family and deported to Theresienstadt, where she kept a diary of her time in confinement. Verešová survived the war in the Terezin ghetto and worked as a librarian and technical designer after the war; see Laurel Holliday, *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1995), 201–7.

38. Holliday, *Children in the Holocaust and World War II*, 16.

transports at Terezin, the unending lines to receive meager rations, the colonies of workers going to forced labor. Helga had an eye for the ironic, depicting with unvarnished candor the macabre and surreal aspects of ghetto culture. We feel for the aged German Jews who arrive at the “rest community for the elderly,” promised them by the Nazi government, only to encounter the ugly and deadly reality of Theresienstadt. We are likewise amused by the farcical efforts of camp authorities to create from Terezin a “model ghetto” for the visit of officials from the **International Committee of the Red Cross** in 1944. Other illustrations capture the pathos and suffering of Helga’s fellow prisoners: the faces of deportees waiting for days in the cold or heat of the ghetto’s dreaded “Sluice”³⁹ before their transport to Auschwitz or ghetto residents’ solemn farewells to their dead comrades, who were daily carried on sledges to a crematorium outside the ghetto.

Sometimes Helga deployed her artistic gifts in a more traditional vein: to create a birthday greeting or a holiday card for friends and loved ones. In *Birthday Wish I* (*Přání k narozeninám I*), she transcends the hunger and deprivation of the ghetto by conjuring a delicious torte for the birthday honoree. Here a childish yearning is fulfilled as a young boy and girl, clad in their summer best, wheel an enormous birthday cake from Prague to Theresienstadt. The fourteen-year-old artist gave her native city gauzy contours; one can make out the prominent features of Prague Castle—the Hradschin—in its outlines. The well-dressed youngsters push the gigantic confection through the green landscape and up to the fortress walls of Terezin. On the surface, the composition is a dreamlike, innocent vision, like a fairytale from childhood. But the idyllic scene bristles with dark humor. The cart that carries the mighty cake is a hearse, a conveyance often used in Theresienstadt to transport items. In another stroke of wit, the wagon seems to bear the inscription “Entsorgung” (waste disposal). Perhaps the young artist meant to suggest that her diminutive helpers have cleared the ghetto of its debris and brought back in its place a wonderful cake?

39. *Slojska* is a Czech variant of the German *Schleuse*, a slang term used in Theresienstadt for the collection point that held deportees arriving and departing on transports.

DOCUMENT 8-14. Watercolor by Helga Weisssová, Birthday Wish I (Přání k narozeninám I), Theresienstadt ghetto, December 1941, USHMMMA WS# 60926, courtesy Helga Weisssová.



A third document concerning innocence and knowledge strikes out into different territory. The opening pages of this book introduce the reader to **Elisabeth Block**, a Jewish teenager living in rural Bavaria. As Peter Miesbeck, the historian who helped to publish Block's journal in 1993, noted, Elisabeth was "no Bavarian **Anne Frank**,"⁴⁰ who described her experiences explicitly and in vivid detail. Indeed, her diary is interesting to scholars because, even in the blackest moments of her personal history, she appears almost pathologically unable to record unpleasant developments. It is certainly true that in the village of Niedernburg, near Rosenheim, Elisabeth and her family felt closely integrated into the small community in which they lived and endured little discrimination at the hands of their neighbors, even as Nazi anti-Jewish policy escalated in the late 1930s. Elisabeth was loath to record those encroachments that the government's antisemitic measures made on her family's economic and social circumstances during these years. During *Kristallnacht*, for example,

40. Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 17.

rampaging **Sturmabteilung (SA)** men had murdered Elisabeth's uncle, Dr. Leo Levy in his apartment in Bad Polzin, an event the teenager referenced only in passing in her journal. Further disturbing developments—the exclusion of Jewish pupils from public schools, the loss of the family home and business, and the **compulsory sterilization** of Elisabeth's father, Fritz Block—received similarly short shrift. It was as if the young girl failed to see herself and her family within the wider framework of Nazi persecution. In her diary, coincidentally begun in 1933, Block uses the phrase "we Jews" just once, in the context of the September 1941 decree requiring German Jews to wear the yellow star.⁴¹

On March 8, 1942, Elisabeth Block wrote the last entry in her journal. As usual, she focused on her daily activities, on her interactions with friends and family members, on the weather, and on events that had transpired in her community. In this instance, the latest excitement was the birth and baptism of little Friedi, the newborn daughter of Elisabeth's friend Regina Zielke, in Benning, a little town two kilometers from Niedernburg. Elisabeth had been deployed to a farm in the vicinity in compliance with a March 1941 decree compelling all able-bodied Jews to undertake compulsory labor assignments. It is clear from the teenager's own descriptions of her experiences and from contemporary eyewitnesses that she was well treated on the farmstead and that she and her employers felt she was part of the family there. This may explain in part why she makes so little mention of the summons by the local labor office (*Arbeitsamt*) dispatching her to agricultural work or of the fact that her service there, however agreeable, was essentially forced labor.⁴² Elisabeth pays little attention to her father's more strenuous compulsory service laying tracks for railway and commuter transit lines. In her March 1942 account, she mentions only that the frostbite that Fritz Block contracted from his heavy work in freezing weather had fortunately occasioned him leave at a time when the family could spend the weekend together.

Most notably missing from Elisabeth's March 1943 entry is mention of the Blocks' fear of imminent deportation "to the East." The exact date on which they received their summons to assemble at the collection point (*Sammelstelle*) in Munich-Milbertshofen is unknown, but in the early weeks of March, when the teenager wrote of Friedi's baptism and her winter sleigh ride, the family had clearly already begun packing up their household, gathering those few possessions they might be allowed to carry with them and storing furniture and

41. Block, *Erinnerungszeichen*, 25.

42. German Jews performing compulsory labor in accordance with the 1941 decree were not entitled to compensation, paid leave, or benefits, which German "Aryan" workers received.

valuables with trusted friends and neighbors.⁴³ Eighteen years old when she wrote the last passage in her diary, Elisabeth could scarcely have been ignorant of the mass deportation of Jews from Germany and the policy's significance for herself and her family. Was her silence on this point a matter of discretion or circumspection? Did her refusal to acknowledge these menacing developments spring from denial or a naive belief that the charmed existence she and her loved ones enjoyed in Niedernburg would continue, even as the rest of her coreligionists were sent to their deaths? We will never know. On April 3, 1942, the Blocks were deported with 989 fellow Bavarian Jews to the Piaski ghetto, near Lublin, in German-occupied Poland. On an unknown date, Elisabeth and her family were transferred to a killing center, presumably **Belzec** or **Sobibór**, and murdered there.

DOCUMENT 8-15. Diary of Elisabeth Block, entry for March 8, 1943, in Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 265–66.

Sunday, March 8, 1942

It has already been seven weeks now that I have not written in my diary, a long time, and what has happened in the meantime! The most important and greatest event would be the birth of the little Friedi on Wednesday, January 28.⁴⁴ That was a terribly exciting day. The hard struggle lasted from ten a.m. until four in the afternoon, then finally there was a black-haired, healthy girl there. On Friday, amidst a terrible snowstorm and deep snow, the little tot [*Butzerl*] was carried, heavily bundled, to the baptism. Christl stood up as the godmother. To everyone's great surprise and joy, Mama came in the afternoon, just in time to attend the christening luncheon and to inquire after the mother and child. The farmer's wife was very touched that Mama dared to come in such weather and walked two hours, but I was very happy to be able to speak my piece on the subject again.

The whole time until February 22, it snowed practically every day, so that we had three-quarters of a meter [2.5 feet] of snow, and with it minus 16 to 20 degrees (Celsius) [3.2 to –4 degrees Fahrenheit] and even a week of 35 degrees below zero [–31 degrees Fahrenheit]. My daily work now consists of laundering, mending, and darning. In the mornings the

43. See Block, *Erinnerungszeichen*, 46.

44. Emphasis is in the original.

farmer's wife (and I) get up at quarter to seven and milk our nine cows—recently I even milked seven of them by myself—and are finished cleaning the stalls by 8:30. We have just had three calves and now have twenty-four head of cattle. After breakfast at 10:00, when the living room, foyer, and kitchen have been cleaned, I do the wash; after the midday meal at 12:30, I go back to the stalls to clean the stable and water the animals. After this there is the mending, and at 6:00 p.m. back out to the stall. That is the daily flow of things, to which is added the washing of the cows and calves and scouring of the house on Saturday.

From January 18 till February 2, I was not at home; but it was so convenient that I could go ride along for a few hours by sleigh by riding with Christl and Gina-Maus because [their trip] coincided with a farmer's holiday.⁴⁵ That was really fun, and it appeared to me as if [the scene] came out of a novel or a winter's tale, riding in a charming horse-drawn sleigh through the winter landscape, bundled warmly. And when home, what a surprise, Papa was home; he had frostbite on his fingers and had leave—the timing was perfect. We all drank coffee together, and then they were off once more, but I was happy when I came again into the warm living room, because I was completely frozen when I arrived.

IN HOPES AND DREAMS: COPING WITH THE HOLOCAUST

Perhaps Elisabeth Block's aversion to recording unpleasant developments represented a strategy to cope with the increasingly difficult circumstances in which she found herself. It is possible that the teenager used her diary to rewrite events: to reshape painful experiences, giving them gentler and less threatening contours. In recasting each day without its uncertainties and adversities, she may have discovered a way to regain a sense of control over her situation and to replace disagreeable memories with those thoughts of home, nature, and family that she treasured most.

Children adopted many strategies to help them adapt to the horrors and deprivations of the Holocaust. Youngsters matured quickly and beyond their years under such conditions, and many of their responses to persecution were practical and pragmatic. Often powerless to shape their individual circumstances in the way that adults could, however, children frequently found highly creative ways to cope with the terrors they faced. Through imagination, play, and their dreams

45. February 2 is Candlemas in the Christian calendar.

for the future, young people were able to transcend the physical and emotional traumas they experienced and cling to their hopes for survival.

Where possible, adults contributed to this process. Through educational activities and structured play, teachers and caregivers worked to create a world in which children could thrive and feel secure, if only temporarily. In the Theresienstadt family camp in Auschwitz, dedicated instructors like Hanna Hoffmann (later Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel) constructed a safe haven for youngsters in the so-called ***Kinderblock*** (children's block) located in the midst of the killing center in Birkenau. Under the aegis of **Fredy Hirsch**, a popular youth leader in the Theresienstadt ghetto, teachers in the children's home organized craft workshops and cultural events for their young charges. A high point for the youngsters was the staging of a play adapted from the beloved Walt Disney film *Snow White*, produced in 1937.

DOCUMENT 8-16. Personal testimony of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, c. 1960, in Inge Deutschkron, *Denn ihrer war die Hölle: Kinder in Gettos und Lagern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), 52–55 (translated from the German).

We taught lessons in sociology, Jewish history, etc. When the SS men came for inspection, the children had to recite poems in the German language while standing at attention. It was thanks to Fredy's exemplary leadership that the SS were pleased with the *Kinderblock* and often showed it off as a curiosity to the commandants of other camps. They also provided us with further favors. Thus, for example, we could even establish a sewing room in the block.

For the home, one of our comrades painted pictures from Walt Disney's *Snow White*. At the German's request, as they were very impressed by the pictures, Fredy produced a play of the fairy tale with the children in the German language and performed it for the dignitaries at Auschwitz. From tables, stools, and straw sacks, we constructed the stage, the backdrop, and the costumes. Because of the language difficulties which had to be overcome, the rehearsals lasted three months. We practiced dances and choruses with the children, rewrote the script, and adapted it to our circumstances. Thus the dwarves appeared as representatives of order and cleanliness. The demoralization to which they were opposed was embodied by the wicked stepmother. It was a truly lovely performance, and for the children it was the grandest experience of their lives—for many of them unfortunately also their last.

It was thanks not least to this performance that the SS-*Lagerführer* put aside a second block, as a day care center for children from three to eight years old and into whose living quarters mothers with children up to the age of ten could move. In this way, we could also look after the children at night, and prevent the exchange of children's food for other goods and services. [. . .]

After a while, we succeeded in translating the harmony which existed among us youth leaders unto the children themselves. We initiated a boy scout system, with challenges that had to be undergone; the children composed slogans and songs. The groups competed with each other to see if each one in the group could do a good deed each day for fourteen days straight. We organized scouting games, made playthings from clay, colored woven straw, and paper, which we later displayed in an exhibition where they were very much admired by the Germans.

This world, into which we had fled from reality, was suddenly shaken to its foundations in early March 1944. We had already spent the three winter months in Birkenau; those from the September transport had even been there for six months. And nothing had happened up until then. Of course many had perished, dead of starvation, and there were more and more *Muselmänner*. But the roll calls were shorter and occurred less frequently. Block curfew [*Blocksperrre*] was seldom declared. Those of us who did not suffer from "chimney fever"⁴⁶ had new cause for hope. But one day the camp elder announced that those from the September transport would be going as a unit to work in Heidebrück in Germany—men, women and children; only the very ill would be exempted. There began a wild guessing game as to where this Heidebrück would be and if it was also a concentration camp. The pessimists maintained that this time certainly they would go to the gas: saying that the chimneys had not been smoking for many days now and they needed new material for burning. The optimists saw this very fact as proof that the gas chambers would be shut down for good.

The pessimists maintained correctly: the September transport, to which nearly all of these children belonged, was within a short time sent to the gas chamber.

46. That is, fear of being gassed.

DOCUMENT 8-17. Just as youngsters at Birkenau reenacted *Snow White*, children in the Novaky labor camp perform a play about another popular Disney character, Mickey Mouse, Slovakia, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 40080, courtesy of Mira Frenkel.



Separation from loved ones was a central experience for many young persecutees during the Holocaust. Whether divided by long distances or isolated in hiding, youngsters often bore the pain of separation in silence, either because they lacked a sympathetic environment in which to express their emotions or because doing so might endanger themselves or their rescuers. Very young children, such as hidden child Ilona Goldman (later Alona Frankel), suffered doubly, for they had very few practical avenues to communicate with parents or family members or to convey their feelings of loneliness and abandonment. Born in Kraków on July 27, 1937,⁴⁷ Ilona was two years old when German forces invaded her native Poland in September 1939. Like many Jewish families, the Goldmans decided to escape German-occupied Poland and fled to Lvov (now Lviv), then in Soviet territory.

Her father, Salomon (1900–1958), a Communist Party member from nearby Bochnia, owned a wholesale materials business. Her mother, Gusta

47. Concerning the story of Ilona Goldman and her family, see Alona Frankel, *A Girl*, trans. Sondra Silverston (Ramat Gan: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, 2009).

(b. 1904), a Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir⁴⁸ youth group member who had spent her teenage years in Palestine, came from the Silesian town of Oświęcim, a city better known by its German name, Auschwitz. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Goldman family found itself incarcerated in the Lvov ghetto. In the spring of 1942, fearing the upcoming liquidation of the ghetto, Salomon Goldman managed to escape with his family to the “Aryan side” of Lvov, where a former employee, Josef Jozak, agreed to hide the Goldmans on one condition: that they find another place of concealment for their lively and voluble four-year-old daughter.⁴⁹ In the end, Salomon and Gusta found a hiding place for young Ilona with a Polish peasant family in the small village of Marcinkowice. Ilona spent some six months there posing as a Christian child with the family of Hania Seremet, whom the Goldmans paid handsomely each week for the care and concealment of their daughter. In Ilona's last months with her foster family, Gusta Goldman sacrificed a gold dental crown every week for her only child's continued safety, with Salomon prying each tooth from her mouth with the help of his Swiss Army knife.⁵⁰ The Goldmans were careful to pay Seremet on schedule, for they had learned that the rescuer had abandoned an earlier charge, a very young boy, to his death when his parents were killed in a ghetto action and relatives were unable to pay for his continued upkeep.⁵¹

Ilona Goldman spent several months separated from her parents. Because the four-year-old had not yet learned to write, she could not converse with her parents through notes or letters. Instead she communicated with them through a series of drawings sketched on the reverse side of Seremet's weekly correspondence with the Goldmans. Besides the connection they established between parents and child, Ilona's drawings served another important purpose: the pictures assured the Goldmans on a weekly basis that their daughter was still alive.

Now in the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Ilona Goldman's childhood drawings capture the themes of village life: the work of peasants in the fields, animals ambling across green meadows, passenger

48. Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir (also Hashomer Hatzair, youth organization of socialist Zionism) was founded in 1918, merging two groups, Hashomer, a Zionist scouting group, and Ze'irei Zion, an ideological group committed to the study of Zionism, socialism, and Jewish history. The oldest existing Zionist youth movement, Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir encouraged *Aliyah* to Palestine and the establishment of kibbutzim; it counted among its members Mordecai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

49. Frankel, *A Girl*, 18.

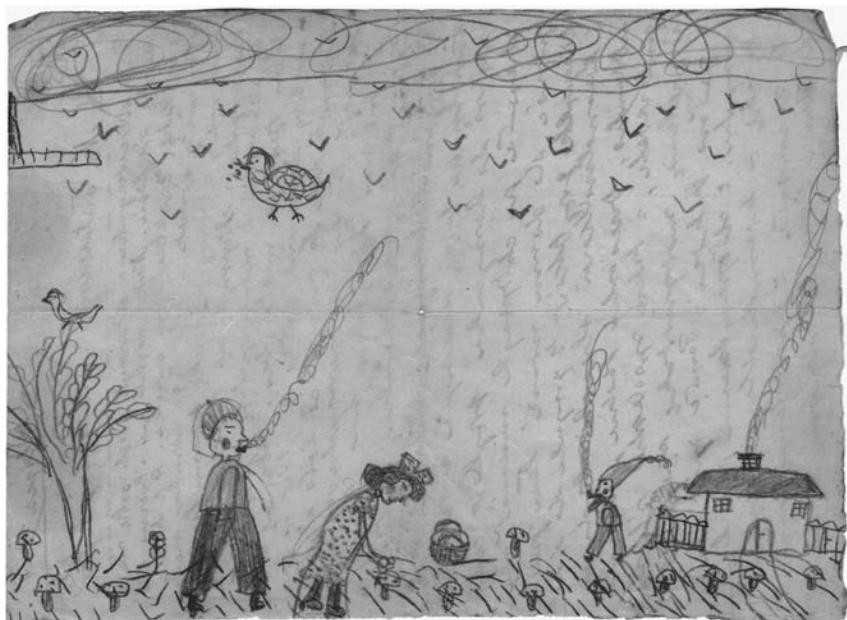
50. Frankel, *A Girl*, 2.

51. Frankel, *A Girl*, 16.

trains traversing the Polish countryside. Wartime shortages also found a place in Ilona's sketches. During her time in hiding in Marcinkowice, the little girl had heard incessant complaints from local farmers about the continual shortages of consumer items, especially cigarettes and smoking materials. Tobacco, hard to come by in wartime, was strictly rationed. In the drawing in Document 8-18, Ilona has rectified the situation. As the residents of her rescuer's household engage in hunting for mushrooms, a common family pastime in late summer and early autumn, the menfolk drag at their cigarettes. The farmers smoke; the house chimney smokes; yes, even the bird aloft in the sky seems to take a few puffs.

Sometime during that autumn of 1942, Ilona's caretakers lost courage and returned her to her parents in their hiding place. For months, the child lived in a kind of double concealment: hidden from the reach of German officials and from the Jozaks, who had forbidden the Goldmans to keep Ilona with them. In July 1944, the Soviet army liberated Lvov and, with the city, the emaciated family. In 1949 the Goldmans emigrated to Israel, where Ilona established herself as an award-winning children's author and illustrator.

DOCUMENT 8-18. Drawing of Ilona Goldman (Alona Frankel) for her parents in hiding, Marcinkowice, Poland, 1942, USHMM Collections, gift of Alona Goldman Frankel (note: writing showing through from other side).



Ilona Goldman's drawings served both as a mode of communication with absent parents and as a means of entertaining herself during her long and lonely time in hiding. For many children during the Holocaust, escape into a world of imagination proved an efficacious way to eschew the harsh realities that surrounded them. Whether through drawing, painting, poetry, or play, imagination provided an important avenue for eluding the miseries of hunger, fear, and deprivation. For young Abram (Avraham) Koplowicz, writing became a way to reassert a sense of control over his environment and to banish feelings of pain and helplessness. Born in Łódź on February 18, 1930, the only child of Mendel and Yochet Koplowicz (née Gittel),⁵² Abram was just nine years old when German troops entered his native city and forced its Jewish inhabitants to reside in the Łódź ghetto. Even in his preteen years, he showed a precocious talent for writing, and within the ghetto walls, the young boy turned to poetry to transcend the physical and spiritual barrenness of his surroundings. His poem

52. Institute of Tolerance/State Archives in Łódź (in cooperation with the Centre de Civilization Française and the Embassy of France in Poland), eds., *The Children of the Łódź Ghetto* (Łódź: Bilbo, 2004), n.p.

“When I Am Twenty” is a literal flight into fancy, a magical journey into a space and time where the horrors of the ghetto could not reach him.

Abram Koplowicz was deported with the transport from the Łódź ghetto to Auschwitz in August 1944 and perished in the Birkenau gas chambers in September of that year. Mendel Koplowicz succeeded in surviving the war and, on returning to Łódź, discovered his son’s illustrated volume of poetry among the ruins of the ghetto. Abram Koplowicz’s original copybook is now reposed in the archives of **Yad Vashem**. Several selections of the young boy’s poetry were published in their original Polish in 1993.⁵³

DOCUMENT 8-19. Abram Koplowicz, “When I Am Twenty,” Łódź ghetto, c. 1943, in Institute of Tolerance/State Archives in Łódź (in cooperation with the Centre de Civilisation Française and the Embassy of France in Poland), eds., *The Children of the Łódź Ghetto* (Łódź: Bilbo, 2004).

When I Am Twenty

When I am twenty,
 I will start admiring our beautiful world
 I will sit down in a huge motor-bird
 And I will rise heavenward
 I will sail, I will fly over rivers, seas and skies
 Clouds will be my sisters, winds will be my brothers
 I’ll be watching rivers: Nile, Euphrates and others
 I’ll see the sphinxes and the pyramids
 In the old country of divine [Isis].
 I’ll conquer the huge water of Niagara
 And I’ll be sunbathing in the heat of the Sahara
 Over Tibetan mountains which reach for the sky
 Over wonderful and mysterious land of the magicians
 And when I finally leave the kingdom of heat
 I’ll rush flying to see the ice of the North
 I’ll fly over the great kangaroo island
 And over the ruins of the Pompeian walls
 Over the Holy Land of Orthodox Order
 And over famous Homer’s mother country
 I’ll be stunned by our beautiful world
 Clouds will be my sister, wind will be my brother.

53. Abramka Koplowicz, *Utwory własne: Niezwykłe świadectwo trzynastoletniego poety z łódzkiego getta* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1993).

Lvov ghetto survivor Nelly Toll used her interest in painting to transcend the dangerous world in which she lived. She was born Nelly Landau in 1933, the only daughter of Sygmunt and Rose Landau.⁵⁴ With her parents and her younger brother, Janek (b. 1937), Nelly resided in Lvov,⁵⁵ where her father was an affluent businessman who owned several apartment buildings. When Lvov came under Soviet occupation in the early months of World War II, Sygmunt Landau went into hiding, fearing arrest by the Soviets as a "wealthy capitalist." The family was therefore initially relieved when German troops arrived in the region on June 30, 1941, and Sygmunt could leave his hiding place and rejoin his loved ones. The Landaus' enthusiasm for the new Nazi occupiers was short-lived, however, as German authorities quickly initiated draconian legislation against the large local Jewish population.

On November 8, 1941, the Germans established a ghetto in the city's northern districts and, by December 15, had forced all Jews in the municipal area into the sealed "Jewish quarter." The Landaus' initial strategy was to place Nelly with a Catholic family outside the ghetto until the war's end. In hiding, the eight-year-old began to use the world of fantasy to cope with the intense loneliness and confusion she experienced. While the young girl lived clandestinely on Lvov's "Aryan side," she imagined that she was journeying on a long trip without her parents. During her later time in hiding, she would capture the sense of isolation she felt during these weeks in a wartime self-portrait that she titled *All Alone*.

Nelly tried to make the best of her time with her kindly Polish guardians, but a few short months later, tragedy struck. Nelly's younger brother, Janek, together with his aunt and young cousin, was caught up in a wave of deportations from Lvov and murdered, presumably in the Bełżec killing center. After Janek's death, Nelly returned to her parents in the ghetto. Sygmunt Landau was now more desperate than ever to rescue his remaining family from the Nazi dragnet. After an ill-fated attempt to escape to Hungary, Landau succeeded in finding a hiding place for his wife and daughter. Drawing on earlier loyalties and proffering a handsome sum as compensation, he convinced his former Polish tenants Michaj and Krysia Wojtek to conceal Nelly and her mother in a hidden room in their apartment. Sygmunt planned to join them there as soon

54. For information concerning Nelly Landau Toll and her Holocaust experiences, see Nelly S. Toll, *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of Hidden Childhood during World War Two* (New York: Dial Books, 1993).

55. Before World War II, Lvov had the third-largest Jewish population in Poland, numbering nearly one hundred thousand individuals; this number nearly doubled during the period of Soviet occupation with a rapid influx of Jewish refugees from German-occupied Poland.

as he had found places for members of his extended family. Yet, a short time after his wife and daughter went into hiding, Sygmunt Landau disappeared without a trace; Nelly and Rose Landau never saw him again.⁵⁶

For the next thirteen months, Nelly and her mother lived in their tiny room with its boarded window, their quarters sealed off from the Wojteks' flat by a door concealed behind a hanging tapestry. After a few long weeks in hiding, Rose Landau arranged for a Polish friend to procure a set of watercolors for her daughter. Over the next several months, ten-year-old Nelly amused herself by painting images on small note cards and writing in her diary. The youngster drew many of her miniature scenes from imagination: from her readings in Leo Tolstoy and Jules Verne, from stories her mother told her to pass the time, or from memories of her happy childhood before the war. Looking through her "secret window," Nelly Landau often blended the reality of what she saw with her own fantasies and hopes for the future. In *Teacher with Children Wearing Black Uniforms*, Nelly painted children she glimpsed on their way to class, imagining the time when she too could be out of doors and go to school. "I walked with them. I silently talked with them,"⁵⁷ Nelly Landau Toll recalled in a 1998 interview.⁵⁸ Young Nelly's watercolors enabled her to reshape the perilous world around her into gentle tones and tranquil scenes. "My art was done in very dangerous times," Toll explained. "It gave me pleasure, it let me forget."

Nelly and Rose Landau were liberated in July 1944, when Soviet forces arrived in Lvov. After Rose's remarriage, seventeen-year-old Nelly joined her mother and stepfather in immigrating to the United States in 1951. There she married Ervin Toll in 1954 and went on to pursue studies in English and art, gaining a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. She has authored three books, as well as a play based on her wartime experiences. Nelly Toll's contemporary paintings continue to transform her observations and experiences into works of art.

56. After Soviet authorities liberated Lvov, Rose Landau tried, without success, to learn the fates of her husband and other family members still incarcerated in the Lvov ghetto at the time of their concealment. Sygmunt Landau likely perished at Belzec.

57. Bruce Frankel, "Nelly's Secret," *People* 49, no. 27 (July 13, 1998).

58. Frankel, "Nelly's Secret."

DOCUMENT 8-20. Watercolor by Nelly Toll, Teacher with Children Wearing Black Uniforms, Lvov, Poland, c.1943–1944, USHMMPA WS# 94466, courtesy of Nelly Landau Toll.





CHAPTER 9

CHILDREN AND RESISTANCE AND RESCUE

THIS CHAPTER addresses a theme traditionally important to Holocaust discourse: resistance. In this case, the subject is children's resistance, a theme often overlooked in monographs dedicated to active opposition to Nazi rule. Boys and girls in their teens participated in armed resistance, their tender ages belying their achievements as **partisans**, ghetto fighters, and members of organized resistance groups. Youngsters struck at Nazi genocidal policy in uprisings at concentration camps and killing centers, such as the prisoner revolt at **Sobibór** in 1943 (Document 9-2). Children lived in family units protected by partisan bands in the forests of eastern Europe (Document 9-4). Young people formed the core of insurgents who battled Nazi forces in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (Document 9-1) and in other armed struggles in ghettoized communities under Nazi occupation. More often, however, children engaged in acts of unarmed resistance, as with the publication of clandestine youth newspapers in the Warsaw ghetto (Document 9-5) or through the provision of aid and intelligence to armed opposition movements (Documents 9-8 and 9-9). Even young children practiced solitary acts of defiance against Nazi authorities, often as smugglers risking their lives to bring food and essential goods to fellow ghetto inhabitants from outside the ghetto boundaries.

Rescue is the mirror image of resistance. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of committed individuals worked to save persecutees in Axis-occupied Europe. Many of these focused principally or solely on the rescue of children. In Allied countries, refugee organizations sought to bring children to the safety of their shores. In England, associations such as the British Committee for the Jews of Germany and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany organized the famous **Kindertransporte**, which

carried Jewish and refugee children to Great Britain (Document 9-13), an effort that many private benefactors worked to emulate (Documents 9-14 and 9-15). Within Nazi-occupied territories, children's aid organizations such as the **Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants** in France and the **Żegota**, an auxiliary branch of the Polish underground resistance, proved particularly successful in removing young children from concentration and internment camps and concealing them from Nazi authorities in a series of safe houses and children's homes. Finally, thousands of young Jewish children spent the war in hiding, either alone or with their families, shielded by a network of rescuers and protectors. These so-called hidden children (Documents 9-10 through 9-12) have become an iconic symbol of rescue efforts during the Holocaust, but the following documentation demonstrates that a dense nexus of individuals, aid organizations, and child-welfare agencies worked tirelessly and with singular ingenuity to save Jewish and non-Jewish children from harm in Nazi Europe.

YOUTH AND ARMED RESISTANCE

One of the most ambitious and fiercely contended insurgencies against Nazi genocidal policy, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had its origins in the perceived defenselessness of Warsaw's incarcerated Jewish population during the time of the Great **Deportation** Action, a period between July 22 and September 21, 1942, when German authorities dispatched three hundred thousand ghetto inhabitants to the **Treblinka** killing center. On July 23, the day the first massive deportation effort from Warsaw began, members of the ghetto's underground movement met to discuss a plan of action that might save the endangered community. Representatives of Warsaw's Jewish youth organizations, which had thus far played a vital role in ghetto resistance, favored the formation of a defense force that might resist further deportation measures through armed intervention. On July 28, 1942, members of the Ha-Shomer, Dror, Ha-Za'ir, and Akiva movements founded the Jewish Fighting Organization (**Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa**, or **ŻOB**) under the command of twenty-three-year-old Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir¹ organizer Mordechai Anielewicz.²

1. See note 48, chapter 8.

2. Mordechai Anielewicz (1919–1943) was born in the small town of Wyszków, near Warsaw, Poland. In his late teenage years, he joined, and became a local leader of, the Zionist youth movement Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir. In early 1943, Anielewicz was instrumental in organizing the first clashes with German forces during the brief January deportation action in the Warsaw ghetto. As the leader of the ŻOB, he played a chief role in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943. It is believed that Anielewicz committed suicide with other leading resistance figures when German forces captured ŻOB headquarters on May 8, 1943. See Norah Levin, *Mordechai Anielewicz: Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Philadelphia: Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, 1988).

In the coming months, activists from the ŻOB distributed leaflets to the ghetto populace informing them of the significance of the Treblinka camp and the fate of persons deported there. More significantly, its leaders made overtures to the Polish Home Army and the Polish communist underground in an attempt to acquire arms, with limited success. In the autumn, another resistance organization, the Jewish Military Union (Żydowski Związek Wojskowy, or ŻZW) formed under the auspices of the Revisionist Zionist associations. For a time the two defense forces vied for men and material, but in the face of renewed deportations from the ghetto, the ŻZW accepted the ŻOB's authority, and the two bodies worked to coordinate their activities.

On January 18, 1943, a second wave of deportations to Treblinka began. This time, members of the ŻOB engaged German forces in combat. Encouraged by the resistance fighters, thousands of ghetto inhabitants refused to show in response to German deportation summons in the days that followed. Nazi officials succeeded in rounding up five to six thousand Jews and halted the action after a few days. Jews and "Aryan" Poles alike interpreted the brevity of the deportation action as a victory for the ghetto's defense organizations. The heroism of the ghetto fighters, together with the realization that any further deportation efforts would mean the final liquidation of the ghetto unit, worked to undercut the authority of the **Jewish Order Police** and the **Judenrat**, which had counseled against armed resistance. The ŻOB had given ghetto inhabitants a measure of hope, and the population gave its allegiance to the ghetto resistance leaders in the days to come. In the winter months of 1943, the preparation of bunkers and subterranean hiding places (malines) proceeded on a massive scale, while ghetto defense forces worked to consolidate their strategies and to arm and equip themselves for the coming battle. The commanders of these units were under no illusion that their resistance efforts would lead to rescue: most viewed the upcoming revolt as a last protest against Nazi Germany's murderous policies and an attempt to live and die with their honor intact.

The resistance campaign known as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began on the evening of Passover on April 19, 1943.³ The ŻOB had received advanced warning of this final deportation action and prepared assiduously for the coming attack. From their experiences in January, German authorities likewise had knowledge of the ghetto's defense organizations and, on the eve of the action, replaced the chief of the **Schutzstaffel (SS)** and police in Warsaw,

3. For a discussion of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, see Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, trans. Ina Friedman (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982); Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to a Perished City*, trans. Emma Harris (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Obergruppenführer Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankenegg,⁴ with SS and Police Leader (SS- und Polizeiführer) Jürgen Stroop,⁵ a man with considerable experience in partisan warfare. The uprising lasted twenty-seven days. Stroop had committed a considerable force, some 2,054 soldiers and police, reinforced with artillery and tanks. Clashing with them, sometimes in hand-to-hand combat, were some seven hundred young Jewish fighters, poorly equipped and lacking in military training and experience. The ŻOB did have the advantage of waging a guerrilla war, striking and then retreating to the safety of ghetto buildings and rooftops. The general population likewise thwarted German deportation efforts, refusing to assemble at collection points and burrowing in malines and underground bunkers. In the end, German troops were obliged to burn the ghetto down block by block in order to smoke out their quarry. The ghetto fighters and the population that supported them held out for nearly a month. On May 8, 1943, German forces succeeded in seizing ŻOB headquarters at 18 Mila Street; Anielewicz and many of his staff commanders are thought to have committed suicide in order to avoid capture. On May 16, Stroop announced in his daily report to Berlin that “the former Jewish Quarter in Warsaw is no more.”⁶ Some thirteen thousand Jews had died in the uprising, while the remaining fifty thousand Warsaw ghetto residents were deported to Treblinka. Only a handful of ghetto inhabitants survived the final *Aktion* in Warsaw, subsisting in their subterranean hiding places or escaping through the city’s labyrinthine sewer system to the “Aryan side.”

The first major revolt of an urban population in German-occupied Europe, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising combined the valiant efforts of ghetto fighters

4. SS-Oberführer Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankenegg (1897–1944) was the Police Leader (Polizieführer) of the Warsaw district on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Transferred to Croatia following his replacement by Jürgen Stroop in Warsaw, he was killed by Yugoslav partisans on September 20, 1944.

5. Jürgen Stroop (1895–1952) joined the Nazi Party and SS in 1932 and saw combat during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. In 1942, as SS-Brigadeführer, Stroop commanded an SS garrison at Kherson before becoming the SS and Police Leader for Lemberg (now Lviv) in February 1943. Following his suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943, he was dispatched to Greece as Higher SS and Police Leader. After difficulties with German civilian authorities there, he ended the war as commander of SS-Oberabschnitt Rhein-Westmark in the Rhineland. An American military court condemned Stroop to death in March 1947 for his role in the murder of downed Allied fliers within his jurisdiction but allowed him to be extradited to Poland to face trial for his crimes there, including the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. Jürgen Stroop was convicted of war crimes and executed in Warsaw on March 6, 1952.

6. See Jürgen Stroop, *The Stroop Report, The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More!* ed. and trans. Sybil Milton (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

with the dogged resistance of the general population. Many of those who engaged in armed resistance in Warsaw were adolescents in their teens; a majority of these came from the city's active underground Jewish youth movements. Writing at the height of the insurgency, **Oneg Shabbat** chronicler **Emmanuel Ringelblum** noted that many of the bravest fighters were not men but young girls, who matched their male counterparts in courage, daring, and commitment. In his essay "Little Stalingrad Defends Itself," Ringelblum reports that a Jewish teenager in Świętojerska Street had captured the public's imagination as the Jewish Joan of Arc.

DOCUMENT 9-1. Emmanuel Ringelblum, "Little Stalingrad Defends Itself," c. April 1943, in Joseph Kermish, ed., *"To Live with Honor and Die with Honor": Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." (Oneg Shabbath)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 601-3.

On the "Aryan side" there was intense interest in what was happening in the ghetto. It was related that the Germans were afraid to show themselves in the ghetto, and that they operated on burnt ground [i.e., scorched earth policy] only, moving forward by burning down block after block. The Germans were spoken of with contempt because of their atrocities. They were laughed at for not being able to put down a handful of Jews fighting for their honour. [...] There were rumours about Jews reconquering the Pawiak⁷ and releasing the prisoners there, who then joined the fighting. A story was spread in town about a handful of Jews who had captured a tank, got into it, and left the ghetto area. Popular fantasy also created a Jewish Joan of Arc. At 28 Świętojerska Street, the bristle workshop, a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl dressed in white had been seen firing a machine gun at the Germans with extraordinary accuracy, while she herself was invulnerable. [...] Among the rumours being spread on the "Aryan side" at that time there was a good deal of fantasy, but there were also authentic facts, if somewhat altered. The legend about the Jewish Maid of Orleans⁸ had its origin in the fact that Jewish girls took part in combat alongside the men. I knew these heroic girls from the period preceding the "action." Most of them belonged to the Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir

7. During the German occupation of Warsaw, Pawiak Prison served as the Gestapo's largest political prison in occupied Poland and became synonymous with Nazi terror.

8. This is an appellation of Joan of Arc, whose greatest military success was the lifting of the Siege of Orleans against English forces in April 1429 during the Hundred Years' War.

and Hechalutz [youth] movements. Throughout the war, they had carried on welfare work all the time with great devotion and extraordinary self-sacrifice. Disguised as “Aryan” women, they had carried illegal literature around the country, managed to get everywhere with instructions from the Jewish National Committee; they bought and transported arms, executed O.B.⁹ death sentences, and shot gendarmes and SS-men during the January “action.” Altogether they completely outdid the men in courage, alertness, and daring. I myself saw Jewish women firing a machine gun from a roof. Clearly one of these heroic girls must have distinguished herself in the heavy fighting waged by the O.B. at Świętojerska Street, and that was probably the origin of the story of the Jewish Maid of Orleans.

The 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the largest show of Jewish armed resistance in the course of World War II. The ŻOB and ŻZW, which instigated the insurgency, were two of the most successful manifestations of organized resistance, but they represented just the tip of the iceberg. Jewish underground organizations existed in over one hundred ghettos in German-occupied eastern Europe. Incredibly, under the most adverse conditions, Jewish prisoners also succeeded in forming resistance cells within the Nazi concentration camp system. During the late war years, surviving Jewish **Sonderkommando** units initiated uprisings at several extermination camps. On August 2, 1943, for example, Jewish prisoners rebelled at Treblinka, seizing firearms from their captors and setting fire to the camp. Some two hundred individuals escaped; half their number were soon recaptured and executed. Likewise, on October 7, 1944, **Auschwitz** prisoners assigned to maintain **Crematorium IV** in the **Auschwitz II–Birkenau** concentration camp rebelled when they learned that their unit was slated for killing. German guards and their auxiliaries brutally crushed the revolt, murdering several hundred prisoners, but not before the *Sonderkommando* succeeded in destroying Crematorium IV with homemade explosives, rendering it inoperable for the duration of the war.¹⁰

9. This is a common abbreviation of the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Jewish Fighting Organization, or ŻOB). The ŻOB issued “death sentences” against those within the ghetto who collaborated with the Germans, including certain members of the Jewish Order Police.

10. See Hermann Langbein, “The Auschwitz Underground,” and Nathan Cohen, “Diaries of the *Sonderkommando*,” both in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 485–502 and 522–34; Gideon Graif, *We Wept without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

The most successful uprising of its kind, however, took place at the Sobibór extermination camp. In the summer of 1943, transports of Jews from the **General Government** to the killing center grew fewer in number. Sensing that they might be murdered along with the last groups of deportees, the veteran Jewish *Sonderkommando* laboring at the extermination camp formed an underground resistance cell, led by Leon Feldhendler, a former *Judenrat* member from the nearby village of Zolkiewka. Feldhendler believed that the group's best chance of survival was to escape the camp. He and his followers had witnessed many individual flight attempts, but experience had taught them that these invariably ended in the capture of the escaping prisoners and fierce retaliation on the rest of the camp population. Feldhendler convinced his colleagues that the solution lay in a mass escape from Sobibór. But how to organize a break-out that could provide all prisoners a chance to escape? In September 1943, a transport of Jews from Minsk brought to the camp first lieutenant Aleksandr ("Sasha") Pechersky, a trained Soviet officer with combat experience. The resistance cell recruited Pechersky, asking him to mastermind an uprising that might free Sobibór's six hundred prisoners.

On October 14, 1943, Pechersky's plan came to fruition. At 4:00 p.m., Thomas (Tuvia) Blatt and a handful of his fellow prisoners cornered their first adversary, SS-Unterscharführer Josef Wolf, murdering him with an axe. Wolf was the first of eleven German and Ukrainian guards killed in the uprising. Other conspirators seized weapons and explosives. The facility's electricity and phone wires were cut. Under a hail of SS fire, prisoners cut through the camp's dense net of barbed wire and made a perilous dash through the minefields that encircled the camp.

By evening, half of the camp's population, three hundred prisoners, had escaped. About one-third of these individuals were eventually recaptured and murdered. Those inmates who had remained behind during the uprising were also killed shortly before the liquidation of the camp some weeks later.¹¹ Many of those still at liberty joined partisan units or received shelter and aid from sympathetic Poles. Nearly seventy prisoners who escaped Sobibór survived the war.¹²

11. Many of these were prisoners in Camp III, where, isolated from the main camp, they remained unaware of the uprising.

12. Among these individuals were Sasha Pechersky (1909–1990), Thomas (Tuvia) Blatt (1927–), and Leon Feldhendler (1909–1945). Feldhendler survived to see the July 1944 liberation of Lublin, where he and his wife had lived in hiding, but was murdered by members of an antisemitic Polish paramilitary group on April 2, 1945. For a discussion of the Sobibór revolt by eyewitnesses, see Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2007); Thomas Blatt, *From the Ashes of Sobibor: A Story of Survival* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997).

One of those survivors was **Berel Dov Freiberg**, just fourteen years of age when he was selected from a transport of Jews from Krasnystaw to labor in a *Sonderkommando* unit at Sobibór.¹³ A year later the teenage Freiberg served as a courier during the Sobibór uprising, keeping the individual actors in the revolt abreast of developments occurring in other parts of the camp. With his fellow prisoners, the fifteen-year-old participated in the killing of several German and Ukrainian guards before making his escape. In 1945, the youngster gave a dramatic account of the prisoner rebellion to **Bluma Wasser**, herself a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto and, with her husband, **Hersh Wasser**, a chronicler for the underground archival organization Oneg Shabbat.

DOCUMENT 9-2. Oral history of Berel Dov Freiberg, recorded by Bluma Wasser, 1945, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 283–87.

At exactly four p.m. Untersturmführer Neumann came to the tailors to have a uniform measured. He was received very warmly, told to sit down, and from behind, his head was split into two pieces with an axe and the halves were swept under the bunks. [. . .] At the exact same time, [Oberscharführer] Greshits, a Ukrainian, arrived at the shoemaker workshop, and in a second, he was turned into a corpse. Any German caught by the Jews was assassinated. If they came into the barrack to force us off to the labor sites, we thought to ourselves: “*Briederke* [brother], this won’t take long—you’ll be dead in no time.” We let them into the barracks and they never left again.

I ran from battle station to battle station as a courier, informing the units of our progress. We broke into the German compound and took all their arms, then headed for the administration office. [Scharführer] Beckmann was at his desk. He knew right away something was up because he’d just come from our barrack and found no one there, not even the [Oberscharführer], so he went straight back to the administration office, where we cut him off. He reached for his revolver, but there wasn’t a chance—all of us jumped him without guns and beat him dead because we didn’t want to shoot. The longer we kept things quiet the better off we’d be. It was hard to keep him down because he jerked around in wild death spasms. [. . .]

13. For a more detailed discussion of the experiences of Berel Dov Freiberg and his arrival at Sobibór, see chapter 5.

When everyone was already assembled inside the camp and we were getting ready to attack the arsenal, *Zugwachmann Rel*—how many times he'd beaten me!—suddenly appeared and realized something was happening when he saw the cut wires. The electricity and telephones were all put out of order by one of us who had access to the generators and smashed them. Rel asked us nervously: “*Was gibt es Neues?*” [“What's up?”]. He just happened to be walking right in front of me, so I raised my axe and, along with two friends, chopped him up into little pieces.

Now everyone knew what was about to happen and a deafening cheer went up, shouts of “*Vperyod!*” “*Vorverts!*” “*Foros!*” [“Forward!”]. Our targets were now ahead of us, not behind us—the arms stockpiles! We stormed the arsenal, killed two Germans where they stood, and brought out the guns. All this time we could see nothing but bullet after bullet ripping at us from all sides—from the guard towers, from the Germans and the *Volksdeutsche* and the 300 Ukrainians who were shooting at us from all around, especially from the fourth camp. They were soon reinforced by another 150 Ukrainians who assaulted us with heavy automatic weapon fire. We returned fire with the few guns we had. But we didn't keep static positions—we ran from station to station shooting in all directions, and defying the risk, broke out of camp. We were still at the wire perimeter when a youth beside me took a bullet and was left hanging on the wires. I was using a rifle I had gotten from the stockpile and kept on running. There were explosions all around—the mines went off, the bullets struck and flashed everywhere we went. The sound of men being torn to pieces, bullets shattering, and mines detonating thundered all through the area. Later, all we could do was laugh as we heard the rattling of the machine guns trailing off behind us. The shooting kept up all night and we got farther and farther away from the camp. We threw off everything along the way. [. . .]

After we ran several hours and were far from the camp by now, we counted ourselves up because everyone had run off in a different direction. There were twenty-four in our group. We kissed and embraced and couldn't believe we were really outside the camp. We walked all night through the forest and found a good spot in a gorge grown over with thicket, and that's where we rested. We didn't eat all day because what we'd accomplished put us into such a state that we were all flushed from exhilaration and our blood was feverish and made us tremble. We couldn't eat a bite and there was nothing to eat in the forest anyway. Someone had a piece of bread, a lump of sugar, so we shared it later.

The prisoner uprisings at Sobibór and subsequently at Treblinka were remarkable in that the rebellions struck at the very heart of the genocidal apparatus. Many escapees joined the ranks of partisan units, where they continued to defy Nazi military and occupation authorities. Jewish partisan bands operated extensively throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Some twenty to thirty thousand Jewish fighters engaged in guerrilla warfare and sabotage against German forces and those who collaborated with them. These units faced tremendous obstacles in acquiring weapons, food, and shelter and were in constant danger of capture or denunciation by hostile elements within the local population. In eastern Europe, many Jews merged with the Soviet partisan movement, although they often faced discrimination or betrayal by antisemitic comrades in arms. As a result, many Jewish fighters preferred to maintain their own fighting organizations. One of the most successful of these partisan units combined traditional guerrilla activity with extensive rescue efforts. These were the Bielski partisans.¹⁴

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, units of the *Einsatzgruppen* killed thousands of Jews in western Belorussia (now Belarus).¹⁵ Surviving Jews in the Nowogrodek District were confined in ghettos, principally in the towns of Nowogrodek and Lida. In 1942 and early 1943, German authorities liquidated these ghettos, murdering most of the region's remaining Jewish population.

The Bielskis were a family of millers and grocers residing in a farming region near the town of Stankiewicze. After a ghetto action in December 1941 in which their parents and other family members were murdered, the four surviving brothers—Tuvia, Alexander (Zus), Asael, and Aron—fled the Nowogrodek ghetto to the nearby forest and, with a handful of fellow escapees, formed the nucleus of a fledgling Jewish partisan band. Familiar with the surrounding district, the brothers received arms and supplies from local non-Jewish friends and acquaintances. As their unit expanded, the Bielskis were able to augment their arsenal with captured German weapons and guns supplied by Soviet partisans.

Armed in this manner, the small band began to target and harass German troops and their collaborators operating in the region. Although paramilitary

14. See Nechama Tec, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

15. Western Belorussia had been Polish territory before World War II, but it had been annexed by the Soviet Union following the invasion of Poland by German and Soviet forces in September 1939.

objectives were a major focus, the unit's recognized leader, Tuvia Bielski,¹⁶ began to view as the group's primary mission the rescue of Jews from the surrounding community. The Bielskis helped Jewish inhabitants of nearby ghettos to escape. Many Jews hiding in small family units also joined their ranks so that, by late 1942, the group had grown to over three hundred members.

Such a large partisan group eventually attracted the attention of German authorities, and in the summer of 1943, occupation officials offered a bounty of one hundred thousand Reichsmark for information leading to the capture of Tuvia Bielski. Some twenty thousand German military and local auxiliary units were deployed to locate the Bielski band and to curb the growing partisan movement, composed of Soviet, Polish, and Jewish units, in the Belorussian forests.

In order to escape the German dragnet, the Bielski group, now seven hundred strong, moved in December 1943 to a new base in the swampy marshes of the Naliboki Forest, on the right bank of Nieman River. Here the band established an unlikely and remarkable community. A core group of 150 men—and a handful of women—engaged in armed operations on behalf of the group. Despite dissension within their own ranks from those who insisted that their unit should accept only armed and able-bodied fighters, Tuvia Bielski proved adamant in accepting all Jews who appealed to the group for aid. "To save a Jew is much more important than to kill Germans," Tuvia told his men.¹⁷ As the armed fighters engaged German forces in defense of the unit, other members of the band cultivated arable land in the vicinity and foraged for food and supplies. The community ultimately established a bakery, laundry, and infirmary and set up an improvised synagogue, a tribunal to adjudicate disputes, and a makeshift jail. Some thirty children lived within the Bielski family group.¹⁸ The Naliboki base housed a school for adolescents, while a group of female members organized to supervise the youngest children.

In the summer of 1944, the Soviet army staged an offensive that swept the German Army Group Center back to the banks of the Vistula and liberated the greater part of Belorussia. Through the efforts of Tuvia Bielski and his comrades, an astonishing 1,236 Jews from the family camp had survived the war. At liberation, 70 percent of the group consisted of women, children, and the elderly, those individuals most likely to have perished during the German occupation.

16. Tuvia Bielski (1906–1987) emigrated with his third wife, Lilka (née Titkin), to Israel after the war, where he participated in the 1948 Israeli War of Independence. He and his family moved to Brooklyn, New York, in 1956. Bielski died in the United States in 1987; in 1988, his body was reburied with full military honors in Haar Hmnuchot in Jerusalem.

17. Tec, *Defiance*, 82.

18. Tec, *Defiance*, 165.

DOCUMENT 9-3. Members of the Bielski partisan family camp, including several small children, shortly before liberation, Naliboki Forest, Belorussia, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 77654, courtesy of the Yad Vashem Photo Archives.



The Bielski partisan movement represented the most successful rescue effort of its kind, but it was not the only instance in which Jewish partisans accepted and protected family units within their ranks. Rachmiel Łozowski was nine years old when he witnessed the killing of the Jews of Zhetl (Zdzięcioł), near Grodno in what is today Belarus in August 1942. As he and his family tried to flee the massacre, police officials apprehended his mother, two younger brothers, and sister, whom he never saw again. Rachmiel, his twelve-year-old brother, and his father were reunited after the raid and found their way to shelter in the Lipiczanska Puszcza forest. There they joined local partisans and lived in their family group for the next two years, surviving the war. In 1947 in Tel Aviv, Łozowski shared with historian A. Yerushalmi his experiences of a childhood spent among the partisan resistance.

DOCUMENT 9-4. Oral history of Rachmiel Łozowski, Tel Aviv, 1947, USHMM RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/540 (translated from the Yiddish).

The forest we were in was at Lipiczanska Puszcza. We stayed together as a family group. There were large partisan units all around us and they didn't bother us. There were fifty people in our family unit, including five children. We would get food from peasants we knew. A teacher, Lazar Meir, used to take care of the children. He was also able to buy guns for the group. One time he left for the Lida [Ghetto] and came back with five Jews.

In the winter of 1943, fifteen other Jews and two children came to us. After that, still more and more people joined us. [. . .]

In the summer of 1944, the forests were put under siege by 32,000 Germans and Ukrainians. Partisan units pulled back. We hid out in underground bunkers. The starvation during that time was horrible. We used to get a few beans a day to eat. This went on for fourteen days. There was room for five people in our bunker—fourteen people lay down there during the siege. As a camouflage, we dragged two dead horses over to cover the entrance. When the Germans moved through with their hounds, the dogs bolted back from the stench. But we suffered terribly from those worm-eaten carcasses. The worms crawled all over us and we choked on the stink of death. We fainted from the putrid air.

Another time, we heard cavalry riding past followed by infantry. We thought they were Germans. We crawled out and started to run. My father was the only one to stay behind in the bunker. The "Germans" got him out and wanted to know who he was and what he was doing here. He told them he was part of a partisan family unit. All they did was yell at him for keeping a fire lit, then they left. They were partisans too, just like us. [. . .]

Sometimes the children would wander around outside the bunker. Once, two boys—Yosif and Srilik, aged seven and eight—and two little girls, aged four and five, fell into the hands of the Ukrainians. They shot the little girls dead right away and took the boys into the village gendarmes. The boys pleaded with the Ukrainians to let them go, but in vain. At that moment, grown-ups from our group passed by, and the boys started shouting: "See?! There go the adults!" The Ukrainians let go of the children and chased the grown-ups. The children got away and ran down into the bunker. Malke Shmulovitch fell into the Ukrainians' hands. They led her into the village, raped her, cut out strips of her flesh, and poured salt into her wounds. She betrayed no one, though, and died heroically.

This is the way we suffered for such a long time. We always had knives ready at our sides, to take our own lives if we fell into the hands of the Ukrainians.

One day, Captain “Severny,” the Jewish Avreym Shereshevski, came to see us to tell us the good news that the Red Army was near. I was the first one he met. I ran to tell the glad news to my people. I searched for them all day and finally found them. When I told them the news, they came back to life.

UNARMED RESISTANCE: THE CHILDREN'S WAR

Acts of armed resistance against Nazi and Axis oppression make up an integral chapter in the history of the Holocaust. Large-scale uprisings undertaken by Jewish underground organizations, such as those in the Warsaw and Białystok ghettos or in the Auschwitz, Sobibór, and Treblinka killing centers, demonstrated that Jewish populations did not go meekly like lambs to the slaughter, as some analysts have claimed, but openly defied German authorities and those who collaborated with them. For many Jewish communities in Nazi-occupied Europe, however, the constraints of captivity and the threat of brutal reprisals made armed resistance difficult and dangerous. Under such extreme conditions, most sectors of the Jewish population that wished to oppose Nazi persecution engaged in unarmed resistance. Such efforts included organized escapes of individuals to partisan units or to safe havens outside ghettos or camps, as well as the noncompliance of ghetto administrators, officials, and residents with Nazi decrees and the organization of educational, religious, and cultural activities prohibited by German authorities. While such actions posed no physical threat to their antagonists, they struck at the core of Nazi discriminatory policy.

In German-occupied Poland, the constellation of political and cultural organizations that had existed before the outbreak of World War II continued to function within the world of the ghetto. Because of the draconian measures imposed on ghettoized communities, many of these associations were driven underground, where they worked assiduously to counteract the effects of Nazi oppression. In the Warsaw ghetto, political parties and organizations were particularly active, and the clandestine publications they generated “multiplied like mushrooms in the rain,” noted Emmanuel Ringelblum, chief archivist of the Oneg Shabbat archive.¹⁹ The numerous youth organizations, a significant force in ghetto resistance activity, played an active part in these endeavors.

19. Joseph Kermish, “On the Underground Press in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 1 (1957): 85.

Those clandestine newspapers²⁰ produced in the ghetto certainly did not match the standards of their organizations' prewar publications. With printing materials in short supply, most news sheets were printed on carbon paper or lightweight flimsy paper.²¹ Many associations produced hectographed²² or type-written editions, while others circulated handwritten copies. Few of the newspapers were very large. The majority was limited to a handful of pages—a dozen at most. Despite a perennial shortage of resources, these underground publications played an important role in the politics and civic life of the Warsaw ghetto. Their most essential task was to lift the flagging spirits of their readers and to strengthen their morale and will to resist Nazi oppression. Another unequivocal mission of the illegal press was to keep residents informed of events inside and outside the ghetto. Appearing in Polish, Yiddish, or Hebrew, underground newspapers and periodicals kept their readers abreast of wartime developments and the unparalleled atrocities leveled against Europe's Jewish communities. In 1941 and 1942, many columns were devoted to speculation concerning the evolution of Nazi policy and to the acts of terror perpetrated by German officials against Warsaw's incarcerated Jews. The clandestine press also focused on various aspects of ghetto life: economic conditions, employment issues, the activities of cultural and welfare institutions, and the policies of the *Judenrat*, about which most editors of the illegal press had little good to say. Largely socialist in orientation, underground newspapers were also sharply critical of the genuine social and class disparities that existed in the ghetto and railed against the measures of the *Judenrat* and other agencies that unfairly burdened the most impoverished sectors of the community.²³

Among the underground publishing organizations in the Warsaw ghetto, the clandestine youth press fulfilled a special need, encouraging young people to hold fast to their ideals in the face of Nazi persecution and offering spiritual and intellectual direction. The struggle against apathy, despair, and spiritual degeneracy proved a common goal among these newspapers and periodicals. Appropriate to their readers' age and outlook, the underground youth press urged opposition to Nazi oppression and preparation for a Jewish future. Thus, publications such as the Polish-language *El Al (Upwards)* encouraged young

20. See Kermish, "On the Underground Press," 85–123; Engelking and Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, 685–94.

21. This refers to an inferior-grade paper traditionally used for making multiple copies.

22. Hectography is a low-technology printing process involving the transfer of an original, prepared with special aniline inks, to a pan of gelatin or a gelatin pad pulled over a frame. Virtually obsolete in modern printing, the process is still used to produce temporary tattoos on human skin.

23. Kermish, "On the Underground Press," 116ff.

audiences to take an active part in their community and to “look ahead to what the future may bring,”²⁴ while others, such as *Yunge Guardie* (*Young Guard*), a Yiddish news sheet, reminded youth active in resistance activities not to neglect their education and self-improvement. Dozens of underground newspapers were produced by young people for young people in the years 1941 and 1942, including *Jungtruf* (*The Call of Youth*), *Di Yugent Stimme* (*The Voice of Youth*), *Avangarda Młodzieży* (*Youth Avant-Garde*), and *Płomienie* (*The Flame*), the latter a publication of the Jewish defense organization Ha-Shomer Ha-Za’ir.

The Gordonia youth organization sponsored three clandestine papers in the Warsaw ghetto: *Oisdoier* (*Endurance*), *Z Problematyki ruchu w chwili obecnej* (*On the Present Problems of the Movement*), and *Słowo Młodych* (*Young People’s Voice*). Before November 1941, when editor Eliezer Geller²⁵ began to focus his attentions on older audiences, the latter publication targeted primarily youths in their middle and late teens. A Polish-language biweekly, *Słowo Młodych* was Gordonia’s mouthpiece, espousing the sentiments of that pioneering youth movement founded in Poland in 1925. Named for Aaron David Gordon (1856–1922), a proponent of Labor Zionism, Gordonia became an international movement in the late 1930s, promoting the creation of a Jewish homeland, the revival of Hebrew culture, and the preparation of youth for *Aliyah* to **Palestine** through education and vocational training. In the Warsaw ghetto, the Gordonia movement gained many adherents by promoting underground educational activities for its young members, comprising several age groups. *Słowo Młodych* spoke to the heart of its young readers, urging them to courageous action and to hopes for a brighter future. In an undated edition from the fall of 1941, *Słowo Młodych* urged its readers to ensure that they would not be the last generation of Jewish youth but rather “the first generation reborn to the Jewish nation.” The newspaper’s publishers invoked the Bible’s Eighty-third Psalm, “Keep Not Thou Silence, O God,” a lament for the nation of Israel traditionally interpreted as a prayer for the destruction of its enemies. As the Jewish people faced a new and terrible oppressor, the paper exhorted its young audience to courage.

24. *El Al*, quoted in Kermish, “Underground Press,” 86.

25. Eliezer Geller (b. 1918) was a Gordonia activist and member of the ŻOB underground resistance in Warsaw. Geller led a unit of armed resistors during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; on April 29, 1943, he succeeded in fleeing through the sewer system to the “Aryan side” of Warsaw. Taking refuge at the Hotel Polski, where German authorities interned Jews with foreign passports, Geller was discovered and ultimately transferred to Auschwitz, where he perished.

DOCUMENT 9-5. "Let the Jewish Youth Remember," *Słowo Młodych* (Young People's Voice), Warsaw ghetto, spring, 1942, USHMM, RG-15.070M, Zespół podziemie-prasa konspiracyjna [Clandestine Publications], 230/13/1.

Słowo Młodych *

Miechaj pamięta młodzież żydowska,
że albo jest ostatnim pokoleniem
wymierającym wędrówką gatunki,
albo pierwszym pokoleniem Odrodzo-
nego Narodu Ziemiowskiego w Eretz
Israel .

Psalm 83 *

Piesś psalmowa Asafa.
Boże nie Tobie milczydź ,
Nie zachowuj ciszy ni spokoju .
Bo oto wrogowie Twoi szumią ,
Sieprzyjaciele Twoi podnieśli głowę .
Przeowl ludowi Twemu chytrze żmija ,
Zmawiają się przeciw Twym umiłowanym .
Powiadają : Huże , wytraśmy ich , by nie byli zgredem ,
By nie wspominano więcej imienia Israel .
O Boże , uczyń ich jako ten kurz wirujący ,
Jako siosek pędzona przed wiatrem !
Jak ogień opala las ,
Jak płomień pożara drzewa góra ,
Tak goń ich swoją burzą ,
Orkanem swym wyrzuć ich w zamieszanie .
Niech się wiecznie wstydzą i lękają ,
Niech będą hańbieni i traceni .
A wiedział będą żeś Ty -- Imię Twoje Jahowa --
Ponad wszystkie światy .

Spolszczył .

Young People's Voice

Let the Jewish youth remember that it is either the last generation of the dying wanderers of the desert, or the first generation of the Reborn Jewish Nation in Eretz Israel.

Psalm 83

Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God.

For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up their heads.

They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones.

They have said, "Come and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

So persecute them with Thy tempest, and make them afraid with Thy storm.

Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Thy name, O Lord.

Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

That men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.

Involvement in the clandestine youth press required a certain set of intellectual skills and abilities and remained the sphere of young people in their late teens and early twenties. Young children, by contrast, were of course limited in the kinds of resistance in which they could engage. In the ghettos of German-occupied Europe, however, there remained one kind of resistance activity for which their size and agility particularly suited them. The smuggling of food-stuffs and other essentials from the "Aryan side" was an illegal, but indispensable, component of ghetto life. It represented a vital source of food and supplies for the captive community, and many families lived on the resources that their members brought into the ghetto illicitly or the proceeds generated from selling smuggled goods. Very young children were especially well adapted for this perilous enterprise. Their diminutive forms enabled them to slip through small gaps and holes in the ghetto walls and to escape to municipal districts from which Jews had been proscribed. Once outside the ghetto, their youth often shielded them from the suspicion of German officials and local citizens so that they might safely beg, steal, barter, or purchase provisions for consumption in their incarcerated communities. Enterprising young smugglers often wore clothing with concealed inner pockets in order to return laden with half their weight in potatoes, bread, and other commodities.

Smuggling provided the sole means of survival for many families, and discouraging ghetto youngsters from such endeavors proved a difficult challenge, despite the best effort of child-welfare organizations. In his 1943 essay “Jewish Children on the Aryan Side,”²⁶ Oneg Shabbat’s chief archivist, Emmanuel Ringelblum, recalled the case of a CENTOS administrator who tried to intercede on behalf of a group of orphaned smugglers who lodged together in the Warsaw ghetto. The youths earned up to fifty złoty per day through their exploits and had sufficient reserves of cash to set up in an apartment in the ghetto’s Mila Street. “When the CENTOS worker proposed that they move into a boarding school,” Ringelblum reported, “the children refused, declaring that they were managing very well by themselves. They said that the CENTOS should put starving children in the boarding schools.”²⁷

Ringelblum noted that the child smugglers he had seen possessed “the most extraordinary and fantastic courage.”²⁸ The work was manifestly dangerous. Returning to the ghetto weighted down with contraband, the youths had little chance to escape potential captors, and many young “entrepreneurs” were intercepted with their heavy loads at ghetto exits or checkpoints. At the very least German officials or Jewish Order Police beat the youngsters mercilessly and seized their hard-won provisions. Many young smugglers paid with their lives for their efforts to bring food and necessities back to their starving community.

26. Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 140–51.

27. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 149.

28. Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations*, 147.

DOCUMENT 9-6. Arrested at a checkpoint, a Jewish boy holds a bag of smuggled goods, Warsaw ghetto, c. 1941, USHMMPA WS# 60611B, courtesy of the YIVO Institute.



One of Ringelblum's *Oneg Shabbat* colleagues, Henryka Łazowertówna, helped to immortalize these everyday heroes who risked life and limb to convey food and supplies to the Warsaw ghetto. During the "Great Deportation" action of July 1942, Łazowertówna voluntarily joined her mother at the *Umschlagplatz* and was deported to her death at Treblinka.²⁹ In the preceding year, however, her poem "The Little Smuggler" had already been set to music and become a popular ballad among ghetto inhabitants.

29. Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 182.

DOCUMENT 9-7. Henryka Łazowertówna (Lazowert), "The Little Smuggler," Warsaw ghetto, c. 1941, in Michał Borwicz, ed., *Pieśń ujdzie cało: Antologia wierszy o żydach pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947), 115–16 (translated from the Polish).

The Little Smuggler (a Song)

Through walls, through holes, though sentry points,
Through wires, through rubble, through fences:
Hungry, daring, stubborn
I flee, dart like a cat.
At noon, at night, in dawning hours,
In blizzards, in the heat,
A hundred times I risk my life,
I risk my childish neck.

Under my arm a burlap sack,
On my back a tattered rag;
Running on my swift, young legs
With fear ever in my heart.
Yet everything must be suffered;
And all must be endured,
So that tomorrow you can all
Eat your fill of bread.

Through walls, through holes, through brickwork,
At night, at dawn, at day,
Hungry, daring, cunning,
Quiet as a shadow I move.
And if the hand of sudden fate
Seizes me at some point in this game,
It's only the common snare of life.
Mama, don't wait for me.

I won't return to you,
Your far-off voice won't reach.
The dust of the street will bury
The lost youngster's fate.
And only one grim thought,
A grimace on your lips:
Who, my dear Mama, who
Will bring you bread tomorrow?

The following photographs (Documents 9-8 and 9-9) are wrenching and arrest the eye instantly. Well known to students of World War II, the images portray one of the first public executions of resistance members by **Wehrmacht** soldiers following the German invasion of the Soviet Union. On October 26, 1941, members of the German 707th Infantry Division hanged twelve members of the communist underground near or on the grounds of a yeast factory in Minsk, Belorussia. The condemned were executed in groups of three. The Lithuanian collaborator tasked with recording these events presumably photographed only one of the proceedings in its entirety, near the gates of the old factory works. The first in the series of images he captured that day shows German and Lithuanian troops of the 707th parading three of the captive resistance figures through the streets of Minsk to the execution site. One of the prisoners, a young woman, commands attention. Around her neck she wears a placard reading in German and Russian, “We are partisans and have shot at German soldiers.”

DOCUMENT 9-8. Historians believe the girl in the center of the photograph to be teenage resistance member Masha Bruskina, being marched with her comrades Kiril Trus and Volodya Shcherbatsevich to their place of execution by German soldiers, Minsk, October 26, 1941, USHMMPA WS# 14101, courtesy of the Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1972-026-43.



The young girl is believed to be seventeen-year-old Masha Bruskina,³⁰ born in Minsk in 1924 to a Jewish family. Shortly after the German occupation of the Belorussian capital in late June 1941, she moved with her mother into the Minsk ghetto. The teenage Masha was, however, a communist and soon escaped to the city's "Aryan side," lightened her hair, and took on her mother's maiden name, Bugakova, to avoid detection. The young woman volunteered as a nurse at the hospital attached to the city's polytechnical institute, which occupying German forces had requisitioned as an infirmary for wounded Soviet prisoners of war. Perhaps at this juncture Masha joined a local resistance cell organized by Kiril Trus and Olga Shcherbatsevicha. The teenager used her post at the hospital to smuggle to the Soviet underground medical supplies and photographic equipment, the latter instrumental in creating false identity papers and other forged documentation. With her aid, other resistance members were able to remove Soviet prisoners of war to safety and to redeploy captured Soviet officers with significant combat experience to the ranks of the growing partisan movement. Despite the inscription on the placard she wore on the day of her death, Masha was not involved in armed resistance. At this time, such efforts were almost wholly the province of male members of the fledgling Belorussian resistance, while females functioned principally as couriers of supplies and information.

In early October 1941, a Soviet prisoner-patient denounced the resistance group to German authorities. Masha and several members of her cell, including leaders Kiril Trus and Olga Shcherbatsevicha, as well as the latter's sixteen-year-old son, Volodya Shcherbatsevich, were arrested. All, including Masha, were brutally beaten and tortured, but none would give the names of fellow resistance members.

On October 26, 1941, Masha, with Kiril and Volodya, walked together with their German and Lithuanian captors to the gates of the yeast factory near Karl Marx Street, the chosen place of execution. Those citizens who observed her that day remarked upon the calmness of the three condemned and the quiet courage and self-possession of the teenage girl.³¹ Masha was chosen as the first victim. With her hands tightly bound, the young girl stepped onto a chair, aided by one of the soldiers, while a German officer adjusted the noose about her neck. In one of the extant photographs of the event, the teenager turned her

30. See Nechama Tec and Daniel Weiss, "A Historical Injustice: The Case of Masha Bruskina," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, no. 3 (winter 1997): 366–77.

31. See the testimony of Nina Antonovna Zhevzhik, reprinted in Tec and Weiss, "A Historical Injustice," 367–68.

back to the crowd. “When they put her on the stool,” recalled eyewitnesses Petr Pavlovich Borisenko, “the girl turned her face towards the fence. The executioners wanted her to stand with her face to the crowd, but she turned away and that was that. No matter how much they pushed her and tried to turn her, she remained standing with her back to the crowd. Only then did they kick away the stool from under her.”³²

Document 9-9 portrays the young girl directly after her hanging. Her comrade, sixteen-year-old Volodya Shcherbatsevich, weeps at the sight of his dead friend, as a German officer tightens the noose about his neck.

DOCUMENT 9-9. The hanging of teenage resistance figures, believed to be Masha Bruskina and Volodya Shcherbatsevich, by an officer of the German 707th Infantry Division, Minsk, October 26, 1941, USHMMPA WS# 25136, courtesy of Ada Dekhtyar.



The photographs became public in the immediate postwar period and soon became iconic images of the Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet partisan resistance movement came to be known. The two men in the photos were quickly identified, but the identity of the “unknown girl” remained a mystery for years to come. Many historians now believe the teenage female in the photographs to be

32. Petr Pavlovich Borisenko, quoted in Lev Arkadiev and Ada Dekhtyar, “The Unknown Girl: A Documentary Story,” *Yiddish Writers’ Almanac* 1 (1987): 187.

Masha Bruskina, based on extensive documentary evidence and identification by contemporary eyewitnesses, family members, and friends.

IN HIDING

When war began in Europe in September 1939, some 1.6 million Jewish children lived in those areas that would fall under the control of Nazi Germany and its allies. Historians estimate that as many as 1.1 million youngsters died in the Holocaust. The small percentage of young people who survived the genocide did so in part because they were the focus of rescue efforts by individuals, religious institutions, welfare agencies, and resistance organizations that sought to save Jews—especially Jewish children—from Nazi persecution. Many thousands survived because their rescuers concealed them in their own homes or because a dense network of supporters protected and sustained them.³³

Jewish children faced exceptional challenges when they went into hiding. Some youngsters could pass as non-Jews and lived openly with their rescuers. In these circumstances, obtaining falsified identity papers, often purchased on the black market or provided by members of the underground resistance, was crucial. By acquiring forged papers, such children might have access to legitimate documentation from local authorities as well as to food and clothing ration coupons, essential for survival in Nazi Germany or its occupied territories. A hidden child's safety depended on strict secrecy. Rescuers often needed to invent elaborate fictions in order to justify the child's presence in their household, explaining to neighbors that the youngster was a distant relative or a refugee from a distant town or village. It was essential that the child adapt swiftly and completely to his new identity and environment. Young people learned to answer by their fictive name without fail and to avoid any language or mannerisms that might be considered "Jewish" or foreign. As most Jewish children were hidden by individuals or religious institutions that embraced faiths different from their own, youngsters carefully learned to recite the prayers and catechism of their "adopted" religion in order to avert the suspicions of both adults and

33. For a discussion of hidden children, see Howard Greenfeld, *The Hidden Children* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993); Andre Stein, *Hidden Children: Forgotten Survivors of the Holocaust* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994); Ewa Kurek, *Your Life Is Worth Mine: How Polish Nuns Saved Hundreds of Jewish Children in German-Occupied Poland, 1939–1945* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997); Mordecai Paldiel, "Fear and Comfort: The Plight of Hidden Children in Wartime-Poland," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6, no. 4 (1992): 397–413.

peers. One false word or gesture was sufficient to place both the child and his or her rescuers in jeopardy.

Of course, there were children who could not pass as “Aryans” or live openly with their protectors. Many youngsters had classical “Jewish features” or had spoken only Yiddish at home, and thus spoke the local language imperfectly or with a telltale accent. Others had lived in the immediate area before ghettoization or deportation had taken place and feared that former neighbors and acquaintances might recognize them. These children remained physically concealed for a significant portion, or for the entirety, of their time in hiding. In rural settings, such youngsters might live out the war in barns, root cellars, or farm outbuildings. In urban areas the risks were greater, so rescuers might conceal their young charges in attics, cellars, closets, or wardrobes, away from prying eyes. Youngsters often had to remain silent or even motionless in their hiding places for hours at a time. Both children and their protectors lived in constant fear lest a raised voice or a footfall should arouse the suspicion of their neighbors. While children with an “Aryan appearance” might continue their education and find companionship among school-age friends, children in complete concealment had no such options and spent interminable hours alone, often in uncomfortable quarters, without occupation or human interaction. Like their coreligionists living openly with foster families, clandestinely concealed children often moved from one hiding place to another to ensure the safety of both the rescuers and their charges. Some hidden children lived with their families; for others, life in hiding meant long separation from loved ones, a division that tormented both children and their parents.

Through his work as the chief archivist of the underground archive Oneg Shabbat, Emmanuel Ringelblum observed the minute workings of the Warsaw ghetto. In an essay in 1943, he chronicled the daily challenges faced by children hiding with family members or rescuers on Warsaw’s “Aryan side.”

DOCUMENT 9-10. Emmanuel Ringelblum, “Jewish Children on the Aryan Side,” 1943, in Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 140–45.

Jewish families rarely crossed to the Aryan side together. First the children went, while the parents stayed on in the ghetto in order to mobilize the necessary funds for staying on the Aryan side. Very often the parents gave up the idea of going across to the Aryan side, as they did not have the money to fix up the whole family. The cost of keeping a child on the Aryan side in the summer of 1942, when the number of children being

sent over was at its peak, was very high, about 100 złoty a day. A sum was demanded for six months or a year in advance, for fear that the parents might be deported in the interim. Thus, a sum of several tens of thousands of złoty was required to fix up a child on the Aryan side and only very wealthy people could afford to do so. Parents of limited means and especially working intellectuals were forced to see their children taken as the first victims in the various "selections" and "actions." Not all Jewish parents wanted to send their children to the Aryan side. There were those who weighed the question of survival for the children, especially the youngest ones, when no one knew what would happen to the parents at the next "selection." Some parents argued that a child deprived of its parents' care will wither like a flower without the sun. There were children who strongly opposed being sent to the Aryan side. They did not want to go to the other side alone, but preferred to die together with their parents.

[. . .]

The majority of children, however, agreed to go across to the Aryan side, as living conditions in the ghetto were terrible. They were not allowed to leave their flats, they stayed for whole weeks in stuffy, uncomfortable hide-outs, they did not see daylight for long months. No wonder then that they let themselves be tempted by the promise of going out into the street, of walking in a garden, etc., and agreed to go to the Aryan side by themselves.

I know an eight-year-old boy who stayed for eight months on the Aryan side without his parents. The boy was hiding with friends of his father's, who treated him like their own child. The child spoke in whispers and moved as silently as a cat, so that the neighbors should not become aware of the presence of a Jewish child. He often had to listen to the anti-Semitic talk of young Poles who came to visit the landlord's daughters. Then he would pretend not to listen to the conversation and become engrossed in reading one of the books which he devoured in quantities. On one occasion he was present when the young visitors boasted that Hitler had taught the Poles how to deal with the Jews and that the remnant that survived the Nazi slaughter would be dealt with likewise. The boy was choking with tears; so that no one would notice he was upset, he hid in the kitchen and there burst out crying. He is now staying in a narrow, stuffy hideout, but he is happy because he is with his parents.

The situation is much worse for the children who have lost their parents, who were taken away to Treblinka. Some of their Aryan protectors

have meanwhile taken a liking to the children and keep them and look after them. But these are only a small percentage of the protectors, generally people of limited means in whom Mammon has not yet killed all human feeling. People like these have to suffer on account of the Jewish children, but they do not throw them out into the street. The more energetic among them know how to fix themselves up and receive money subsidies from suitable social organizations. We know of cases where the governesses of wealthy children took care of them after their parents had been taken away to Treblinka. They keep these children out of their beggarly wages and don't want to leave them to their fate. Some of these Jewish orphans were fixed up in institutions, registered as having come from places affected by the displacement of the Polish population (Zamość, Hrubieszów, Poznań, Lublin, etc.). A considerable percentage of the orphans returned to the ghetto, where the Jewish Council fixed them up in boarding schools; they were taken away in the "resettlement actions." There were frequent instances, when the "protectors," having received a large sum of money, simply turned the child out into the street. There were even worse cases where the "protectors" turned Jewish children over to the uniformed police or the Germans, who sent them back to the ghetto while it was still in existence.

There were also cases of Jewish children, especially very small children, who were adopted by childless couples, or by noble individuals who wanted to manifest their attitude to the tragedy of the Jews. A few Jewish children were rescued by being placed in foundling homes, where they arrive as Christian children; they are brought by Polish Police, who, for remuneration of course, report them as having been found in staircase wells, inside the entrances to blocks of flats, etc.

There were no problems with Jewish children as far as the need for keeping their Jewish origin secret. In the ghetto Jewish children went through stern schooling for life. [...] They ceased to be children and grew up fast, surpassing their elders in many things. So when they were sent to the Aryan side, their parents could assure their Aryan friends and acquaintances that their little daughter or son would never breathe a word about his Jewish origin and would keep the secret to the grave. I know of a young girl who was dying in an Aryan hospital, far from her parents. She kept the secret of her origin till her death. Even in those moments of the death agony, when earthly ties are loosed and people no longer master themselves, she did not betray herself by a word or the least movement.

When the nurse who was present at her death bed called her by her Jewish name, Dorka, she would not reply, for she remembered that she was only allowed to respond to the sound of the Aryan name, Ewa.

Even the youngest children were able to carry out their parents' instructions and conceal their Jewish origin expertly. I remember a four-year-old tot who replied to my asking him treacherously what he was called before—a question often put to children by police agents—by giving his Aryan name and surname and declaring emphatically that he never had any other name.

Hidden children often spent anguished weeks and months away from their parents. Szepsel Griner, born shortly before the outbreak of World War II, became separated from his family in the early years of the German occupation of Poland. Presumably because Szepsel was the youngest child, his father placed the toddler with a Polish farmer before relocating his wife and remaining children to a hiding place in the home of an acquaintance. Szepsel's father visited him daily, bringing his son toys and provisions, and it was from him that the small boy learned of the deportation and murder of his mother and siblings. After a time, the elder Griner stopped coming to the farm, and Szepsel came to understand that his father had been killed. Following the liberation of Zamość by Soviet forces, the youngster spent a year in a Polish orphanage. Discovered at the home by his nineteen-year-old cousin, Szepsel was adopted by an aunt who had been living in Russia. In the immediate postwar period, the young boy related his experiences in hiding to an official of the Jewish Historical Commission in Warsaw.

DOCUMENT 9-II. Oral history of Szepsel Griner by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, c. 1947, USHMM RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/2284 (translated from the Polish).

Statement 35

Szepsel Griner, eight years old, born in Zamość. Before the war he lived in Zamość. During the occupation in Zamość. Currently he lives in Wałbrzych 1-Maja 4:

When the German marched into our area, a man knocked on our window and called to Papa to flee. Papa took some clothes with him and fled to a German acquaintance. We—that is, I, Mama, my sister and two brothers, as well as my uncle—were supposed to follow.

Once, as we sat in our hiding place, the Germans came to take us away, but our German defended us. He said he would not deliver us up, and they had to go away empty-handed. We stayed there hidden for ten days.

Papa lodged me with a Polish woman, and he himself went to find another hiding place. He found an empty room at someone's home. He prepared a lot to eat there and brought Mama, my sister, and my brothers there. After four weeks they were discovered by the Germans and brought to a camp. Mama was sick. The Germans came to the camp, and Papa understood that they wanted to kill all the Jews, so he fled, but my sister and my brothers didn't manage to get away. The Germans took them, deported them, and killed them. Papa came to me and told me all of that. At first he didn't want to tell me any of this, but I saw that he was so sad, and I cried constantly that I wanted to go to Mama. So he told me everything. Papa came to me daily. Every time he brought vodka for the Pole and other things with him. He said to me that I should be good, mind the Pole, and not wander out upon the farm.

Papa brought me a revolver (a play one), a harmonica, and other toys. The whole day I played the harmonica.

In the shed next to me the farmer kept rabbits, which I liked to play with.

At night I cried often. I was so sad, I wanted so badly to have someone from among my relatives with me.

I had completely lost my appetite and I got very bad food to eat besides. For a long time, Papa didn't come anymore to me. This is when I understood that the Germans had killed Papa too.

Once I sat in the house and looked out the window. I saw that many Jews with children were being led away. Some of them didn't have any hands. Where they were brought to, I don't know.

I always felt as if I were going to burst into tears, but I only cried when no one was in the house, or at nights.

Later, the Russians started throwing bombs, and soon they also came to us.

During World War II, thousands of Jewish children were concealed by conscientious individuals, by religious and resistance groups, and by various aid and relief organizations dedicated to helping Jews and other persecutees escape from harm in areas controlled by Nazi Germany and its allies. In most cases, hidden children lived with their rescuers or in a series of safe houses, isolated from friends and loved ones. Yet the Shoah's most famous hidden child did not

suffer her long ordeal alone but lived in concealment with her family, aided and insulated from deportation by a network of friends and supporters. That youngster was, of course, **Anne Frank**, whose diary has captured the imagination of generations of young readers and personalized the fate of hundreds of thousands of children murdered in the Holocaust.

Annelies (Anne) Frank was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on June 12, 1929, the second daughter of prosperous businessman Otto Frank, and his wife, Edith. Immediately after Hitler's rise to power, Anne fled with her parents and elder sister, Margot, to Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The Franks had hoped to escape antisemitic persecution in their native Germany, but when German forces invaded Dutch territory, the family once again figured as targets of Nazi anti-Jewish policy. When Margot Frank received a summons for deportation on July 5, 1942, Otto Frank convinced his family to go into hiding. On the following day, the family entered a narrow, three-story annex attached to Frank's Opetka office building at 263 Prinsengracht³⁴; the family would not leave it again until their arrests two years later. The vivacious Anne had just received a plaid-covered autograph book for her twelfth birthday and now began to use the volume as her diary, keeping a faithful and detailed account of events as they took place in the "secret annex." Addressing her entries to "Dear Kitty," a favorite character in a book series that she had been reading, the young Anne captured a portrait of a family in hiding; she also vividly portrayed a young girl growing up under desperate circumstances. Among the individuals introduced in her journal were the van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer, friends or acquaintances who eventually joined the Frank family in their hiding space,³⁵ and the groups' rescuers, including Miep Gies and Viktor Kugler, Otto Frank's former employees, who brought food, supplies, and information and ensured the hidden Jews' safety during their confinement. In March 1944, while listening to Radio Oranje, a Dutch resistance radio station, Anne heard a broadcast by Gerrit Bolkestein, education minister within the Dutch government in exile. Bolkestein announced that he would make a public record of the Dutch population's experiences during World War II and asked his countrymen

34. Otto Frank had owned two businesses in Amsterdam that produced and sold pectin and other food preservatives and spices. After Nazi German forces overran the Netherlands, Frank was forced to liquidate his assets. He transferred the ownership of the businesses, including Opetka, to trusted colleagues so that he could continue to make sufficient income for his family and might recover his assets in the postwar period.

35. Anne Frank gave pseudonyms to fellow dwellers in the annex who were not members of her immediate family. The van Pelses received the fictive name "van Daan," while the dentist Fritz Pfeffer became "Albert Dussel."

to save their letters and journals for collection in the postwar. At this point, Anne began composing and editing her diary with future publication in mind. She continued writing until August 1, 1944.

This diary entry would be her last. Three days later, on August 4, 1944, members of the SS and Dutch Green Police discovered the Franks' hiding place and arrested its inhabitants. Anne, her family, and the friends who had been concealed with them were transferred to the Dutch transit camp Westerbork, then on September 3 to Auschwitz. Sometime in October 1944, Anne and Margot arrived on a transport from Auschwitz to the **Bergen Belsen concentration camp**. Both succumbed to **typhus** there in late February or early March 1945, just weeks before the liberation of the camp by British forces. The sole survivor of the group in hiding, Otto Frank,³⁶ returned to Amsterdam in the summer of 1945. There he recovered his daughter's diary and papers, which had been retained by Miep Gies. Anne's diary appeared in print for the first time in Dutch in 1947 and has been in publication ever since.³⁷

Two days before Anne Frank wrote the last lines in her journal, another young girl in Amsterdam, Louise Israels, was celebrating her second birthday in hiding. She had been born on July 30, 1942, in the Dutch city of Haarlem, where she lived with her parents, grandparents, and elder brother. The Israelses were a secular and assimilated Jewish family. Louise's father, a reserve officer with the Dutch army, worked in the family business selling women's lingerie and accessories. Although the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands had imposed a number of antisemitic measures and restrictions upon the Jewish population, the Israelses, like many Dutch Jews, hoped that their little family might emerge from the war years intact. Two events shook their confidence. In early March 1943, in a bold and imaginative move, the Dutch national resistance bombed the central population registry office in Amsterdam, effectively hindering German authorities from comparing forged personal documents held by Jews and other persecutees in Holland against authentic public records. Nazi officials countered this measure with a series of brutal reprisals. In Haarlem, Nazi occupiers arrested the Israelses'

36. Hermann van Pels was gassed shortly after arrival at Auschwitz, where Edith Frank died of starvation in January 1945. Fritz Pfeffer perished in Neuengamme concentration camp in December 1944. Peter van Pels, Anne's love interest, survived until the last days of the war, dying of exhaustion at Mauthausen on May 5, 1945. Mrs. van Pels joined Margot and Anne briefly at Bergen Belsen and probably died shortly thereafter on a transport bound for Theresienstadt.

37. For a further discussion of Anne Frank and the influence of her diary, see Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition*, ed. David Barouw and Gerrold van der Stroom, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans, B. M. Mooyaart-Doubleday, and Susan Massotty (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Hyman Aaron Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer, eds., *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

neighbor, the president of the city's Jewish community, and shot him and nine other prominent Jews before the eyes of their fellow citizens. At the same time, the Jews of Haarlem received a summons to concentrate in Amsterdam as a prelude to deportation. Spurred by these events, Louise's father devised a daring plan to save his family. First, he secured false papers for his wife and children from the Dutch underground. Then, liquidating all available assets, Israels located a small apartment near the city's famous Vondelpark and paid the leasing agent funds sufficient for ten years' rent.

Sometime in the spring months of 1943, the young family slipped quietly inside the doors of their new residence. They would not emerge again until the arrival of Allied forces in Amsterdam two years later. Joining the Israelses in hiding was a young woman named Selma, the daughter of the president of Haarlem's Jewish community who had been murdered just weeks before. Her family had been deported following her father's death, and the young woman now became an integral part of the Israels family. She would prove a valuable source of information when a maturing Louise Israels began to piece together her wartime experiences.

Unlike the more famous Frank family, who lived in a secret annex, the Israelses literally hid in plain sight, lodged in a residential apartment building amid dozens of neighbors. It was a perilous existence in which the threat of denunciation was an ever-present reality. The family lived in a silent world, isolated from the vibrant city outside. After dark, Louise's father risked a nighttime curfew to provide his family with food and firewood. Israels' army reserve comrades represented a vital lifeline for the little household, regularly bringing them provisions and news from the outside world.

In the summer of 1944, the family had been living in hiding for more than one year. Although their situation was certainly preferable to that of thousands of Dutch Jews awaiting deportation in transit camps such as Westerbork and Vught, the family knew hunger and privation and lived in constant fear lest a raised voice or obtrusive noise should rouse the suspicion of their neighbors. So, when little Louise's second birthday arrived on July 30, 1944, her parents decided to use the event to lift the family's morale. In a photograph from that day, Louise wears a new dress for her party, which her mother made from an old blouse. She is perched on a rattan doll's chair that her father purchased through Dutch friends "on the outside." Her nurse, Selma, cobbled together old scraps to make a rag doll, which Louise clutches wistfully. For the occasion, her elder brother has lent her his favorite pull-toy horse, a special treat—but just for the day!³⁸

38. Information concerning the story of the Israelses' years in hiding is provided courtesy of Louise Lawrence-Israels.

DOCUMENT 9-12. Louise Israels celebrates her second birthday in hiding, Amsterdam, July 30, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 16427, courtesy of Louise Lawrence-Israels.



Louise and her family would remain in hiding for almost ten more months before Canadian forces liberated the city of Amsterdam on May 5, 1945. In the Netherlands Louise Israels would eventually earn a degree in physical therapy; in 1965 she married American physician Sidney Lawrence and in 1967 immigrated to the United States. She later became a volunteer at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, where her small rattan doll's chair is displayed in the museum's "Permanent Exhibition."

The stories of two young girls in Amsterdam, Louise Israels and Anne Frank, present us with two very different pictures of children in hiding and represent dramatically different fates.

CHILDREN AND AID ORGANIZATIONS: THE POLITICS OF RESCUE

Among the myriad attempts to rescue children from persecution during the Holocaust, none is more celebrated than the efforts of public and private refugee and child-welfare organizations to bring children from Germany to Great Britain, collectively known as the *Kindertransporte* (children's transports). Following the violent ***Kristallnacht*** pogrom staged by the Nazi authorities on Jews in Germany on November 9 and 10, 1938, the British government eased immigration restrictions for certain categories of Jewish refugees. Spurred by British public opinion and the persistent efforts of refugee aid committees, most notably the British Committee for the Jews of Germany and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, British authorities agreed to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of seventeen to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories in what had formerly been Austria and the Czech lands.³⁹

Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. In return, the British government agreed to allow unaccompanied refugee children to enter the country on temporary travel visas. It was understood at the time that when the crisis was over, the youngsters would return to their families. Parents or guardians could not travel with their children.

The first *Kindertransport* arrived in Harwich, Great Britain, on December 2, 1938, bringing some two hundred children, many from a Jewish orphanage in Berlin that had been destroyed during *Kristallnacht*. Like this convoy, most transports left by train from Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and other major cities in central Europe. Children from smaller towns and villages traveled from their homes to these collection points in order to join the transports. Jewish organizations inside the Greater German Reich—specifically the **Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland** (Reich Association of Jews in Germany),⁴⁰ headquartered in Berlin, as well as the Jewish Community Organization

39. For a discussion of the *Kindertransporte*, see Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishers of St. Martin's Press, 2000); Rebekka Göpfert, *Der jüdische Kindertransport von Deutschland nach England, 1938–1939: Geschichte und Erinnerung* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1999); Anne L. Fox and Eva Abraham-Podietz, *Ten Thousand Children: True Stories Told by Children who Escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1999).

40. In early 1939, this organization replaced the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jewry), founded in September 1933.

(Kultusgemeinde) in Vienna—planned the transports. These associations generally favored children whose emigration was urgent because their parents were in concentration camps or no longer able to support them. They also gave priority to homeless children and orphans.

Children chosen for a *Kindertransport* convoy traveled by train to ports in Belgium and the Netherlands, then by ship to Harwich. At least one of the early transports left from the port of Hamburg in Germany, while some children from Czechoslovakia flew by plane directly to Britain. The last transport from Germany left on September 1, 1939, just as World War II began, while the very last *Kindertransport* sailed from the Netherlands for Britain on May 14, 1940, the day on which the Dutch army surrendered to German forces. In all, the rescue operation brought about nine to ten thousand children, some seventy-five hundred of them Jewish, from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain.

After the children's transports arrived in Harwich, those children with sponsors went to London to meet their host families. Those children without sponsors were housed in a summer camp in Dovercourt Bay and in other facilities until individual families agreed to care for them or until hostels could be organized to accept larger groups of children. About half the children lived with foster families. The others stayed in boarding houses, at schools, or on farms throughout Great Britain. In 1940, British authorities interned about one thousand adolescents from the children's transport program as enemy aliens on the Isle of Man and in other internment camps in Canada and Australia. Despite their classification as German aliens, some of the young men from the children's transport program later joined the British army and fought in the war against Germany. After the war, many children from the children's transport program became citizens of Great Britain or emigrated to Israel, the United States, Canada, or Australia. Most of these children would never again see their parents, who were murdered in the Holocaust.

Helmuth Ehrenreich was one of thousands of German children fortunate enough to gain a place aboard a *Kindertransport* headed for Britain. Born in Frankfurt am Main on May 11, 1928, Helmuth was the son of Nathan Ehrenreich, a prominent pianist, choral director, and music critic, and his wife, Frieda. In the early summer of 1939, a distant cousin had gained a berth on a children's transport, but then decided to remain behind with his family. Frieda Ehrenreich accepted her relatives' offer to send young Helmuth in his cousin's place, a decision that saved her son's life. Eleven-year-old Helmuth traveled with a *Kindertransport* on June 20, 1939, arriving in Harwich the following day. In the following weeks, he was housed at a refugee camp in Margate, before being

lodged with a host family in the heart of London. Here Helmuth settled with a German-speaking foster family that harbored Nazi sympathies, and they mistreated him. Wishing to stay out of the house, Helmuth enjoyed exploring the city with other *Kindertransport* refugees and practicing his newly gained English skills. When London became the target of German bombs during the Blitz, Helmuth, like many British children, was evacuated to the English countryside. Fortunately, in August 1939, his mother, Frieda, succeeded in obtaining an entry visa for Britain and fled Germany on one of the last airplane flights from Frankfurt to London before hostilities began. She worked as a housekeeper in Ditchling, East Sussex, where Helmuth was staying and lived in a nearby home so that they could visit each other more easily. That winter the family's U.S. visas were finally issued, and Nathan Ehrenreich, who had spent the last year in a Dutch refugee camp following his arrest on *Kristallnacht*, arrived in New York City. In March 1940, nine months after Helmuth's voyage to Britain aboard a *Kindertransport*, the entire family was reunited in the United States. Adopting the more American name "Henry," the young man thrived in the United States, excelling in high school and attending Cornell and Columbia universities. In 1963 he became a professor of engineering and applied physics at Harvard University, a post he retained, finally as emeritus professor, until his death in 2008.

DOCUMENT 9-13. Child identification card of Helmuth Ehrenreich, Police Presidium of Frankfurt am Main, June 16, 1939, USHMM, Acc. 2006.396, Ehrenreich Family Papers (translated from the German).



[Handwritten] For emigration to [England]

The Police Presidium in Frankfurt am Main

(Issuing Authority)

Frankfurt am Main, June 16, 1939

Child Identification Number 8874/39

[Only valid until June 15, 1940]

Family name: Ehrenreich

First Name: Helmuth Israel⁴¹

Born on: May 11, 1928

Nationality: German Reich

Residence (permanent): Frankfurt am Main

Fee 50 RM

[Administrative remarks]

41. Beginning in January 1939, all Jews whose given names did not correspond to those on an authorized register of "Jewish" names had to add the name "Sara" after their first name if female and "Israel" if male. The letter J stamped on the identification card indicates that Helmuth Ehrenreich is a Jew.

Many aid agencies worked to ensure the success of the *Kindertransport* endeavor. The effort of British child-welfare societies to rescue children from Nazi Germany inspired Jewish and refugee organizations in the United States to emulate the English example. In the early 1930s a small number of German Jewish children arrived as unaccompanied minors on U.S. shores. They came largely through the sponsorship of private citizens or under the auspices of local Jewish congregations who undertook the costs of their immigration and provided foster homes for the youngsters. Such efforts increased as Nazi anti-semitic policy radicalized in the wake of the November 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogrom. Even in this time of sorest need, refugee organizations faced major obstacles in bringing young children to the United States. The effects of the Great Depression had sparked hostility to foreigners entering the United States, and American internal and foreign policy continued to place limits on immigration.⁴² The Wagner-Rogers Bill, cosponsored by Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY) and Representative Edith Rogers (R-MA), proposed to admit 20,000 Jewish refugee children under the age of fourteen from National Socialist Germany but failed to garner congressional approval in June 1939. Although many welfare organizations were daunted by this decision, one young American couple refused to abandon their plans to rescue Jewish youngsters from Nazi oppression.

The mission to bring fifty children to safety in the United States was the brainchild of Philadelphia lawyer **Gilbert Kraus** and his wife, **Eleanor**.⁴³ Kraus's father had been a founding member of the Independent Order Brith Sholom, a Jewish fraternal organization that, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century, supported many charitable and educational programs for Jewish immigrants. Kraus's local chapter had recently erected a new residence center just outside Philadelphia. Faced with the mounting crisis in Europe, Brith Sholom's grand master, Louis Levine, suggested to Kraus that the complex be used to house refugee Jewish children from Germany.

Both Levine and Kraus were aware that many efforts on the part of welfare and religious organizations to arrange a kind of *Kindertransport* to America had met with failure. Hampering such efforts was an otherwise reasonable U.S. Labor Department guideline making it unlawful for any organization to bring unaccompanied children into the United States. A capable lawyer, Kraus now

42. See David Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

43. The rescue efforts of Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus are documented in Eleanor Kraus, "Don't Wave Good-bye" (unpublished manuscript, private collection, c. 1940).

suggested locating fifty members within his local Brith Sholom lodge who would be willing to serve as individual sponsors for the children. Each would have to pledge to support a young person and to guarantee that he or she would not become a public charge. On February 3, 1939, Kraus laid out his plans to Assistant Secretary of State George Messersmith.

DOCUMENT 9-14. Letter of Gilbert Kraus to George Messersmith, assistant secretary of state, February 3, 1939 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG-59, General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 150.6265/610).

	Law Offices Kraus & Weyl
Gilbert J. Kraus	Bell Telephone
Edward S. Weyl	Kingsley-4416
_____ Bankers Securities Building _____ Philadelphia	
H. J. Seman	Cable Address
Milton Brooks	"Kreyl"
Jerome L. Markovitz	
February 3, 1939	
Hon. George Messersmith Assistant Secretary of State Washington, D.C.	

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

Following our recent interviews and as suggested by you, I wish to submit a general outline of our plan.

The members of the Independent Order Brith Sholom are extremely eager to bring fifty refugee children from Germany to the United States. They are ready to provide a home and education for them. The Society was founded in 1905 as a Jewish fraternal institution, to provide a refuge for immigrant Jews in America. Brith Sholom has become an organization of large size and substantial wealth, with membership in fifty-three cities, in twenty States of the Union. Mr. Louis Levine, who attended our conferences with you, is the present Grand Master. He is a substantial citizen of New York City.

The Society has just completed a home in Collegeville, Pa., at a cost of \$250,000. It has eighty-five acres of beautiful farm country ground and is twenty-eight miles from Philadelphia. Due to the anxiety and distress of the members over the pressing need for aid for German refugees, the

Order wishes to turn over this new home for the housing of the refugee children. Last summer, the grounds were used as a summer camp for one hundred and fifteen children. The home has complete modern equipment, tile swimming pool, recreation hall, infirmary, solarium, large spacious bedrooms, kitchens, dining hall and other necessary facilities.

We will supply satisfactory affidavits and guarantees from individuals of good standing and character to fulfill the public charge requirements. Each child shall have his own affidavit. There are ample private funds to provide transportation of the children from Germany to Philadelphia and for their support, maintenance, and education.

The children are to be selected from those within the quota regulations whose numbers have been reached or are about to be reached and have met all other essential requirements except that relating to the public charge clause. For these, we will be prepared to supply satisfactory affidavits and guarantees from the United States, executed by private individuals.

To accomplish our purposes as promptly as possible, Mrs. Kraus and I are prepared to go to Germany to arrange with the proper Governmental authorities for the selection of eligible children, the filing of the affidavits, and the transportation of the children.

We should like, if possible, to get under way immediately, since there is still the better part of three months of this year's quota left for emigration from Germany to the United States. Before planning any further, we await word from your Department concerning the feasibility of our plan and news from Germany.

Hoping to hear from you as promptly and conveniently as possible, and with sincere thanks for all the assistance you have given us, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

[signature]

Gilbert J. Kraus

GJK/B

Shortly after posting this letter, Kraus journeyed to Washington, DC, to discuss his proposal with Messersmith. During the interview, the assistant secretary suggested that the real difficulty lodge members would likely encounter in sponsoring the children lay in the current U.S. quota system, which set strict limits on immigration from foreign countries. In the early months of 1939, the number of German emigrants registering with U.S. consulates had already filled the German quota for the entire year. There would be no exceptions, Messersmith noted; each youngster would have to wait until his or her quota number came up in order to obtain a visa.

Returning to Philadelphia, Kraus tried to discover a legal way to work within the existing quota system in order to secure the appropriate paperwork for the children. He seized upon the idea of using so-called dead-number visas—visas that for various reasons had gone unused in the previous year and might be carried over and applied to the next year's quota. Uncertain that such a strategy would prove successful, the Krauses resolved to go to Germany themselves and to work with consular officials to bring a group of children back to the United States.

Their efforts met with stiff opposition from many local and national aid agencies. Representatives of several established Jewish refugee and charitable organizations wrote to the Krauses and to their State Department contacts, suggesting that they abandon their plans.⁴⁴ The Krauses “should be [. . .] stopped from this undertaking at all costs,” wrote one director of an American Jewish aid agency to George Messersmith:

They could be harmful and a hindrance to those agencies which are properly qualified to do this work. We are certain they could not possibly be successful in this endeavor. [. . .] As you know, we are sincerely engaged in trying to bring children to this country and we feel that personal and sensational publicity on the part of outsiders would make trouble for all. We must discredit these people in every way and I urge you to give this matter your serious consideration. You must be fully aware that the only thing they seek is private publicity.⁴⁵

In the face of intense criticism, Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus set sail for Europe in the early spring of 1939. Despite the danger the Jewish Krauses faced in traveling to Nazi Germany, the couple journeyed from Berlin to Vienna, where representatives of that city's Jewish Community Organization (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde) helped to interview potential young candidates for emigration, together with their parents. On May 21, the Krauses left the former Austrian capital with fifty children, aged four to fourteen, whom they had chosen for sponsorship by Brith Sholom members. The Krauses traveled with their young charges by train to Berlin in order to apply for formal visas from the American consulate. In the end, Gilbert Kraus's gamble to make a claim for dead-number visas paid off, and all fifty Austrian youngsters received the necessary papers for entry to the United States. On June 3, 1939, the

44. See “Fifty German-Jewish Refugee Children,” *The Jewish Exponent*, June 9, 1939.

45. Kraus, “Don’t Wave Good-bye,” 17–18.

Krauses and their wards sailed into New York Harbor aboard the SS *President Harding*. The children were bussed directly to "Sholomville," Brith Sholom's residence outside Philadelphia, which had been equipped to house the youngsters. Despite the excellent facilities available there, community leaders quickly resolved that the young refugees would thrive best in private homes rather than in an institutional setting, and by Labor Day of 1939, Brith Sholom members had found foster families for each of the fifty children. Eleanor and Gilbert Kraus themselves took in a pair of siblings from Vienna, Robert and Johanna Braun. These children remained with their benefactors until the end of the war and were ultimately reunited with their parents.

DOCUMENT 9-15. Aided by philanthropists Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus, a group of Austrian Jewish children finds safe haven in the United States, June 3, 1939, USHMMPA WS# 96464, courtesy of Anita Willens.

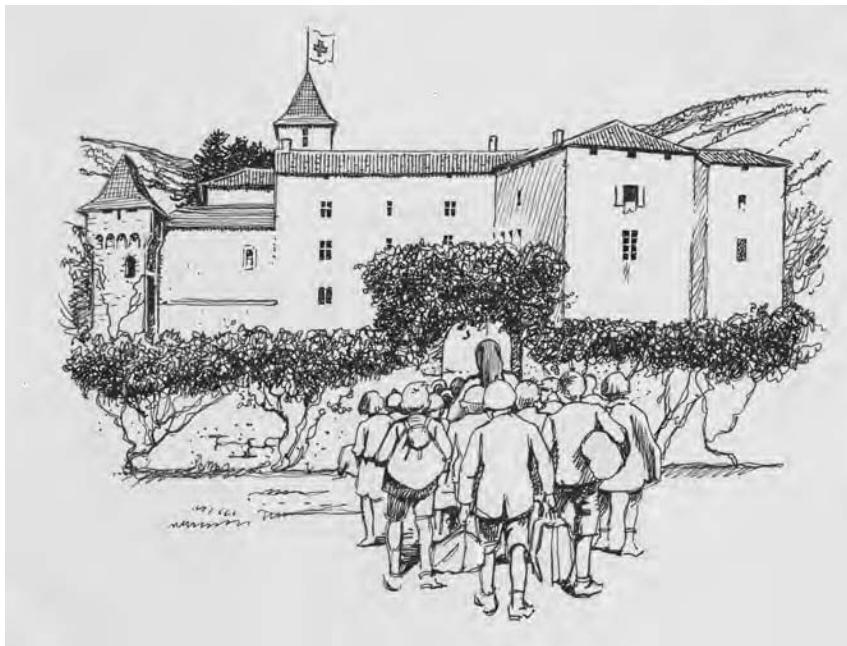


An oft-cited African proverb suggests that it takes a village to raise a child. The same may also be said of saving the lives of children during the Holocaust. The Krauses' successful rescue of fifty Austrian children in 1939 demonstrates that, with community support, a few committed individuals could overcome

enormous odds in order to bring Jewish youngsters to the safety of American shores. But often it took a veritable network of agencies to protect Jewish children from the threat of deportation. In the years immediately preceding World War II, the Committee to Assist Jewish Refugee Children (Comité d'Assistance aux Enfants Juif Refugiés, or CAEJR) had worked to shelter Jewish refugee youths in Belgium. The organization had been founded by Marguerite Goldschmidt-Brodsky, whose husband, Alfred, served as treasurer of the Belgian Red Cross. In response to the thousands of German and stateless refugees fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany, Goldschmidt-Brodsky and a handful of determined society matrons, among them Lily Felddegen, worked to persuade the Belgian government to grant asylum to Jewish children until they could safely emigrate to other countries. Many of the children under their protection had entered Belgium illegally or come as a part of organized transports from the German city of Cologne, adjacent to the Belgian border. The CAEJR arranged foster families for many of the children; over one hundred of their charges lived in homes in the Brussels suburbs organized under their auspices, Home Speyer for boys and Home General Bernheim for girls. Following the German invasion of Belgium, most of these youngsters escaped on one of the many refugee trains to southern France. For nearly a year they lived in primitive conditions on a large farm in Sreyre, near the city of Toulouse; there many of the older youths aided in agricultural work on-site or on the neighboring estates.

In the meanwhile, Marguerite Goldschmidt-Brodsky had also fled to southern France, where her husband and his Red Cross colleagues were working to settle hundreds of Belgian Jewish refugees. From their home in Cahors, she used her husband's connections with the Swiss Red Cross, persuading members of its auxiliary organization, the Secours Suisse aux Enfants (Swiss Children's Aid) to rescue "her" children. Local members of the Secours Suisse were able to furnish the youngsters and their caretakers, Elka and Alexander Frank, with much-needed food and supplies, and in the early spring of 1941, they succeeded in moving the young people to an abandoned castle, the Château de la Hille, in a rural area of the Pyrenees near the Spanish border. During the children's tenure at La Hille, an unknown youth created the drawing shown in Document 9-16, capturing the arrival of his companions and rescuers at the old château. Although the castle was located near the French town of Pamiers, the young artist placed a Swiss flag upon its ramparts in honor of the welfare organization that had done so much to support them.

DOCUMENT 9-16. Child's drawing of Château de la Hille, La Hille, France, c. 1942, USHMMPA WS# 45699, courtesy of Vera Friedlander.



Nearly all of La Hille's young occupants survived the Holocaust. Through the intervention of Lily Felddegen, one of the children's Belgian benefactors now working through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)⁴⁶ in New York, the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children and the American

46. An international organization established in 1881 in New York City to assist the emigration of Jews fleeing czarist Russia, HIAS offered important immigration and resettlement services to Jewish populations fleeing the persecution of Nazi Germany. After the Nazis came to power in early 1933, the most urgent mission of HIAS became the emigration of Germany's Jewish population. By providing an emigration route through France, Spain, and Portugal to North and South America during wartime, HIAS (joining with two other immigration services under the name HICEM) continued to provide emigration assistance to Jews who escaped the occupied territories. In the postwar period, HIAS joined with an arm of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to form the Displaced Persons Coordinating Committee and administer emigration and family reunification services in hundreds of displaced persons camps.

Friends Service Committee,⁴⁷ a Quaker organization, furnished seventeen of the youngest children at La Hille with visas to enter the United States in the summer of 1941. A year later, in August 1942, French police conducted a raid upon the château, arresting forty teenagers from the group aged fifteen or older and incarcerating them in LeVernet internment camp to await deportation. Desperate to rescue them, Rösli Näf,⁴⁸ the educator who had inherited the directorship of the La Hille colony, immediately contacted their benefactors in the Secours Suisse. At her instigation, chief Secours Suisse administrator Maurice Dubois⁴⁹ successfully negotiated with René Bousquet,⁵⁰ secretary general of the Vichy police, for the release of the children. After this narrow escape, Näf initiated efforts to smuggle the remaining children into neutral Switzerland or nearby Spain. A handful of these youngsters were apprehended by border police and perished at the Auschwitz and Majdanek

47. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization founded in 1917 to provide an alternative to military service in the pacifist tradition and to furnish humanitarian aid to civilians overseas. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the refugee section of the AFSC worked during World War II with Jewish welfare organizations to provide relief for those persecuted in Germany and in Nazi-occupied Europe. Operating chiefly out of its Geneva, Berlin, and Rome offices in continental Europe, the AFSC also worked to procure travel visas for refugees of German persecution, particularly those residing in North Africa and in neutral countries. Following the cessation of hostilities in 1945, the AFSC engaged in relief and reconstruction work in postwar Europe. See Howard Wriggins, *Picking Up the Pieces from Portugal to Palestine: Quaker Refugee Relief in World War II* (New York: University Press of America, 2004).

48. Swiss-born Rosa (Rösli) Näf (1911–1996) had worked for Dr. Albert Schweitzer in Africa for three years before undertaking the responsibility for the castle of La Hille. After the war, Näf settled in Denmark. In 1986, Yad Vashem named her “Righteous Among the Nations.”

49. After the military defeat of France, Maurice Dubois (1905–1998) provided aid to hundreds of refugees in southern France. He soon became responsible for the Swiss Aid Cartel for Child War Victims in unoccupied France and, after this organization became affiliated with the Red Cross, for Swiss Children’s Aid. He worked for the employment of Swiss nurses in the internment camps of Gurs and Rivesaltes and helped to develop a network of children’s homes for refugee children. He was declared “Righteous Among the Nations” in 1985.

50. René Bousquet (1909–1993) was a high-ranking member of the collaborationist Vichy regime who was instrumental in the infamous roundup of Parisian Jews at the Vélodrome d’Hiver in July 1942. This action resulted in the arrest and deportation of thirteen thousand Jews. Bousquet remained influential in French politics until serious allegations about his Vichy past resurfaced in the late 1980s. After initial efforts by political allies to prevent Bousquet’s prosecution, French justice officials indicted the aging civil servant in 1991, accusing him of crimes against humanity in the deportation of 194 children. Bousquet was assassinated on June 8, 1993, shortly before his trial was to take place.

concentration camps.⁵¹ Ninety of the original La Hille children survived the war. In the 1980s, the **Yad Vashem** remembrance authorities declared Maurice Dubois and Rösli Näf “**Righteous Among the Nations.**”

WHEN RESCUE FAILS

For every successful rescue of a child during the Holocaust, many such efforts undoubtedly ended in tragedy. The fate of the children of Izieu is a case in point. Their would-be rescuers, Sabine and Miron Zlatin, were eastern European Jews who made their home in northern France, obtaining French citizenship in 1939.⁵² At the outbreak of World War II, Sabine Zlatin trained as a Red Cross nurse. After the couple fled occupied France, Sabine became involved with the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (Children’s Aid Society, or OSE), through which she assisted in the release of several youngsters from the Rivesaltes and Agde internment camps. When German forces occupied Vichy France in 1943, Zlatin and her husband received permission to take possession of an empty farmhouse in the remote mountain village of Izieu in southeastern France. There the couple established a refugee children’s home, La Maison d’Izieu, some sixty miles from Lyon in the Rhone Valley. The local subprefect of Belley (Ain), Pierre-Marcel Witzler, who had offered the retreat to the Zlatins, perfectly understood that the small home would provide Jewish youngsters safe haven from deportation. The first arrivals to the refuge came from Lodève in the Herault department in the Languedoc; others came from internment camps in the south of France. Ranging in age from three to eighteen, the children lived, by wartime standards, an idyllic existence, enjoying their school lessons as well as varied and nutritious meals, weekly hikes in the beautiful countryside, and abundant time for games, drawing, and play. The Jewish identities of the youngsters and their caretakers were a closely guarded secret, and official records identified the young persons only as refugee children. Surrounded by the Zlatins and five other staff, the children felt safe and secure.

51. Just one of those deported, Werner Epstein succeeded in surviving Auschwitz and a death march before liberation in the spring of 1945.

52. Sabine Zlatin (née Chwast, 1907–1996) was born in Warsaw and emigrated as a young woman to France; she met Russian-born Miron Zlatin (1904–1944), an agronomy student in Nancy, where the couple married in 1927.

DOCUMENT 9-17. Jewish refugee children pose at a children's home in Izieu, France, summer 1943, USHMMPA WS# 15513, courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.



That security was shattered on the morning of April 6, 1944, when SS-Hauptsturmführer Klaus Barbie (1913–1991), chief of the Lyon **Gestapo**, led a raid upon the children's colony at Izieu. SS and police authorities found the youngsters and the staff in the refectory eating breakfast. As Barbie indicated in his now infamous telex, he and his men seized the forty-four children resident in the home (the original document states forty-one children, as three of the teenagers were counted as adults) and seven grown-ups, including Miron Zlatin. His wife, Sabine, had gone to Montpellier to collect supplies and thus escaped the dragnet. Only one youngster, Leon Reifman, managed to leap from one of the home's windows and escape.

The captive children and their adult attendants spent the night in Lyon's Fort Montluc prison. Fearing that local authorities might intervene on the children's behalf, Barbie arranged for their immediate transfer to the **Drancy** transit camp, near Paris. Miron Zlatin and two of the oldest youngsters were ultimately transferred from there to Tallinn, Estonia, where they were shot to death. The rest of the children traveled on the next available transport to Auschwitz, where they were gassed immediately upon arrival. Of the adults who accompanied

them to the killing center, only one, twenty-four-year-old Léa Feldblum, was spared at **selection** and survived Auschwitz.⁵³ Together with Sabine Zlatin, by then eighty, a sixty-nine-year-old Feldblum testified against Klaus Barbie at his trial in Lyon in 1987. The tragic fate of the Izieu children played a pivotal role in Barbie's indictment and conviction. The so-called Butcher of Lyon died in prison in 1991.⁵⁴

53. Léa (Laja) Feldblum (1918–) was born July 1, 1918, in Warsaw. By 1929, her family had emigrated to Antwerp, but after the German occupation of Belgium, the Feldblums fled to southern France. Léa Feldblum worked at several OSE facilities before her employment at the Izieu children's home. Here, like the Zlatins, she lived under false papers, assuming the name Marie-Louise Decoste. Arriving at the Drancy transit camp following the Barbie raid on Izieu, she revealed her true identity so that she might be deported with the children to Auschwitz. Feldblum was liberated at the Auschwitz complex in January 1945 and emigrated the following year to Palestine.

54. For a discussion of the trials of Klaus Barbie and René Bousquet, mentioned previously, see Richard J. Golsan, "Crimes-against-Humanity Trials in France and Their Historical and Legal Contexts," in *Atrocities on Trial: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Prosecuting War Crimes*, ed. Patricia Heberer and Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008), 247–61.

DOCUMENT 9-18. Telex from Klaus Barbie, commanding officer of the Security Police and Security Service IV B, Lyon, to Department IV B 4, Paris (Barbie Telex), April 6, 1944, in Serge Klarsfeld, *The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy*, trans. Kenneth Jacobsen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 95 (translated from the German).

Der Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD												
im Bereich des Militärbefehlshabers in Frankreich												
Fernschreibstelle												
Aufgenommen			Befördert			Raum für Eingangstempel						
Tag	Monat	Jahr	Tag	Monat	Jahr	Zeit						
- 6 APRIL 1944			durch			an	durch					
von			durch									
FS-Nr.			Verzögigungsvermerk									
30490												
FS-Annahme												
AB:	Uhr. ab:	Uhr.										
VON NR. 3269 6. 4. 44 2010 UHR == FI == AN DEN SOS - AUF L. ROEM. 4 B - PARIS = SEIN: JUEDISCHE KINDERHEIM IN IZIEU-AIN = VORSI: OHNE = IN DEN HEUTIGEN MORGENSTUNDEN WURDE DAS JUEDISCHE KINDERHEIM " COLONIE ENFANT " IN IZIEU-AIN AUSGENOMEN. INSGESAMT WURDEN 41 KINDER IM ALTER VON 3 BIS 13 JAHREN FESTIGENOMMEN. FERNER GELANG DIE FESTNAHME DES GESAMTEN JUEDISCHEN PERSONALS - BESTEHEND AUS 10 KOEPFEN, DAVON 5 FRAUEN. BARGELD ODER SONSTIGE VERMOEGENSWERTE KUNNTEN NICHT SICHERGESTELLT WERDEN == DER ABTRANSPORT NACH DRANCY ERFOLGT AM 7.4.44 ==												
DER KOP. DER SIPO UND DES SD LYON ROEM. 4 B 61/43 <u>Klausur</u> 1. A. GEZ. BARBIE SS-OSTUF ==												
1) Ausgelegert im Izieu v. R. o. B und R. d. B befreite. R. o. B rollt, seit vier wichtige Fälle befreite aufzufinden. R. d. B nimmt, seit vier wichtige Fällen die plausibel zu erkennen sind und jetzt ein großer wichtiger wichtiger wurde aufzufinden und will es auch auf in diesem Falle auf den vorherigen Werten ab. Gattie 2. R. d. B. auf dem vorherigen Werten ab. Gattie 3. R. d. B. für E. und füllt												

The Commander of the Security Police and the SD [Sicherheitsdienst, or Security Service] in the area of the Military Commander in France

[Telegraph Office]

Lyon No 5,269 4/6/44 8:10 p.m. Fl.

To the BdS Dept. IV B Paris

Re: Jewish children's home in Izieu/Ain

Prev[ious]: none

This morning the Jewish children's home "Colonie Enfant" in Izieu/Ain was raided. In total, forty-one children aged from three to thirteen were taken into custody. In addition, officials succeeded in arresting the entire Jewish staff, consisting of ten persons, five of them women. Neither cash nor other valuables could be secured.

The transport to Drancy is to take place on April 7, 1944.

The commanding officer of the Sipo [Sicherheitspolizei, or Security Police] and the SD Lyon, IV B 61/43 [Dr. Werner Knab]

As authorized, signed [Klaus] Barbie, SS[-Obersturmführer]

[Handwritten]

1. Affair discussed in the presence of Dr. v. B.⁵⁵ and Hauptsturmführer [Alois] Brunner.⁵⁶ Dr. v. B. stated that in such cases, special measures regarding the lodging of the children had been provided for by Obersturmführer Röthke. Hauptsturmführer Brunner replied that he had no knowledge of such instructions or plans, and that as a matter of principle, he would not consent to such special measures. In these cases also he would proceed in the normal manner as regards deportation. For the time being I have made no decision in principle.

[Obersturmführer] Röthke for information and decision.

55. Dr. von Behr, director of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg in Paris, was responsible for the confiscation of the valuables of deported Jews.

56. Alois Brunner (1912–?) was one of Adolf Eichmann's most trusted associates in the deportation of European Jews to killing centers and ghettos in the East. As commander of the Drancy internment camp outside Paris from June 1943 to August 1944, Brunner was responsible for sending thousands of Jews to their deaths. After the war, Brunner escaped abroad and is believed to have resided in Syria. He was condemned to death in absentia by French courts in 1954 and again in March 2002. It is unclear whether Brunner is alive and at large. See Hans Safran, *Eichmann's Men*, trans. Uta Stargardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009).



CHAPTER 10

ELSEWHERE, PERHAPS? CHILDREN AND THE END OF THE HOLOCAUST

ON MAY 8, 1945, World War II, the most destructive conflict in modern history, came to an end in Europe. Between 7 and 9 million people had been uprooted from their homes as a result of hostilities. Between 2 and 3 million of these individuals were former prisoners—Jews and non-Jews—who had survived the war in concentration camps, forced labor camps, and killing centers throughout Axis-controlled Europe.¹ Ill and exhausted from years of malnourishment and maltreatment, many child and adult survivors greeted their liberation with jubilation and set about making plans for a new future. Particularly for adolescents who had witnessed the deaths of parents and family members, however, a sense of overwhelming loss and uncertainty tempered the joy of this newfound freedom. Where would they go now? What would the future hold in a world without family love and support?

For survivors, the end of World War II marked a rupture between past and present. The immediate postwar period was a time to reconstruct their lives and reestablish homes and households dissolved during the war years. Separation from loved ones was a central experience of Jewish families during the Holocaust, and already in the late spring of 1945, surviving Jews and other victims of Axis policy began the complex process of locating family members

1. Hagit Lavsky, “The Role of Children in the Rehabilitation Process of Survivors: The Case of Bergen Belsen,” *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004), 103.

scattered during the years of persecution. Parents sought their missing children in orphanages, children's homes, and religious institutions throughout Europe. Such searches often became protracted, as hidden children had often moved from safe house to safe house during the war years, and many were still listed in official records under assumed names. Even those children fortunate enough to be reunited with their parents or other relatives often found rejoining their family units traumatic. For many young children, leaving the safety of their rescuers' homes for parents they scarcely remembered was a distressing experience. Likewise, hidden children who had spent years living under false identities discovered that returning to the family fold meant a difficult period of readjustment, as youngsters struggled to reconcile their past and present selves.

And then, child and adult Holocaust survivors alike faced the most daunting dilemma of all: where should they call home? Was it a viable option to return to one's homeland, where the memories of persecution were still fresh? Could one begin a new life in old surroundings? Would they discover missing friends and relatives when they returned, or would they find only the ghosts of the past? Many children, both with and without parents, waited, sometimes for years, in **displaced persons (DP) camps** throughout the Allied occupation zones of Germany and Austria for the chance to settle elsewhere, to emigrate abroad, perhaps to the United States or British-controlled **Palestine**. And there these surviving children began again, pursuing the education denied to them under Nazi occupation. Slowly and tenaciously, they made lives for themselves in the shadow of the Shoah. Many later shared their experiences, filtering the memories of their extraordinary childhoods with the perspectives they had gained as adults. Their testimonies are essential, for sixty-five years after those harrowing years of war and genocide, these individuals are our last living witnesses to the events of the Holocaust.

"OVER THIS FIELD OF DEATH, PEACE BREAKS OUT": LIBERATION

It is impossible to ascertain with precision the number of young people who survived persecution by the Nazi regime or its allies in concentration camps and ghettos or in hiding. Yet, in the winter and spring months of 1945, thousands of children experienced liberation, as Allied armies made their way through Axis-controlled Europe and into the German Reich itself. In the last months of the war, as German military and occupation forces retreated, they evacuated hundreds of camps in eastern Europe before the advance of the Soviet army, driving their prisoner populations to camps deep in the German interior.

Schutzstaffel (SS) personnel forced these prisoners to march hundreds of miles on foot in brutal winter conditions without adequate food, shelter, or clothing. Their SS guards summarily shot those too ill or exhausted to keep pace on these death marches. Concentration camps on German soil were often unprepared for the vast numbers of incoming prisoners from the east. Burgeoning camp populations outstripped the food and water supplies; extreme overcrowding spread epidemics of **typhus**, tuberculosis, and dysentery. In many camps the last weeks of the war witnessed catastrophic losses among Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners due to starvation, exposure, and disease.²

On April 11, 1945, units of the U.S. Ninth Armored Infantry Battalion liberated the **Buchenwald** concentration camp near Weimar, Germany. On that day, the camp's underground prisoner resistance movement seized control of Buchenwald in order to prevent atrocities by retreating camp guards. It was the first major Nazi concentration camp uncovered by U.S. forces,³ and American soldiers were horrified when they encountered more than twenty thousand starving and emaciated prisoners.⁴

Gert Silberbart was sixteen when he learned that American troops were approaching the perimeter of the Buchenwald camp. A young Jew from Berlin, Silberbart had lived in the German capital until February 1943, when **Gestapo** agents arrested him and his family and transported them to Berlin's **collection camp** (*Sammellager*) for Jews at Grosse-Hamburger-Strasse. The Silberbarts were deported directly to the **Auschwitz** concentration camp. His parents and eight-year-old sister went directly to the gas chambers, but Gert, then fourteen, had an athletic build and was selected for forced labor. He spent several months in the **Buna** camp (Auschwitz III–Monowitz), before civilian contractors from the Siemens concern recruited him as a skilled worker in an electronics factory attached to the Bobrek⁵ subcamp of Auschwitz. There the youth worked under comparatively good conditions until the last months of the war. In early January

2. See, for example, a discussion of the final days of the Bergen Belsen camp in Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2006).

3. On April 4, 1945, units of the U.S. 89th Infantry Division overran Ohrdruf, a Buchenwald subcamp. It was the first Nazi concentration camp liberated by U.S. forces.

4. See Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

5. See "Bobrek" in *The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, Vol. 1: *Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS–Business Administration Main Office (WVHA)*, ed. Geoffrey Megargee (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), 228–30.

1945, he and several of his fellow prisoners from Bobrek endured a forced march to Buchenwald. In the last days of the camp's existence, SS guards oversaw almost daily transports of prisoners to other camps in Germany's interior. Fearing that he would have to undergo another death march, a starving and exhausted Silberbart hid in the camp's cellars and sewage holes, hoping to survive a potential liquidation of Buchenwald's prisoner population. The teenager's first indication that Allied forces had arrived at the complex was the sound of American music playing from the camp's loudspeakers. Silberbart emerged from his hiding place and embraced his fellow prisoners with joy.

Gert Silberbart responded to his liberation at Buchenwald with jubilation. Although weak and malnourished, he walked out to greet his American rescuers and to share the happiness and relief of the moment with his fellow survivors. In an August 1946 interview with American psychologist Dr. **David Boder**,⁶ Silberbart expressed his satisfaction at the arrest of his former SS tormentors. His rejection of retribution against SS guards held temporarily at the Buchenwald camp after liberation indicates that the young man had emerged from the years of persecution with his humanity intact. Now almost eighteen, Gert Silberbart looked ahead to a brighter future; he envisioned reuniting with his extended family and studying dentistry.

DOCUMENT 10-1. David P. Boder, interview with Gert Silberbart, Geneva, August 27, 1946, USHMM RG-50.472, spool 9-82 and 83 (translated from the German).

Gert Silberbart: [...] I stayed hidden for about a week. Constantly there was the call "*Juden raus, Juden raus*," ["Jews out, Jews out!"] and when the largest part of the Jews were gone, they went after the Christians. There were daily transports from the camp, so that in the camp that had held 100,000 people a week before, at the point of liberation by the Americans on April 11, there were only 22,000 people left. [...]

David Boder: Well? And so?

Gert Silberbart: And so the Americans came on the 11th, on April 11 at four o'clock in the afternoon, and liberated us.

6. See David Boder, *The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary Notes on a Psychological and Anthropological Study* (Chicago: Illinois Institute of Technology and the Psychological Museum, 1947), and David Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), as well as the online site for Boder interviews, "Voices of the Holocaust" (<http://voices.iit.edu>), a project of the Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology.

David Boder: Now, and how was that? Do you want to tell us about the last three days? [. . .]

Gert Silberbart: Well, so, during these . . . during these last three days I hid in cellars and sewage holes. I did not eat or drink during these days, just always listened anxiously to the cry of "*Juden raus*"; and when somebody, something moved close to me, when I heard any sound, I immediately grew terrified.

David Boder: So you say you did not really eat anything during those three days?

Gert Silberbart: Yes. That was not . . . that was not the first time. I had already starved for seven days. Nothing to eat and nothing to drink. [. . .] [I hid] until I heard the cries of jubilation on the afternoon of April 11, and heard American music from the loud speakers, and then I immediately crawled out, completely exhausted, and we embraced each other, crying . . .

David Boder: So American music from the radios . . .

Gert Silberbart: It was like this. In the room of the camp commandant, which was outside the camp, there was a big . . . a microphone [. . .] and this radio in the commandant's room played American music. The inmates stood immediately. [. . .]

David Boder: Tuned in and one heard American music?

Gert Silberbart: . . . immediately heard American music. And then the first Americans immediately talked over the loudspeakers. We were . . . we just [knew] we were free.

David Boder: And?

Gert Silberbart: We just could not grasp it in the first hours. Yes, and then we embraced crying. It is really hard to describe the last—the first hours after the liberation.

David Boder: Try it!

Gert Silberbart: Yes, when I crawled out, I saw some comrades again whom I had known for a long time, and we embraced and we almost could not fathom that we were free. We were so exhausted from the last days that we had not eaten—in short, we were exhausted. The bad thing was also that the Germans in their retreat had destroyed the water pipeline, so that there was no water in the whole camp, and we almost died of thirst.

David Boder: [Interviewer David Boder changes the recording spool and identifies the interviewee, date, and time.] So you said you heard American music, now go on.

Gert Silberbart: Yes, so we just crawled out of our hiding places and were happy about our newly regained freedom; many actually collapsed from the thought, at this occasion . . .

David Boder: Did you immediately see some Americans, too?

Gert Silberbart: Yes, we immediately saw American tanks that drove through the barbed wire and the electrical fences. At once you saw white flags on all the roofs, and—to make a long story short—there was jubilation and laughter all over the camp.

David Boder: Who put out the white flags?

Gert Silberbart: Those were simple bed sheets. [. . .]

David Boder: Now, the prisoners did not have to surrender. What did the white flags mean?

Gert Silberbart: No, the white flags meant simply that we were together with the Americans. [. . .]

David Boder: Yes, and what happened to the kapos?

Gert Silberbart: The kapos were—a part of the kapos who had a bad conscience, who had collaborated with the SS men during all these times, fled with the SS men who fled at the last minute. [. . .] The kapos who had a good conscience, who had been behaving fairly towards their fellow prisoners, they stayed with us and also celebrated their freedom.

David Boder: Yes. Now. Eh—did they catch some SS men? Did they . . . ?

Gert Silberbart: Very many were still caught on the way because . . . many inmates took, eh, plundered right away these weapons arsenals, the arsenals of the SS . . .

David Boder: Yes . . .

Gert Silberbart: . . . and armed themselves, and those who were strong enough ran after the SS, together with the Americans. Quite a few were still arrested.

David Boder: And what was done with them?

Gert Silberbart: They were first brought into the camp and held in a block. They were disarmed and everything taken from them. Then, several days later, they were transported by the Americans, by the military, further into Germany. [. . .]

David Boder: Did you have an opportunity to talk to the SS?

Gert Silberbart: I did not have an opportunity myself because the whole time I was too weak to just go a few steps. [. . .] I just rested. Others had the opportunity to talk to the SS men. Many also took revenge on them.

David Boder: In what form?

Gert Silberbart: Simply by harassing them.

David Boder: Yes. Did the Americans defend or protect the SS in any form?

Gert Silberbart: Neither defended nor protected them. They took—in the first . . . in the first days you saw rather few Americans in our camp because the camp was still on the front lines, that whole area. Only later, when the front had moved further into Germany, there came a special camp commando of the U.S. Army, a great number of personnel who took over the running of the camp. Also many tankers came that brought water into the camp. Because it took about a week and a half after our liberation until the water pipeline was restored.

David Boder: Aha. Now tell me, there were so many inmates, how come the SS was even left alive?

Gert Silberbart: They were left alive. Because if we would not have let them live, then we would—we would not have been much different than the Germans. So we had to—we wanted, after all, to set a good example. If not a good example . . . but we should not act as they acted towards us: then we would have been just like them in the end.

David Boder: That was the philosophy of the matter?

Gert Silberbart: That was not the philosophy of the matter. That is my opinion. Surely many others had a different opinion. But overall that was the mind set in the camp. [. . .]

David Boder: Now, and how did it go with the food and care?

Gert Silberbart: Of course the food improved immediately and immensely. Many were not used to the good fare of the American military, in fact, no one was. [. . .] [Many] suffered right away from diarrhea, gastritis, stomach cramps. Nobody took well to it. The whole camp suffered from diarrhea. And only later, slowly, slowly, did we get used to the normal diet.

David Boder: Now, and how long were you then in Buchenwald?

Gert Silberbart: I was then in Buchenwald until the beginning of June 1945, when many youths had to sign up through the UN,⁷ and the

7. Gert Silberbart is referring to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which undertook the provision of food, clothing, and essentials for displaced persons and victims of war and persecution following World War II. Among the administration's tasks were documenting orphaned or unaccompanied minors and assisting in their reunion with relatives or relocation.

transports went to Switzerland, and I was among them. And so I came to Switzerland. [. . .]

David Boder: And how old are you now?

Gert Silberbart: I will be eighteen.

David Boder: And what are your plans? What do you want to do in the future?

Gert Silberbart: I am intending to finish the dental technician course and the [evening] course at the trade school, and then go to my relatives in Chile and work there as a dental technician.

DOCUMENT 10-2. Young boys join adult survivors in cheering their U.S. Army liberators at Dachau, April 29, 1945, USHMMPA WS# 45075, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.



Fourteen-year-old P. H.⁸ experienced his liberation from the **Dachau** concentration camp in a markedly different way. At the age of nine, the young boy had been forced to move into the **Lódz ghetto** with his family. There, in

8. Editor Isaiah Trunk chose to anonymize all sources of oral testimony published in his 1982 anthology *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*.

September 1942, he and his younger brother had evaded the children's action (*Kinderaktion*) associated with the ghetto's notorious *Gehsperrre* by hiding in the attic of their small apartment. The family remained in Łódź until the final liquidation of that ghetto in August 1944. At the time, P. H. reflected, he did not understand that his intact family had provided an invaluable source of stability and support. "I didn't value as a young child what it means to have a family with a father and mother. I only really appreciate it now that it's too late . . ."⁹ During the final **deportation** action, thirteen-year-old P. H. was separated from his mother and little brother and arrived with his father on a transport to Auschwitz.Flushed with crying and wearing several sets of clothing in the warm summer heat, the young H. appeared robust to SS officers performing **selections** on the ramp, and he and his father were chosen for labor. Two days after disembarking at **Birkenau**, father and son reboarded a transport for the Kaufbeuren concentration camp,¹⁰ a subcamp of Dachau near Augsburg. In the last weeks of the war, young H. was transferred with other ill and exhausted Jews to the Dachau concentration camp.

Unlike Gert Silberbart, P. H. did not experience a sense of joy when U.S. forces liberated Dachau on April 28, 1945. While Silberbart had lost his parents and other family members at the outset of his Holocaust odyssey, H.'s father had died just weeks before the arrival of American troops, deepening his son's sense of loss. Bereft of family members and close friends, H. felt a profound sense of loneliness and abandonment at liberation. Isolated from his fellow survivors, with whom, as a new arrival at Dachau, he felt very little connection, H. could not understand the elation that other prisoners demonstrated when their hour of freedom finally came. In this moment of celebration, the fourteen-year-old felt only apathy and despair. In a February 1946 interview, he confided to oral historian David Rum that only the injunction of his dying father enabled him to face his future alone.

9. P. H., quoted in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 326.

10. The Bavarian city of Kaufbeuren was also the location of the "euthanasia" facility mentioned in chapter 6.

DOCUMENT 10-3. Oral history testimony of P. H. by the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal, February 1946, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 326–28.

We were 600 men. On the first morning, we were sent out to the sites. My father worked in the forest for two days and caught pneumonia. I tried to muster all my strength for this work and was beaten hard all the time. After eight days, my father got better, but he was still too weak for the labor gangs. They put him in the infirmary—which was very bad. He died in two days. I was left all alone, without anyone or any hope for tomorrow. The number of dead grew from day to day. Of 600 Jews, only 320 were left. The camp went on operating for another week, and by then, the last exhausted remnant of 125 people was transferred to Dachau. I looked like a corpse, with no strength left at all. We were put into the infirmary, but forty other people had died in the train on the way there—they couldn't have held out for another moment. Since I was the youngest here, the others gave me more food and I only started coming back to life after two long weeks. The doctor, who was French, felt sorry for me and didn't discharge me from the infirmary right away. He gave me light work to do inside the clinic. On April 25, all the Jews were packed into a transport that was headed for the Tyrol. This doctor tried to save me and write out a false diagnosis which confined me to bed, though I was already better. Both of us risked our lives doing this. But luckily, they crossed me off the transport list and I stayed behind in the infirmary.

On April 28, the Americans walked in. Thousands of people “rose from the dead” to come out on the grounds and stare at the liberators. The SS were marched past us with their hands stuck high in the air. I reacted coldly to all these signs of liberation—I had no reason to be glad. I fell into complete apathy. I watched the people sing and dance with joy, and they seemed to me as if they'd lost their minds. I looked at myself and couldn't recognize who I was. I lost all sense of what had happened to me. After a long time, I began to understand. I was left all alone, without help or protection, without a living soul I could call my own. There were [times] I regretted having been left alive among these last survivors and handful of Jews. This was how the two months at Dachau passed. Many people died and many recovered. [. . .] I only live today for the words my father said to me on his deathbed: “I'm already forty-three—I won't be able to survive this hell. But you—you're young, see to it our name isn't torn out from the pages of the world.”

This keeps alive my spirit and I live with the hope for a better tomorrow.

One of the most extraordinary accounts of the last days of the **Theresienstadt ghetto** comes to us from the diary of eighteen-year-old Alice Ehrmann (later Alisa¹¹ Shek), born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, on May 5, 1927. Her Czech Jewish father, Rudolf Ehrmann, was a successful civil engineer; her Catholic mother, Pavla, was from Vienna. As children of a mixed marriage, Alice and her siblings became subject to Nazi antisemitic legislation when the Czech lands were annexed by the German Reich in March 1939.

Like many other Czech **Mischling** children, sixteen-year-old Alice and her sister Ruth, nineteen, were deported to Theresienstadt in July 1943 without their parents. While their “Aryan” mother continued to live in Prague until the end of the war, Rudolf Ehrmann was arrested and held in Theresienstadt’s Small Fortress in the spring of 1944. He was ultimately deported to Auschwitz, which he survived.

Alice Ehrmann began her diary in October 1944. In the ghetto she had met twenty-four-year-old Ze’ev Shek (then Scheck), a leading figure in the Czech Zionist youth movement. Soon after his arrival in the ghetto in October 1943, Shek began to assemble a small archive in order to document the true state of Theresienstadt, which Nazi authorities showcased to outsiders as a model ghetto. The young couple fell in love. After Shek was deported to Auschwitz in October 1944, Alice took over his task, concealing his trunk of documents within the workings of the **Terezin** fortress. When Shek returned to Prague after the war, Ehrmann retrieved the trunk from its hiding place, and the couple presented the collection to the new Czech director of the Jewish Agency.¹²

Through her diary, the teenage Alice performed another important service. Her descriptions of the ghetto’s last months provide us with a detailed eyewitness account of those turbulent days after the arrival of the Russian forces

11. This is also transliterated as Alisah in some sources.

12. In 1947, Ze’ev Shek received permission to emigrate to Palestine, where he studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. That same year he returned to Prague as a member of a delegation to a youth conference and married Alice Ehrmann. The couple emigrated to Israel in July 1948, and Ze’ev entered the diplomatic service. From 1950 to 1953, he was the first secretary of the Israeli embassy in Prague. His diplomatic career included postings in London and Paris. From 1967 until 1971, he served as Israeli ambassador to Austria. From 1977 he functioned as ambassador to Italy until his death in Rome on October 2, 1978. Alisa Shek was instrumental in founding and sustaining Israel’s Beit Theresienstadt, a memorial to the survivors of the Terezin ghetto. She died in 2007.

that liberated Prague and, with it, Theresienstadt. Particularly poignant are her impressions of the first days of peace, in which the celebratory mood of the local population contrasted starkly with the ongoing suffering of the liberated ghetto inhabitants. As she and her sister Ruth, a nurse, stayed behind to aid in the general evacuation, they could not fail to notice the mounting mortality rates among ghetto survivors. Amid the chaos, young Alice Ehrmann portrayed the experiences of many concentration camp and ghetto inmates for whom the first days of liberation appeared an incongruous juxtaposition of death and salvation.

DOCUMENT 10-4. Diary of Alice Ehrmann (Alisah Shek), entries for May 10, 11, and 18, 1945, in Alisah Shek, "Tagebuch," in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente*, ed. Miroslav Kárný, Raimund Kemper, and Margita Kárná (Prague: Verlag Academica, 1994), 196–99 (translated from the German).

May 10, 1945

Russians in the ghetto. They came to pick up the Russian [prisoners of war]. They broke through to the "Hamburg" [barracks], were halfway pushed out again. The Russians have disarmed the gendarmes; the chaos grows exponentially. The racially "Aryan" prisoners are registering; people are running away, they are going with the Russians. The Soviet flag flies over headquarters. Everywhere else, Czechoslovakian and Red Cross flags. [...] In the afternoon two cars with German wounded. Boys with red armbands and weapons in front of headquarters. Rioting. In the back sit two girls; a soldier holds a thin blonde, and around them the crowd howls. They threaten them with their fists. I know that they have done all this, but really, it wasn't just them. What does it help to beat them? Everything is always the same; people are always the same; no, they are always malicious. I am so unhappy. [...]

Evenings: the Russians drive all about, young girls ride on their tanks. The modern woman. People fill the city. Shaven heads and women's hairstyles, painted backs and summer clothes; stripes and bright clothing.¹³ [...] What are we to them? For the Russians a hospital city. And here there is no nurse besides Ruth and another girl. South barracks: we drove over two cars with beds and mattresses for twelve "Aryan" nurses.

13. Here the author means to indicate the mix of concentration camp prisoners and members of the local population.

Night. Down below the barracks with half-lit windows, barbed wire, and everywhere the death's head: typhus, rags, blankets full of lice, and shoes lie everywhere. And the smell, the eternal stench of cattle cars and assembly areas [*Schleusen*]. Here and there a bent figure hobbles from one barracks to another. The shaved head next to the signboard. . . . The first barracks, No. 11, almost everyone dead. Only a few moan, whimper, and wail. And over this field of death, peace breaks out. In the distances you can see rockets. The people are celebrating peace—peace, happiness. They build from the unhappiness they have caused a joy and are happy, and now everyone is supposed to go home.

May 11, 1945

Relative order, the ghetto is functioning, more or less. Many are leaving. [.] South barracks: the promised transfer [of the sick] to a field hospital does not materialize. The doctor does not dare to go inside; he¹⁴ promised to transfer them. All who can walk have been disinfected and moved to the Bodenbacher barracks. Two hundred and fifty who cannot move must face a gruesome death in the barracks, surrounded by their own excrement and the corpses. It is terrible, terrible. My sister is there; she cannot pull herself away. I understand her. The decision to leave the barracks behind, knowing that 250 living, young people are gasping their last—and how, who could do that? And even when one knows that, he cannot help. I am unendingly tired of everything. I think it must be wonderful not to have to do anything anymore. Ever.

May 18, 1945

In the evening Mařka Pick, Honza Meissner [visited]. Father in Slovakia,¹⁵ I believe. Everything is spinning round me. All the compressed thoughts of horror concerning him fly before my eyes. It is like a storm that breaks out, terrible and yet harmless, all dark spirits and ghosts of night—I extinguish them with one gesture. No, the light is too bright, and I am blind [from it]. And around me the darkness is so thick. A letter this evening. I have my mother again.

14. That is, the physician; emphasis is in the original.

15. Emphasis is in the original.

THE SEARCH FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

One of the most universal experiences of the Holocaust was the separation from loved ones. The division of family members tormented both children and their parents. Each lived in fear for the others' safety, yet remained in ignorance of their circumstances and felt powerless to aid them in extremity. Hidden children in particular learned to bear this burden in silence, for any mention of an absent mother or father might endanger their own safety or jeopardize the lives of their rescuers or loved ones. Thousands of young people spent most of the war years divided from their families. For many youngsters, the long separation in wartime would become a permanent reality.

As the war in Europe ended in May 1945, surviving Jews and other victims of Axis policy began the arduous process of locating family members scattered during the years of persecution. Parents searched for their children in foster families, orphanages, and religious institutions. Such quests were often grueling and protracted, for the war and Nazi policies of deportation and population transfer had produced massive relocation, a ceaseless stream of refugees from devastated regions, and millions of displaced persons. Tracing services, most notably the International Tracing Service of the Red Cross,¹⁶ together with many other relief organizations and Jewish agencies, aided in locating missing persons, but these searches were often fraught with difficulty. Many hidden children had passed through several safe houses during the war years and thus no longer remained with the original foster families in which their parents had left them. Others had relocated with their rescuers from war-torn areas and now lived far from their native communities. Still others languished, ill and exhausted, among other concentration camp survivors in relief camps or hospitals or lived in DP camps hundreds of miles from home. Psychologist and child survivor Peter Suedfeld, quartered in a Red Cross children's home in Budapest after World War II, remembers that he thought he might be lost forever. "I was passing as a Christian, under a false name unknown to my family, and my current orphanage was only the latest in a series of bombed-out shelters, far from the original address where they had left me."¹⁷ Parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members often spent months looking for their young ones. In many instances, such searches ended in tragedy, as parents learned that their

16. International Tracing Service, *An Introduction to the International Tracing Service* (Bad Arolsen: International Tracing Service, 2009).

17. Peter Suedfeld, "Life after the Ashes: The Postwar Pain, and Resilience, of Young Holocaust Survivors," *Occasional Paper of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2002), 5.

youngsters had perished. Children too came face to face with the devastating knowledge that none of their family had survived. Thousands spent their childhoods in orphanages or were placed with foster families by state or municipal authorities when no family members stepped forward to reclaim them.

DOCUMENT 10-5. Hedvig Dydyna holds a name card intended to help surviving family members locate her at the Kloster Indersdorf DP camp, Germany, c. May 1945, USHMM WA# 06677, courtesy of Lilo Plaschkes.



Maria Straucher was one of the more fortunate ones. Born on May 4, 1938, in Bochnia, a town near Kraków in southern Poland, Maria remembered little about her parents, who perished in the Holocaust, or about life before her concealment with peasants in the Polish countryside. Like many hidden children, Maria stayed with several rescuers before settling with her newly married guardian, Tadeusz Polowiec, in the last stages of the war. There the youngster, made to work long hours, was often beaten by Polowiec, a man with a

violent temper who did not spare his own infant child. Maria was precisely seven years old when the war ended in May 1945. After several months of searching, Maria's aunt, now her closest living relative, succeeded in locating and reclaiming the youngster, showing her perhaps the first tenderness the child had experienced for some years.

DOCUMENT 10-6. Interview with Maria Straucher by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Kraków, December 2, 1947, USHMM, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/3292/1-2 (translated from the Polish).

Maria Straucher, born in Bochnia, May 4, 1938, reports:

I don't remember anything about things before the war. I remember that I lived with an old woman in the area of Bochnia. There I was very hungry; it was already war. Day after day I was locked in the house. I was never permitted to go outside. Then Tadeusz Polowiec, who had taken charge of me, took me away from there and housed me with another old woman. There were many Germans there at the farmyard who came there with wagons. I always situated myself in the area of the wagons and got something to eat from the Germans, who did not know that I was Jewish. I didn't know it either. There I looked after a cow or goats. I was often struck when I was not obedient. After a year Polowiec took me to peasants in the countryside. There I went to school. After school I tended the cows. There were no children in the house. I don't remember anymore how long I stayed there—maybe the whole summer? Then the man took me back and put me with a younger woman who had had a little baby. There I washed diapers, cleaned, and brought water from the cellar; I had a lot of work to do. This woman had married my guardian, Polowiec. I was often beaten there. My guardian in his rage even beat his little eight-month-old child. Because of this, his mother had to call the physician in order to bandage up the child, who had a wound on its buttocks. Once he kicked me with so much force that I fell down and dislocated a bone in my throat. I became unconscious. They poured cold water on me. When I came to, Polowiec had me wipe up and mop up the water that they had poured on me. I liked the little child very much. They always swore at me, calling me "Jewess," which I didn't understand, because nobody explained it to me. Polowiec never called me by name, always only "little girl." He never petted or hugged me. The first time in my life someone kissed me was an aunt, whom I call mother. She had located me and come to me. She kissed

me, and burst into tears. I didn't know and couldn't understand why she was crying. She told me that she was my aunt. I went back to work on this day as usual and did not interrupt my chores. Only in the evening did I sleep by my aunt; she stayed the night with us. My aunt explained to me that she was a sister of my mother and how she had finally found me in Bochnia after searching a long time; and she promised me to take me with her to Kraków. I wasn't afraid and immediately agreed to go with her. My guardian asked me if I would file a complaint against him. Later I was taken before a judge and asked if I wanted to go with my aunt. All the neighbors knew how hard and how much I had worked and wondered how I had held out, because I had been beaten so often there.

I went with my aunt to Kraków, where she placed me in the children's home. I have been there a month, that is, since October. My aunt I call "Mama," and I am doing so well, oh so well!

Maria S.

Kraków, December 2, 1947

Protocol by Janina Maślowska

The effort to reunite as a family unit was not confined to the task of locating missing members. For many young people, the search for parents and other loved ones was often a search for their own identity. Hidden children in particular had spent years concealing their true origins, their religion, and even their own names. Children whose parents had placed them with rescuers in their infancy or young childhood had little or no memory of their families or their lives before the war. Many remained unaware that they were Jewish. For these youngsters, reunion with family members initiated a long and often painful process of reconciling their past and present selves.¹⁸

On the other hand, a parent's recovery of a missing child did not necessarily guarantee the successful reconstruction of the family circle. Throughout Europe, thousands of rescuers refused to return their charges to parents, family members, or Jewish or public organizations. Sometimes their motives were pecuniary: former foster families demanded that parents compensate them for their care of the child and for incurring tremendous risks in their safekeeping. Other individuals had exploited the labor of their wards in households and on family farms and were reluctant to lose the child's services. More commonly, however, rescuers had grown genuinely attached to their young charges and

18. See Robert Krell, *Child Holocaust Survivors: Memories and Reflections* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2007).

did not wish to part with them. Sometimes it was the child who resisted such a reunion. Many youngsters had endured such traumatic upheaval in their young lives that they proved profoundly averse to yet another change. Many, through experience, had grown distrustful of adults and were reluctant to put their faith in family members who had “reappeared” to claim them after the war, particularly if these were distant relatives with whom the child had had little contact before hostilities began. Children often felt betrayed by parents who had “abandoned” them during their long years in hiding. Others had learned to renounce their Jewish heritage and were reluctant to discard their new Christian identity, which had offered them such security, in order to return to the Jewish roots that had been the source of their persecution. Very young children could remember no other home than that of their rescuers and fiercely resisted leaving the only family they had known for the arms of strangers—in this case, their parents.

DOCUMENT 10-7. Renée Pallarés (right) and her family helped save Diane Popowski, an infant who had been with her mother at the Agde internment camp in France. In 1949, nine-year-old Diane reluctantly returned to her widowed father. She reunited with the Pallarés family some years later. USHMMPA WS# 13346, courtesy of Diane Popowski Fenster.



Gizela Szulberg was five years old when her parents left her with relatives of their gardener in the village of Włoska Wola. Michał and Necha Szulberg were fleeing a roundup of Jews in the area of Dubeczno, near Lublin, Poland, and had packed a small suitcase for their only child, believing they would be reunited with her soon. The Szulbergs' gardener had received handsome compensation for hiding the youngster and advised his relations to kill the girl so that they might pocket the money. The Wajdziks, a fiercely antisemitic peasant family, had nevertheless refused to harm Gizela and reluctantly hid the child. Gizela settled with them for the remainder of the war. For much of her stay, the family concealed the youngster in a wardrobe, away from the prying eyes of farmhands and neighbors. In time, Gizela learned that her parents had been murdered on their way to reclaim her. Her foster family, who had presumably expected a lucrative payment from the Szulbergs for the safe return of their daughter, decided to continue concealing the child, but only if the youngster signed over her property to her rescuers. Gizela's father had been a prosperous engineer and part owner of a glass factory in Warsaw before the invasion of Poland, and it is possible that the Wajdziks hoped to acquire these assets as payment for their troubles at the end of the war. Following the cessation of hostilities, Gizela, like many hidden children, continued to live with her foster family. Although she had been sorely mistreated and exploited by her rescuers, the eleven-year-old felt enduring gratitude to the Wajdziks and had herself baptized in 1946 in order to "give them my soul as a gift." Although they had created a hostile environment for the child, the family represented the only stability that Gizela had known for seven years. Strongly identifying with the Wajdziks and their beliefs, she was violently opposed to returning to Warsaw with a surviving family member when her distant cousin came to claim her.

DOCUMENT 10-8. Interview with Gizela Szulberg by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Bytom, September 3, 1947, USHMM RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/2731/2-3 (translated from the Polish).

Deposition: Szulberg, Gizela, born October 23, 1934, in Warsaw

Father: Michał Mother: Necha, née Bernstein

Resident: Bytom, ul. Prusa 23, Jewish orphanage.

[. . .] At this time I found out what had happened to my parents. They had been in hiding, but later they had nothing to live on because this woman [with whom they had stored their possessions] did not want to give them their things back. They were on their way to me, to pick me up, when the Germans caught them, killed them, and buried their bodies into a ditch. My

host wanted to keep me, but I should sign all of my property over to him. They talked for days on end of nothing else but this property, only of this property. I wanted to ingratiate myself with them and promised to give them everything. Despite this, they once threw me out of the house. I set myself out by the barn because I didn't have anywhere else to go. Later they found me there and allowed me to return to the house. I was already so resigned that I didn't really care what happened to me. In the spring I watched after the cows and was already much happier, because I did not have to cower locked up in the wardrobe. I am even still a little humped over from sitting like that so much. After this I came down with the measles, and my hostess laid me on top of the stove, where it was very dusty, and at the end of my illness I lay up in the attic. How much I have had to suffer from them! They hated me because I was a Jew. I was treated like Cinderella, truly. At dawn I rose and tended the cattle, together with the sheep there were eighteen [animals]. My legs were covered in sores—it was so frightening.

Then the Soviets came and the people said to me, "Now the Germans won't kill you anymore; now you are free." But I didn't believe in my good fortune. In spring 1946, I had myself baptized, because I wanted to show [my rescuers] that I appreciated it that they had taken me in. I simply wanted to give them my soul. After this I went to the grave of my parents, that is to the ditch [where they were buried], and lay [a bouquet of] violets there and cried a good deal. Today I don't cry anymore, so hardened is my heart from all the fear through which I have lived. After this the people from the AK [*Armia Krajowa*, or Polish Home Army] wanted to kill me. They said to my host, "If you don't hide us, we will kill this *Chaja*¹⁹ of yours." My hosts still often called me "Bejlis!"²⁰ After all this, one of my cousins found me and wanted to take me away from them. But they said, "Either a half a million or the child." He didn't have that much money because he was in the military, and he went away. I didn't even want to say good-bye to him, I was so dumb. I wanted to stay with them and be a Pole, so used had I grown to this way of life. But my cousin had told the Jews²¹ about me and they took me away from the Wajdziks. While on

19. "Chaja" or "Chaya," the Hebrew form of "Eva," is used here to designate a female Jew.

20. Menahem Mendel Bejilis (also transliterated as Beilis or Beiliss) was a Ukrainian Jew tried for ritual murder in a notorious trial in Kiev in 1913. The proceedings sparked international criticism of antisemitic sentiment and practice in Imperial Russia. Szulberg suggests that her foster family repeatedly confronted her with Bejilis's "crimes," although Bejilis was ultimately acquitted of murder charges.

21. That is, to officials of the Jewish Committee.

the way I ran away from them, ran seven kilometers [almost 4.5 miles] on foot, and went back to my host family. The police came to get me, but they had to drag me by my hands and feet because I always broke free. Then the Jews put me in an orphanage and now I am really doing well.

Protocol taken by Ida Gliksztejn [signature]

Bytom, September 3, 1947

Witness: Gizela Szulberg

WHERE IS HOME?

At the end of World War II in Europe, the Allied powers discovered that some 7 to 9 million persons remained displaced by the conflict. This number included 2 to 3 million former camp inmates—Jews and non-Jews—who had survived concentration and forced labor camps, killing centers, and death marches from the east into the German interior in the last months of the war.²² Many thousands of former prisoners, exhausted and ill from years of malnourishment and mistreatment, perished in the weeks directly following their liberation. Those who survived joined the hundreds of thousands seeking repatriation through Allied efforts or migration to European ports in the hopes of settling abroad. By the end of 1945, more than 6 million individuals had returned to their countries of origin or succeeded in immigrating to non-European countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia or in a trickle to British-controlled Palestine. Remaining behind, mainly on German and Austrian soil, were some 2 million refugees and displaced persons, among them 250,000 Jews.

Three kinds of Jewish DPs lived in the Allied zones of occupation by early 1946. The first included those who had remained in western Europe, hoping for a British settlement to the “Palestine Question” so that they might legally emigrate to today’s Israel. The second category included those who had refused to return to their homelands directly after the war, either because they chose not to reside in an eastern Europe haunted by memories of the Holocaust or because they feared a resurgence of antisemitism in these regions. Finally, a third set of Jewish refugees had remained in, or returned to, their homelands in the early postwar period but now migrated west to the safety of the Allied zones in Germany and Austria. In this so-called *Beriha* (flight, migration, or exodus), tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors fled eastern Europe in order to evade economic ruin or renewed anti-Jewish persecution from local populations.

22. Lavsky, “The Role of Children,” 103.

Approximately three hundred thousand Jewish survivors resided in German and Austrian territory between late 1945 and 1950.²³

To deal with the massive postwar refugee crisis, a series of DP camps had been established in Allied zones throughout Germany and Austria and in occupied areas of Italy.²⁴ Originally these camps were run by Allied authorities within their zones of occupation. Initial conditions at such facilities were dismal. Rations were meager, and residents lived under imposed curfews in fenced enclosures, often within the same confines as Nazi perpetrators and collaborators. As relations between Jewish DPs and Allied officials became strained, the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)**, established in 1943 to aid victims of war and to facilitate the repatriation of refugees, undertook the management of the DP camps, aided by voluntary relief agencies and Jewish organizations. Jewish DPs, known in Hebrew as the *Sh'erit ha Pletah* (Surviving Remnant), would prove long-term charges of the UNRRA camps, whose last displaced persons facility, Föhrenwald, near Munich, closed in 1957.²⁵

By the summer of 1945, most Jewish DP camps had begun to exercise internal autonomy within their complexes, fostering the creation of a Jewish society within the camp structure. Once Jewish displaced persons had won the right to separate from the general DP population, each camp elected a central committee, which managed the facility's internal administration and promoted cultural and religious activities. Camp committees also established an elaborate school system, at least within the American and British zones, which provided youngsters and adolescents with nursery schools, elementary education, religious schools and yeshivas, high schools, teacher-training academies, and vocational-training facilities organized by the ORT. As the Jewish Agency for Palestine²⁶ sponsored many school systems, education in the DP camps had a

23. Lavsky, "The Role of Children," 104.

24. Concerning the topic of displaced persons camps following World War II, see Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, trans. John Broadwin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001); Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.)

25. Joachim Schröder, "Politische und kulturelle Geschichte der jüdischen Displaced Persons anhand des von den USA verwalteten Lagers Föhrenwald in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone" (master's thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, 1990).

26. The Jewish Agency for Palestine was established by the World Zionist Organization in 1922. Its offices in Jerusalem, London, and Geneva facilitated emigration to Palestine and provided representation to those Jews already in the British Mandate of Palestine until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

decidedly Zionist orientation; course work and curricula inculcated in young students the ambition to make *Aliyah* and provided extensive language training and instruction in those disciplines useful for immigration to Palestine. Despite the tremendous obstacles they faced, teachers and administrators worked to aid in the emotional, physical, and intellectual rehabilitation of child survivors, many of whom had had little or no formal instruction during the war years.

DOCUMENT 10-9. An exercise class for preschoolers in the Bergen-Belsen DP Camp, Germany, 1947, USHMMPA WS# 11811, courtesy of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.



Regina Laks (later Regina Gelb) was a bright young student at the Hebrew Public School sponsored by UNRRA at the Schlachtensee Displaced Persons Camp in Berlin. Regina, often called Renia, was born in Wierzbnik, Poland, on December 16, 1929, the youngest daughter of Isaac and Pola Laks. The Laks were a secular Jewish family but maintained a kosher household at the behest of Pola Laks, an activist in local Zionist organizations. Like her elder sisters, Hania and Rozalia Krysia (later Chris), Regina attended Polish public school, as well as Hebrew school in the afternoon. The girls were excellent pupils, and when, following the German occupation, Jewish students were prohibited from attending school, Pola Laks organized an ad hoc classroom in her own home. Eager to expand their knowledge and education, Regina and her friends organized an

informal lending library, pooling the reading resources of many local Jewish families.²⁷

On October 27, 1942, German authorities rounded up Jews in the Wierzbnik-Starachowice region. Pola Laks, who had assisted an elderly woman as they approached the assembly point, was deported directly to the **Treblinka** extermination camp. Regina, her father, and her sisters survived for the next two years in a series of labor camps, sustained by a gentile Polish family whom the Lakses had entrusted with their possessions and who, at great risk, smuggled money to the family to purchase food on the camps' black markets. In the early autumn of 1944, the girls and their father were deported to Auschwitz, where Isaac Laks perished in October. Regina and her sisters did not face a selection on the ramp at Birkenau but were processed and confined to the quarantine camp. In October or November 1944, an acquaintance among the prisoner staff arranged for the girls to work with a special labor detail in the *Effektenkammer*, a separate warehouse that held the confiscated effects of non-Jewish prisoners. In this indoor environment, the Laks sisters survived the cold autumn and winter months before the liquidation of the Auschwitz camp in January 1945. Preparing for a forced march to the Gleiwitz concentration camp, Hania, Rozalia, and Regina helped themselves to the piles of warm clothing and shoes in the warehouse, an act of foresight that may have saved their lives. Escaping from a death march near Retzow, an auxiliary camp of the **Ravensbrück** concentration camp near Mecklenburg, Germany, Regina and her sisters spent the last days of the war at an abandoned German estate.

At war's end the Laks sisters took a train to Poland, where they were reunited with members of their father's family in Łódź. Yet, as they attempted to return to their native village of Wierzbnik, they narrowly evaded an attack by angry Poles who wished to keep them from regaining their family's property. In the spring of 1946, Regina traveled with her sister Rozalia—who had recently wed Jewish resistance fighter Shmuel Milek (Miles) Lerman²⁸—to Berlin in

27. Information concerning the Laks sisters stems from "Interview with Regina Gelb," February 20, 2001, and "Interview with Rosalie (Chris) Lerman," January 13, 1999, both of the Holocaust Museum Oral History Project, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

28. Miles Lerman (1920–2008) was a founding member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Born in Tomaszów Lubelski, Poland, Lerman grew up with Zionist convictions and hoped to emigrate to Palestine. With the German invasion of Poland, he was arrested and sent to the Viniki forced labor camp. Lerman escaped and spent the rest of the war years as a Jewish partisan. Following his emigration to the United States, Lerman became a successful businessman, active in the real estate, gasoline, and heating trades. In 1979, U.S. President Jimmy Carter named him to the advisory board of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Lerman served as chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's governing board from the time of its opening in 1993 until his retirement from the museum in 2000.

order to escape rising antisemitic violence in Poland. There they settled in the Schlachtensee DP Camp, where Regina proved an excellent student at the Hebrew public high school sponsored by UNRRA. In the winter of 1947, the teenager joined the Lermans in immigrating to the United States.

DOCUMENT 10-10. Report card of Regina Laks from the Herzl Hebrew Public School, Schlachtensee DP Camp, Berlin, January 18, 1947, USHMMPA WS# 96426, courtesy of Regina Laks Gelb.

HEBREW PUBLIC SCHOOL "HERZL" UNRRA CAMP „DÜPPEL CENTER“ BERLIN SCHLACHTENSEE			
CERTIFICATE			
Pupil	Laks Regina		
born	December 16 th 1928		
city	Starachoni		
country	-		
attended	the 5 th class		
from	September 18, 1946 to January 15 th 1947		
and graded as follow:			
Behavior	Excellent	Mathematics	Excellent
Bible	Excellent	Algebra	Excellent
Hebrew Language	Excellent	Geometry	Excellent
Hebrew Literature	Excellent	Physics	Excellent
English Language	Excellent	Botanics	Excellent
Hebrew History	Excellent	Drawing	Excellent
Palestine Geography	Excellent	Music	Excellent
Geography	Excellent	Physical Training	Excellent
Decision of pedagogical body			
Day	January 18 th	Year	1947
Class Teacher	<i>R. Anaya</i>		
			School Director

Hebrew Public School

"Herzel"

UNRRA Camp "Düppel Center"

Berlin Schlachtensee

Certificate

Pupil: Regina Laks Born: December 16, 1929

City: Starachowice Country: [Poland]

Attended the Fifth class from September 18, 1946 to January 18, 1947

And graded as follows

Behavior:	Excellent	Mathematics:	Excellent
Bible:	Excellent	Algebra:	Excellent
Hebrew Language:	Excellent	Geometry:	Excellent
Hebrew Literature	Excellent	Physics:	Excellent
English Language:	Excellent	Botanics:	Excellent
Hebrew History:	Excellent	Drawing:	Excellent
Palestine Geography:	Excellent	Music:	Excellent
Geography:	Excellent	Physical Training:	Excellent

Decision of the pedagogical body

Day: January 18th Year: 1947

Class teacher [signature] School director

Both Jewish and non-Jewish survivors faced the daunting challenge of rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of the Holocaust. After liberation, Jewish displaced persons often feared returning to their homes in view of the antisemitism that persisted in many regions of Europe. Particularly in postwar Poland, many Jewish refugees encountered violence as they attempted to return to their old residences and reclaim their former possessions.²⁹ For others, the inability to locate or discover the fate of family members or loved ones made the journey home a distressing prospect. Children who had lost or become separated from their parents in the course of the war faced a number of difficult dilemmas. Should they attempt to make the arduous journey back to their place of origin, or should they remain in an orphanage or DP camp that could provide them with food and shelter? How was such a journey possible without resources or provisions? Would missing parents, siblings, or relatives be waiting for them on their return? Who would care for them if their relatives were dead? Could one

29. In early July 1946, a pogrom initiated by Polish rioters in Kielce claimed the lives of forty-two Jewish Poles and a Polish gentile who attempted to help wounded victims to safety. See Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, "Patterns of Return: Survivors' Postwar Journeys to Poland," *Occasional Paper of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007).

build a new life and a new future beside one's old roots, in a place where one had perhaps been forgotten or forsaken by one's neighbors?

In the late spring of 1945, fifteen-year-old **Michal Kraus** returned to his native Czechoslovakia. Michal (later Michael) had been raised in the Bohemian town of Nachod, where his father, Karl Kraus, was a physician. In December 1942, the Krauses, like many Czech Jews, were deported to Theresienstadt. The following year the small family arrived on a transport to Auschwitz II–Birkenau. There the Krauses joined other deportees of the Terezin ghetto in the so-called **Theresienstadt family camp** in Birkenau.³⁰ When this camp was liquidated in July 1944, an emaciated Karl Kraus perished in the gas chambers, while camp physician Dr. **Josef Mengele** selected young Michal and eighty-eight other young boys from the family camp to serve as *Läufer* (runners), couriers who carried information and goods among guards and officials within the Birkenau camp. In the early months of 1945, the fourteen-year-old endured a series of forced marches from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz and then to several camps and subcamps of the **Mauthausen** concentration camp system. He was severely ill with typhus when liberated by American forces at Gunskirchen Lager on May 5, 1945.

After recovering in an American military hospital, Michal and several other young Czech friends decided to make their way back to Prague. The journey to Czechoslovakia was arduous; without sufficient funds, the boys made their way along the Danube by boat and train, then walked nearly 100 kilometers (62 miles) to reach Bratislava (in today's Slovakia) when local rail lines fell into disrepair. The group reached Prague on June 28, 1945. There Michal Kraus remained briefly with a family friend, Vera Loewenbach. Loewenbach had been with Lotte Kraus on a transport from Auschwitz, and it was she who told the young boy of his mother's death in Stutthof in January 1945.

Michal lodged with a number of family friends and acquaintances in his hometown of Nachod, where he returned to school. At this time he began a retrospective "diary" of his Holocaust experiences, which he finished in 1947 and dedicated to his parents. In the summer of 1948, Michal's guardian arranged for him to join an **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee** orphans' transport to Canada. In 1951, the youth emigrated to the United States, where he enrolled in Columbia University's School of Architecture. After positions with architectural firms in London and Geneva, he settled with his new wife, Ilana Eppenstein, in the Boston area. Of Michael Kraus's extended family, only one aunt and one cousin survived the Holocaust.

30. For a broader discussion of the Krauses and the Theresienstadt family camp, see chapter 5.

DOCUMENT 10-11. Memoir/Diary of Michal (Michael) Kraus, handwritten with illustrations, 1945–1947, 2, 23–28, USHMM, Acc. 2006.51, Michael Kraus Collection (translated from the Czech).

Thousands of people returned to their homes. You see the repatriated everywhere. Everyone hurries home. What kind of upheaval were you able to create, Hitler! And those are just the few who are left: those who endured, and they will not forget! [. . .]

We were all at the end of our strength. It was evening as we walked along the Bratislava streets. People turned around to stare at us. We looked terrible. They led us to a new building that was supposed to have been a department store; but now many refugees are sleeping there on the floor. On the third story, we settled down on the floor of a small room. Last night we were able to get a piece of bread and some coffee; and a man on the street gave us about 20 KC [Czechoslovak crowns].

We went to sleep early and fell asleep immediately after the exhausting trip. We were still not completely recuperated, and walking the whole distance was terribly taxing. We spent several days in Bratislava. At the Jewish Community office, we received 400 KC after a considerable wait, which we used to purchase food in a soup kitchen. The food was not anything special, but better than that usually given to refugees. We even went to the movies there for the first time: *Ivan the Terrible*.

Daily we waited in the repatriation offices for our turn to come. They issued us identity cards. We went to the public baths to bathe, and the next day set off for Prague. A lady gave us a loaf of bread. We hopped on a streetcar, went along to the railroad station, and without tickets got on the express train.

Our group dispersed. Herz and Goldberger got out in Brno. Here the train emptied out a bit, so that we were able to sit down instead of standing in the corridor. A man joined us in our compartment; he gave us a sweet pastry, which for us was an incredible delight. In Pardubice Pavel Werner got out; and at two in the morning only three of us stood at the Wilson Railway Station³¹: Fink, Skoba and I.

First we looked for the repatriation office. It was closed, it opened at eight a.m. So we went to the Masaryk Railway Station, and I slept under a desk.

31. From 1945 until 1953, this was the name of the central railway station in Prague.

In the morning Harry left us and we went to the repatriation office, across from the Representative House in the Hybernska. There we met Mr. Berger, an acquaintance from Terezin. They sent us to some sort of shelter on Peter Square. [. . .] At Peter Square I asked about my relatives, but nobody knew anything. I still hoped that Mother was alive, but I began to have my doubts. It was a terrible uncertainty.

They sent us to the Milicova³² house where they received us cordially and told us that we had to get examined for lice and only then could we go to the convalescent center. [. . .] They found that I had some scabs, so that I had to go to the disinfection station, and only late at night they came to get us again. In the morning I went to the Milicova again and then immediately went to the convalescent center by car with Director Pitter.

The car in which we were traveling stopped in Olesovice. [. . .] We got out there and walked through the beautiful countryside to Kamenice. It was June 19. Yesterday was my birthday. There in Prague, in the disinfection station, it was my fifteenth birthday. But now I feel good. I go with Skoba and a lady teacher to a pretty castle in a large garden. There for the first time I ate again at a table with knife and fork, slept in a bed, went on outings and enjoyed my freedom.

I began to correspond. With the Horaceks, the Bazelovs. Then Vera [Loewenbach] told me the sad news of my mother's fate. One day we drove to Pardubice and then to Skalice. Vera said that she will keep me there for the time being.

32. This refers to a street in central Prague.

DOCUMENT 10-12. "Where are our parents, you murderers?" a young survivor of Buchenwald writes on the side of the train car that will take him and other "Buchenwald Boys" from Germany to an orphanage in France, June 1945, USHMMPA WS# 44251, courtesy of Willy Fogel.



While the teenage Michal Kraus was able to travel with his comrades back to his Czech homeland in the hopes of finding his mother, many young Holocaust survivors had no home to which they could return. Many had no surviving family. Others were too young to travel on their own or to make an informed choice about where to go. What to do with youngsters such as these?

This dilemma confronted U.S. authorities shortly after the liberation of Buchenwald in April 1945. American soldiers of the U.S. Ninth Armored Infantry Battalion, arriving at the concentration camp complex on April 11, were astonished to discover among the twenty thousand starving and emaciated prisoners over one thousand children, most of them Jewish youngsters from Poland, Romania, and Hungary. The bewildered U.S. commander immediately cabled officials of the **Children's Aid Society (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants, or OSE)**, the French Jewish humanitarian organization with offices in Geneva: "Have found a thousand Jewish children in Buchenwald," the commander wrote. "Take immediate measures to evacuate them."³³

33. Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Post-War Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 2000), 21.

DOCUMENT 10-13. Page of convoy list of Buchenwald's orphaned children taken from Germany to Écouis, France, June 8, 1945, in Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Post-War Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 2000), 180.

- 2 - ORPHAN CHILDREN FROM BUCHENWALD NOW IN PARIS ENFANTS VENUS D'ALLE AGNE - CONVOI DU 8 JUIN 1945 A ECOUIS (Eure)					
Paris List N° II62 .					
49	ENGLANDER	Matton	II/II/28.	Szatmar	Hongr.
50	ERNST	Miklos	19/5/29	Typest	"
51	FACHLER	Joseph	6/2/29	Bodzetyr	Pol.
52	FARKAS	Chaim	3/8/28	Borsa	Roum.
53	FARKAS	Erwin	5/6/31	Oradéa	"
54	FARKAS	Mendel	10/1/28	Karynesavj	"
55	FANKOWTZ	Martin	8/5/29		"
56	FEIG	Lamar	5/5/29	Visent	"
57	FEIN	Idel	1/1/30	Kowno	Lith.
58	FELD	Chrsz	18/1/28	Krakow	Pol.
59	FELDBERG	Aron	18/4/28	Bedzin	"
60	FELZERBERG	Abraham	15/1/28	Bacau	Hongr.
61	FINCKERSTEIN-SALEK		9/7/31	Movikarczyn	Pol.
62	FINKERLSTAQN-Chaim		13/8/29	Strserioszyce	"
63	"	Jalcob	1/2/32	"	"
64	FISCHMAN	Zoltan	4/6/28	Kaletele	Roum.
65	"	Hersch	1/5/28	Sighet	"
66	FISCHMAN	Mendel	22/8/29	Opatiew	Pol.
67	FLUGELANN	Abraham	II/7/23	Ronadejos	Roum.
68	FOOM	Perez	23/8/28		"
69	FOGEL	Izsak	4/4/29	Satmar	"
70	FOGEL	Jeno	8/5/28	Dziatoszucc	Pol.
71	FOGEL	Wolf	15/8/28	Pjotskow	"
72	FREILICH	Moritz	25/10/28	Chorzab	"
73	FREIMAN	Mozeck	29/9/28		
74	FRENKEL	Samuel	12/3/27		Tchê.
75	FRIEDMAN	Ermann	5/5/29	Rachow	
76	FRIEDMAN	Leb	28/5/29	Viseul de Sus	Roum.
77	FROM	Natan	17/7/27	Sosnowiec	Pol.
78	FROMAN	Zysman	8/11/29	Bedzin	"
79	FRUCHTER	Zalel	24/4/29	Féliste	Roum.
80	FRUCHTER	Major	6/10/29	Creesunest	"
81	FRYDMAN	Léon	30/12/30	Lodz	Pol.
82	FUCHS	Kor	20/1/28	Oradéa	Roum.
83	FULOP	Marton	2/2/29	Ilenda	"
84	FULOP	Simon	18/9/28		"
85	FUSYNSKI	Abram	27/9/29		Pol.
86	FULOP	Abraham	7/4/28	Surduc	Roum.
87	GANC	Chaim	26/1/28	Maramosos	"
88	GERMUTH	Sandor	24/8/29	Viseul de Sus	"
89	GERSON	Gerszon	1/1/29	Kasimiers	Pol.
90	GERTRUCZ	Mozezs	15/4/28		"
91	GLIXSMAN	Mohiek	15/10/29	Pabianice	"
92	GLUCK	Jakob	15/3/30	Viseul de Sus	Roum.
93	GLUCK	Miklos	2/5/23	Tarkal	Hongr.
94	GOLDINGER	Rafael	25/6/29	Lopusno	Tohé.
95	GOLDBERG	Berek	8/II/34	Lodz	Pol.
96	GOLDBERG	Abram	15/2/28	Zdunska-Wola	"
97	GOLDBLUM	Idel	9/8/29	Lodz	"
98	GOLBERGER	Lipot	4/10/29	Barochovo	Tohé.

Two American army chaplains, Rabbis Herschel Schacter and Robert Marcus, coordinated the evacuation of the children with OSE representatives. Most of the children wanted to go to Palestine, but the British Mandate there had placed strict limitations on Jewish immigration. In the end, it was arranged that English organizations would take in 250 boys, while OSE homes and orphanages in France and Switzerland would accommodate the remaining children. On June 2, 1945, 426 boys boarded a train bound for the French town of Écouis (Eure) in Normandy. Incongruously, many of the youngsters wore **Hitler Youth** uniforms, the only age-appropriate clothing that American officials could find; thus, the appearance of the boys in their compartment windows initiated a full-blown riot among local observers when the train crossed the French frontier at Metz. When the boys reached Écouis, their instructors realized that their new pupils faced a formidable array of obstacles. Most of the children, both young and old, had experienced Auschwitz and the horrors of the death marches, as well as the last terrible months of the war in Buchenwald. Starved and brutalized, the boys now grappled with the physical and emotional trauma of their recent past, as well as the very present grief for their murdered loved ones. Besides the psychological devastation, there were intellectual hurdles as well. Many of these young charges had not undertaken formal schooling since the beginning of the war; all had missed several years of instruction and lagged behind their age cohort in terms of academic development. Teachers and administrators understood that the boys' rehabilitation would pose difficult challenges, but they were quite unprepared for what they found as the boys moved into Écouis. The youngsters were sullen and intractable. Years spent in the concentration camp universe had left them distinctly distrustful of adults and utterly free of many moral scruples. Polite and correct comportment was conducive to the classroom setting, but such behavior might mean certain death in a place like Auschwitz. Committed instructors, among them twenty-two-year-old social worker Judith Feist, saw that they had their work cut out for them. Feist was a German Jewish refugee working in the Geneva OSE offices when she heard of the now-famous Buchenwald Boys and decided to visit some of the youngsters at the OSE home of Ambloy.³⁴ Deeply moved by what she found, Feist agreed to take over directorship of the facility and remained until 1947, when the last boy was settled elsewhere. In 1984, Feist, by then Judith

34. In August 1945, the Écouis home was closed down and the children redistributed among more suitable facilities, such as Ambloy, Le Vesinet, and Taverny; 173 of the youngsters with relatives in Palestine were permitted to immigrate to the mandate by British officials and departed Marseilles for Palestine aboard the RMS *Mataroa* in July 1945.

Hemmendinger,³⁵ recalled the first challenging months with “her children of Buchenwald.”

DOCUMENT 10-14. Judith Feist Hemmendinger remembers the “Buchenwald Boys,” 1984, in Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Post-War Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 2000, 27–31).

When the special French train arrived at Buchenwald on June 2, 1945, children stormed it for fear that it would leave without them. Dr. Revel, who accompanied the children, described that “dressed in their striped pyjamas or in uniforms of the Hitler Youth (the only clothes available), they looked like young savages.” Many had suffered a total loss of identity. They did not remember their names, having been addressed only by their numbers or nicknames.

Each time the train stopped, the boys jumped out to pillage the countryside, but once in France, the vandalism stopped. A new problem presented itself when the French spotted the German uniforms and attacked the train. The child survivors, now perceived as the enemy, were in such great danger that the train had to be diverted to a sidetrack overnight at the Metz railroad station. [. . .]

Écouis was an abandoned sanatorium placed at the disposal of the OSE by the French government. The OSE had prepared 500 beds for little children, unaware that nearly 400 were aged twelve to twenty-one and only thirty were between eight and twelve years old. They looked like bandits, suspicious and mute. Their heads were shorn; all dressed the same, with faces still swollen from hunger and not a smile to be seen. Their eyes bespoke sadness and suspicion. They were apathetic towards the outside world. They likened the supervisors to guards and were terror stricken at the sight of doctors who reminded them of Mengele, the man who, upon their arrival in Auschwitz, had sent the weak ones to gas chambers, the able-bodied to slave labour.

It was clear that Écouis would not function in the manner of more traditional institutions. The youngsters felt entitled to everything that they

35. Judith Feist Hemmendinger was born in 1923 in Bad Homburg, Germany. In the late 1920s, her family moved to France; in 1943, her father, Phillip Feist, was deported and murdered in Auschwitz. During World War II, Feist worked extensively for Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants. In 1948 she married Claude Hemmendinger and emigrated to Israel.

had been deprived of for so many years. The food they had received from American soldiers was of better quality than what postwar France could offer during the first year. So they bartered in the neighboring farms for extra food by trading blankets, sheets, and dishes and pots from the home. One of them stole puppies that he sold in Paris.

Écouis was a collection of houses surrounding a common yard where all the youngsters were gathered on various occasions. It was at Écouis [that] they vented their anger, their rage. Their rebelliousness led to factions splitting off into groups, by age, by degree of [religious] observance, and by nationality. The older boys in their late teens and even early twenties were sent to Paris, to a big home on Rue Rollin and to Fontenay-aux-Roses, another place on the outskirts of Paris. They were about ten to fifteen percent of the total group.

Unfortunately, the architecture of Écouis reminded the children of the camps. In addition the Director spoke only French and German and could communicate, barely, only with the [Romanians] who knew a little French. All the other boys would not respond when addressed in German. When pieces of bread were handed out, this too reminded them of the camps and they requested that bread be put on the table so that they could help themselves. At the end of each meal the leftovers disappeared into their rooms since one could never know when the next meal would be served.

For these young people, all adults were potential enemies who were not to be trusted. One day they were served Camembert cheese for dessert. The strong smell convinced them that it was poison. They threw the cheese at the adults who were supervising dinner. [. . .]

There were many visitors who came to Écouis to talk with the young survivors of Buchenwald. There were journalists and rabbis and numerous officials who came to meet with these earliest arrivals from Germany. As a matter of fact, visitors did³⁶ want to hear [their] experiences but the boys refused to speak of them. The children listened silently to the beautiful and affectionate words, noted that it was well meant, but did not react for they were totally disillusioned about human nature.

One day Chaplain Marcus of the American army came to Écouis. He had met the boys before in Buchenwald. They sat in a circle around him on the lawn. The Chaplain stood in front of them unable to utter a word, overcome by his emotions, tears streamed down his cheeks. It had

36. Emphasis is in the original.

been a long time since the children had seen an adult cry. Something in them thawed and they too began to cry. One of them described later, “The Chaplain returned to us our souls. He reawakened the feeling we had buried within us.”

THE PROCESS OF REMEMBERING

When Judith Feist Hemmendinger decided to publish her compelling account of her years with the Buchenwald Boys in 1984, she received a letter from a former student, in 1945 a fifteen-year-old youngster from Romania.

I read your book and I remember. I see us back in 1945. Écouis, Ambloy, Taverny. The dumbfounded instructors, the disoriented children. [. . .] Did you know, Judith, that we pitied you? We felt sorry for you. I hope you are not angry that I speak so openly? You thought you could educate us, and yet the younger of us knew more than the oldest among you, about what existed in the world, of the futility of life, the brutal triumph of death. We were not impressed with your age, or your authority. We observed you with amusement and mistrust. We felt ourselves stronger than you. How did you succeed to tame us, Judith? [. . .] Reasonably, Judith, we were doomed to live cloistered lives on the other side of the wall. And yet we succeeded in a short time to find ourselves on the same side. To whom can we attribute the miracle? How can one explain it? To our belief? To yours?³⁷

The author of this letter, soon to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, was Elie Wiesel. By then an internationally recognized writer and chairman of the U.S. Presidential Commission on the Holocaust,³⁸ Wiesel had certainly fulfilled the promise of integrity and intellectual achievement that Hemmendinger had seen in that band of sullen, mistrustful boys from Buchenwald in 1945. Wiesel was born on September 30, 1928, in Sighet, Transylvania, then part of the Kingdom of Romania. His father, Shlomo, an Orthodox Jew of Hungarian descent, was a shopkeeper who owned a grocery store in Sighet and figured as a respected and influential man in his community. His mother, Sarah (née Feig), was the daughter of a prominent Hassidic family from the next village. Wiesel often

37. Elie Wiesel, quoted in Hemmendinger and Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald*, 10–11.

38. Later, this became the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, the founding and governing body of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

claimed that within his household circle, his father had represented reason and his mother belief and faith. Shlomo Wiesel had always encouraged young Elie to improve his intellect, urging him to study literature, history, and modern Hebrew. It was Sarah who convinced her young son to read the Torah and other religious works.³⁹

Romania ceded northern and eastern Transylvania to Hungary in 1940, and as Hungarian authorities instituted an array of antisemitic legislation, Transylvanian Jews like the Wiesels became subject to these measures. In April 1944, thirteen thousand Jews from Sighet and the surrounding rural communities were ghettoized. In the following month the Hungarian authorities, in coordination with the German **Security Police**, began systematically to deport Hungarian Jews. Between May 16 and 22, 1944, the Wiesels and their fellow residents of the Sighet ghetto were dispatched to Auschwitz. In the chaos of selection at Birkenau, Wiesel's elder sisters were separated from the family and survived the war. Sarah Wiesel and her youngest daughter, Tzipora, perished in the gas chamber immediately upon arrival at the camp. Spared on the ramp, Elie and his father found themselves attached to a labor detail in Buna (Auschwitz III–Monowitz). Father and son endured appalling conditions there and at three subsequent forced labor camps, and survived the “death march” that brought them to Buchenwald. There, in the last weeks of the war, Shlomo Wiesel died of dysentery, starvation, and exhaustion. On April 11, 1945, Elie Wiesel, just fifteen years old, witnessed the liberation of Buchenwald by American forces.

Following World War II, Wiesel, as we have seen, traveled with other young former prisoners of Buchenwald to France, where he convalesced and received formal educational instruction at OSE children's homes at Écouis, Ambloy, and Taverny. At this time, he learned that his sisters Hilda and Beatrice had survived the war and was reunited with them. Wiesel remained in France after leaving the OSE home and began studies at the Sorbonne in literature and philosophy. Although he supported himself by working as a journalist for French and Israeli newspapers, Wiesel initially refused to write or speak about his Holocaust experiences. In 1954, however, he broke his self-imposed silence, penning an 862-page manuscript that he called *Un di Velt Hot Geshvign (And the World Remained Silent)*. The manuscript, published in Yiddish in Argentina, failed to attract literary interest, and Wiesel shelved the project until an interview he hoped to carry out for a Tel Aviv daily with French prime minister Pierre

39. See Ellen S. Fine, *The Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982).

Mendes-France brought the young man into contact with French novelist and Nobel laureate François Mauriac. Mauriac persuaded Wiesel to translate and shorten his text. The result was a spare, 109-page volume published in 1958 in French and retitled *La Nuit*, or in English, *Night* (1960). With Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* and Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man*,⁴⁰ *Night* remains one of the seminal memoirs in Holocaust literature.⁴¹

The following selection, a pivotal scene in Wiesel's original Yiddish manuscript as well as in *Night*,⁴² differs strikingly from most sources presented in this volume. With few exceptions, this edition has attempted to reconstruct the experiences of children during the Holocaust through sources produced at the time or through oral testimony or trial depositions provided in the early postwar years. The last section of this chapter, however, examines how adult survivors have framed their memories of childhood during the Holocaust. It is not uncommon for a survivor's in situ accounts or recollections articulated in the immediate aftermath of the Shoah to differ appreciably from testimonies given decades later, if not in detail, then in emphasis and perspective. This is particularly true of the testimonies of child survivors, for whom the passage into adulthood may fundamentally alter perceptions of persons and events. The passing of time obscures certain aspects of the past, while others stand out in sharp relief. Intellectual understanding and emotional maturity sharpen the lens and bring once inexplicable incidents into clearer focus. The middle-aged man connects more cogently the kaleidoscope of events that facilitated his survival. A child may have felt only anger and bitterness toward parents who "abandoned" her to utter strangers during the war years; now grown with children of her own, the adult survivor may at last comprehend the deed that saved her life and the tremendous personal sacrifice made by her parents in such an undertaking. For Wiesel, writing a decade after his arrival at Auschwitz, the intervening years had accentuated the caesura between past and future, which had emerged in that first terrible night in the camp: that break which separated the author from his childhood and his faith.

40. The American title of this work by Primo Levi is *Survival in Auschwitz*.

41. Scholars have had difficulty classifying Elie Wiesel's masterpiece specifically as a memoir; some call it an autobiographical novel and others as a semifictional memoir. See Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Interpretations: Elie Wiesel's Night* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001). Wiesel himself disputes that his work has any aspects of a novel, calling it instead his "deposition"; see Elie Wiesel, *All Rivers Run to the Sea* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996).

42. Compare Document 10-15 with the depiction of this scene in Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 31–32.

DOCUMENT 10-15. Elie Wiesel, *Un di Velt hot Geshvign*, trans. Vera Szabó (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1956), 66–71 (translated from the Yiddish).

At that point we did not yet know which was the good direction—left or right; which way led to work, and which to the crematorium. Nevertheless, I felt lucky—I was going with my father.

A new inmate came up to us:

“Satisfied?”

“Yes,” someone replied.

“Idiots,” he said, “you’re going straight to the chimney.”

They are taking us to the chimney. . . .

Could this be true? Or is he just trying to scare us? Is he just a sadist, who takes pleasure in seeing others’ fear? No, it looks like he was telling the truth. Sixty meters [almost 200 feet] from us, flames are leaping up from a pit, gigantic flames. They are burning something there. What can it be? A truck drives up to the pit and drops its load automatically. Suddenly, I catch a glimpse of what it was delivering and pouring into the pit—little children! Infants! Newborn babies! Yes, I saw it with my own eyes. . . . I saw that they threw children into the flames alive!

(Is it surprising, dear Reader, that I have not been able to sleep ever since? Is it surprising, that I stopped believing in the holiness of fire? And in the *shkhine*⁴³ that is supposed to be present when babies are born?)

The blood froze in my veins. Suddenly, an icy wind blew through my entire body. So it’s true, we are really going to the chimney. To the burning pit. There must be another pit farther down, a bigger one, for adults. For us. For me.

I pinch my cheek instinctively. Am I still alive? Am I awake? Or is this just a dream of a hypersensitive child? Maybe it’s a nightmare? Or a feverish vision? The fruit of my sick fantasy?

I pinched my cheek, I felt the pain, but I still couldn’t believe that this was really happening. One thought kept hammering away at my brain: how is it possible that they are burning people, and the world remains silent? How is it possible that they are throwing children into burning pits alive, just like coal; and the civilized world, our educated, progressive world is not voicing its fury and not protesting. “Impossible . . . impossible,” I murmured to myself. The world would not remain silent. People would say something. They would revolt, or at least react somehow. After all, we are not living in the Middle Ages! We are more advanced; this is

43. That is, “Divine Presence.”

the twentieth century! Once upon a time there was wanton disregard for human life [“amol iz take dem mentshns lebn hefker geven”], but today? No, none of this is true; it can’t be true. It was a dream. Just a dream. I am dreaming. A nightmare . . . I will wake up soon, with a pounding heart, and I will see again the home where I grew up, the bookshelf. . . .

My father’s voice ripped me out of the quarrel that was going on in my head:

“It’s a pity . . . a pity that you didn’t go with your mother. . . . I saw several boys your age going with their mothers . . .”

His voice was terribly sad. I realized that he did not want to see what they were going to do to me. He did not want to see how they burned his only son alive. . . .

You have to know: at that point we did not yet know about the perfection of the German death factory, about the elegant gas chambers. We thought that they simply burned people alive. . . . And we were even wondering—how come we can’t hear the agonizing moans of the dying, their painful outcries.

A cold sweat ran down my forehead. Death by fire! The most horrible way to die. No, I don’t want to die like this. No way!

But why cause pain to my father? I tell him that I don’t believe they would burn people in our modern world. Humanity would never let this happen. . . .

“Humanity?” answered my father. “Humanity is not concerned with us. They wouldn’t move a finger for us. Our age is the age of possibilities, endless possibilities. . . . Today anything is possible. Anything is permitted, even these chimneys.”

His voice was choking on the tears he held back.

“Father,” I said, “if that is so, I will commit suicide. I am going to run to the electric wire. Let them shoot me. And if they won’t, I will be electrocuted. I would rather die quickly than after a long agony . . . after fighting with the flames for hours. If I have to die, Father, I would rather die like a human being, not a piece of wood.”

He did not answer. He was weeping. My father’s entire body, his whole self, was shaking convulsively. Everyone was weeping.

Someone began to say kaddish.⁴⁴ Another person said the *vide*.⁴⁵ I do not know if it has ever happened before, in the long history of the Jewish people’s sufferings, that Jews would say kaddish for themselves.

44. This is a prayer for the dead.

45. This prayer confessing sins is said on Yom Kippur and before dying.

"*Yisgadal . . . veiyiskadash shmei rabo.* . . ."⁴⁶ I hear my father whisper it too.

This was the first time that I revolted against God, against the One whose name is blessed.

Why should I sanctify His name? Does He deserve it? How did He earn our blessings? If humanity is silent, I won't sanctify its name. But the Lord of the Universe, the great, mighty and awesome God—He was silent too. So why should I thank Him? Why should I sanctify His name? Why praise Him?

Meanwhile, we continue walking and come closer to the pit, the flames. An infernal heat was rising from it. [. . .] In the depths of my heart, I bid farewell to my father and to the whole world. Words are forming themselves in my mind involuntarily, without crossing the threshold of my lips: *Yisgadal veiyiskadash shmei rabo*. And I still thought of Him, of God. I was still too close to my past, to my illusions back then. My heart is about to burst from too much excitement. That's it! Soon . . . a rendezvous with the Angel of Death. . . .

No. All the fear was in vain. Two steps from the pit we were ordered to turn to the left, toward the bath barracks. [. . .] I will never forget that night either. The first night in the camp, which turned my entire life into one long night.

I will never forget the smoke that took my mother and Tzipoyrele,⁴⁷ like sacrifices, up to heaven.

I will never forget the little faceless children, whose tiny bodies and souls I saw turned into clouds in a clear, sinfully silent sky.

I will never forget the fire that consumed my faith in everything that is beautiful, in everything that is true, and in everything that is holy, forever. I will never forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me of the desire to live and the possibility to make peace with the future.

I will never forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams into a desert.

I will never forget these things, even if I am condemned to live longer than God himself. Never.

Historians often prefer *in situ* testimony because of its immediacy to events: there is no time for embellishment or outside influence to cloud or to

46. From the Hebrew, "Magnified and sanctified be His great name," the opening line of the Kaddish prayer.

47. This is the Yiddish diminutive of Tzipora, the name of Wiesel's sister.

intrude upon the “truth” of the matter. Yet, scholars must also be grateful for postwar accounts of Holocaust survivors. Time allows for the contemplation and recollection of details perhaps omitted in initial testimonies and facilitates the interweaving of historical and factual knowledge with personal experiences. In some cases, the lack of immediacy to events also allows for the candidness that comes with distance. While former persecutees generally do not hesitate to come forward with memories of shootings, roundups, and deportations, many survivors are loathe to discuss incidents of a sensitive nature connected with the war years—family conflict, betrayal of personal principles, issues of child abuse and sexual violence—and feel safer in including such topics in their history only with the passage of time.

Child survivors who write about their experiences face an extraordinary challenge in untangling the confusing web of childhood memories. In his memoir *A Story of a Life*, Israeli novelist Aharon Appelfeld suggests that his recollection of six perilous years of war are, for the most part, fragmented images that “fade away quickly, as if refusing to reveal themselves.”⁴⁸

Appelfeld was born in 1932 in Czernowicz (Ukrainian: Chernivtsi; Romanian: Cernăuți), a city occupied by Romanian forces following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. He was eight when his mother was murdered by Romanian fascists. Deported with his father to a camp in the Transnistrian Reservation, in Romanian-occupied Ukraine, the young Appelfeld escaped and spent three years in hiding before joining the Soviet army as a kitchen boy. He came to Palestine via Italy in 1946 and is widely regarded today as one of the most prominent Hebrew-language authors.⁴⁹

In his series of essays titled *Beyond Despair*, Appelfeld records his fascination with the manner in which child survivors like himself absorbed and processed the tragedies that they had witnessed and experienced. While adults had known another life before the Holocaust and toiled to rebuild their lives in the postwar years on the memory of those former times, the children of the Shoah had no other chronology. The Holocaust was the indestructible present that shaped their lives, while their adult contemporaries could and often chose to exorcise such memories from their histories.

48. See Aharon Appelfeld, *The Story of a Life*, trans. Aloma Halter (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), vii.

49. From his prolific oeuvre, see Appelfeld, *The Story of a Life*, and Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Conversation with Philip Roth*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: Fromm, 1994).

DOCUMENT 10-16. Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Conversation with Philip Roth*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1994), 36–37.

There were child acrobats who walked tightropes with marvelous skill. In the woods they had learned how to climb in the highest, thinnest branches. Among them was a set of twins, boys of about ten, who juggled wooden balls fantastically. There were also child mimics who would imitate animals and birds. Dozens of children like that wandered around the camps. While the adults tried to forget what had happened and to forget themselves, to get back into the fabric of life, the children refined their sufferings as, perhaps, can be done only in a folk song.

I have discussed the children because it was from them, in the course of time, that artistic expression arose. I shall try to explain myself. Ultimately the children did not absorb the full horror, only that portion of it which children could take in. Children lack a sense of chronology, of comparison with the past. While the adults spoke about what had been, for the children the Holocaust was the present, their childhood and youth. They knew no other childhood. Or happiness. They grew up in dread. They knew no other life.

While the adults fled from themselves and from their memories, repressing them and building up a new life in the place of the previous one, the children had no previous life or, if they had, it was now effaced. The Holocaust was the black milk, as the poet said, that they sucked morning, noon, and night. [...]⁵⁰

The Holocaust as life, as life in its most dreadfully concentrated form from both the existential and social point of view—that approach was rejected by the [adult] victim. The numerous books of testimony that were written about the Holocaust are, if you will, a desperate effort to force the Holocaust into a remote recess of madness, to cut it off from life, and in other cases, to envelop it in a kind of mystical aura, intangible, which must be discussed as a kind of experience that cannot be expressed in words, but rather in prolonged silence. In the case of children who grew up in the Holocaust, life during the Holocaust was something they could understand, for they had absorbed it with their blood.

50. This line refers to a recurring line in the celebrated 1948 poem “*Todesfuge*” (“Death Fugue”) by Romanian Holocaust survivor Paul Celan.

While some individuals prefer not to discuss their memories of the Holocaust, many survivors, including child survivors, feel the need to share their experiences with others, either through oral or written testimonies. Many hope that their stories will have historical or pedagogical value, or they feel compelled to bear witness to the tragedy, lest the world forget. For others, the process of remembering has become an artistic endeavor. For those already gifted at writing, drawing, or sculpting, creativity and memory can combine in a lasting testament to their Holocaust experience. Visual arts and literature also provide an innovative way for former persecutees to process their experiences and convey the deep emotions attached to them. For child survivors like Halina Birenbaum, poetry is a means to articulate childhood recollections in an adult voice.

Halina was born in Warsaw in 1929.⁵¹ At the age of ten, she was interned with her family in the **Warsaw ghetto**. In April 1943, the thirteen-year-old, along with her mother, brother, and sister-in-law, were deported from the **Umschlagplatz** in Warsaw to the **Majdanek** concentration camp on the outskirts of Lublin. Halina's mother died in the gas chambers directly upon arrival.⁵² Two months later, Halina and her sister-in-law, Hela, found themselves on a transport to Auschwitz. There, the twenty-year-old Hela assumed the role of the young girl's mother and protector; when Hela died of tuberculosis in the Auschwitz infirmary, a heartbroken Halina was left to face the horrors of the killing center alone. Struck by a sentry's bullet on New Year's Day 1945, the youngster was convalescing when she learned that the camp was being liquidated on January 27, 1945. Still weak from her injuries, Hadina endured a series of forced marches to Ravensbrück and Neustadt-Glewe, where on May 2, she and her fellow prisoners were liberated by Soviet army forces.

In 1947, Halina Birenbaum emigrated to Israel and worked on a **kibbutz** until her marriage in 1950. She remembers that in the chaotic early days of Israeli independence, she found little time to contemplate her recent past. "When I arrived in Israel, at the beginning of the War of Independence in 1947, everyone was struggling for his very existence and that of the State which had just been established. There was no time to talk about still fresh memories. There was also no one interested in listening. There was no lack of burn-

51. See Halina Birenbaum, *Hope Is the Last to Die: A Coming of Age under Nazi Terror*, trans. David Welsh (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996).

52. See Halina Birenbaum's poem "She Was Waiting There" describing her first visit to the Majdanek memorial site in 1986, in Halina Birenbaum, *Sounds of a Guilty Silence: Selected Poems*, trans. June Friedman (Kraków: Centrum Dialogu, 1997), 50–52.

ing issues of the moment, and a great desire to provide [ourselves] with new experiences and values—different ones, the ones of Israel.”⁵³

The **Eichmann Trial**, played out in a Jerusalem courtroom from 1961 to 1962, galvanized Birenbaum to reflect upon her childhood and to express her recollections in writing. In 1967, she published a memoir, *Hope Is the Last to Die*, and spent much of the next three decades recounting her history to young listeners and pressing, particularly in her native Poland, for Jewish-Christian reconciliation. In the early 1980s, Birenbaum turned to poetry to give voice to the powerful memories that linked her harrowing past with her workaday present. Many of her poems turn on the contemplation of a common activity or object that holds a deeper significance in her traumatic childhood. Other works arose as a result of visits she made to the Auschwitz and Majdanek concentration camp memorials in the 1980s and 1990s. In “There Is My Soul,” the poet is aware that she sees more vividly than her fellow visitors as she walks through a deserted Auschwitz in spring. She is haunted. She sees ghosts in the ruins, in the dust, in the sky where once there was smoke. Her experiences and memories hold her here, as if she were bound. Whatever her future, her fate is here, where so many of her friends and loved ones have died. In “My Life Started from the End,” however, Birenbaum sees resurrection in the miracle of her survival. The nightmare years have done their work, but they have not destroyed her or her belief in the essential good in human nature. Painful memories remain, but they cannot eclipse the present or bar her egress to the living world.

DOCUMENTS 10-17 AND 10-18. Halina Birenbaum, “There Is My Soul” (1994) and “My Life Started from the End” (1983), in Halina Birenbaum, *Sounds of a Guilty Silence: Selected Poems*, trans. June Friedman (Kraków: Centrum Dialogu, 1997), 5, 35–36.

There Is My Soul

There among the ghosts
 between the barracks,
 crematorium’s ruins,
 silence full of murmurs
 audible, visible, but
 only to me
 faces, figures
 between present greenery
 or whiteness of snow
 futile moans, prayers

53. Birenbaum, *Hope*, ix–x.

Dead and gone, suspended forever
in the clouds over Auschwitz
on the ground, in the earth
in every pebble, speck of sand
speck of dust,
over there among ashes and bones
crushed, mixed
crowds of souls in space
lost for eternity
also mine
it's not important where I live
when, how or where I will die
or wherever in the world
they will bury my body
marked number 48693
tattooed here

My Life Started from the End

My life started from the end
first I have known death,
then—birth
I was growing amidst hatred,
in the kingdom of destruction
only to learn later about creation
breathing bleakness, fires, deterioration of feeling
this was the atmosphere of my childhood
only then I have seen the light;
only then I have flourished.
I have always known love
even when it was terrible or worse!
love was there even in hell
I have encountered it!
my life began from the end and just then
everything returned to the beginning,
I was resurrected.
it was all not in vain, not in vain,
because goodness is not less powerful than evil
in me is strength too
I am the proof.

DOCUMENT 10-19. A boy displays his Auschwitz tattoo as other children from the Neu Freimann DP camp look on, USHMMPA WS# 29314, courtesy of Jack Sutin.





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Document 1-2. Irmgard Marx, “Everyday Terror,” 1989, in Elfi Pracht, ed., *Frankfurter jüdische Erinnerungen: Ein Lesebuch zur Sozialgeschichte* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1997), 227–32 (translated from the German).

Document 1-3. The antisemitic *Der Stürmer* newspaper portrays Jewish children ejected from a public swimming pool in Bad Herweck, near Mannheim, 1935, USHMMPA WS# 11196, courtesy of the Wiener Library Institute of Contemporary History.

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Document 1-4. A class essay by Gerd Zwienicki, “Does History Show That Racial Mixing Leads to the Decline of a People,” c. 1934, USHMMMA, Acc. 2005.122.1 (translated from the German).

Document 1-5. Irene Spicker Awret, *They'll Have to Catch Me First: An Artist's Coming of Age in the Third Reich* (Madison, WI/Takoma Park, MD: University of Wisconsin Press/Dryad Press, 2004), 88.

“I Decide Who Is a Jew”

Document 1-6. Walter Grab, “The Jews are Vermin Except for my Jewish Schoolmate Grab,” in *“Niemand war dabei, und keiner hat’s gewußt”: Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit und die Judenverfolgung, 1933–1945*, ed. Jörg Wollenberg (Munich: Piper, 1989), 45–50 (translated from the German).

Document 1-7. A crowd of Viennese children look on as an Austrian Nazi forces a youth to paint the word *Jud* (Jew) on the facade of his father’s store, 1938, USHMMPA WS# 01510, courtesy of the Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte.

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Document 1-8. Letter of Ernst Löwensberg, Burkeville, Virginia, to students of the emigration-training farm at Gross-Breesen, Silesia, June 16, 1938, USHMMMA, Acc. 2000.227, Herbert Cohn Gross-Breesen Collection (translated from the German).

Document 1-9. Jewish teenagers unload a cart of hay at the Gross-Breesen’s emigration-training farm, Germany, c. 1936, USHMMPA WS# 68299, courtesy of George Landecker.

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Document 1-10. Marguerite Strasser, “Then I Felt Like a Subhuman . . . ,” in Friedrich Kraft, ed., *Kristallnacht in Bayern: Judenpogrom am 9. November 1938: Eine Dokumentation* (Ingolstadt: Claudius Verlag, 1988), 109–10 (translated from the German).

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Document 1-11. Decree of the Reich Minister of Science, Education, and Adult Education re the Schooling of Jews, November 15, 1938 (translated from the German).

Document 1-12. Diary of Elisabeth Block, entry for November 17, 1938, in Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 162–63 (translated from the German).

Document 1-13. A young girl reads her classroom lesson in Hebrew to her fellow classmates at a school sponsored by the Jewish Community of Berlin, c. 1935, USHMMPA WS# 32505, courtesy of the Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

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Document 2-2. Julien Bryan, *Warsaw: 1939 Siege, 1959 Warsaw Revisited* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1959), 20–21.

Document 2-3. Inge Deutschkron, *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, 4th ed. (1975; Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1983), 60–67 (translated from the German).

Document 2-4. Interview of Idel Kozłowski (Kozlovskij) by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, February 14, 1947, USHMMMA, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, Lódź, 301/3626 (translated from the Russian).

Document 2-5. A Jewish child in occupied France wears the yellow star, USHMMMPA WS# 63042, courtesy of Michael O'Hara.

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Document 2-7. Addendum of Milovan Đjilas to the July 28, 1942, diary entry of Vladimir Dedijer, in Vladimir Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer*, Vol. 1: *From April 6, 1941, to November 27, 1942* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 269–70.

Document 2-8. Body of a young boy killed in an antipartisan campaign on the slopes of Petrova Gora, a stronghold of communist resistance activity in Yugoslavia, 1942, USHMMMPA WS# 01138, courtesy of Lydia Chagoll.

Document 2-9. Diary of Tanya Savicheva, Leningrad, December 1941 to May 1942, courtesy of the Saint Petersburg Museum of History, Saint Petersburg, Russia (translated from the Russian).

Document 2-10. Letter of Marie (Maruška) Šroubková, c. July 2, 1942, in Jolana Macková and Ivan Ulrych, eds., *Fates of the Children of Lidice: Memories, Testimonies, Documents*, trans. Elias Khelil (Nymburk: Lidice Memorial, 2004), 36.

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Document 2-11. Bert Voeten, *Doortocht: Een Oorlogsdagboek, 1940–1945*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 1947), 198–99 (translated from the Dutch).

Document 2-12. Malnourished Dutch children in the German-occupied Netherlands, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 89175, courtesy of David Briggs.

Document 2-13. Testimony of Ernst Wirtz, 1948, *United States of America v. Alfried Krupp, et al.* (Case 10: "Krupp Case"), in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 14 vols. (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., 1997), 9:1113–17.

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Document 3-2. Thea Gersten Hurst, *Das Tagebuch der Thea Gersten: Aufzeichnungen aus Leipzig, Warschau und London, 1939–1947* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 58 (translated from the German).

Document 3-3. Crayon drawing by Fritz Freudenheim, *From Our Old Home to Our New Home*, c. 1938, in Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin and Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), 155.

Document 3-4. Letter of Walter Horwitz to his daughter Cilia (Cilly) Horwitz, February 15, 1939, in Reiner Lehberger and Ursula Randt, eds., "Aus Kindern werden Briefe": *Dokumente zum Schicksal jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der NS-Zeit* (Hamburg: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, 1999), 39–40 (translated from the German).

Document 3-5. Letter of Liesel Joseph to Morris C. Troper, European director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, June 17, 1939, USHMMMA, Acc. 1997.36.12, Betty Troper Yaeger Collection (translated from the German).

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Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:516–17.

Document 3-9. Report of military chaplain Dr. Joseph Maria Reuss, Catholic divisional chaplain, to Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth, First Generalstabsoffizier, 295th Infantry Division, August 20, 1941, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *"Schöne Zeiten": Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 135–36 (translated from the German).

Document 3-10. Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth to commander in chief of the Sixth Army, Field Marshall Walther von Reichenau in re report on events in Byelaya Tserkov on August 20, 1941, August 21, 1941, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *"Schöne Zeiten": Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 140–42 (translated from the German).

Document 3-11. Testimony of August Häfner, May 31, 1965, in Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *"Schöne Zeiten": Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1988), 145 (translated from the German).

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Document 3-13. Note of Klaus Scheurenberg to his father, Paul Scheurenberg, c. 1942, Scheurenberg collection, Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin—Centrum Judaicum, CJA 614 Nr. 8.

Document 3-14. Letter of Felicitas and Thomas Gumpel, July 14, 1942, in Reiner Lehberger and Ursula Randt, eds., *"Aus Kindern werden Briefe": Dokumente zum Schicksal jüdischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der NS-Zeit* (Hamburg: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, 1999), 52–53 (translated from the German).

Document 3-15. Lissy Asser, a young girl from Göttingen, waits with other German Jews at a deportation point in Hildesheim, c. March 1942. Lissy, her parents, and a younger brother are believed to have been murdered in Treblinka, USHMMPA WS# 69635, courtesy of the Stadtarchiv Hildesheim.

Document 3-16. Vita of Iser Franghieru, Hehalutz Orphanage, September 12, 1947, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive, RG 25.001, American Joint Distribution Committee, Case Files of Romanian Orphans.

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Document 3-18. Letter of Pinchas Eisner to his brother Mordechai Eisner, Budapest, October 16, 1944, in Reuvan Dafni and Yehudit Keliman, eds., *Final Letters* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholas 1991), 454–57.

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Document 4-2. Interview of Seweryn Dobrecki by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, c. 1946, USHMMMA, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/3611/4-5 (translated from the Polish).

Document 4-3. Two children beg on the streets of the Warsaw ghetto, September 1941, USHMMMPA WS# 32327, courtesy of Günther Schwarberg.

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Document 4-5. Diary essay of Josef Zelkowicz, "The Breadwinner (The Seventh Apartment)," 1941, in Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 63–69.

Document 4-6. Children digging for "coal" in the Łódź ghetto, 1941, USHMMMPA WS# 61900, courtesy of the YIVO Institute.

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Document 4-7. Speech of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, Łódź ghetto, September 4, 1942, in Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006), 272–75.

Document 4-8. Children selected for deportation bid farewell to their families through the wire fence of the central prison during the *Gehsperrre* action in the Łódź ghetto, September 1942, USHMMMPA WS# 30057, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghetaot.

Document 4-9. Testimony of Adolf Avraham Berman, May 3, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:425–26.

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Document 4-10. Diary of an anonymous girl, Łódź ghetto, entries for March 10 and 11, 1942, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 236–38.

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Document 4-12. Jewish children work at a box-making factory in the Glubokoye ghetto, Belorussia, c. early 1942, USHMMPA WS# 08059, courtesy of Karl Katz.

Document 4-13. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478.

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Document 5-3. Testimony of Magda Szabo, August 24, 1964, Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, in Fritz Bauer Institute and the State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau, eds., *Der Auschwitz-Prozess: Tonbandschnitte, Protokolle, Dokumente* (DVD) (Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2004) (translated from the German).

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Document 6-5. Testimony of Otto Uebe, November 4, 1947, *United States of America v. Ulrich Greifelt et al.* (Subsequent Nuremberg Case No. 8, RuSHA Trial), in *Trials of War Criminals before the Nürnberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No. 10*, 14 vols. (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., 1997), 4:1060–62.

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Document 6-9. ITO/ITS Report of Johannes Meister, children’s search officer, regarding Gypsy children of Sankt Josefspflege in Mulfingen, c. 1948, USHMMMA, RG-07.004*01, Zigeunerinder aus der Sankt Josefspflege in Mulfingen (translated from the German).

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Document 6-12. Testimony of Johann Frahm, March 3 to June 18, 1946, *UK v. Max Pauly, et al.* (Curio-Haus Case), March 29, 1946, USHMMMA, RG-59.016M, Reel 4, Judge Advocate General’s Office, United Kingdom, War Crimes Case Files, Second World War, 1945–1953, Public Record Office.

Document 6-13. Relief workers lead child survivors from Birkenau following the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet forces. Leading the ranks (beside the nurse) are Miriam and Eva Mozes, survivors of Josef Mengele’s infamous experimentation with twins, January 1945, USHMMPA WS# 88591, courtesy of the Instytut Pamieci Narodowej.

Document 6-14. Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor’s Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (Hungarian ed., 1946; New York: Fell, 1960), 175–78.

Document 6-15. Hygiene-Bacteriological Research Station of the Waffen SS, Southeast, delivery slip for the head of a corpse, signed by Dr. Josef Mengele, June 29, 1944, USHMMPA WS# 00592, courtesy of the Auschwitz Memorial Museum (Państwowe Muzeum w Oświęcim-Brzezinka) (translated from the German).

7 The Lives of Others

Youth Organizations in the Third Reich

Document 7-1. A young boy leaps into the clasped arms of his schoolmates during outdoor physical education exercises at the Hitler Youth training facility in Memmingen, Germany, USHMMPA WS# 30590, courtesy of the Holocaust Museum Houston.

Document 7-2. Editorial of W. Thomas, director of the Berlin Deaf Athletes’ Association, *Youth Supplement of the Newsletter of the Berlin Deaf Athletes’ Association*, May 1, 1937, USHMMMA, RG-10.320, Horst Biesold Collection (translated from the German).

Document 7-3. Young women remember the League of German Girls, 1946, in Gisela Miller-Kipp, ed., “Auch Du gehörst dem Führer”: *Die Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Mädel (BDM) in Quellen und Dokumenten. Forschungsreihe Materialien zur Historischen Jugendforschung* (Weinheim: Juventa Verlag, 2001), 315–16 (translated from the German).

Nonconformity and Dissidence: The Edelweiss Pirates

Document 7-4. Report of the Gestapo, Düsseldorf, December 10, 1937, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 28–30 (translated from the German).

Document 7-5. Handwritten flyer distributed by the Wuppertal troop of the Edelweiss Pirates, “To the Subjugated German Youth,” c. 1942, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 81 (translated from the German).

Document 7-6. The “Cologne Navajos’ Fight Song,” c. 1944, in Detlev Peukert, *Die Edelweisspiraten: Protestbewegungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 51 (translated from the German).

Hearts and Minds: Nazi Propaganda

Document 7-7A. Excerpt from a children’s textbook in the Third Reich: “You Are Carrying the Load!” (“Hier trägst Du mit!”), in Jacob Graf, *Biologie für höhere Schulen (Biology for Secondary Schools)* (Munich: Lehmann Verlag, 1943), table 25.

Document 7-7B. Excerpt from a children’s textbook in the Third Reich: A story problem in *Arithmetic for Volksschulen: Governing District Cologne and Aachen, School Years in Seven and Eight*, 1941, quoted in Ute Hoffmann, *Todesursache “Angina”: Zwangssterilisation und “Euthanasie” in der Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalt Bernburg* (Magdeburg: Eigenverlag des Ministeriums des Innern des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, 1996), 24 (translated from the German).

Document 7-8. German school children read the antisemitic children’s story *Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom)*, c. 1938, USHMMMPA WS# 69561, E39 No. 2381/7, courtesy of the Stadtarchiv Nürnberg.

Document 7-9. Game board “*Juden raus!*” (“Jews, Get Out!”), Günther & Co., 1938, USHMMMPA WS# 11894, courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute.

Perpetrators and Victims

Document 7-10. Letter from the director of the Trade and Vocational School for Boys to the Department of Education, Frankfurt am Main, October 1, 1935, in Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, eds., *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1963), 111 (translated from the German).

Document 7-11. Report of the Centralverein Landesverband Pommern (Pomerania), signed Michelsohn, to the Central Office of the Centralverein, in re Schivelbein, August 16, 1935, USHMMMA, RG-11.00, Osobyi Archive Moscow, 721-1-3019, Centralverein Records, 91 (translated from the German).

Document 7-12. Decision of the State Court, Karlsruhe, concerning the appeal of Franz Josef Seitz against the removal of parental custody, Karlsruhe, April 15, 1937, USHMMMA, RG-32.008*01, Willi Seitz Collection (translated from the German).

German Children and the War

Document 7-13. Members of the Hitler Youth practice donning gas masks during an air raid drill, c. 1937, USHMMMPA WS# 31512, courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

Document 7-14. School essay of an eleven-year-old girl, Nuremberg, 1946, in Emmy E. Werner, *Through the Eyes of Innocents: Children Witness World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 49.

Document 7-15. Interview with Harry Bahrmann, *Völkischer Beobachter*, c. March 1945, in Franz Seidler, *Deutsche Volkssturm: Das letzte Aufgebot, 1944–1945*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Herbig, 1991), 322.

Document 7-16. Journal of Lili G., entries for April 15 through May 9, 1945, in Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Der Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion, 1941–1945: Eine Dokumentation zum 50. Jahrestag des Überfalls auf die Sowjetunion* (Berlin: Argon-Verlag, 1991), 257–58 (translated from the German).

Document 7-17. A German mother shields the eyes of her young son as American troops force her and other townspeople to view the bodies of Soviet civilians from a mass grave near Sutrop, Germany, May 3, 1945, USHMMMPA WS# 08197, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

8 The World of the Child

Escape into Learning

Document 8-1. Diary/memoir of Miriam Wattenberg, entry for July 12, 1940, in Mary Berg, *Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary by Mary Berg*, ed. S. L. Shneiderman, trans. Norbert Guterman and Sylvia Glass (New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945), 32–33.

Document 8-2. Diary entry of Pola Rotszyl (Yad Vashem Archives, sign. 03/438) in Barbara Engelking-Boni, “Childhood in the Warsaw Ghetto,” in *Children and the Holocaust: Symposium Presentations of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies* (Washington DC: USHMM, 2004), 35.

Document 8-3. Three girls study at a clandestine Jewish school in Prague, c. 1942, USHMMMPA WS# 37424, courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Prague Photo Archive.

Document 8-4. Diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski, Vilna ghetto, entry for March 14, 1943, in Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers’ Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 223.

At Play during the Holocaust

Document 8-5. Children at play in a field in Marysin, Łódź ghetto, c. 1941, USHMMMPA WS# 33844, courtesy of the Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, sygn. 1120, fot. 27-832-6.

Document 8-6. Oskar Rosenfeld, entry in *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*, August 25, 1943, in Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lourie et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 373–74.

Document 8-7. Painted wooden butterfly toy, Small Fortress, Theresienstadt ghetto, 1941–1945, USHMMMPA WS# N00049, original reposed in Pamiatnik Terezin Narodni Kulturni Pamatka.

Document 8-8. Testimony of Dr. Aharon Peretz, May 4, 1961, in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Trust for the

Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995), 1:478–79.

Document 8-9. Personal testimony of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, c. 1960, in Inge Deutschkron, *Denn ihrer war die Hölle: Kinder in Gettos und Lagern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), 52–55 (translated from the German).

Document 8-10. An eight-year-old resident of the Vilna ghetto describes the game “Jews and Germans” (Genia Silkes Collection, YIVO Institute), quoted in George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 72.

Document 8-11. In the Łódź ghetto, children, one dressed as a ghetto policeman, play a peculiar version of cops and robbers, 1943, USHMMMA WS# 80401, courtesy of Beit Lohamei Haghettaot.

Innocence and Knowledge

Document 8-12. Excerpt from Josef Zelkowicz's essay “The Optimist in the Potato Queue,” Łódź ghetto, September 5, 1942, in Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Łódź Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002), 306–7.

Document 8-13. Young children from the Marysin colony wait to be conveyed to the deportation assembly point during the *Gehsperrre*, Łódź ghetto, September 1942, USHMMMA WS# 50334, courtesy of the Instytut Pamieci Narodowej.

Document 8-14. Watercolor by Helga Weissová, *Birthday Wish I (Přání k narozeninám I)*, Theresienstadt ghetto, December 1941, USHMMMA WS# 60926, courtesy Helga Weissová.

Document 8-15. Diary of Elisabeth Block, entry for March 8, 1943, in Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte/Historischer Verein Rosenheim (Rosenheim: Wendelstein-Druck, 1993), 265–66.

In Hopes and Dreams: Coping with the Holocaust

Document 8-16. Personal testimony of Hanna Hoffmann-Fischel, c. 1960, in Inge Deutschkron, *Denn ihrer war die Hölle: Kinder in Gettos und Lagern* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1965), 52–55 (translated from the German).

Document 8-17. Just as youngsters at Birkenau reenacted *Snow White*, children in the Novaky labor camp perform a play about another popular Disney character, Mickey Mouse, Slovakia, 1944, USHMMMA WS# 40080, courtesy of Mira Frenkel.

Document 8-18. Drawing of Ilona Goldman (Alona Frankel) for her parents in hiding, Marcinkowice, Poland, 1942, USHMM Collections, gift of Alona Goldman Frankel.

Document 8-19. Abram Koplowicz, “When I Am Twenty,” Łódź ghetto, c. 1943, in Institute of Tolerance/State Archives in Łódź (in cooperation with the Centre de Civilization Française and the Embassy of France in Poland), eds., *The Children of the Łódź Ghetto* (Łódź: Bilbo, 2004).

Document 8-20. Watercolor by Nelly Toll, *Teacher with Children Wearing Black Uniforms*, Lvov, Poland, c. 1943–1944, USHMMMA WS# 94466, courtesy of Nelly Landau Toll.

9 Children and Resistance and Rescue

Youth and Armed Resistance

Document 9-1. Emmanuel Ringelblum, “Little Stalingrad Defends Itself,” c. April 1943, in Joseph Kermish, ed., *“To Live with Honor and Die with Honor”: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives “O.S.” (Oneg Shabbath)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986), 601–3.

Document 9-2. Oral history of Berel Dov Freiberg, recorded by Bluma Wasser, 1945, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 283–87.

Document 9-3. Members of the Bielski partisan family camp, including several small children, shortly before liberation, Naliboki Forest, Belorussia, 1944, USHMMMA WS# 77654, courtesy of the Yad Vashem Photo Archives.

Document 9-4. Oral history of Rachmiel Łozowski, Tel Aviv, 1947, USHMMMA RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/540 (translated from the Yiddish).

Unarmed Resistance: The Children’s War

Document 9-5. “Let the Jewish Youth Remember,” *Słowo Młodych (Young People’s Voice)*, Warsaw ghetto, spring, 1942, USHMMMA, RG-15.070M, Zespół podziemie–prasa konspiracyjna [Clandestine Publications], 230/13/1.

Document 9-6. Arrested at a checkpoint, a Jewish boy holds a bag of smuggled goods, Warsaw ghetto, c. 1941, USHMMMA WS# 60611B, courtesy of the YIVO Institute.

Document 9-7. Henryka Łazowertówna (Lazowert), “The Little Smuggler,” Warsaw ghetto, c. 1941, in Michał Borwicz, ed., *Pieśń ujdzie cało: Antologia wierszy o Żydach pod okupacją niemiecką* (Warsaw: Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Polsce, 1947), 115–16 (translated from the Polish).

Document 9-8. Historians believe the girl in the center of the photograph to be teenage resistance member Masha Bruskina, being marched with her comrades Kiril Trus and Volodya Shcherbatsevich to their place of execution by German soldiers, Minsk, October 26, 1941, USHMMMA WS# 14101, courtesy of the Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-197-026-43.

Document 9-9. The hanging of teenage resistance figures, believed to be Masha Bruskina and Volodya Shcherbatsevich, by an officer of the German 707th Infantry Division, Minsk, October 26, 1941, USHMMMA WS# 25136, courtesy of Ada Dekhtyar.

In Hiding

Document 9-10. Emmanuel Ringelblum, "Jewish Children on the Aryan Side," 1943, in Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, ed. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974), 140–45.

Document 9-11. Oral history of Szepsel Griner by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, c. 1947, USHMM RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/2284 (translated from the Polish).

Document 9-12. Louise Israels celebrates her second birthday in hiding, Amsterdam, July 30, 1944, USHMM WS# 16427, courtesy of Louise Lawrence-Israels.

Children and Aid Organizations: The Politics of Rescue

Document 9-13. Child identification card of Helmuth Ehrenreich, Police Presidium of Frankfurt am Main, June 16, 1939, USHMM, Acc. 2006.396, Ehrenreich Family Papers (translated from the German).

Document 9-14. Letter of Gilbert Kraus to George Messerschmidt, assistant secretary of state, February 3, 1939 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG-59, General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 150.6265/610).

Document 9-15. Aided by philanthropists Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus, a group of Austrian Jewish children finds safe haven in the United States, June 3, 1939, USHMM WS# 96464, courtesy of Anita Willens.

Document 9-16. Child's drawing of Château de la Hille, La Hille, France, c. 1942, USHMM WS# 45699, courtesy of Vera Friedlander.

When Rescue Fails

Document 9-17. Jewish refugee children pose at a children's home in Izieu, France, summer 1943, USHMM WS# 15513, courtesy of Serge Klarsfeld.

Document 9-18. Telex from Klaus Barbie, commanding officer of the Security Police and Security Service IV B, Lyon, to Department IV B 4, Paris (Barbie Telex), April 6, 1944, in Serge Klarsfeld, *The Children of Izieu: A Human Tragedy*, trans. Kenneth Jacobsen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985), 95 (translated from the German).

10 Elsewhere, Perhaps?

"Over This Field of Death, Peace Breaks Out": Liberation

Document 10-1. David P. Boder, interview with Gert Silberbart, Geneva, August 27, 1946, USHMM RG-50.472, spool 9-82 and 83 (translated from the German).

Document 10-2. Young boys join adult survivors in cheering their U.S. Army liberators at Dachau, April 29, 1945, USHMMPA WS# 45075, courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.

Document 10-3. Oral history testimony of P. H. by the Canadian Jewish Congress, Montreal, February 1946, in Isaiah Trunk, ed., *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 326–28.

Document 10-4. Diary of Alice Ehrmann (Alisah Shek), entries for May 10, 11, and 18, 1945, in Alisah Shek, "Tagebuch," in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente, 1994*, ed. Miroslav Kárný, Raimund Kemper, and Margita Kárná (Prague: Verlag Academica, 1994), 196–99 (translated from the German).

The Search for Family Members

Document 10-5. Hedvig Dydyna holds a name card intended to help surviving family members locate her at the Kloster Indersdorf DP camp, Germany, c. May 1945, USHMMPA WS# 06677, courtesy of Lilo Plaschkes.

Document 10-6. Interview with Maria Straucher by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Kraków, December 2, 1947, USHMMMA, RG-15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/3292/1-2, 1949 (translated from the Polish).

Document 10-7. Renée Pallarés (right) and her family helped save Diane Popowski, an infant who had been with her mother at the Agde internment camp in France. In 1949, nine-year-old Diane reluctantly returned to her widowed father. She reunited with the Pallarés family some years later. USHMMPA WS# 13346, courtesy of Diane Popowski Fenster.

Document 10-8. Interview with Gizela Szulberg by the Central Jewish Historical Commission, Bytom, September 3, 1947, USHMMMA RG 15.084, Holocaust Survivor Testimonies, 301/2731/2-3 (translated from the Polish).

Where Is Home?

Document 10-9. An exercise class for preschoolers in the Bergen-Belsen DP Camp, Germany, 1947, USHMMPA WS# 11811, courtesy of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Document 10-10. Report card of Regina Laks from the Herzl Hebrew Public School, Schlachtensee DP Camp, Berlin, January 18, 1947, USHMMPA WS# 96426, courtesy of Regina Laks Gelb.

Document 10-11. Diary of Michal (Michael) Kraus, handwritten with illustrations, 1945–1947, 2, 23–28, USHMMMA, Acc. 2006.51, Michael Kraus Collection (translated from the Czech).

Document 10-12. "Where are our parents, you murderers?" a young survivor of Buchenwald writes on the side of the train car that will take him and other "Buchenwald Boys" from

Germany to an orphanage in France, June 1945, USHMM WA# 44251, courtesy of Willy Fogel.

Document 10-13. Page of convoy list of Buchenwald's orphaned children taken from Germany to Écouis, France, June 8, 1945, in Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Post-War Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 2000), 180.

Document 10-14. Judith Feist Hemmendinger remembers the "Buchenwald Boys," 1984, in Judith Hemmendinger and Robert Krell, *The Children of Buchenwald: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Post-War Lives* (Jerusalem: Gefen Press, 2000, 27–31).

The Process of Remembering

Document 10-15. Elie Wiesel, *Un di Velt hot Geshvign*, trans. Vera Szabó (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-Farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argentine, 1956), 66–71 (translated from the Yiddish).

Document 10-16. Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Conversation with Philip Roth*, trans. Jeffrey M. Green (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1994), 36–37.

Documents 10-17 and 10-18. Halina Birenbaum, "There Is My Soul" (1994) and "My Life Started from the End" (1983), in Halina Birenbaum, *Sounds of a Guilty Silence: Selected Poems*, trans. June Friedman (Kraków: Centrum Dialogu, 1997), 5, 35–36.

Document 10-19. A boy displays his Auschwitz tattoo as other children from the Neu Freimann DP camp look on, USHMM WA# 29314, courtesy of Jack Sutin.



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GLOSSARY

Note: Terms below are defined in reference to the period covered in the text, 1933–1946.

Aktion (operation or action): In the National Socialist context, German authorities often employed this term to mean a campaign to further Nazi racial goals, such as *Aktion T4* (the “euthanasia” program) or *Aktion Reinhard*, the killing of the Jews of the **General Government**.

Aliyah (Hebrew: “ascent”): In the context of the Zionist movement, this term describes the mass settlement of Diaspora Jews in **Palestine** to establish a Jewish homeland. In the period between 1933 and 1941, more than fifty-two hundred Jews left the German Reich for Palestine. The Youth Aliyah movement organized by German-Jewish educator Recha Freier and others in 1933 helped more than five thousand Jewish youths to emigrate before September 1939. As British restrictions on Jewish settlements in Palestine increased in the mid-1930s, the illegal *Aliyah (Aliyah Bet)* gained in significance; the movement continued until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

See Brian Amkraut, *Between Home and Homeland: Youth Aliyah from Nazi Germany* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006); Recha Freier, *Let the Children Come: The Early History of the Youth Aliyah* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961).

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC, AJDC, Joint, or JDC): Founded in 1914, the Joint provided assistance to Jews around the world, particularly in eastern Europe. During the Nazi era, this umbrella agency for aid organizations in the United States was involved in emigration planning and relief work in Germany, until

1939 providing an increasing share of the budget for German Jewish organizations, such as the **Reichsvertretung**. The Joint's efforts continued after the war began and extended beyond the Reich into countries occupied or controlled by Germany.

See Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–45* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1981).

Anschluss (literally, “connection” or “joining”): Nazi officials employed this euphemism to describe the German annexation of Austria in March 1938. Although it constituted an act of aggression on the part of Germany against its independent neighbor and resulted in mass arrests and anti-Jewish violence, the *Anschluss* met with widespread popular support in both Austria and Germany. Austria, renamed the **Ostmark**, remained a part of the German Reich until the end of World War II.

See Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler’s Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Appell (roll call): A practice followed at least twice a day in the vast Nazi concentration camp system, *Appell* was usually performed in the early morning and again in the evening on the *Appellplatz* (roll call yard). Camp officials forced emaciated and exhausted prisoners to stand at attention for hours on end, even in inclement weather, while SS guards, assisted by prisoners, counted and inspected the inmates and distributed daily punishment for real or invented infractions. The *Appell* functioned both as a means of furnishing a prisoner head count and as a punitive measure.

Arrow Cross: The Arrow Cross Party was a fascist political movement in Hungary during the 1930s and 1940s, modeled after Germany’s National Socialist Party. Led by Ferenc Szálasi (1897–1946), the Arrow Cross promoted an ideology that fused Hungarian nationalism with a virulent antisemitism. In October 1944, with German support, Szálasi launched a successful coup to dislodge Hungarian regent **Miklós Horthy**. During their brief time in power, the Arrow Cross initiated a reign of terror, torturing and murdering Budapest Jews in the streets and reinitiating **deportations** of Jews from the capital. In the immediate postwar, Hungarian authorities tried and executed Szálasi and other leaders of the Arrow Cross Party.

See Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

“Aryan”: The word “Aryan” derives from Sanskrit. Since ancient times, the peoples of modern-day Iran have used the term to describe their lineage, language, and culture. In linguistic terminology, “Aryan” refers to a subfamily of the Indo-European languages, and before the term’s adoption and perversion by National Socialist ideologues, it was the name employed to describe the parent language of the Indo-European language family. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, linguists and ethnologists began to argue that speakers of the Indo-European languages constituted a distinct race,

separated in the racial hierarchy from the Semitic peoples (i.e., Jews). Nazi ideology used the construct of an “Aryan” ideal type to denigrate “non-Aryans,” particularly Jews, in the attempt to create a racially homogenous ***Volksgemeinschaft***. In German-occupied Europe, Jews described the municipal district beyond the ghetto walls, inhabited by non-Jews, as the “Aryan side.”

See Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

“Aryanization”: Derived from the vocabulary of Nazi antisemitism, this term denotes the process of expropriating Jews and excluding them from German economic life. Beginning in early 1933, the process gathered pace over time. The events surrounding the *Anschluss* of Austria and the **pogrom** of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 triggered a wave of exclusionary measures that culminated in the forced “Aryanization” of the remaining Jewish-owned businesses later that year. German allies and satellites, such as Hungary and **Vichy France**, often adopted such “Aryanization” policies.

See Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933–1943* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 1989).

Auschwitz: The Auschwitz complex was the largest camp of its kind established by the Nazi regime. Located outside Oświęcim, Poland, near Kraków, the complex comprised three camps: Auschwitz I, established in May 1940; **Birkenau** (Auschwitz II), built in early 1942; and **Monowitz**, or **Buna** (Auschwitz III), established in October 1942. Auschwitz I, the main camp, resembled most German concentration camps in that its primary aim was to incarcerate real and perceived enemies of the German Reich; like Monowitz, it also deployed a significant number of forced laborers both on-site and in SS-owned construction and war-related enterprises. Birkenau, with sections for men and women and temporary family camps for **Roma** (Gypsies) and for Jewish deportees from **Theresienstadt**, housed the largest prisoner population and accommodated the complex’s killing center. From 1942 through the late summer of 1944, trains carrying transports of Jews arrived at Birkenau from every corner of Axis-occupied Europe. It is estimated that the SS and police deported more than 1.3 million people to Auschwitz. Of these, camp authorities gassed about 1.1 million. In mid-January 1945, as Soviet forces approached the complex, officials began evacuating Auschwitz and its subcamps. Soviet troops liberated the Auschwitz complex on January 27, 1945, freeing some seven thousand ailing prisoners who had remained at the camp following its evacuation.

See Waclaw Dlugoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz: 1940–1945*, trans. William Brand, 5 vols. (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000); Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990); Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994).

Bełżec: Bełżec, **Sobibór**, and **Treblinka** comprised the killing centers of **Operation Reinhard** (*Aktion Reinhard*). Located directly on the Lublin-Zamość-Rava Russkaya railroad line, the spot was chosen by Reinhard planners in order to tap the municipalities of Lublin, Kraków, and Lvov, all cities with a large Jewish population. Christian Wirth served as Bełżec's first commander, succeeded by former **Operation T4** administrator Gottlieb Hering in June 1942. Operations began at Bełżec on March 17, 1942. Initial gassings still employed the pure bottled carbon monoxide utilized at “**euthanasia**” installations; later, carbon monoxide gas generated by diesel engine became the standard mode of killing here and at all Reinhard extermination centers. Between March and December 1942, approximately 434,500 Jews and an undetermined number of Poles and **Roma** were deported and murdered at Bełżec.

See Bogdan Musial, ed., *“Aktion Reinhardt”: Der Völkermord an den Juden im Generalgouvernement, 1941–1944* (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2004).

Bergen-Belsen: A concentration camp established by German authorities near Celle in northwestern Germany in 1940, Bergen-Belsen first served as a POW camp, first for French and Belgian soldiers and then for Soviet POWs until 1943. Converted into a concentration camp in that year, Bergen-Belsen also served as a holding camp (*Aufenthaltslager*) for privileged Jews whom German authorities hoped to exchange for German civilians interned abroad. In the war’s last stages, Bergen-Belsen became a reservoir for thousands of Jewish prisoners evacuated from concentration camps in the East. Overcrowding, insufficient provisions, and poor sanitation led to deplorable conditions in the camp, and tens of thousands perished of disease and malnutrition in Bergen-Belsen’s last months. Between May 1943 and April 1945, some thirty-seven thousand prisoners died at Bergen-Belsen. British forces liberated the camp on April 15, 1945, freeing some fifty-five thousand ailing and emaciated prisoners. More than thirteen thousand former prisoners, too ill to recover, perished in the weeks following liberation.

See Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006).

Biebow, Hans (1902–1947): Born in Bremen, German businessman and Nazi official Hans Biebow headed the German administration of the **Łódź ghetto** from October 1940 until August 1944. Biebow encouraged the establishment of ghetto factories and workshops and gleaned enormous profits both from these forced labor enterprises and from the stolen property of the incarcerated community. Eager to maintain this flow of proceeds, he helped to ensure the ghetto’s continued existence until the summer of 1944. Following the decision to liquidate the Łódź ghetto, Biebow helped to organize the final **deportations** of ghetto residents to the **Chełmno** and **Auschwitz** killing centers. He was tried and sentenced to death by a Polish court in Łódź in April 1947 and executed.

Birkenau (Auschwitz II–Birkenau): Birkenau, with its sections for men and women and its temporary family camps for **Roma** and for Jewish deportees from **Theresienstadt**, housed the largest prisoner population within **Auschwitz** and accommodated its killing center. In all, some 1.1 million Jews were transported there. New arrivals underwent the process of **selection**. Young and able-bodied Jews were often chosen for labor and registered as prisoners at the camp. The sick, the weak, young children, and the aged were murdered upon arrival. Gassing operations continued at Birkenau until November 1944.]

See Wacław Długoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz: 1940–1945*, trans. William Brand, 5 vols. (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000); Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939–1945* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990); Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994).

Block, Elisabeth (1923–1942): Living with her parents and two siblings in rural Bavaria, Elisabeth Block began a diary in 1933 in which she made few direct references to the persecution of her fellow German Jews. In the spring of 1942, she was deported with her family via Munich-Milbertshofen to Piaski in the Lublin district. On an unknown date, Elisabeth and her family were transferred to a killing center, presumably **Bełżec** or **Sobibór**, and murdered there.

See Elisabeth Block, *Erinnerungszeichen: Die Tagebücher der Elisabeth Block*, ed. Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte (Rosenheim: Bayerische Staatskanzlei, 1993).

Boder, David (1886–1961): Born in Latvia, David Boder was a professor of psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology. In 1946, he headed a pioneering project to interview Holocaust survivors. Boder recorded over 120 hours of oral testimony, a significant source of primary documentation concerning the Holocaust.

See Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Boycott of April 1, 1933: When Adolf Hitler's regime came to power in late January 1933, Nazi authorities proclaimed their intention to eliminate Jews from German economic life. On March 28, 1933, the Nazi Party leadership announced a boycott effort against Jewish-owned shops and businesses to begin on April 1. On the morning of the boycott, local party action committees stationed **SA** or **SS** men outside Jewish-owned stores and enterprises, encouraging passersby to buy their wares only in "German" stores. Despite the best efforts of central planners such as *Der Stürmer* publisher **Julius Streicher**, the boycott failed to win the public support the Nazis hoped for, and international condemnation of the measure ensured that the centralized boycott campaign would be confined to a one-day affair. However, depending on the degree of local antisemitic sentiment, so-called wild boycotts continued throughout the 1930s, forcing many Jewish-owned businesses into insolvency or liquidation.

See Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (London: André Deutsch, 1970).

Brandt, Karl (1904–1948): Born in Alsace, Karl Brandt was from 1934 Adolf Hitler's attending physician. Along with Philipp Bouhler, director of the Führer Chancellery, Brandt headed the planning and implementation of the “euthanasia” program, beginning in 1939. In July 1942, Hitler appointed him General Commissioner for Sanitation and Health (*Generalkommissar für das Sanitäts- und Gesundheitswesen*) and, later, Reich commissioner, which placed Brandt in control of all German military and civilian medical institutions. In 1946, Brandt served as chief defendant at the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial, in which an American military tribunal sentenced him to death. He was executed on June 2, 1948.

See Ulf Schmidt, *Karl Brandt, the Nazi Doctor: Medicine and Power in the Third Reich* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

Buchenwald: Together with its over 130 satellite camps, Buchenwald, near Weimar in eastern Germany, was one of the largest concentration camps within the Reich proper. Established in July 1937, most of its early inmates were political prisoners, who played an important role in the camp's prisoner infrastructure and its underground resistance. In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, German SS and police sent about ten thousand Jews to Buchenwald. Between July 1937 and April 1945, the camp held some 250,000 persons from all countries of Europe; recidivist criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses, **Roma and Sinti** (Gypsies), and German military deserters numbered among its prisoner population. In the camp's later stages, the SS also incarcerated prisoners of war, resistance fighters, prominent former government officials of German-occupied countries, and foreign forced laborers there. At least fifty-six thousand prisoners were murdered in the Buchenwald camp system, over eighteen thousand of them Jews. On April 11, 1945, as U.S. troops neared the camp, Buchenwald prisoners stormed the watchtowers, seizing control of the camp. Later that afternoon, U.S. forces arrived at Buchenwald, liberating more than twenty thousand prisoners, among them over nine hundred young children.

See David A. Hackett, ed. and trans., *The Buchenwald Report* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

Buna (Auschwitz III–Monowitz): Auschwitz III–Monowitz, also known also as the Buna labor camp, was the first and largest Auschwitz satellite camp for forced labor and later operated as the administrative headquarters for all Auschwitz satellite camps employing prison labor in factories. Construction of the camp began in April 1941. The great majority of forced laborers at Monowitz worked at the IG Farben Buna Werke, a large synthetic rubber plant located only 300 meters (984 feet) from the camp. Due to IG Farben's continual need for forced labor, Buna held as many as eleven thousand prisoners in 1944. With the approach of the Soviet army, German authorities evacuated Buna on January 18, 1945. From Gleiwitz, a subcamp of Auschwitz, most of these

prisoners were transferred to **Buchenwald** and Mittelbau. More than eight hundred ill and exhausted prisoners remained at the camp following evacuation and were liberated by Soviet forces on January 27, 1945.

See Wacław Dlugoborski and Franciszek Piper, eds., *Auschwitz 1940–1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), 1:108–15.

Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM, or League of German Girls): In 1930, the **Bund Deutscher Mädel** in der Hitler-Jugend (League of German Girls within the **Hitler Youth**) was founded as the official female branch of the Hitler Youth organization. Before the Nazi rise to power in January 1933, the BDM did not attract a mass following, but membership expanded rapidly throughout the 1930s, until participation for eligible girls became compulsory in 1936. The BDM's core constituency consisted of girls from fourteen to eighteen years of age, with a corresponding junior branch, the Jungmädel (Young Girls' League), for girls aged ten to fourteen. In 1938, a third component, the BDM Union for Belief and Beauty (BDM-Werk Glaube und Schönheit), offered a voluntary association for young women aged seventeen to twenty-one.

See Gisela Miller-Kipp, “*Auch Du gehörst dem Führer*”: Die Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Mädel (BDM) in Quellen und Dokumenten (Weinheim/Munich: Juventa Verlag, 2001).

CENTOS (Central Organization for Orphan Care): Founded in 1924 to unite voluntary child-care organizations throughout Poland under one agency, CENTOS operated aid organizations for children and youth, including orphanages, boarding and trade schools, day-care centers, food- and clothing-distribution centers, and children's camps. It also provided funding to foster families. Prior to the German invasion of Poland, CENTOS functioned in more than two hundred Polish cities and cared for tens of thousands of children. CENTOS was very active in the **Warsaw ghetto**, operating over one hundred care institutions for forty-five thousand children, among them **Janusz Korczak**'s well-known Orphans' Home. Dr. Adolf Berman and Józef Barski assumed the directorship of CENTOS in the Warsaw ghetto in January 1940.

See Barbara Engelking and Lacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Chełmno (Kulmhof): In late 1941, the National Socialist regime established the first stationary killing center to murder Jews within the context of the “Final Solution” at Chełmno. German authorities chose the site because of its location along a central road that linked it to the city of Łódź. An abandoned manorial estate and adjacent forest formed the nexus of the camp, which was planned as a killing site for the Jewish population of the **Wartheland**, including the inhabitants of the **Łódź ghetto**. Mass-murder operations began at Chełmno on December 8, 1941. The killing center employed **gas vans** to murder its victims. Herbert Lange initially commanded the small number of SS and police functionaries at the site until his replacement by Hans Bothmann in

the spring of 1942. From mid-January 1942 until March 1943, thousands of Łódź ghetto inhabitants, as well as Jews from the surrounding districts, were murdered at Chełmno. In the spring of 1943, these **deportations** actions ceased, and SS personnel dismantled the camp. In the spring of 1944, however, German authorities decided to liquidate the Łódź ghetto, and for a brief period, Chełmno was again the site of killing operations, until mid-July 1944 when the last Łódź ghetto inhabitants were deported to **Auschwitz**. In all, at least 152,000 persons, the vast majority of them Jews, were murdered at Chełmno.

See Archives of the District Museum in Konin, *Chełmno Witnesses Speak*, ed. Łucja Pawlicka-Nowak, trans. Juliet D. Golden (Konin: Council for the Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom in Warsaw/District Museum in Konin, 2004).

Collection camp (*Sammellager*): These were holding locations where regional Jewish populations were detained before their **deportation** from Germany. Under the supervision of the **Gestapo**, collections camps served as assembly points where deportees were ordered to appear and register themselves and their property before their transport to ghettos, concentration camps, or killing centers in the East.

Compulsory sterilization: see **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases**.

Crematorium (*Krematorium*, Auschwitz): Five crematoria complexes with adjoining gas chambers were the primary means of murdering European Jews in **Auschwitz II–Birkenau**. Crematorium I, housing three large furnaces, was first used in September 1940 to incinerate the bodies of prisoners who had died or been murdered in Auschwitz and its satellite camps. Concealed behind large hedges, Crematoria II through V and their connected gas chambers were operational in Birkenau by the summer of 1943. After **selection**, victims were assembled in the crematoria yards. Under the guise of delousing, the victims undressed in a room connected to the gassing chamber. The **Zyklon B** gas used generally killed its victims within thirty minutes. **Sonderkommando** units then sorted the victims' clothing and valuables in the anterooms of the crematoria, while others of their number incinerated the corpses of the gassing victims. In the summer of 1944, the crematoria reached a burning capacity of twenty thousand corpses per day. Following the *Sonderkommando* revolt in October 7, 1944, in which Crematorium IV was severely damaged, **Heinrich Himmler** ordered the destruction of the Auschwitz gassing apparatus.

See Franciszek Piper, "Gas Chambers and Crematoria," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 157–182.

Dachau: Established in March 1933, the Dachau concentration camp was the first regular concentration camp established by the National Socialist government. Located near Munich, Germany, the early prisoner population consisted chiefly of political prisoners

and other ideological opponents of the Nazi regime. In time, Jehovah's Witnesses, **Roma**, homosexuals, "asocials," and recidivist criminals were also interned there; in the wake of **Kristallnacht**, more than eleven thousand Jewish men were briefly incarcerated at Dachau as well. The Dachau camp was a training center for **SS** concentration camp guards and became the model for all Nazi concentration camps. Prisoners at Dachau engaged in forced labor, both at the main camp and in over 160 subcamps. The total number of prisoners incarcerated at Dachau between 1933 and 1945 exceeded 188,000. Over forty thousand died at the camp between January 1940 and May 1945, as did an unknown number of unregistered prisoners. American forces liberated Dachau on April 29, 1945.

See Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Deportation: Deportation was an integral mechanism in the implementation of the "Final Solution." In this volume, the word has two contexts. First, it was the process of uprooting individuals, most notably Jews, from their home communities and transporting them to ghettos, camps, or extermination centers in the East. Second, deportation was a method of transferring Jews from ghettoized communities, such as the **Warsaw** and **Lódz** ghettos, to killing centers for "liquidation."

Der Stürmer: see **Julius Streicher**.

Deutsches Jungvolk: see **Hitler Youth**.

Displaced persons (DPs) and Displaced persons camps: At the end of World War II in Europe, some 7 to 9 million people had been displaced by the conflict. This number included 2 to 3 million former camp inmates—Jews and non-Jews—who had survived concentration and forced labor camps, killing centers, and forced death marches into the German interior in the last months of the war. By the end of 1945, more than 6 million individuals had returned to their countries of origin or succeeded in immigrating to other countries. Remaining behind were some 2 million refugees and displaced persons, among them 250,000 Jews. In order to deal with the massive postwar refugee crisis, a series of DP camps were established in Allied zones throughout Germany and Austria and in occupied areas of Italy. Originally run by Allied authorities within their zones of occupation, responsibility for the camps eventually devolved to the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration**.

See Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post–World War II Germany*, trans. John Broadwin (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001); Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Drancy: Located 20 kilometers (almost 12.5 miles) southeast of Paris, a former housing complex served as a transit and internment camp for the German occupiers and their

French collaborators after the invasion of France in May 1940. On August 21, 1941, Drancy became an internment camp for Jews. Although SS captain Theodor Dannecker, leader of the *Judenreferat* in Paris and **Adolf Eichmann**'s representative in France, had ultimate authority over the camp (he was succeeded by Heinz Röthke as of July 1942), its direct administration was originally entrusted to French officials. The first **deportation** left Drancy on March 27, 1942. Of a total seventy-five thousand Jews deported from French soil, predominantly to **Auschwitz** and **Sobibór**, some sixty-five thousand passed through Drancy.

See Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover, NH : University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

Eichmann, Adolf (1906–1962): Raised in the Austrian city of Linz, Adolf Eichmann joined the Nazi Party and the SS in 1932 in Austria before moving to Germany, where he joined **Reinhard Heydrich's Security Service**. Following the *Anschluss* of Austria, Eichmann began to serve a key function among German officials as an expert for “Jewish affairs.” With the coming of war, he became one of the chief agents of Nazi anti-Jewish policy and played a pivotal role in the **deportation** of European Jews to the killing centers of the “Final Solution.” In hiding after the war, he was abducted by the Israeli secret service in Argentina in May 1960 and put on trial in Jerusalem. Sentenced to death by the court, he was hanged in June 1962.

See Hans Safrian, *Eichmann's Men*, trans. Uta Stargardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010).

Eichmann Trial: The trial of **Adolf Eichmann** began on April 10, 1961, following his arrest in Argentina in May 1960. Israeli officials brought Eichmann to trial on the basis of Israel's Nazi and Nazi Collaborators' Punishment Law of 1950. Eichmann was found guilty and sentenced to death on December 11, 1961. Hanged on May 31, 1962, Eichmann remains the only person executed by the state of Israel. Prime Minister David Ben Gurion expressed the wish that the televised trial might educate audiences concerning the genocide of European Jewry. The depositions of survivors at the trial have contributed greatly to the wealth of eyewitness testimony concerning the Holocaust.

See State of Israel Ministry of Justice, *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings of the District Court of Jerusalem*, 9 vols. (Jerusalem: Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 1992–1995).

Einsatzgruppen (literally, “task forces”): In the context of the Holocaust, this word refers to mobile killing units composed primarily of German SS and police personnel operating in Soviet territory. Under the command of the German **Security Police** and **Security Service**, the *Einsatzgruppen* had among their tasks the murder of perceived

racial or political enemies found behind German combat lines in the occupied Soviet Union. Many scholars believe that the systematic killing of Jews by these forces represented the first step of the “Final Solution.” During the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the *Einsatzgruppen* followed the German army into Soviet territory, carrying out mass killing operations, often with the aid of indigenous auxiliary support. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* and Order Police battalions had killed over 1 million Soviet Jews and tens of thousands of Soviet political commissars, partisans, **Roma**, and institutionalized disabled patients.

See Christopher Browning with contributions by Jürgen Mattheus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941–1943* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992).

Einzelaktion: This was an individual or spontaneous action against Jews.

Eugenics (also **racial hygiene**): Together with virulent antisemitism, eugenics, or racial hygiene, formed a governing tenet in the development of Nazi ideology and helped to inspire some of the Nazi regime’s most radical and deadly policies. An international movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it endorsed “selective breeding” as a way to build a better society. Eugenicists sought to define “valuable” members of their community and encourage them to reproduce. They also aimed to discourage society’s “unworthy” from reproducing, often through proposed voluntary or **compulsory sterilization** measures. Many eugenicists concerned themselves with the “problem” of the mixing of races. Finally, eugenicists wished to divert vital resources from the “unworthy” to society’s “valuable” members. During the era of the Third Reich, Nazi authorities implemented policies that applied the concepts of racial hygiene in its most concrete and radical forms. In 1933, Adolf Hitler’s cabinet promulgated the **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases**, which mandated the compulsory sterilization of four hundred thousand “hereditarily ill” Germans. With the coming of war, German authorities inaugurated a clandestine “**euthanasia**,” or T4, program which claimed the lives of some two hundred thousand mentally and physically disabled patients during the war years. Finally, the genocide of 6 million European Jews and hundreds of thousands of **Roma and Sinti** (Gypsies) may be interpreted as the Nazis’ most radical application of racial hygiene.

See Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

“Euthanasia” program (Operation T4): “Euthanasia” was a euphemism for the National Socialist state’s first program of mass murder, a radical eugenic measure targeting disabled children and disabled adult patients living in institutional settings in Germany and German-annexed territories. In the autumn of 1939, Adolf Hitler signed an authorization vesting Philipp Bouhler, director of the Führer Chancellery,

and **Karl Brandt**, Hitler's attending physician, to spearhead the killing operation. Bouhler and Brandt initiated a child "euthanasia" program through which at least five thousand physically and mentally disabled children were murdered during the war years. By 1940, Brandt and Bouhler had commenced an adult killing campaign known as **Operation T4** (*Aktion T4*). At least 70,273 institutionalized mentally and physically disabled adults were murdered at the "euthanasia" gassing installations between January 1940 and August 1941. In August 1941 Hitler ordered a halt to the adult "euthanasia" gassing measure. At this time, many T4 functionaries were recruited as German personnel for the **Operation Reinhard** extermination camps of **Bełżec**, **Sobibór**, and **Treblinka**. In the summer of 1942, the adult "euthanasia" killing program resumed in a decentralized format. In all, historians estimate that some two hundred thousand institutionalized mentally and physically disabled people were murdered as a result of Operation T4 and its corollary programs between 1939 and 1945.

See Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Fort IX: Located outside the city of Kovno (today Kaunas) in Lithuania, Fort IX served as the primary killing site for the Jews of the Kovno ghetto and for Jews deported from western Europe to Kovno during the German occupation from 1941 to 1944. The largest mass shooting at Fort IX took place on October 28 and 29, 1941, during the *Grosse Aktion* in the Kovno ghetto, which claimed the lives of ninety-two hundred Jews.

See U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Hidden History of the Kovno Ghetto* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1997).

Frank, Anne (1929–1945): Annelies Frank was born in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 12, 1929, the second daughter of businessman Otto Frank and his wife, Edith. Upon Adolf Hitler's rise to power, the Franks fled to Amsterdam in order to evade the Nazis' anti-Jewish measures; when German troops invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, the family again faced Nazi persecution. On July 5, 1942, Anne's sister, Margot, was summoned for **deportation**; on the following day, the family went into hiding in an annex attached to Otto Frank's office building. During their time in hiding, Anne kept a diary, detailing the events that took place in the "secret annex." On August 4, 1944, the Franks' hiding place was discovered. The inhabitants of the annex were transferred to **Westerbork** and on September 3 to **Auschwitz**. Sometime the following month, Anne and her sister Margot arrived at **Bergen Belsen**, where both succumbed to **typhus** in late February or early March 1945. Otto Frank, the sole survivor of the group, returned to Amsterdam in the summer of 1945, where he recovered Anne's journal. Published in English in 1952, the work has become one of the world's most widely read books and transformed its author into a symbol of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust.

See Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition*, eds. David Barouw and Gerrold van der Stroom, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans, B. M. Mooyaart-Doubleday, and Susan Massotty (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

Frank, Hans (1900–1946): Receiving his law degree in 1926, Hans Frank became an early legal adviser for the fledgling Nazi Party and founded the National Socialists' Lawyers League (NS-Rechtswahrerbund) in 1928. In October 1939, Adolf Hitler appointed Frank to administer the **Generalgouvernement (General Government)**, the unincorporated portion of German-controlled Poland. In his role as the powerful chief civilian administrator of this region, Frank issued persecutory decrees for the region's Polish and Jewish populations and ordered forced labor for its residents. In the immediate postwar, the International Military Tribunal found Frank guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the trial of the major Nazi criminals at Nuremberg and sentenced him to death. Frank was hanged on October 16, 1946.

See Chris Klessman, "Hans Frank: Party Jurist and Governor General of Poland," in *The Brown Elite*, ed. Ronald Smelser and Rainer Zitelmann, trans. Mary Fischer (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 39–47.

Freiberg, Berel Dov (also Fraiberg, 1927–): Born in 1927, Berel Dov Freiberg was one of the very few youngsters to survive the **Sobibór** killing center. In 1942, he and other family members escaped the **Warsaw ghetto** but were caught in a roundup near Lublin in eastern Poland. Freiberg was deported to Sobibór in May 1942, aged fourteen. Surviving as a member of a **Sonderkommando** unit, he participated in the Sobibór Uprising on October 14, 1943, and was one of nearly seventy Sobibór prisoners to survive the war. The only member of his family to survive the Holocaust, Freiberg emigrated to Israel, where he testified at the **Eichmann Trial** in Jerusalem in 1961.

See Dov Freiberg, *To Survive Sobibor* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2007).

Gas van: Shooting was the most common form of killing used by the **Einsatzgruppen**. Yet, in the late summer of 1941, **Heinrich Himmler** requested that a more convenient mode of killing be developed. The result was the gas van, a mobile gas chamber mounted on the chassis of a cargo truck that employed carbon monoxide from the truck's exhaust to kill its victims. Gas vans made their first appearance on the eastern front in the late fall of 1941 and were eventually utilized, along with shooting, to murder Jews and other targets in most areas where the *Einsatzgruppen* operated. They were also employed at **Chełmno**, the first extermination center of the "Final Solution."

See Mathias Beer, "Die Entwicklung der Gaswagen beim Mord an den Juden," *Vierteljahrsshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 35 (1987): 403–417.

Gauleiter: Resulting from the stratification of the Nazi Party after 1925, a man serving as *Gauleiter* acted as the regional party head in a *Gau*, or region, and maintained a strong personal connection to Adolf Hitler in his capacity as Party leader. In acting as a kind of regional governor, the *Gauleiter*'s functions as a Party official increasingly became intertwined with state functions at the regional level.

Gehsperrre: In early September 1942, German officials announced an *Allgemeine Gehsperrre* (general curfew) in the **Lódź ghetto**. From September 5 to 12, 1942, German

forces brutally seized all those unfit for labor for **deportation**. Ghetto elder **Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski** had famously pled with ghetto inhabitants to “give me your children” to fill the German-imposed quota, thereby averting a communitywide deportation. Approximately 15,500 individuals were transported to their deaths at **Chełmno**; the vast majority of these victims were young children and adults over the age of sixty-five.

See Isaiah Trunk, *Lódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006).

Geltungsjude: A term used based on the First Ordinance to the **Reich Citizenship Law** of November 14, 1935, to describe a “**Mischling**” of the first degree (with two Jewish grandparents) who was legally treated as a “full Jew” based on his/her marriage to a Jewish spouse or practice of the Jewish faith.

See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

Generalgouvernement (General Government): The *Generalgouvernement* was the unincorporated portion of German-occupied Poland, governed by the civil administration of Governor General **Hans Frank**. After the German invasion and defeat of Poland in the autumn of 1939, Adolf Hitler ordered the creation of the General Government as a territory in which to concentrate Jews and other undesirable racial elements resettled from the Polish territories incorporated into the Reich, including Danzig, West Prussia, Eastern Upper Silesia, and Posen (Poznań).

Germanization: Implemented under the rubric of such efforts as the *Generalplan Ost* (General Plan East), Germanization aimed to homogenize ethnically the eastern annexed and occupied territories with Germans by deporting or killing the local Slavic and Jewish populations, settling **Volksdeutsche** (ethnic Germans) in their place, and allowing a small proportion of the local population to remain as forced laborers. Implementing Germanization involved multiple agencies, including the **Reich Security Main Office**, the **Race and Settlement Main Office**, and the office of the Reich Commissar for the Strengthening of Germandom (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, or RKFDV).

See Isabel Heinemann, “*Rasse, Siedlung, Deutsches Blut*: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas” (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

Gestapo (acronym for Geheime Staatspolizei, or Secret State Police): As the chief executive agency charged with fighting internal “enemies of the state,” the Gestapo functioned as the Third Reich’s main surveillance and terror instrument, first within Germany and later in the territories occupied by Germany. After 1933, the Gestapo became part of a complex apparatus of state and party police agencies and maintained special

administrative offices to supervise anti-Jewish policies. After 1934, the Gestapo was placed under SS chief **Heinrich Himmler**, then became part of **Reinhard Heydrich's Security Police** apparatus in mid-1936; in September 1939 the Gestapo was merged with the **Security Service (SD)** into the **Reich Security Main Office**.

See George C. Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1990).

Goebbels, Josef (1897–1945): Serving from 1926 as **Gauleiter** of Berlin, Josef Goebbels became the architect of the Nazi propaganda machine, with its radical anti-semitism and mystification of Adolf Hitler as Führer. In March 1933, Hitler appointed him Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (*Reichsminister für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*). Goebbels also directed the policies of the Reich Chamber of Culture (Reichskultkammer), particularly in matters of race, and played a key role in the instigation of **Kristallnacht** and subsequent anti-Jewish measures, including the **deportation** of Jews from Berlin to ghettos, concentration camps, and extermination centers.

See Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006).

Göring, Hermann (1893–1946): A World War I flight commander and participant in the 1923 Nazi putsch attempt in Munich, Hermann Göring provided an important link for Adolf Hitler's movement with Germany's conservative elite. Göring amassed an array of functions, particularly in the area of rearmament and economic policy; for instance, he was named Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan in October 1936 and Hitler's official successor in September 1939. In 1941, Göring charged **Reinhard Heydrich** with development of a "total solution to the Jewish Question." The highest-ranking Nazi in the dock at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Göring was convicted and sentenced to death in 1946.

See Richard J. Overy, *Göring: The "Iron Man"* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1984).

Gymnasium: This is a German school providing secondary education in preparation for college study, much like college-preparatory high schools in the United States.

Hereditary Health Law (Erbgesundheitsgesetz): see **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases**.

Heydrich, Reinhard (1904–1942): After his dismissal from the German navy in 1931, Reinhard Heydrich received a commission from SS chief **Heinrich Himmler** to create a secret service for the Nazi Party, the **Sicherheitsdienst (SD)**, or **Security Service**, which Heydrich headed until his death. In 1936, he became head of the **Security Police** main office that combined the **Gestapo** and the Criminal Police. The Security Police, together with the SD, increasingly controlled the Third Reich's anti-Jewish policy. In the autumn

of 1939, Heydrich merged the two agencies into the newly created **Reich Security Main Office**, which became the single most important agency for the implementation of the Holocaust through **deportation**, and mass murder. Attempting to bring the “Final Solution” under his closer control, Heydrich invited leading officials from state and party agencies to the **Wannsee Conference** held on January 20, 1942. Heydrich died as the result of an assassination attempt by Czechoslovak partisans in Prague; as a reprisal for his death, the Czech city of **Lidice** was destroyed and its inhabitants murdered or deported to concentration camps.

See Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

Himmler, Heinrich (1900–1945): An early Nazi Party member and a participant in the November 1923 Beer Hall Putsch in Munich, Heinrich Himmler was appointed by Adolf Hitler in early 1929 to become the leader of the **SS (Reichsführer SS)**. After 1933, Himmler advanced rapidly from his initially small power base in Bavaria as police president in Munich to become head of the **Gestapo** in Prussia in 1934 and chief of the German police in mid-1936. During the war, Himmler further expanded his SS and police apparatus to uphold Nazi control in the Reich and in German-controlled countries and to play the key role in executing the genocide of European Jewry.

See Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

Hirsch, Fredy (Alfred) (1916–1944): Aboard one of the first transports to **Theresienstadt** in the winter of 1941, popular Jewish youth leader Fredy Hirsch became deputy director for youth services in the ghetto. In September 1943, Hirsch was deported from Theresienstadt to **Auschwitz** and absorbed into the **Theresienstadt family camp** in **Birkenau**. There, Hirsch and a staff of counselors and teachers organized educational and social activities for the camp’s youngsters and sought to improve their physical welfare. On March 8, 1944, the family camp was liquidated, and most of the children, along with their family members and teachers, were murdered. On March 7, Hirsch apparently committed suicide in his quarters.

See Nili Keren, “The Family Camp,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 428–40.

Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend): In July 1926, this official youth organization of the Nazi Party was officially incorporated into the **SA**. Following the Nazi assumption of power, **Baldur von Schirach** assumed the leadership of the Hitlerjugend, organizing a general membership of boys from fourteen to eighteen and a corresponding junior branch, the German Young Volk (**Deutsches Jungvolk**, or **Pimpfe**). Hitler Youth members received both physical and paramilitary training and ideological indoctrination. On December 1, 1936, the Law Concerning the Hitler Youth (*Gesetz über die Hitlerjugend*) called

for the assimilation of all German youth into the appropriate youth organizations and made membership obligatory.

Horthy, Miklós (1868–1957): In 1920, Miklós Horthy was declared regent and head of the Hungarian state, a position he held until October 1944. A political conservative, Horthy forged an alliance with Nazi Germany in an effort to regain Hungarian crown lands ceded following World War I. The Horthy regime imposed harsh antisemitic measures against Hungarian Jews beginning in 1938. German troops moved to occupy Hungary on March 19, 1944, and began to deport Hungarian Jews in May of that year. Faced with a worsening military situation, Horthy called a halt to these **deportations** on July 7, 1944. When Horthy negotiated with Soviet authorities and prepared to announce an armistice, German officials arrested him on October 15, 1944, and installed a new government under the fascist and radically antisemitic **Arrow Cross**. Following Hungarian defeat and his release by the Allies, Horthy emigrated to Portugal, where he died in 1957.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): This humanitarian organization was begun in the mid-nineteenth century to aid victims of international conflict. The ICRC has often been criticized for failing to make the rescue of Jews and political victims of Nazi persecution a priority during the war years. Under pressure from Danish authorities, German officials allowed a rare and highly choreographed visit of ICRC representatives to a sanitized **Theresienstadt** in June 1944.

See Jean-Claude Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Jewish Badge (also **Jewish Star** or **Yellow Star**): One of the most ubiquitous antisemitic measures employed in German- and Axis-controlled Europe was the mandatory wearing of the Jewish badge. The effort to impose a distinctive mark on the Jewish population marginalized Jews and rendered them more vulnerable to official and spontaneous discriminatory actions. **Hans Frank** issued the first decree imposing the Jewish badge in occupied Poland in November 1939, ordering all Jews over the age of twelve living in the **General Government** to wear an armband affixed with a blue Jewish star on the right sleeve of their outer garment. Similar regulations, with various discrepancies regarding the badge's appearance and the age of the wearer, were enacted in other districts of Poland and in areas occupied by German forces following the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. German Jews were forced to wear the Jewish badge on September 15, 1941, shortly before the first **deportations** of Jews from the Reich. Legislation mandating the Jewish badge was soon adopted in western lands occupied by Germany and in German satellite states.

See Diemut Majer, “*Non-Germans under the Third Reich*”: *The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939–1945*, trans. Peter Thomas Hill, Edward Vance Humphrey, and Brian Levin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2003).

Jewish Order Service (also Jewish Order Police): This refers to the Jewish police force in the ghettos of eastern Europe created by local **Jewish Councils** on the order of the German authorities to police the ghettos and enforce German commands and decrees. When **deportations** began and German authorities compelled the Jewish Order Police to assist in the operations, aversion to the Jewish Order Police among ghetto residents turned to hostility and fanned resistance among underground organizations.

Judenrat (Jewish Council; pl.: Judenräte): During World War II, German authorities established Jewish Councils among Jewish communities in areas under their jurisdiction. These Jewish municipal administrations were required to ensure that Nazi orders and regulations were implemented. In ghettoized communities, Jewish Councils also worked to provide community services for their incarcerated population. Used as a tool to implement Nazi anti-Jewish policy, Jewish Councils often incurred the distrust and odium of their communities, and they remain a controversial feature of the Holocaust among survivors and postwar scholars.

See Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

Kapo (also capo): In the Nazi concentration camp system, *Kapos* were prisoner functionaries selected by, and under the command of, the **SS Kommandoführer**. Most often chosen from among the criminal and political prisoner population in the camps, *Kapos* oversaw the work production of their units, accounted for the prisoners under their supervision, and distributed punishment to those under their command. In the latter capacity, many *Kapos* earned a reputation for extreme cruelty and mistreatment of other prisoners.

Kibbutz (Hebrew: “gathering”): In the early twentieth century, the kibbutz was a form of collective settlement instigated by the Zionist movement in **Palestine** and based on ideas about shared forms of production, education, and ownership popular among reformist circles since the late nineteenth century.

See Michael Brenner, *Zionism: A Brief History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2003).

Kinderaktion (children’s action): This refers to the roundup and **deportation** of children from a ghetto or concentration camp. Because very young children were not usually utilized for forced labor, Nazi authorities viewed them as “useless eaters” and targeted them for early deportation measures. A large percentage of the 15,500 people deported during the **Gehsperrre** from the **Lódź ghetto** to **Chełmno** in September 1942 were children under the age of ten. Children figured as a large proportion of victims in the Dünamünde Aktion, in which thirty-eight hundred Jews from the Riga ghetto were massacred in March 1942. In addition, children’s actions took place in Kovno on March 27 and 28, 1944, and in the context of the first great deportation from the **Warsaw ghetto** to **Treblinka** in July 1942.

Kinderblock (Children's Block, Auschwitz)): In the brief months of its existence, the **Theresienstadt family camp** at **Birkenau** was a haven for children who might otherwise have been murdered directly upon arrival at Auschwitz. **Fredy Hirsch**, earlier deputy director for youth services in the **Theresienstadt** ghetto, arranged with Birkenau camp officials to create a separate children's block (Block 31) where youngsters might receive educational instruction, engage in structured play, and obtain more appropriate and nutritious meals. The *Kinderblock* was dissolved with the liquidation of the Theresienstadt family camp in early July 1944.

See Nili Keren, "The Family Camp," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 428–40.

Kindertransport (children's transport): Following **Kristallnacht**, the British government agreed to permit an unspecified number of children under the age of seventeen to enter Great Britain from Germany and German-annexed territories. Private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for each child's care, education, and eventual emigration from Britain. The first *Kindertransport* arrived in Harwich, Great Britain, on December 2, 1938, bringing some two hundred children; the very last *Kindertransport* sailed from the Netherlands for Britain on May 14, 1940, the day on which the Dutch army surrendered to German forces. In all, the rescue operation brought about nine to ten thousand children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland to Great Britain.

See Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

Korczak, Janusz (1878–1942): This was the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit, an eminent Polish pediatrician, pedagogue, and children's author, born in Warsaw on July 22, 1878. In 1911, Korczak came to direct the Dom Seriot orphanage, which incorporated his innovative approaches to child care. Over the course of his career, he founded Poland's first national children's newspaper, wrote influential books on parenting and child psychology, and worked within the juvenile court system to defend the rights of children. In 1940, when German authorities established the **Warsaw ghetto**, Korczak resettled there with his young Jewish charges. On August 5, 1942, SS officials ordered the children living at the orphanage to appear for **deportation**. Refusing to abandon his charges, Korczak led a column of children to the **Umschlagplatz** and boarded the train with his wards. The group was gassed upon arrival at **Treblinka**.

See Janusz Korczak, *Ghetto Diary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Janusz Korczak, *King Matt the First*, trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986); Betty Jean Lifton, *The King of Children: A Biography of Janusz Korczak* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988).

Kraus, Gilbert and Eleanor: Inspired by the **Kindertransport** campaign that brought young Austrian and German refugees to Great Britain, Philadelphia attorney Gilbert

Kraus and his wife, Eleanor, led a successful effort in the summer of 1939 to bring a group of Jewish refugee children to the United States. Under the aegis of the Brith Sholom lodge, a Jewish fraternal organization headquartered in Philadelphia, the Krauses visited Nazi Germany, choosing fifty Jewish children from Vienna and securing visas for the youngsters to travel to the United States. The Krauses and their lodge personally vouched for the financial maintenance of the children and arranged foster homes for them in the Philadelphia area.

Kraus, Michal (Michael) (1930–): Michal Kraus grew up in the town of Nachod (today in the Czech Republic), where his father, Karl, was a physician. In December 1942, the Krauses were deported to **Theresienstadt**. In December 1943, the family was transported to **Auschwitz II–Birkenau** and absorbed within the **Theresienstadt family camp**. In June 1944, Michal's mother, Lotte, was transferred to the Stutthof concentration camp, where she perished in January 1945. In early July, Auschwitz camp officials liquidated the family camp; Karl Kraus was gassed on July 11, 1944. Michal numbered among eighty-nine young boys spared by physician **Josef Mengele** and survived Auschwitz as a “runner,” assigned to convey communications and supplies among officials in Birkenau. In early 1945, Kraus endured a series of forced marches from Auschwitz; on May 5, 1945, he was liberated by American forces at Gunskirchen in Upper Austria. Returning to Czechoslovakia, the teenager reconstructed his Holocaust experiences in an extraordinary three-volume chronicle, completed in 1947.

Kristallnacht or **Reichskristallnacht** (Crystal Night or Night of the Broken Glass): On the night of November 9 to 10, 1938, a nationwide **pogrom** against German Jews erupted throughout Germany and annexed Austria, as well as in areas of Czechoslovakia recently occupied by German troops. *Kristallnacht* had its roots in the shooting of Ernst vom Rath, a German official stationed in Paris, by a young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, on November 7, 1938. Vom Rath's death two days later coincided with the anniversary of the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch; the Nazi Party leadership used the occasion to launch a night of antisemitic excesses. The pogrom was initiated primarily by Nazi Party officials and conducted by members of the Nazi Party, the **SA**, and the **Hitler Youth**. The violence destroyed 267 synagogues throughout Greater Germany. Rioters smashed windows, plundered homes, and looted Jewish-owned shops and businesses. *Kristallnacht* claimed the lives of at least ninety-one Jews. In its aftermath, **SS** and police units arrested some thirty thousand Jewish males, incarcerating them in concentration camps until each prisoner could produce papers for emigration abroad. The events of *Kristallnacht* represented an important turning point in Nazi antisemitic policy. After the pogrom, anti-Jewish measures radicalized dramatically, with a concentration of powers for their implementation resting more and more concretely in the hands of the SS.

See Walter Pehle, ed., *November 1938: From “Reichskristallnacht” to Genocide*, trans. William Templer (New York: Berg, 1991); Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht, 1938* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).

Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities (*Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung deutscher Schulen und Hochschulen*): Nazi efforts to expel Jewish pupils from German public schools began with the April 25, 1933, Law against the Overcrowding of German Schools. In the years that followed, regional ordinances further limited Jewish school attendance in certain areas, but a comprehensive national ban came only with the Decree on Schooling of Jews of November 15, 1938, which dismissed all Jewish pupils from German schools.

See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*. Vol. 1: *The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*): Also known as the Hereditary Health Law (*Erbgesundheitsgesetz*) of July 1933, this legislation ordered the **compulsory sterilization** of persons suffering from specific diseases or impairments. Five of the disabilities designated in the ordinance represented psychiatric or neurological disorders, including schizophrenia, manic-depressive (bipolar) disorder, hereditary epilepsy, Huntington's chorea, and "hereditary feeble-mindedness." Four physical conditions also warranted sterilization under the new law: hereditary deafness, hereditary blindness, serious hereditary physical deformity, and severe alcoholism. From January 1, 1934, until the end of World War II, some four hundred thousand Germans were forcibly sterilized under the auspices of the Hereditary Health Law.

See Gisela Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Paul Weindling, "Compulsory Sterilization in National Socialist Germany," *German History* 5 (1987): 10–24.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*, or *Blutschutzgesetz*): see **Nuremberg Laws**.

Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service: (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtenstums*): The Civil Service Law decreed the enforced retirement of Jews and "politically unreliable elements" from the German civil service. Signed by Adolf Hitler on April 7, 1933, the measure marked the National Socialists' first major piece of anti-Jewish legislation.

See Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (London: André Deutsch, 1970).

Lebensborn (Fount of Life): This Nazi organization was established in 1935 in an effort to reverse Germany's dwindling birthrate and to increase the number of "racially valuable" offspring. Instigated by Reichsführer **Heinrich Himmler**, the effort provided financial assistance and maternity care to the wives of SS men and also to unmarried mothers, a group that concerned Nazi racial hygienists and population planners. Lebensborn administrators encouraged unwed mothers to give up their infants after birth, and the organization managed both orphanages and adoption services that placed

Lebensborn children with “deserving” German families. Some seven thousand children were born in the organization’s homes in Germany between 1936 and 1945. Lebensborn officials played a more insidious role in placing children from eastern Europe chosen for **Germanization** with adoptive families in Germany.

Lidice: On May 27, 1942, Czechoslovak parachutists Jan Kubiš and Jozef Gabčík succeeded in fatally injuring **Reinhard Heydrich**, a key planner of the “Final Solution” and the governor of the **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**. Following the assassination attempt, **Gestapo** intelligence erroneously linked the Czech village of Lidice with the assassins. On June 10, 1942, German SS and police shot the village’s 173 men and boys on the outskirts of Lidice. The town itself was razed to the ground. With few exceptions, the female adult population of Lidice was deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp. Forcibly separated from their mothers, the children of Lidice received a racial screening by SS personnel. Nine children who possessed sufficient “Germanic” background to make them candidates for **Germanization** were placed with adoptive German parents. The remaining children of Lidice were transported to Łódź and are believed to have been gassed at **Chełmno** in early July 1942.

See Jolana Macková and Ivan Ulrych, eds., *Fates of the Children of Lidice: Memories, Testimonies, Documents*, trans. Elias Khelil (Nymburk: Lidice Memorial, 2004).

Łódź ghetto (also Litzmannstadt ghetto): The Łódź ghetto was established in February 1940 and initially held 164,000 inhabitants. Appointed head of its **Judenrat** by German authorities, **Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski** displayed energy and organizational skill in overseeing the ghetto’s workshops and social agencies, but he was viewed as a controversial and divisive figure. The ghetto boasted an impressive array of social services, including schools, hospitals, and a postal system. Living conditions there were deplorable, however, and some 20 percent of the ghetto’s population died as a result of starvation and disease. From January to September 1942, German authorities deported over seventy thousand Jews and five thousand **Roma** to **Chełmno**. In the spring of 1944, the Nazis decided to liquidate the Łódź ghetto, then the last remaining ghetto in Poland. In June and July 1944, the Germans deported thousands of Jews to Chełmno; in August 1944, the surviving population of the ghetto was deported to Auschwitz.

See Isaiah Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, ed. and trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006).

Majdanek (Lublin/Majdanek): This was a vast forced labor and concentration camp near Lublin. Constructed in October 1941, it incarcerated Jews temporarily spared from **Operation Reinhard** killing operations in order to serve as forced labor in the Lublin District. Tens of thousands of Jewish forced laborers too weak to work were murdered in the Majdanek gas chambers and in shooting operations or died through mistreatment and starvation. After uprisings at **Sobibór** and **Treblinka**, **Heinrich Himmler** ordered SS and police forces to shoot over forty thousand Jewish prisoners in the Lublin

District, including eight thousand from Majdanek, at the camp under the auspices of Operation Harvest Festival (*Erntefest*) on November 3, 1943. Soviet forces liberated an intact Majdanek on July 24, 1944.

Mauthausen: After the incorporation of Austria in the *Anschluss* in March 1938, German authorities established the Mauthausen concentration camp near Linz, Austria. The camp held recidivist criminals and asocials in the first years of its existence. After World War II began, the number of prisoners in Mauthausen increased greatly, including more than seven thousand Spanish republicans turned over by **Vichy** authorities in France. Of more than two hundred thousand prisoners who passed through the Mauthausen camp system between August 1938 and May 1945, over one hundred thousand died there, including fourteen thousand Jewish prisoners. U.S. forces liberated Mauthausen on May 5, 1945.

See Hans Marsalek, *The History of Mauthausen Concentration Camp*, trans. Max Garcia (Vienna: Austrian Society of Mauthausen Concentration Camp, 1995).

Mengele, Josef (1911–1979): In 1937 Josef Mengele joined the Nazi Party; the following year, the same year in which he received his medical degree, he joined the **SS**. After service with the **Waffen-SS**, Mengele was transferred to **Auschwitz**, on May 30, 1943. He began as the medical officer responsible for **Birkenau**'s Gypsy camp; several weeks after the Gypsy camp's liquidation, Mengele became chief camp physician of Auschwitz II (Birkenau) in November 1943. Associated more closely with **selection** duty than any other medical officer at Auschwitz, Mengele also became infamous for his deadly medical experimentation, particularly with twins. With the aid of his prosperous family, Mengele evaded postwar prosecution and fled to South America; in declining health, he drowned while swimming near Bertioga, Brazil, on February 7, 1979.

See Sven Keller, *Günzburg und der Fall Josef Mengele: Die Heimatstadt und die Jagd nach dem NS-Verbrecher* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Office of Special Investigations, *In the Matter of Josef Mengele: A Report to the Attorney General of the United States* (Washington, DC: Office of Special Investigations, 1992).

Mischling (mixed-breed, hybrid; pl.: *Mischlinge*): This was a racial category formally introduced into the Third Reich's anti-Jewish politics following the promulgation of the **Nuremberg Laws**. This term also applied to children of other mixed "races."

See Jeremy Noakes, "The Development of Nazi Policy towards the German-Jewish 'Mischlinge,' 1933–1945," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 291–354.

Monowitz (Auschwitz III): see **Buna**.

Muselmann (pl.: *Muselmänner*): Concentration camp inmates used this term to describe ailing or exhausted fellow prisoners who had lost the will to live. Given their inability to work or stand for roll call (*Appell*) for significant lengths of time, *Muselmänner* might survive for only a short while. The origin of the term is uncertain but is believed to stem from the German word for "Muslim," as many Europeans at the time believed Islam to have a fatalistic element.

Mussfeld, Erich (also recorded as Mussfeldt) (1913–1948): A baker by profession, Erich Mussfeld joined the Nazi Party in 1939. He first served as a guard at the **Majdanek** concentration camp and was transferred to **Auschwitz** in May 1944. There he supervised the **Sonderkommando** at the **Birkenau** crematoria. In January 1947, an American military tribunal sentenced Mussfeld to a life term; shortly thereafter, he was extradited to Poland where he was sentenced to death and executed on January 24, 1948, in Kraków for crimes committed at Auschwitz.

Nuremberg Laws: This phrase is frequently used to describe the two basic pillars of Nazi antisemitic legislation: the **Reich Citizenship Law** (Reichsbürgergesetz) and the **Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor** (Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre). This legislation was promulgated, together with the Reich Flag Law, on September 15, 1935, during the annual Nazi Party rally and at a specially convened session of the Reichstag in Nuremberg, Franconia. The first law restricted citizenship, and thus full protection under the law, to those of “German or related blood.” The Law for Protection of German Blood and German Honor proscribed marriage and sexual contact between German “**Aryans**” and Jews. Subsequent regulations defined a “Jew” as someone with at least three Jewish grandparents (according to their religious affiliation) or as someone descended from two Jewish grandparents who him- or herself practiced the Jewish religion or was married to a Jew. Persons with two Jewish grandparents, but without Jewish religious affiliation or a Jewish spouse, came to be defined as “**Mischlinge** of the first degree” (*Mischlinge ersten Grades*). Persons with one Jewish grandfather or grandmother were labeled “**Mischlinge** of the second degree” (*Mischlinge zweiten Grades*). With later clauses added, the Nuremberg Laws formed one of the basic laws of the Third Reich that facilitated the **deportation**, murder, and expropriation of German Jews.

See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 61–78; Karl A. Schleunes, ed., *Legislating the Holocaust: The Bernhard Loesener Memoirs and Supporting Documents* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

Nyiszli, Miklós (1901–1956): A Hungarian physician, Miklós Nyiszli was deported in June 1944 with his wife and young daughter to **Auschwitz**. Volunteering to work as a physician in the prisoner barracks, Nyiszli came to the attention of **Birkenau** camp physician **Josef Mengele**, who forced the doctor to aid in his medical experimentation upon Auschwitz prisoners. In 1946, Nyiszli published a harrowing account of his experiences as a prisoner-physician in *Dr. Mengele boncoló orvosa voltam az Auschwitzi krematóriumban*.

See Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor’s Eyewitness Account*, trans. Tibère Kremer and Richard Seaver (Hungarian ed., 1946; New York: Frederick Fell Publishers, 1960).

Obshestvo Remeslenofo zemledelcheskofo Truda (ORT, or Society for Trades and Agricultural Labor): This was a Jewish self-help organization founded in 1880 in Russia to provide Jews with occupational training in agriculture and trade. The organization

expanded in the interwar years to nearly every country of eastern and central Europe with a significant Jewish population, often in cooperation with the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee**. During World War II, ORT continued vocational training in many ghettos in eastern Europe. With the Jewish **displaced persons** crisis after the war, ORT, in cooperation with the **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration**, trained forty to forty-five thousand individuals, providing Jewish displaced persons with skills often critical to securing an immigration visa.

Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE, or Children's Aid Society): Begun by physicians in Russia in 1912 as Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniya Yevreyev (Society for the Protection of the Health of Jews), the organization expanded into many European countries with significant Jewish populations and focused increasingly on the welfare of children in its care. Relocating to Paris in 1933, the organization assumed the name Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants. OSE ran a number of orphanages in France for Jewish refugee children and, when the **deportations** of Jews in France began in 1942, organized an underground effort to smuggle many of the children from OSE orphanages to the safety of neutral countries.

Oneg Shabbat (In Celebration of the Sabbath; also Oneg Shabbas and Oneg Shabes): Established by Warsaw historian and social worker **Emmanuel Ringelblum**, Oneg Shabbat was a clandestine archive that documented the history of the **Warsaw ghetto** and its inhabitants. With the aid of his assistant, Rabbi Simon Huberband, archive secretary **Hersh Wasser**, and a core of other professionals and volunteers, Ringelblum collected diaries, letters, and testimonies of ghetto residents, compiled hundreds of documents concerning the German occupation, and commissioned studies of the ghetto by experts. The activities of Oneg Shabbat continued until the first large-scale **deportation** action, when Ringelblum directed that the underground archive's material be buried in milk cans and metal boxes within the ghetto. After the war, Hersh Wasser helped to recover much of the archive's materials, which are reposed in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

See Joseph Kermish, *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor: Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S." (Oneg Shabbath)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1986); Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

Operation Reinhard (Aktion Reinhard or Aktion Reinhardt): In late 1941 and spring 1942, the planners of the "Final Solution" founded the **Bielzec**, **Sobibór**, and **Treblinka** killing centers, known collectively as the Operation Reinhard camps, to facilitate the murder of the Jews of the **General Government**. These killing centers claimed the lives of some 1.5 million Jews and thousands of Poles, **Roma**, and Soviet prisoners of war. In November 1943, after prisoner revolts at Sobibór and Treblinka, SS and police units shot the Jewish labor forces still incarcerated at Trawniki, Poniatowa, and **Majdanek** during Operation Harvest Festival (*Erntefest*). Forty-two thousand prisoners were murdered through this shooting action on November 3 and 4, 1943, bringing Operation Reinhard to a close.

See Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

Operation T4: see “euthanasia” program.

Ostmark: This was the Nazi name for annexed Austria after the **Anschluss**; it derives from the medieval designation for what was then the Austrian March.

Palestine (or Palestinian Mandate): This was a territory under British mandate beginning in 1920. Zionists had advocated a return to the Jewish “ancestral homeland” for Jews since the late nineteenth century, and Jewish immigration to Palestine began in earnest in 1882. Increased Jewish immigration and native Arab resistance to its manifestation induced the British government to place a strict quota on Jews immigrating to Palestine; the British White Paper of 1939 tightened these restrictions, limiting the ability of Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution to find a safe haven there. After the war, the growing number of Holocaust survivors and refugees hoping to reach Palestine led to massive illegal immigration. The British government announced that it would vacate the Palestinian Mandate by August 1948; on May 14, 1948, the Jewish leadership under future prime minister David Ben-Gurion declared an independent state of Israel.

Partisan: In the context of this volume, “partisan” refers to a unit or detachment of irregular troops waging guerilla warfare and sabotage against German forces and those who collaborated with them. Some twenty to thirty thousand Jewish fighters joined partisan bands that operated extensively throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, often cooperating with the broad-based Soviet partisan movement.

Pimpf: This refers to a member of the **Deutsches Jungvolk**; see **Hitler Youth**.

Pogrom (from Russian: “destruction”): A localized violent assault on a group of individuals and their property, often instigated by state or local authorities. The term is usually ascribed to antisemitic violence. The events of **Kristallnacht** are often characterized as a pogrom.

Police Decree Concerning the Designation of Jews (Polizeiverordnung über die Kennzeichnung der Juden): This police decree of September 15, 1941, compelled German Jews to wear the **Jewish badge**, shortly before the first systematic **deportations** of Jews from the Reich began in October 1941. The measure required all Jews over the age of six to attach to the left side of their outermost garment a six-pointed yellow star, inscribed with the word *Jude* (Jew) in black lettering. The decree also applied to Jews in Austria and the **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**.

Ponary: The Ponary Woods, located eight miles from the city of Vilna (today Vilnius, Lithuania), served as the primary killing site for the Jewish population in the Vilna ghetto. From July 4, 1941, to July 1944, German **Einsatzgruppen** and Lithuanian auxiliary units systematically massacred around one hundred thousand Jews at Ponary.

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: During the Munich crisis of September 1938, Great Britain and France forced the Czechoslovak Republic to cede its German-speaking borderlands (e.g., the Sudetenland) to Nazi Germany. On March 15, 1939, the German army occupied the remainder of rump Czechoslovakia. German authorities annexed to the Reich the territory roughly encompassing the modern Czech Republic, creating the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. With its incorporation by Nazi Germany, the new Protectorate adopted the bulk of Nazi antisemitic legislation. On September 27, 1941, **Reinhard Heydrich** assumed the effective government of the territory until his death following an assassination attempt in June 1942.

Race and Settlement Main Office SS (Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt, or RuSHA): The Race and Resettlement Office was originally established in 1931 to maintain the “racial purity” of the **SS** organization. Initially tasked with vetting the ancestry of SS recruits and their existing or intended spouses, RuSHA officials eventually helped to implement Nazi race and settlement policies in the eastern occupied and annexed territories during World War II. Their racial “experts” helped to determine **Volksdeutsche** (ethnic Germans) fit for assimilation in the German Reich and chose “racially suitable” children in Slavic lands for inclusion in the **Lebensborn** program.

See Isabel Heinemann, *“Rasse, Siedlung, Deutsches Blut”: Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

Racial hygiene: see **eugenics**.

Rassenschande (“race defilement”): This term describes real or purported sexual contact between “Aryans” and “non-Aryans” (especially Jews). The **Nuremberg Laws** provided the apparatus to make such relations punishable by law.

Ravensbrück: This, following the women’s camp at Auschwitz, was the largest concentration camp for women in the German Reich. German authorities began construction of the camp in November 1938 at a site in northern Germany some eighty kilometers (fifty miles) north of Berlin. In April 1941, **SS** officials established a small men’s camp adjacent to the main camp. Beginning in the summer of 1942, **SS** physicians subjected many prisoners at Ravensbrück to grisly medical experimentation. In January 1945, Ravensbrück and its subcamps held more than fifty thousand, mostly female, prisoners; among the inmates were political prisoners, “asocials,” **Roma and Sinti**, Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and “race defilers” (see **Rassenschande**). Soviet troops liberated Ravensbrück in April 1945.

Razzia: This refers to a roundup, as for **deportation** to a concentration camp or killing center.

Realschule: This refers to a type of secondary school in German-speaking lands, generally catering to pupils between the ages of eleven and seventeen.

Reich Citizenship Law: see **Nuremberg Laws**.

Reichsmark (RM): This was the currency used in Germany from 1924 until June 20, 1948. The Reichsmark was subdivided into one hundred (Reichs)pfennigs.

Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA, or Reich Security Main Office): This agency combined with the **Security Police** and the **Security Service** under the authority of Reichsführer-SS **Heinrich Himmler** and was directed by **Reinhard Heydrich**; after Heydrich's death, Ernst Kaltenbrunner eventually undertook leadership of the organization. The RSHA was the central mechanism for extrajudicial terror and repression in Germany and the occupied territories and a key agency in the implementation of the "Final Solution."

Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland (Reich Association of Jews in Germany): This successor organization to the **Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland** was formally installed in July 1939. In the hands of the **Gestapo**, the Reichsvereinigung became a tool for the administration and control of Jews remaining in Germany. Having served the purpose set by the regime, it was dissolved in 1943 and its staff deported.

See Beate Meyer, "The Inevitable Dilemma: The Reich Association (*Reichsvereinigung*) of Jews in Germany, the Deportations, and the Jews Who Went Underground," in *On Germans and Jews under the Nazi Regime*, ed. Moshe Zimmermann (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2006), 297–312.

Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jews, or RV); also **Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland** (Reich Representation of Jews in Germany): The Reichsvertretung was founded in September 1933 by a coalition of leading German Jewish functionaries, most prominently Leo Baeck, who subsequently served as the organization's president. Intended as a coordinating umbrella organization for the many German Jewish organizations in the Third Reich, the Reichsvertretung cooperated closely with the Jewish agencies and associations inside and outside Germany. The **Nuremberg Laws** had an immediate effect on the organization's ability to protect Jews in Germany from persecution and resulted in the organization's extended efforts to encourage emigration; the organization also changed its name to Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland at this time. By the spring of 1939, the hitherto largely autonomous Reichsvertretung had transformed into the **Gestapo**-controlled Reichsvereinigung.

See Otto Dov Kulka and Esriel Hildesheimer, "The Central Organization of Jews in the Third Reich and Its Archives," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 187–201.

Righteous Among the Nations: Yad Vashem bestows this title on non-Jewish individuals who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. In German-occupied eastern Europe, the punishment for sheltering or assisting Jews was often death. In 1962, Yad Vashem formed a thirty-five-member Commission for the Designation of the Righteous to award the title "Righteous Among the Nations." As of January 2010, 23,226 people from forty-four countries have been recognized as "Righteous Gentiles."

See Israel Gutman and Sara Bender, eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, 5 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003).

Ringelblum, Emmanuel (1900–1944): A historian by training, Emmanuel Ringelblum established **Oneg Shabbat**, a clandestine archive that documented the history of the **Warsaw ghetto** and its inhabitants. Ringelblum himself contributed to the documentation effort, with writings such as the monograph *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*. During the first great **deportation** action from the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942, Ringelblum ordered that the archive be buried in a series of milk cans and metal boxes in order to preserve the work of the organization. In March 1943, Ringelblum and his family succeeded in escaping to the “**Aryan** side” of Warsaw, where they were discovered in their hideout in March 1944 and murdered.

See Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Polish-Jewish Relations during the Second World War*, eds. Joseph Kermish and Shmuel Krakowski (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974); Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emmanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

Roma and Sinti (Gypsies; also Romani): Among the groups the Nazi regime and its Axis partners singled out for persecution on racial grounds were the Roma and Sinti. Roma were affected in great numbers by several acts of Nazi legislation, including the **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases** and the **Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor**, whose ancillary legislation was extended to Roma and other “racially inferior” minorities. In the mid-1930s, German authorities established Gypsy camps (*Zigeunerlager*) throughout the Reich. Roma were deported to concentration camps including **Buchenwald**, **Dachau**, Sachsenhausen, **Mauthausen**, **Auschwitz**, **Chełmno**, and **Ravensbrück**. In addition they were interned in the Lublin, Łódź, and **Warsaw ghettos**. Members of the **Einsatzgruppen** undertook killing actions that included Roma victims in the Soviet Union and Serbia. The Croatian **Ustaša** killed and interned thousands of Roma along with Serbs and Jews. In 1941, thousands of Romanian Roma and Jews were deported to Transnistria. Historians estimate that the Germans and their allies killed 25 percent of all European Roma, or some 220,000 Roma individuals.

See Michael Zimmermann, *Verfolgt, Vertrieben, Vernichtet: Die nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik gegen Roma und Sinti* (Essen: Klartext, 1989).

Rudashevski, Yitskhok (1927–1943): On September 6, 1941, Yitskhok Rudashevski and his family received orders to move into the Vilna ghetto. Shortly thereafter, the fourteen-year-old began to write a diary, which he filled with vivid descriptions of the ghetto and the individuals who inhabited it. Rudashevski was also active in forging an intellectual life for the youth of the Vilna ghetto. He and his family went into hiding when **deportations** from Vilna began, but **SS** officials discovered them in early October 1943 and murdered them at **Ponary**. A cousin who had escaped deportation located the

family's hiding place immediately after the war and found Rudashevski's diary, which was first published in Yiddish in 1953.

See Isaac Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto, June 1941–April 1943* (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1973).

Rumkowski, Mordechai Chaim (1887–1944): Russian-born Chaim Rumkowski served as the director of the Helenowek Jewish orphanage in Łódź until October 1939. Following the German invasion of Poland, German authorities established the **Łódź ghetto** and appointed a **Judenrat** with Rumkowski at its head. Directly accountable to German administrator **Hans Biebow**, Rumkowski wielded extraordinary authority over the internal management of the ghetto. He displayed enormous organizational skill in overseeing the ghetto's workshops and social agencies, but he governed in an autocratic fashion and was viewed by contemporaries, as by scholars today, as a controversial and divisive figure. Rumkowski believed from the start that the ghetto's best chance for survival lay in cooperating fully with the German officials. Thus, he acceded in December 1941 to German demands for **deportations** of ghetto residents to **Treblinka**. On September 4, 1942, faced with a further call for twenty thousand deportees, Rumkowski decided he would fill the required quota with the ghetto's least productive members: the ailing, the aged, and children under ten. Rumkowski was deported with his family to **Auschwitz** during the liquidation of the Łódź ghetto and died there on August 28, 1944.

See Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

Schirach, Baldur von (1907–1974): The son of Berlin theater director Rittmeister Carl Baily Norris von Schirach and his American wife, Baldur von Schirach was an early leader of the National Socialist German Students' League. Acting as the first Reich Youth Leader (*Reichsjugendführer*), he headed the **Hitler Youth** from 1933 until 1940. At this time, he became **Gauleiter** of the *Reichsgau* Vienna until the war's end; in this capacity he helped to oversee the **deportation** of Viennese Jews to the camps and ghettos in the East. Von Schirach was a defendant before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, which found him guilty of crimes against humanity and gave him a twenty-year prison sentence.

Schutzstaffel (SS, or Protective Squadron): Established in 1925 as a protective service for prominent Nazi Party functionaries, the SS grew under the stewardship of **Heinrich Himmler** into one of the most important tools for maintaining the regime's grip on political power through suppression and terror directed against real or imagined internal "enemies of the Reich." Many of these enemies were incarcerated in concentration camps run by the SS. Through its party branch, the SS increasingly overlapped with state agencies such as the **Gestapo** and other parts of the police subordinated to Himmler. In 1940 it added a military wing, the **Waffen-SS**. Himmler's apparatus, which by the war's end comprised more than 1 million men in a range of different agencies, played a key role in planning and implementing the genocide of European Jewry.

See Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

Scout Movement: Founded in England in 1907 by Robert Baden Powell, scouting is an international youth movement that offers youngsters practical training in outdoor activities, sports, and crafts. A German scouting movement began in 1910 and attracted thousands of members. The group was banned by the Nazis in the 1933 and 1934 in order to facilitate the integration of German youth into the **Hitler Youth** and its auxiliary organizations.

Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei, or Sipo): This branch of the German police comprised the **Gestapo** (Secret State Police), the Criminal Police (Kriminalpolizei, or Kripo), and the Border Police (Grenzpolizei). As chief of the Security Police as well as the **Security Service**, Reinhard Heydrich merged the two organizations by establishing the **Reich Security Main Office** in September 1939. The Security Police helped to supply the forces of the **Einsatzgruppen**, which served as both security police and mobile killing units in German-occupied territories.

Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst, or SD): This intelligence and surveillance organization was established in 1931 under **Reinhard Heydrich**. Among its major tasks were monitoring real or imagined enemies of national socialism and reporting on the state of opinion among the German public. As chief of the Security Service as well as of the **Security Police**, Reinhard Heydrich merged the two organizations, establishing the **Reich Security Main Office** in September 1939.

Selection: New arrivals to **Auschwitz II–Birkenau** underwent the process of “selection.” Amid the chaos of disembarkation, Auschwitz prisoner-workers and **SS** guards separated the deportees by gender and ordered them to form short ranks. SS medical staff performed selections of Jewish prisoners, determining who would be retained for work and who would perish immediately in the gas chambers. Young and able-bodied Jews were often chosen for labor and registered as prisoners at the camp. Along with the sick, weak, and aged, children were generally murdered upon arrival. Selections took place on a regular basis at many other camps in the Nazi concentration camp system to cull children and ailing prisoners for gassing.

Sobibór: Located in a wooded and thinly populated region, the village of Sobibór was chosen as a site for the second of three extermination camps operating under the auspices of the **Operation Reinhard**. Sobibór’s first commandant was Franz Stangl; in August 1942, Stangl was transferred to **Treblinka** and succeeded by his deputy, Franz Reichleitner. German **SS** and police officials conducted gassing operations at Sobibór from May 1942 until autumn 1943, when Jewish prisoner revolts there and at Treblinka spurred the liquidation of both killing centers. In all, at least 167,000 individuals perished at the Sobibór extermination camp.

See Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor: A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, trans. Karin Dixon (Oxford: Berg Publishers in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007);

Miriam Novitch, ed., *Sobibór, Martyrdom and Revolt: Documents and Testimonies* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1980).

Sonderkommando (literally, “special detail or detachment”): The word *Sonderkommando* had two meanings in the context of the Holocaust. First, it applied to certain SS units, such as special units of the *Einsatzgruppen* and to unit commands like that of Sonderkommando Lange, which ran the **Chełmno** killing center. Second, it applied to details of Jewish prisoners compelled to dispose of victims’ bodies and belongings in National Socialist killing centers.

Sterilization: see **Law for the Prevention of Progeny with Hereditary Diseases.**

Streicher, Julius (1885–1946): One of the Nazi Party’s earliest members, Streicher established his virulently antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer* (*The Storm Trooper*), in 1923; in the same year, he took part in the abortive Beer Hall Putsch. Following Adolf Hitler’s release from prison, the Nazi leader named Streicher **Gauleiter** of Middle Franconia (later Franconia). In the first months of the Nazi regime, Streicher helped to organize the **Boycott of April 1, 1933**, of Jewish-owned businesses. In 1938, Streicher’s *Stürmer* reached its highpoint in terms of circulation; his successful publishing house of the same name produced, among other works, a host of antisemitic children’s literature, including the infamous *Der Giftpilz* (*The Poisonous Mushroom*). Despite his strong personal association with Hitler, Streicher was viewed as mercurial by leading officials and, in 1939, stripped of his party posts. Streicher was convicted of crimes against humanity in a trial of major war criminals before the International Military Tribunal. He was hanged in Nuremberg, his former stronghold, on October 16, 1946.

See Dennis Showalter, *Little Man, What Now? Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1982).

Sturmabteilung (Storm Division, or SA; also Storm Troopers): As the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, the SA, formed in 1921, initially comprised mainly German World War I veterans, militia members, and others opposed to both the democratic **Weimar Republic** and to the Communist Party. Its terror tactics against opponents increased the public visibility of the Nazi movement, both before and after Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. Once the Nazi regime was established, it began to perceive the disruptive tactics of the SA as a threat. Hitler agreed to the murder of the SA’s top leadership in the Röhm Purge,” or “The Night of the Long Knives,” in June 1934, carried out primarily by the SS. The SS, previously a part of the SA, relegated that organization to a Nazi Party agency of secondary importance.

See Richard Bessel, *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Stormtroopers in Eastern Germany, 1925–1934* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

Sudetenland: Adolf Hitler demanded this borderland of western Czechoslovakia because of its majority ethnic German population; it was annexed to the German Reich at the conclusion of the Munich Conference in September 1938. Like their coreligionists in Germany proper, Jews in the Sudetenland experienced **Kristallnacht** on November 9 to 10, 1938.

Theresienstadt (Terezin): In autumn 1941, **Reinhard Heydrich**, governor general of the **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia**, suggested that the former imperial fortress of Theresienstadt near Prague act as the holding station for Jews in the Czech lands on their way to the camps and ghettos in the East. Following the **Wannsee Conference** of January 20, 1942, Theresienstadt also became a “settlement area” for German Jews over the age of sixty-five and for Jewish war veterans who had been decorated or disabled in combat, those categories of German Jews initially exempted from **deportation**. Nazi propagandists portrayed Theresienstadt as a kind of model ghetto community for Jews, employing the “Jewish city” to deceive foreign governments and agencies, as when the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** visited a highly sanitized Theresienstadt in June 1944. In reality, Theresienstadt amalgamated Nazi concentration camp and ghetto. Of the more than 140,000 Jews transferred to Terezin, 33,500 died there, victims of starvation, disease, and ill treatment. More significantly, Theresienstadt functioned as a way station for deported Czech Jews and eventually for Jews deported from the Reich to the **Auschwitz**, **Majdanek**, and **Treblinka** extermination camps. Between December 1941 and the end of the war in the spring of 1945, eighty-eight thousand individuals passed through Theresienstadt on the way to almost certain death in the East.

See H. G. Adler, *Theresienstadt, 1941–1945: Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960); Vojtěch Blodig, *Terezín in the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” 1941–1945*, trans. Jan Valěška and Lewis Paines (Prague: Památník Terezín/Oswald, 2003).

Theresienstadt Family Camp (Auschwitz II–Birkenau): In September 1943, five thousand Jews, among them over one thousand children, arrived at Auschwitz from **Theresienstadt**. Spared the customary **selection**, they were brought directly to a separate barracks network in Birkenau, designated the Theresienstadt Family Camp. A second transport from Theresienstadt joined their ranks in December 1943. Its inmates were processed as special prisoners; their hair was not shorn, and they were allowed to retain their civilian clothing. Men and women were housed in separate blocks, but prisoners could move freely within the small camp, and children could remain with their parents. Historians believe that the family camp was allowed its short, privileged existence in order to deceive representatives of the **International Committee of the Red Cross**, who had visited Theresienstadt and planned to make a similar visit to Auschwitz. In early July 1944, survivors of the camp’s December 1943 transports were put to a selection. The majority of these prisoners were gassed, while the camp itself was liquidated.

See Nili Keren, “The Family Camp,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), 428–40.

Treblinka: Planners of the “Final Solution” chose the site for this third **Operation Reinhard** killing center in an isolated area some eighty kilometers (fifty miles) northeast of Warsaw. The most fully developed and deadly of the Reinhard camps, Treblinka began killing operations in late July 1942. Commandants of the Treblinka killing center were Dr. Irmfried Eberl (July–August 1942), Franz Stangl (August 1942–August

1943), and Kurt Franz (August 1943–November 1943). **Deportations** to Treblinka came mainly from the **Warsaw ghetto** and from smaller ghettos in the Warsaw and Radom districts of the **General Government**. Jews from Germany, Austria, France, Slovakia, Thrace, and Macedonia were also murdered there, as were thousands of **Roma** and Poles. On August 2, 1943, Treblinka inmates organized a prisoner revolt at the camp, spurring liquidation of the site in the autumn of 1943. From July 1942 through November 1943, camp authorities killed 870,000 to 925,000 Jews at the killing center.

Typhus: This acute, contagious disease is caused by rickettsial microorganisms and usually transmitted by an animal vector, such as fleas or lice. It should not be confused with typhoid, an unrelated disease. Typhus epidemics claimed thousands of lives in ghettos and concentration camps in German-occupied Europe.

Umschlagplatz (transfer point): Located on the corner of Zamenhof and Niska streets, the **Umschlagplatz** was an area separating the **Warsaw ghetto** from the Polish, or “**Aryan**,” side of the city. Originally the official transit point through which manufactured goods from the outside were transported into the ghetto, the site, with its adjacent railroad siding, became the assembly point for the thousands of Jews deported from the Warsaw ghetto, predominantly to the **Treblinka** killing center, between July 1942 and May 1943.

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA): The UNRRA agency was established in November 1943 in response to the unfolding **displaced persons** crisis in Europe. Subject to the authority of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) in Europe, UNRRA facilitated repatriation of non-German refugees under Allied control, administering hundreds of displaced persons camps in Germany, Italy, and Austria. Twenty-three volunteer relief agencies worked through the UNRRA, including the **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee**, **ORT**, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). The International Refugee Organization succeeded UNRRA in 1947 in caring for some 650,000 remaining displaced persons.

Ustaša/Ustaše (also anglicized: Ustasha): This Croatian fascist party controlled the Independent State of Croatia, as a puppet state of Nazi Germany, from 1941 to 1945 and helped to implement the Holocaust in Croatia. Under leader Ante Pavelić, the Croatian state persecuted its Serb, Jewish, and **Roma** populations. Thirty thousand Jews and 325,000 to 333,000 Serbs were murdered in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia under the Ustaša government.

Versailles Treaty: Drafted by the victors in World War I and signed by Reich officials amid widespread German protests in June 1919, the Versailles Treaty laid out the conditions of the German defeat. The treaty imposed harsh financial sanctions, territorial demands, and military limitations on Germany, undermining the troubled democratic **Weimar Republic**. Many blamed the treaty’s provisions for having provided the essential precondition for the Nazi Party’s success, but other domestic factors also proved critical in contributing to the demise of Germany’s Weimar democracy.

See Conan Fisher and Alan Sharp, *After the Versailles Treaty: Enforcement, Compliance, Contested Identities* (London: Routledge, 2008).

Vichy France: Following the German defeat of France in May 1940, French and German officials signed an armistice on June 22 of that year. Under its terms, northern France came under direct German occupation. Southern France remained unoccupied and was governed by a French administration, headquartered in the city of Vichy. In July the French National Assembly voted to suspend the constitution of the Third Republic and placed the new “Vichy regime” under the leadership of the aging Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain. Officially neutral, Vichy France collaborated closely with Germany. In the autumn of 1940, Vichy administrators began to promulgate antisemitic legislation closely patterned on that of German anti-Jewish decrees and ordinances in place in the German-occupied zone. In March 1941, a central agency, the General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives), was established to coordinate anti-Jewish legislation and policy. Thousands of Jews were interned under deplorable conditions in French-administered detention camps, where at least three thousand individuals died during the war years. As **deportation** of Jews from western Europe began, German officials, aided by French police, conducted roundups of Jews in both occupied and unoccupied zones of France throughout the summer of 1942. In November 1942, German troops occupied Vichy’s formerly “free” zone.

See Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover, NH : University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

Volk: Acquiring currency from romantic writers in the nineteenth century, the German word *Volk*, meaning “folk” or “people,” became a catchword used by National Socialists to define a nation or people united by culture, language, and ethnicity. For Nazi ideologues, it suggested a “community of the blood” in racial terms.

Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans): This National Socialist term included people of German ethnic origin who lived outside the borders of the German Reich and were not Reich citizens. Large communities of ethnic Germans lived in the Baltic countries and in southeastern and eastern Europe. Nazi ideologues were particularly eager to integrate these individuals into the **Volkgemeinschaft**. Following the invasion of Poland, German authorities established a central registration bureau, the German People’s List (Deutsche Volksliste, or DVL), to register ethnic Germans. The Ethnic Germans’ Central Agency (Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, or VoMi) organized the spoliation of property from Jews and Poles and its redistribution to ethnic Germans. In line with Reich policy of **Germanization**, thousands of ethnic Germans were resettled in German-annexed territories of the Reich, either voluntarily or under compulsion.

See Doris Bergen, “The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939–45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (October 1994): 569–82.

Volksgemeinschaft: This was the Nazi term for the German ethnic and racial community, as defined by National Socialist ideology.

Volksschule: This is a primary school in German-speaking lands.

Waffen-SS: The Waffen-SS represented the military wing of the SS, itself a Nazi Party organ. In accordance with Adolf Hitler's wishes, the Waffen-SS was never incorporated into the regular German army. Its thirty-eight divisions fought beside the regular army (**Wehrmacht**). It was also a multiethnic force, as nearly 60 percent of its troops were foreign recruits and volunteers by war's end. Waffen-SS divisions were implicated in numerous war crimes, including the Malmedy, Ardeatine, and Oradour-sur-Glane massacres.

Wannsee Conference: On January 20, 1942, fifteen high-ranking Nazi Party and German government officials met at a villa in the Wannsee suburb of Berlin to discuss and coordinate the implementation of the "Final Solution." **Reinhard Heydrich**, the head of the **Reichssicherheitshauptamt**, convened the Wannsee Conference to secure support from government ministries and other interested agencies. The participants did not deliberate whether such a plan should be undertaken but instead discussed the implementation of a policy decision already made at the highest level of the Nazi regime.

See Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

Warsaw ghetto: On October 12, 1940, the Germans decreed the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto. Containing over four hundred thousand inhabitants, the ghetto was sealed off from the rest of the city in November 1940. Food allotments rationed to the ghetto by the German civilian authorities were not sufficient to sustain life; between 1940 and mid-1942, eighty-three thousand Jews died of starvation and disease. From July 22 until September 12, 1942, German SS and police units carried out mass **deportations** from the Warsaw ghetto, sending 265,000 Jews to the **Treblinka** killing center. On April 19, 1943, German authorities commenced finally to liquidate the ghetto. Led by the Jewish Fighting Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa), ghetto fighters and residents resisted for nearly a month, mounting the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. German troops overcame the insurgency on May 16, 1943, deporting forty-two thousand Warsaw Jews to forced labor camps and killing centers. Perhaps as many as several thousand Warsaw Jews continued to live in hiding on the "**Aryan side**" of Warsaw after the liquidation of the ghetto.

See Barbara Engelking and Lacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Wartheland/Warthegau: The **Reichsgau** of **Wartheland** (**Reichsgau** of Posen until 1940) was one of four incorporated territories of the Reich that were part of prewar Poland but annexed by the Nazi state following the Polish defeat in 1939. German authorities marked the Warthegau for **Germanization**. The native Polish and Jewish populations were forcibly resettled in the non-incorporated territory of the Reich known as the

General Government, while ethnic Germans were resettled in the Warthegau territory in order to restructure the region ethnically.

Wasser, Hersh and Bluma (1912–1980 and 1912–1990): Hersh Wasser played an important leadership role in the **Warsaw ghetto** and was active as secretary of the **Oneg Shabbat** archive. After the war, Wasser helped to recover much of the archive's materials, which had been buried in milk cans and other containers within the Warsaw ghetto. Along with his wife, Bluma, a teacher and contributor to the archive, Wasser emigrated to Israel, where he served as director of the J. L. Peretz Publishing House. See Hersh Wasser, "Daily Entries of Hersh Wasser," ed. and trans. Joseph Kermish, in *Yad Vashem Studies* 15 (1983): 201–82.

Wehrmacht: The Wehrmacht (defense force) included the combined German armed forces from 1935 until 1945. It comprised the *Heer* (army), the *Kriegsmarine* (navy), and the *Luftwaffe* (air force).

Weimar Republic: This German democracy formed at the end of World War I was named after the city in which its national constitution was adopted in February 1919. Following a phase of relative internal stability, the Weimar Republic underwent a massive crisis, triggered by the worldwide economic downturn in 1929. Elite manipulation of the republic's constitution, combined with the economic crisis, produced the rapid erosion of political support for democratic parties. Against this backdrop, conservative elites negotiated Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933.

See Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993).

Westerbork: The Dutch government established Westerbork in the Dutch province of Drenthe in October 1939 to intern Jewish refugees who had entered the Netherlands illegally. The camp continued to function after the German invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940. In 1941, it had a population of eleven hundred Jewish refugees, mainly from Germany. From 1942 to 1944, Westerbork served as a transit camp for Dutch Jews before their **deportation** to concentration camps and killing centers in German-occupied Poland. Westerbork was liberated on April 12, 1945, by Canadian forces.

Yad Vashem: Located on the Mount of Remembrance (Har Hazikaron) in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem is Israel's official remembrance authority to commemorate, document, research, and educate concerning the Holocaust. In 1953, the Israeli Knesset enacted the Law of the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority proposed by Education Minister Ben-Zion Dinur. Among its activities, the institution is responsible for awarding the title "**Righteous Among the Nations**" to non-Jewish individuals who, at personal risk to themselves, aided Jews during the Holocaust.

See Bella Guterman and Avner Shalev, *To Bear Witness: Holocaust Remembrance at Yad Vashem* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005); James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

YIVO (Yiddisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, or Jewish Scientific Institute): The YIVO Institute was founded in Vilna, Poland (today Vilnius, Lithuania), in 1925 to document and research the language, literature, history, and culture of eastern European Jewry. In 1940, YIVO moved its headquarters to New York City. Today its library holds over 385,000 books and periodicals in twelve major languages.

Żegota (Council for the Aid to Jews; *Rada Pomocy Żydom*, or RPŻ): This secret organization was created in the fall of 1942 by the Bureau for Jewish Affairs of the Polish government in exile to assist Jews in hiding in occupied Poland with financial support, housing, employment, medical care, forged documentation, and child welfare. The organization predominantly comprised non-Jewish social and political activists. At least four thousand Jews received direct assistance from Żegota, and tens of thousands more benefited under its auspices.

See Irene Tomaszewski and Tecia Werbowski, *Żegota: The Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, 1942–1945* (Montreal: Price-Patterson Ltd., 1994) and David Engel, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

Zelkowicz, Josef (1897–1944): Born in Konstantynow, near Łódź, Josef Zelkowicz began to write for Yiddish newspapers and publications in the 1920s. In 1929 he became a member of the board and staff of the YIVO Institute branch in Łódź. Incarcerated in the **Łódź ghetto**, he became a teacher of Yiddish and a leading writer and archivist of *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto*. Zelkowicz also kept a personal diary, twenty-seven notebooks of which are now reposed in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. In August 1944, Zelkowicz was deported to **Auschwitz** during the liquidation of the Łódź ghetto and was murdered there.

See Josef Zelkowicz, *In Those Terrible Days: Writings from the Lodz Ghetto*, ed. Michal Unger, trans. Naftali Greenwood (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2002).

Złoty: This unit of Polish currency comprises one hundred *groszy*. During the German occupation of Poland in World War II, the złoty was the official currency of the **General Government** and was pegged at a fixed exchange rate to the German **Reichsmark**.

Zyklon B: The Nazi authorities used this lethal hydrogen cyanide (prussic acid) gas as a method of mass killing in the Nazi concentration camp system. First used on September 3, 1941, in a test gassing of 650 Soviet prisoners of war and 200 ailing prisoners at **Auschwitz**, Zyklon B, in pellet form, was procured from private chemical firms that employed the acid as a pesticide for fumigation. Nazi authorities had previously used carbon monoxide gas as a means of gas killing and continued to do so at the camps of **Operation Reinhard**. Zyklon B was utilized to kill predominantly Jewish prisoners at **Auschwitz II–Birkenau** and **Majdanek**.



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