

**A Teaching Module for  
College and University Courses**

**VOICES OF CHILD SURVIVORS:  
CHILDREN'S HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES**

**Module 1: From Hungary to Auschwitz and back**

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# VOICES OF CHILD SURVIVORS

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## VOICES OF CHILD SURVIVORS *Teacher's Guide*

# 1. Theoretical Introduction

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**T**his teaching module is designed principally for university and college courses. It contains children's Holocaust testimonies collected in 1946 from the Aschau DP youth center. Materials and pedagogic strategies are provided as tools to help the students and the instructor explore together the historical, literary and linguistic aspects of the testimonies, and through them, the experience of children in the Holocaust. The module includes a step by step analysis of a child's testimony, which provides instructors and students with a model when conducting analyses of other children's Holocaust testimonies. This unique multidisciplinary approach in analyzing testimonies broadens and deepens our understanding when learning about the Holocaust.

### **Children's testimonies as historical sources of the Holocaust**

The use of life writings and witness testimonies as sources of research constitutes a general methodological problem of historiography. Historians consider documents that were created by various organizations and institutions during their operation, such as the documents of ministries, documents of the occupying authorities and those of the Jewish Councils, or the reports of the Einsatzgruppe concerning the massacres of Jews in the Eastern territories, as valuable sources of historical research. On the other hand, life writings, such as testimonies, memoirs, diaries and autobiographies, are considered to be “anecdotal evidence,” and as such are of highly questionable value. Life writings are thought to be subjective and wrought with problems pertaining to the workings of memory and individual psychology.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is not the workings of the bureaucracy and practical necessities that determine the facts that are preserved in the documents, but what a single person finds worthy of reporting based on his own perspective, aims, capabilities and psychological needs. From the point of view of traditional historical research, children's testimonies pose a special challenge because their perspective is usually extremely narrow and the children's understanding of the events is considered more limited than that of adults.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these problems, testimonies have become integral to Holocaust documentation since they comprise an almost exclusive record of the reactions and special characteristics of Holocaust victims that is otherwise unavailable in the numerous official sources concerning the destruction of the Jews. The employment of these sources constitutes an ethical and practical imperative, since they alone enable the special Jewish and individual character of the victims to emerge. The testimonies presented in this module were collected from young survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. They belong to a body of thousands of testimonies that were taken from Jewish children who survived the Holocaust. Assisting the least

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<sup>1</sup> Diaries fare a bit better with historians, as they are, at least, contemporary with the events they describe.

<sup>2</sup> Suleiman, Susan Rubin. “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust.” *American Imago* 59.3 (2002): 277-295.

articulate voices of the child victims to be heard is an even more urgent obligation. This module will demonstrate how the distinctive voice in children's testimonies sheds a unique light when analyzing the history of the Holocaust.

### **The language of trauma: Child testimonies as literary and linguistic sources**

Testimonies and life stories are considered extremely valuable sources for linguistic research.<sup>3</sup> The focus of the testifier is on conveying his crucial and defining experience. Therefore he does not pay conscious attention to the rendering of the story. This enables the researcher to identify linguistic structures and literary features that will pinpoint the emotional foci of the testimony. In turn, these emotional centers enable us to find and evaluate the historical and personal information embedded in the testimony.

Traumas are unhealed psychological wounds; they are the consequences of an intensive traumatic event, a series of events, or long-term situations that can completely overwhelm a person and remain unassimilated with continuing negative effects. Since trauma narratives do not relate events that are “over” or in any way psychologically resolved, they are capable of traumatizing and re-traumatizing the person who deals with them.

After the first reading of early testimonies, almost every reader reports that the testimonies are laconic and strangely devoid of feelings. This phenomenon is usually the result of the testifier's own efforts to prevent the testimony from becoming a re-traumatizing force. However, during our linguistic, literary, and historical analyses, we focus on the hidden expressions of emotions and by doing that, we allow the raw trauma to emerge. Moreover, we analyze the testimonies in one another's context and also in the context of literary testimonies, which enhances the strong, unpredictable, and powerful impact each one of them has on the reader's psyche.

Shoshana Felman, in her “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching,” describes and analyzes how she, as a university professor, accidentally managed to traumatize an entire class by teaching Holocaust testimonies together with works of literature.<sup>4</sup> For the present project, it is especially important that the trauma surfaced after observing the screening of a child-survivor's testimony. A more general explanation of why narratives of immense trauma can traumatize the listener can be found in Dori Laub's article in the same volume (pp. 57-76).

Based on the sources above and our own experiences, we have found that it is crucial to deal with the testimonies in class scientifically and formally. We should encourage our students to use their analytical faculties rather than their emotional ones. Over-identification/internalization can affect us both psychologically and ethically. By over-identifying with the testimony we are, in effect, denying the the witness' autonomous existence. And by doing that, we reinforce one of the most painful effects of trauma: the denial of the existence of a separate and autonomous self.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example William Labov: “Ordinary Events” in *Sociolinguistic Variation: Critical Reflection*. Ed. Carmen Fought, Oxford UP. 2004. pp. 31-43.

<sup>4</sup> in S. Felman, and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 1-56.

## Pedagogical Perspectives

In addition to transmitting knowledge to its readers, this teaching module seeks to engage students in an active process of examination by providing pedagogical activities that elicit students' predictions, opinions, comparisons, and conclusions. The pedagogical tools provided in this module will assist the instructor in maximizing the students' learning experience, so that the students will absorb the multifaceted meaning within children's Holocaust testimonies.

Students acquire knowledge and information in a variety of ways. Each individual may have certain characteristics which lend themselves to specific styles of learning. Felder and Brent explain this concept in their article "Understanding Student Differences":

"The concept of learning styles has been applied to a wide variety of student attributes and differences. Some students are comfortable with theories and abstractions; others feel much more at home with facts and observable phenomena; some prefer active learning and others lean toward introspection; some prefer visual presentation of information and others prefer verbal explanations."<sup>5</sup>

In some cases there may be a disparity between the learning style of the student and the teaching style of his or her instructor. Although it is unrealistic to expect instructors to create individualized activities for each and every student in the class based on their learning styles, providing a variety of activities throughout the lesson enables a wider range of compatibility among learners.

In addition to learning style awareness, instructors and educators should be sensitive and responsive to the effect of trauma narratives on their students. Josey Fisher reminds us that "an empathetic teacher, aware of painful historical content yet unaware of how individual students might respond to it, stays alert to students' responses and provides alternative means for them to explore and express their reactions."<sup>6</sup> Fisher suggests using written reflection, guided discussion, and open-ended questions as viable means for assisting the individual student in the course of processing the information.

The module contains suggested discussion points, analytical questions, enrichment opportunities for further reflections, and cooperative learning activities. We hope that the choices and varieties of activities which are presented in this module will appeal to a wide audience of college and university students and will cater to different learning styles.

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<sup>5</sup> R.M. Felder and R. Brent, "Understanding Student Differences." *J. Engr. Education*, 94(1), 57-72 (2005).

<sup>6</sup> J. G. Fisher, "Foreword," in *The Call of Memory: Learning About the Holocaust Through Narrative, A Teacher's Guide*. Eds. Karen Shawn and Keren Goldfrad, Ben Yehuda Press. 2008. p. 5.

### Setting the Stage for Learning:

Asking students to reflect upon certain issues before they actually learn about them can arouse their curiosity and make them more attentive. One way of doing this is to project a few questions on the screen, one by one, and use them as prompts for a classroom discussion. Here are a few possible questions for reflections and discussion:

1. What do you know about DP camps?
2. What could be the positive and negative aspects of collecting testimonies from children in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust?
3. Who should be the people appointed to the task of collecting these testimonies?
4. In your opinion, what would be the best collection method of these testimonies: written descriptions, sketches, paintings, drawings, recorded conversations? Why?

## 2. Providing the Historical Context

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The testimonies presented in this module were collected from young survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. They belong to a body of thousands of testimonies that were taken from Jewish children who survived the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> The large number of testimonies attests to an obvious interest in children's Holocaust experience on the part of the adult Jewish community. The Jewish Historical Commissions in Poland and in The American Zone in Germany, both large scale grass-roots initiatives by survivors to document the Holocaust, targeted children in their efforts for building a collection of survivor testimonies.<sup>8</sup> In addition there were many private initiatives as well: Benjamin Tenenbaum, for example, was a Polish born Jewish immigrant to Palestine who arrived in Poland in 1946. With the aid of a few friends, he collected 1,000 'autobiographies' written by surviving Jewish children. Many teachers, survivors themselves, collected testimonies in their classrooms. By 1947 several anthologies of children's testimonies were published in Polish, Yiddish and Hebrew.

### To testify or not to testify? Children's testimonies collected by the Central Historical Commission (CHC) in Munich

The children's testimonies from the Aschau youth center were collected by the Central Historical Commission in the American Zone in Germany. The Zone became, over time, home to tens of thousands of Jews (150,000 by 1947) streaming in from Eastern Europe as the hostility of their neighbors and outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence drove them out. Termed DPs (Displaced Persons) by the administration, they referred to themselves and were known in the Jewish world as *She'erit Hapletah* -- The Surviving Remnant (Heb.). They established a representative council, "The Central Committee for the Liberated Jews in Germany," which in turn established the Munich-based "Central Historical Commission" in December of 1945.

Israel Kaplan, a teacher from Kovno, and Moshe Figenboim, an accountant, both Holocaust survivors, were appointed to head the CHC. Through their leadership, the Commission's workers and activists collected 2,500 testimonies, 8,000 filled-in questionnaires mainly in Yiddish, but also in Hebrew, Polish, Hungarian, German, Russian, Romanian, etc. The Commission searched for and mapped unknown concentration camps in Germany through questionnaires sent to German mayors and local government officials. They even succeeded in acquiring the Dachau camp register. Documents and photos of the period were also collected, as was Nazi anti-Semitic literature.

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<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth description and discussion of the issues dealt here see: Boaz Cohen, "The Children's Voice: Post-War Collection of Testimonies from Children Survivors of the Holocaust", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Spring 2007) pp.74-95.

<sup>8</sup> On Historical Commissions see: Laura Jockusch, "Khurbn Forshung – Jewish Historical Commissions in Europe, 1943–1949", *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook VI* (2007), pp 441 –473 and Boaz Cohen "Holocaust Survivors and the Genesis of Holocaust Research", in Johannes-Steinert Dieter and Weber-Newth Inge (eds), *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour. Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution*, Osnabrueck (Secolo Verlag), 2005 pp.290-300.





With Hebrew print sets and a printing machine, the CHC started publishing a journal entitled, *Fun lezten Churban* (*From Our Last Destruction*). It was aimed to "inspire every Jew from among the [Holocaust] survivors to give their testimony of their experiences under the Nazi regime". Indeed, Kaplan claimed: "Since we started with the Journal we get a wider response from survivors."<sup>9</sup> Ten to twelve thousand copies of the journal were published in all. When the Commission closed down in 1948, the materials it had gathered were transferred to Yad Vashem.

For Israel Kaplan, a teacher in pre-war Kovno, children were a distinct group whose voice had to be heard. As a teacher he saw great importance in collecting these stories for both the teachers who needed to better understand their students and for the children themselves. Kaplan initiated a project aimed at collecting testimonies from children Holocaust survivors in the DP camps. "Of great significance to our work is inspiring children to write about what they endured", he said in 1947. "We have already gotten in touch with children's camps, youth groups ('kibbutzim') and schools for this."<sup>10</sup>

Kaplan explained to fellow DPs that the aim of collecting children's testimonies was not "the extraction of as many facts as possible..." It is rather, to record the "child's understanding, his approach and reaction to what happened to him; how the events affected him". The teachers were asked to look for the "psychological and pedagogical aspects" of the testimony to enhance their educational work. In order to enable a full understanding of the child's experience it is imperative, he said, "not to make any corrections in these works, even in language."

Though hundreds of children's testimonies were collected Kaplan admitted that reaction to this initiative among teachers and educators wasn't all enthusiastic: "Up to now only a few have responded properly, despite the numerous reminders." He claimed that teachers were overtly shielding the children, fearing to "bring back the wounds that have already healed." While he accepted that this was possible, he claimed that "It is nevertheless doubtful whether it is always and in every case preferable to have the young people forget their deep and meaningful experiences". He doubted "whether when they grow older the children will be grateful to their teachers for their excessive warm-heartedness." In order not to cause unnecessary pain to the children he suggested that once teachers attempt "with the appropriate pedagogical approach" to have a child give a full version of his experiences, a copy would be deposited in a school archive, enabling teachers to consult the testimony "without causing further stress to the child himself." Success in this project depended on convincing people in the camps to do the fieldwork. Even a cursory check of the Commission's children's testimonies shows that they come in batches from places where the teachers or UNRRA workers were won over to the project.

It must be noted that Kaplan had firsthand knowledge of the hardships of the Jewish child in the Holocaust and the personal and humane aspects. Kaplan had been

<sup>9</sup> Israel Kaplan, The protocol of the first meeting of the [historical] workers of the Historical Commission, Munich. 11 - 12/ 5/1947 (Yiddish), YIVO Archive 1258/476.

<sup>10</sup> Israel Kaplan, *Day to Day work in the Historical Commission*, [a lecture] given at the meeting of the Historical Commissions, Munich 12 may 1947, Published by the Central Historical Commission of Liberated Jews in the American Zone, p. 16.



transferred from the ghetto to a work camp, leaving his wife, daughter and son behind. Just before she was murdered by the Nazis, his wife hid their son with a Lithuanian widow. Although Kaplan and his son were reunited after the war, it was a difficult reunion. His son blamed Kaplan for leaving him and his mother, and Kaplan, busy with matters concerning the CHC, found it hard to re-build a relationship with his son.<sup>11</sup> It is apparent that this experience contributed to Kaplan's commitment to the collection of children's testimonies.<sup>12</sup>

Views similar to Kaplan's were held by some of the staff of children's homes in Poland which were home to surviving Jewish children. These young women, survivors themselves, intuitively reached the conclusion that by giving testimony, the children could work out their traumatic experience. Nesia Orlovitch ran the children's home in Ludwikowo in Poland and her interest in testimonies was not historical but therapeutic. One of her children, Berko, a teenager who fought with the partisans, was highly depressed following his experiences – particularly because of the loss of his leg. "I was worried about his depression," she said, "and thought that he might ease his burden if he would write it all, open his heart and write all that was haunting him." It worked. The writing of his 'autobiography' brought about a change in his condition.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Chasia Biecelska (today Bornstein), whose children's home was one of the first to leave Poland, organized the writing of a collective testimony booklet by 'her' children when they were incarcerated in a British detention camp in Cyprus. Biecelska, who spent the war as a courier in the resistance, started the children's kibbutz in Lodz. With her charges, she embarked on an odyssey that took them through Germany, on the illegal immigrant ship *Theodore Herzl*, to detention in Cyprus and finally to Palestine. In her memoirs, she explained that the interim period in the British detention camp was just the right time, "to tell our story so that it will not be forgotten or lost in the depth of time."<sup>14</sup> She continues to write that "Psychologically, it seemed the right thing to do. I had no other tools and was not trained to deal with their psychological needs." On the other hand, she did not think that "anyone else in the world knew more than we knew." The effect on the children, recounted Bielicka, was "clearly apparent." The few weeks spent on this group project of drafting, writing and illustrating were "like opening a wound and extracting the pus. It was as if the children were throwing up whole chunks of painful matters and easing their pain accordingly."<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note that no clear-cut verdict or policy regarding the psychological value of the process existed. Neither was there, at that time or later, a professional evaluation of the contribution that testifying might make on the children's emotional recuperation. Our experience shows that some children that gave testimonies at the time, do not recall these testimonies. Over the years it is certainly difficult to differentiate between the survivors who gave testimonies as children and those who

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<sup>11</sup> On this issue see Shalom Eilati (Kaplan's son), *Crossing the River*, (Hebrew) Jerusalem 1999.

<sup>12</sup> On Kaplan and his work on children's testimonies see: Boaz Cohen, "Representing Children's Holocaust: Children's Survivor testimonies published in *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Munich 1946-1949", in Avinoam Patt and Michael Berkowitz (eds.) *We are here: New Approaches to Jewish Displaced persons in Postwar Germany*, in print.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Tene (Tennenbaum), *To the City of my Youth*, (Hebrew) Tel Aviv 1979, p. 150.

<sup>14</sup> Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka, *One of the Few*, (Hebrew) Moreshet, Tel-Aviv 2003, p. 324.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 325.

did not. On the other hand, it seems obvious that survivors working with the children, and some non-survivors too, saw the process of testifying as crucial to the child's psychological recovery and claimed to see its immediate returns.

### Aschau youth center

Already during the war it was obvious that Europe and other war zones would lay devastated after the war and that millions of displaced people would need to be taken care of and repatriated. In November 1943 UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, was established by delegates from 44 countries. The millions of refugees and displaced persons (DPs), their welfare, rehabilitation, and repatriation were to be its immediate concern.

The hundreds of thousands of Jewish DPs that came out of hiding, liberated from camps and returned from the inner reaches of the USSR, was a problem by itself. They had no family, home or community to return to and the rampant Anti-Semitism and pogroms against Jews in Eastern Europe served to show that there was no going back. These refugees streamed into the American Occupation Zone swelling the population of Jewish DPs there to 150,000 by 1947.

But what was to be done with the thousands of Jewish child survivors?

The original UNRRA policy was not "to establish Jewish orphanages in Germany, but rather to send these children to England, Switzerland, France or other countries which have offered asylum to them".<sup>16</sup> However, the UNRRA's plans changed rapidly with the massive influx of Jewish children groups. "For some weeks the problem of Jewish unaccompanied infiltrate children has been gaining unprecedented proportions," wrote Eileen Blackey of UNRRA headquarters on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1946. "The children are coming in at such a rate and moving around so frequently once they have entered the Zone that registration and documentation is almost out of the question."

The overwhelming majority of the children were organized into groups, 'Kibbutzim,' most of them under the flag of some Zionist or Jewish ideological movement. Their education was geared towards making 'Aliyah' ('ascending' – the Zionist term for immigration to Eretz Israel). Germany was only a way-station. It was obvious that either something should be done to "stem the tide" or that work must be done with the organizers of these groups on "planning jointly for the reception of these children into Germany."<sup>17</sup> UNRRA opted for the second alternative, deciding to work with the children in their organic groups and with their youth leaders – the 'madrichim' (Hebrew: guides, mentors, used for youth leaders).

It was explained that "the group pattern was adopted before the children came to Germany and will probably continue in Palestine. By breaking it up during the interim stay there is a danger of tearing down some emotional security that the children have been able to acquire." It was further decided that "each of these centers be occupied by different Kibbutz" from the same movement thus eliminating ideological

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E.E. Rhatigan deputy director general to Sir Michael Creagh, UNRRA, European Regional Office, 29<sup>16</sup> September 1945. UN archives S-0416-0008-5

<sup>17</sup> "Subject: Jewish Infiltrate Children," E. Blakey to Mr. B. R. Alpert 10 August 1946. UN archives S-0402-0002-6.

competition and proselytizing as well as facilitating a more focused, appropriate infrastructure.<sup>18</sup>

Initially, children groups were integrated into existing DP camps and one children's center at Lindelfels. Soon, the need arose for more centers and a decision was made to open three more centers "immediately" – one in Aschau.<sup>19</sup> By December 1946, it was reported that there were 26,506 Jewish children under UNRRA care in the American Zone. Of those, 13,878 entered the American Zone in the four months preceding November 1<sup>st</sup> 1946. 5703 children had no relative left and were recognized by UNRRA as "unaccompanied children." By December, 3146 of them were already in children's centers.<sup>20</sup>



**Children in the Aschau DP Camp 1**  
Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters' House Archive  
and the children were taken to Israel; the ORT Center, however, remained in operation until May 1950.<sup>21</sup>

At an early stage, it was decided that the Aschau camp will cater mainly to children's groups affiliated with the Mizrahi (the religious-Zionist movement) and that its educational facilities as well as the kitchen will be organized appropriately. UNRRA area team no. 154 ran the camp.

The camp in Aschau existed from February 1946 until the summer of 1948. It had various educational facilities including an ORT – vocational education center. In 1948, the camp was dissolved

A better understanding of life in the Aschau camp and of the problems confronting the children and the staff can be attained from UNRRA documents from the first year of the camp's operation. Following are excerpts from three such documents reporting on the camp.

On March 20, 1946, Susan Pettiss, Child Welfare Officer for Jewish Children, inspected the Aschau camp:

The camp is relatively new; it is about 10-12 miles out of Muhldorf off the main road. The people are housed in rather good stone barracks set near the village of Aschau in the pine forest.

The present population is about 400 but about 100 more people are expected. Of the present pop[ulation] 6 are under 6, 30 are 6-10, 80 between 10-14.

<sup>18</sup> "Report on Jewish infitree children," Susan Pettiss, Child Welfare Officer for Jewish Children, 5 December 1946. UN archives 0401-0002-3.

<sup>19</sup> "Installations to be opened immediately: Goldcup – capacity – 450, Aschau (Muldorf) capacity 500, Schliersee – 600, Lindelfels (in operation) capacity 450" (no date, circa November 1946 – date of other correspondence pertaining to the situation in Lindenfels of which this report is one.) UN archives S-0437-0012-22. Ultimately there were eight such centers for Jewish children.

<sup>20</sup> "Report on Jewish infitree children"

<sup>21</sup> For more information about the Aschau DP camp see: YVA, O.48/297.12, and two testimonies, YVA, O.3/10124, O.3/9024.

Most of the rest of the population seems to be under 35. They are all in Kibbutzim of which there are 8 in all; there are Polish and Hungarian Jews.<sup>22</sup>

On November 1946 we hear of 21 children belonging to the 'Atid [Heb: future] Kibbutz group' presently at Aschau 'requesting clearance for Palestine'. We learn that they: 'had been in the US zone in Germany since February 1946 and were at St. Ottilien Hospital (used as a children's center at one time). They were under the leadership of David Aronovski who assumed responsibility for them.'<sup>23</sup> Apart from this group there were another 11 children, mostly from Hungary, waiting for clearance to Palestine. An analysis, done at the time, of this camp's children's group gives some inkling of what experiences the children were bringing with them into the camp:<sup>24</sup>

| <b>Situation in relation to their parents:</b>    | <b>Relatives:</b>                                     | <b>First separation from parents because parents were:</b> | <b>During the war the children:</b> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Mother deceased, father's whereabouts unknown - 2 | In Palestine - 11                                     | Taken to ghetto - 11                                       | Were in a concentration camp - 10   |
| Father deceased, mother's whereabouts unknown - 1 | Elsewhere - 6   | Forced labor - 2   | Hid in the woods - 10               |
| Orphans - 16                                      | No relatives - 5                                      | Concentration camp - 5                                     | Were with an Aryan family - 10      |
| Parent's whereabouts unknown - 10                 | Relatives in the same camp (sisters or brothers) - 18 | Fled to the woods - 2                                      | Forced labor - 1 In Silesia - 1"    |
| Father at home - 1                                | Relatives in US Zone in Germany - 3                   | Killed - 7   |                                     |
| Parent's at home - 2 (Hungarian)                  |   | Sent to Russia - 1   |                                     |
| Mother with child - 1                             |   | Children fled - 2  |                                     |

Nine months after her first visit, on December 19, 1946, Pettiss returned to Aschau. She described the conditions in the camp and its specific problems in the following document:

This center was a camp formally built and occupied by factory workers. It consists of stone buildings, one story, with an average of three dwelling units, all of which are painted in pastel colours [this spelling in the original], giving a friendly, pleasant appearance. Each dwelling unit has one small room, now used for recreation or common room, bathroom facilities and one large room for eight to ten beds. The rooms were clean and attempts have been made to make them attractive with paintings, bits of curtains and other decorations. Most of the beds seem to have

<sup>22</sup> "Aschau camp, under team 154, Muhldorf - visited 20 March, 1946." UN archives S-0435-0014-19. information is also given on camp directorate: " Director Mr. Craddock, D.D. Barbara Donalds, Child Welfare: Gertrude Steinova, Warehouse Off. Mr. Norman." We set the information from the original document in a table format.

<sup>23</sup> "Analysis - Children in Aschau Youth Center Requesting Clearance for Palestine" prepared by Susan Pettiss, Child Welfare Officer for Jewish Children, 26 November 1946, UN archives S-0437-0012-13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



mattresses. The whole camp is centrally heated, but most units supplement this with small stoves.

A large building is for the offices, another has two large shower rooms with continuous hot water and modern equipment. The dining room is also used for recreation as it has a stage. The kitchen is steam, tile, with excellent equipment. There is a laundry unit with electric washing machine, a drying room and electric mangles. This staff is supplemented by youth leaders and workers. There is a committee which helps in the administration.

Other buildings are used for schools, shoemaker, tailor shop, dressmakers, kindergarten, infirmary. Two buildings formally used as garages have been converted into shops for vocational training – machine and wood, a marionette theater is in another. An interesting mushroom growing project is in program in an old air raid shelter.

The staff in residence, under supervision of the Muhldorf Area Team, consists of the UNRRA administrator, an UNRRA supply officer, a J.A.F.P. worker. There is a D.P. doctor and two nurses in charge of the medical [facilities]. Since most of the children are from very religious groups there are several Rabbi teachers. An ORT representative is in charge of the vocational training program.

Capacity 500 (400 children)      Present population – 370

Adults – 198   Children – 170   With parents – about 40   Under 6 – 5

The groups in the center are of the Mizrachi Kibbutz. They are chiefly Hungarian. There is one adult Kibbutz of 37 people.

The supply situation is fair, with the greatest shortage in children's shoes and light bulbs. One child has recently been badly burned by a candle. Hungarian books for the children's school are needed. Cloth for the dressmaker and tailor would serve two purposes, make clothing and assist in vocational training.

The food situation seemed good. Medical recording has not been completed, immunization was in process, and plans had been made for X-Ray examinations. Documentation of all the children is not quite completed.

Problems:

The committee is weak, needs some reorganization.

The adult kibbutz needs to be moved to an adult assembly center.

Since it is a religious camp no work can be done on Saturday, although there are some essential duties in connection with operating a camp that have to be done.

Because of the desire of religious teachers to keep children at school all day, the interest in vocational training is lagging.

Need for training for the D.P. staff.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Susan Pettiss, Child Welfare Officer for Jewish Children, "Visit to Jewish Children's centers in the Muhldorf area 19<sup>th</sup> December 1946", UN archive S-0437-0012-7.

## Choosing the testimonies

Twenty three children and teenagers in the Aschau children's center gave testimonies while in the center. Their testimonies are numbered consecutively in the Central Historical Commission's archives now in Yad Vashem (YVA M-1/E 147 - YVA M-1/E 169.). Eight of these testimonies (YVA M-1/E 161 - YVA M-1/E 168.) were given in Hungarian and the rest in Yiddish. We have chosen to work on the Hungarian testimonies for several reasons: The children have similar cultural and educational background; their experiences are typical of the Hungarian Holocaust and complement one another; the majority of the testimonies were given together in class and the interactions amongst the children can be identified.



Children in the Aschau DP Camp 2  
Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters House Archive

### Checking for Understanding:

Some students need to actively use the information that they've heard during the lecture in order to internalize the material. Having an on-line forum discussion after the lesson, can serve this purpose. In addition, by observing the on-line discussion, the instructor has the ability to check whether students understood the complexity of the situation at hand. Following are a few examples that can be used as forum questions:

1. Why did the majority of Historical Commissions established by survivors want to take testimonies from children?
2. Why were some teachers reluctant to comply with this demand? What do you think about this resistance?
3. How were the children and teenagers organized within the DP camps? Why was this division necessary?
4. What can you learn about the children and teenagers in Aschau from the photos presented in this section?

### 3. Memory's Context – Background information for the sample testimony

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#### **Hungarian Holocaust – an overview**

The Jewry of Hungary was systematically destroyed at a very late stage of the Second World War, and is recognized as the last sizable community annihilated in Europe. The first phase of the history of the Holocaust in Hungary, the phase of the Hungarian anti-Jewish policy, began in the spring of 1938, when the First (anti-)Jewish Law was passed in the Hungarian Parliament. In this period, the Hungarian regime by employing anti-Jewish legislation gradually and systematically eliminated the Jews from the economic and social spheres. Even though the Hungarian regime demonstrated its murderous hatred towards the Jews in two massacres—at Kamenetsk-Podolsk<sup>26</sup> and at Délvidék<sup>27</sup>—and by the institution of forced labor in the Hungarian army, which affected Jewish men of military age, we can say that until March 1944, the Jews of Hungary lived in relative safety and families remained more or less intact. They experienced neither the gradual disintegration during years spent in ghettos, as did the Jews of Poland, nor the deportation of whole communities to work among inhuman conditions, as did the Jews of Rumania who were deported to Transnistria.

The relative safety of the Jews of Hungary ended abruptly when the German army occupied Hungary on 19 March 1944 and began the second phase of the Holocaust, the phase of the German anti-Jewish policy. The destruction of the majority of the Jews of Hungary then happened very quickly. Within the short span of a few months, between April and July 1944, the Germans with the active and efficient help of the Hungarian authorities sent the majority of the Jewish population of Hungary to the concentration camps. This phase lasted a little more than a year, from the German occupation of Hungary until April 1945, when the country was liberated from the German rule. Ghettoization, deportation, and massacres of Jews characterized this period.<sup>28</sup>

#### **AG's testimony from the Yad Vashem Archives YVA M-1/E 168**

Much thought had been given in the preparation of this project to the question of unveiling the full names of witnesses. The collectors of the testimonies saw great importance in recording the full personal details of the testifiers which figure also in the several anthologies of testimonies published at the time. One obvious reason was that of identity: many of the children lost their families and were lost to surviving family members. Full details could ensure recovery by family members. Moreover, it

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<sup>26</sup> See Kinga Frojimovics, *I have been a stranger in a strange land: The Hungarian State and Jewish Refugees in Hungary, 1933-1945*. (Jerusalem: The International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, 2007)

<sup>27</sup> Braham, Randolph L. *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2000, pp. 34-37.

<sup>28</sup> Rita Horváth, "Wiesel and Kertész: *Night* in the Context of Hungarian Holocaust Literature." in: Alan Rosen (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching Wiesel's Night*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2007. pp. 69-75.



is an ancient Jewish tradition to remember the names of the martyred Jews. In Jewish tradition, espoused by secular Jews as well, there was no place for an 'unknown soldier'. Every dead Jew had a name and therefore names of killed parents or siblings should be recounted in the testimony. The testifying children themselves, it was believed, had a right to be known by their full names – they were heroes who 'earned' their name by surviving the ordeals they went through. As testimonies were also deemed important for the incitement of war criminals and their accomplices, it was important to give the full names of the testifiers.

For the modern day researcher the issue hangs in balance. On the one hand, these testimonies are accessible to the public in the archives and partially on the net. Fifty years have passed since they were recorded and they are now in the public domain. Publishing the names would give the children their identity and would make the testimonies more personal as befits this subject matter. On the other hand, the testimonies were recorded when the witnesses were young, some were still minors. They were recorded at a time of great emotional upheaval and at a very sheltered setting. At the time, the issue of publication was not on the children's minds. In the main testimony discussed in this module the testifier relates his personal status in the camp – one that has very negative undertones. It has therefore been decided to use initials only in this presentation.

AG's testimony, which was translated from the Hungarian [by Rita Horvath], follows the original text very closely. Any awkwardness that appears in the English version corresponds with some kind of awkwardness in the Hungarian original.

I am AG. I was born in Hungary, in Debrecen on October 17, 1931.

Like the rest of my Jewish brethren, together with my family, I too was dragged away to a ghetto (on) May 15, 1944. After one month of ghetto life, we were taken to a brick factory and from there to Auschwitz.

On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 o'clock, 90 of us by a cattle-car with wired windows, together with a couple of lunatics, we arrived in Auschwitz. Men dressed in striped clothes unloaded [kivagoníroz = detrain] us. And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives [the period is missing] We marched past Mengele and by chance I was also put [assigned] among the workers. After disinfection I got into Lager E. or [also called as] the Gypsy Lager. After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, I was taken to the Mühldorf work camp [work lager], where I succeeded to get into the potato peeler (brigade), and later, I became the lackey [csicskás = pipel] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf] [the period is missing] Later they put us into cattle-cars and sent us towards an unknown aim. The aim was machine-gunning. Along the way we had an air raid and I got wounded. At the same time the transportführer also died, who would have executed the machine-gunning and thus we came through. The S.S. men fled and the U.S. Army [liberated—this word is missing and the sentence is not grammatical] us on April 29, 1945, after 10 months of a sore trial I was free once again.

After four months of vacationing I returned to Hungary, where I joined one of [the] Zionist movements in the framework of which I hit the road again on January 26, 1946. Now here, in Aschau, I wait for aliya<sup>29</sup>, which brings my only aim: the building of ERETZ ISRAEL.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 'Ascending' – the Zionist term for immigration to Eretz Israel

<sup>30</sup> The Land of Israel

## 4. Historical analysis of the sample testimony

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The following pages show a step by step analysis of AG's testimony. The analysis contains a set of instructions to be used in class. This format can be used by the instructor when he leads his class in conducting analyses of other testimonies.

### **Catering to Different Learning Styles:**

Some students are global learners. These students have a hard time following a step by step analysis, unless they are presented with the overall picture in advance. Preparing a handout or projecting the following steps on the board can greatly facilitate their learning process.

#### **A. Recording the Data Concerning the Testimony:**

- i) Current testimony location
- ii) Where and when was the testimony recorded
- iii) Who or which organization collected the testimony
- iv) Characteristics of the testimony
- v) The Witness

#### **B. Determining the historical parameters of the testimony**

- i) Determining the nationality of the witness
- ii) Determining the type of Holocaust experience that is related in the testimony
- iii) Determining the timeframe and story-frame
- iv) Determining the stages of the witness' experience
- v) Identifying the historical meanings of special terms and concepts
- vi) Source Criticism: Verifying the dates, place names and events in the testimony
- vii) Differentiating informative statements and evaluative or explanatory statements (also containing later knowledge)

#### **A. Recording the Data Concerning the Testimony:**

##### **i) Current testimony location**

YVA M-1/E 168: In the Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), under No. M-1/E 168

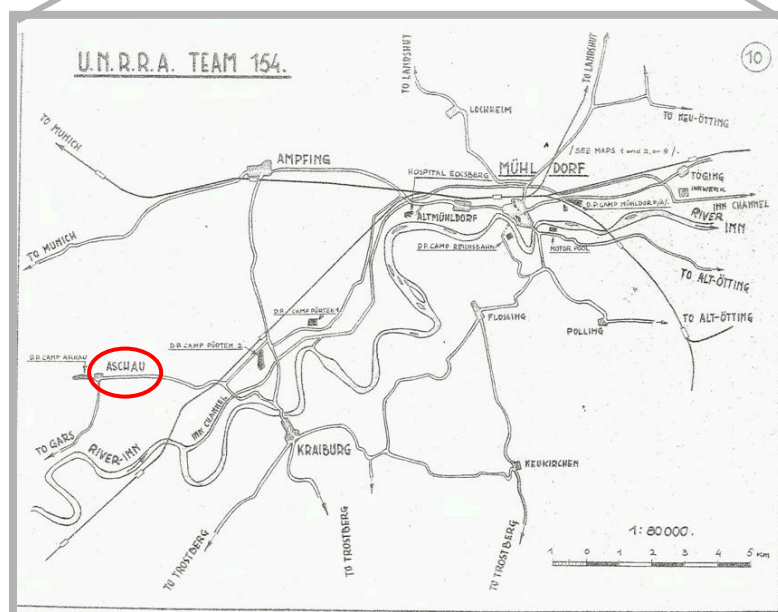
Description of the archival record group (fond) of which this testimony is part:

YVA, M-1 contains the archival material of the Central Historical Commission (CHC) of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the US Zone, Munich, which was founded in December 1945 in Munich. The CHC opened about 50 branches in the various Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany. Testimonies were taken and questionnaires distributed. After three years the CHC was dissolved. Its archival material arrived in Yad Vashem Archives.

YVA, M-1/E is the sub-group that contains testimonies which had been taken in the DP camps. During the three years of its existence the CHC gathered about 2,550 testimonies taken from Holocaust survivors coming from different countries.

## ii) Where and when was the testimony recorded

In the Aschau DP Camp, Bavaria Germany, in the US Zone of occupation



US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
RG – 19.047 Samuel B. Zisman Papers (map of the area)

The testimony is not dated, but the first testimony in this batch (YVA M-1/E 149) is dated to 1946 07. 18. Thus we think that all of them were recorded around that time.

### iii) Who or which organization collected the testimony

This testimony, like all the others, was collected on the initiative of the Central Historical Commission. The UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] Area Team 154, which ran the Aschau children center, was apparently in charge of the actual data collection.

### iv) Characteristics of the testimony

#### *Handwritten*

The handwriting is not cursive, whereas the other Hungarian testimonies given by children in Aschau are.

#### *Language: Hungarian*

There is a typed Yiddish translation (written in Latin characters) attached to the Hungarian document.

#### *Circumstances:*

It is likely that this testimony was given separately from the other Hungarian testimonies given in Aschau by survivor children and youngsters. This testimony is not entitled like all the others: “How did I pull through the times of the German regime.”<sup>31</sup> In fact, it does not have a title at all. Also, it is possible to see that the other children who were from the same locality worked together at least on some parts of their testimonies. An extreme example of working together is that of the boys from Berettyóújfalu. AG does not make any reference to any other testimonies, not even to one that was written by a boy, who was also deported from Debrecen, but who was much ‘luckier’ than he was. In addition, all the other testimonies include data on the testifier’s previous schooling, and are signed by the witness. This testimony, however, is not signed and lacks data concerning his previous schooling. The highly personal and extremely painful information contained in the testimony may explain why it was not given together with the others.

The scanned version of the original testimony appears at the end of the module.

### v) The Witness

AG was born in October 1931 in Debrecen, Hungary.

He was deported from Hungary to Auschwitz in 1944, when he was 12.5 years old.

He had a family, but he does not supply any information on the members of his family.

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<sup>31</sup> YVA M-1/E 162-164. The title in Hungarian: “Hogy vészeltem át a német rezsim alatti időket.” The Hungarian word in the title “átvészel” is a synonym of “survive” but it emphasizes the active struggle through a period of extreme danger. Hence I have translated it as “pull through.” The Hungarian word contains the same root “vész,” signifying catastrophe or calamity that the Hungarian word for the Holocaust contains: “Véskorszak” (Rita Horvath).

Social-religious background: most probably the family was not religious, since he says that they arrived in Auschwitz on a Saturday, and does not call the day “Shabbat” or make any reference to its sanctity.

His use of the concept “chance” throws some light on the witness’s current world view: “And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives. We marched past Mengele and, *by chance*, I was also put [assigned] among the workers.” The first selection on the ramp of Auschwitz is one of the focal points of the witness’s trauma. The close text analysis which will follow indicates that AG lost his loved ones during the first selection. One of the signs that AG relates here an especially traumatic event is that he cannot stay within the boundaries of his otherwise straightforward, chronological narration. He also includes an evaluative and explanatory statement and inserts knowledge that he has gained later.

According to AG’s knowledge, which he gained after his admission to the camp, he, as a child under 13, was not supposed to survive the first selection. Hence the introduction of the evaluative statement: “by chance.” Rather than evaluating his survival as a miracle or something destined, as some of his peers did (see below), AG attributes his survival to chance. He chooses the most secular among the possible explanatory belief systems, leaving the self most vulnerably lonely. The secular concept of chance implies an utter loneliness and being completely at the mercy of unimpressible forces.

In order to bring out the force of AG’s assertion of his world view, we can see here, how other children also felt compelled to express their ultimate frame of reference. JF was born in 1930 in Berettyóújfalu (Hungary). He gave the testimony No. YVA M-1/E 164 also in Aschau to the UNRRA Team 154. JF with his family was ghettoized in Nagyvárád, but instead of being deported, he was taken to Budapest in the framework of the Kasztner-action, because his grandfather was the Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish community of Berettyóújfalu. The family was placed in a special camp in Budapest but in the end they were not on the Kasztner-train and were taken to the ghetto of Pest, where “Next to us people were dying off from starvation and bombs. One week before liberation, my grandfather died of starvation. *The survival of each and every person was a special miracle of God.*” [*Italics* are ours].

## **B. Determining the historical parameters of the testimony**

### **i) Determining the nationality of the witness**

The Holocaust occurred differently in the various countries. Thus, we have to study the events of the Holocaust in the witness’ home country.

The witness is from a large town in southern Hungary, Debrecen.

The overwhelming majority of Jews in Hungary living outside of the capital were deported to Auschwitz in the spring and early summer of 1944, after spending a short period (usually less than a month) in a ghetto.

Many of the Jews were ghettoized and deported together with their families. This is because well into the war Jewish families were still more or less intact, and the

Hungarian authorities organized the ghettoization and deportation of the Jews on a regional basis.<sup>32</sup>

## ii) Determining the type of Holocaust experience that is related in the testimony

Was the witness hidden by non-Jews? Was he hiding together with his family with or without false identity papers in towns or in the country? Was he confined in ghettos, entainment centers, labor camps, death camps, etc.?

AG relates the most representative story of a Jew from the Hungarian provinces. The overwhelming majority of the Jews from the Hungarian provinces were deported to Auschwitz, and from there, many of those who were admitted into the camp were taken to various other camps to work.

Two Nobel Prizes, those of Elie Wiesel and Imre Kertész, demonstrate and guarantee that the story of the Jews of Hungary will be a — or perhaps even *the* — representative story of the Holocaust. There are numerous reasons for this, but one of the most obvious is that Auschwitz is a shockingly unprecedented phenomenon in human history, which became the symbol of the entire Holocaust. The Jews from the Hungarian provinces, from their relative safety, leading their quite normal life, suddenly, without any preparation, were thrown into the center of the Holocaust: Auschwitz.

### Literature Extensions:

It is fruitful to compare the literally testimonies of Elie Wiesel and Imre Kertész with AG's testimony.<sup>33</sup> In their major works—Wiesel in *Night*, a memoir, and Kertész in *Fatelessness*, an autobiographical novel—both writers narrate in stages what happened to them in the Holocaust.<sup>34</sup> Their experiences are very similar to that of AG in many respects. Moreover, both writers were only a bit older than AG. Imre Kertész was born in 1929, and Elie Wiesel was born in 1928.

## iii) Determining the timeframe and story-frame

With what time period, event, description, or statement the testimony commences and ends?

The testimony opens with the ghettoization and ends in the DP camp with the testifier's statement of his object in life.

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<sup>32</sup> The majority of Jewish families were not completely intact because many men of military age had been called up earlier for forced labor service in the framework of the Hungarian Army.

<sup>33</sup> Rita Horváth, "Wiesel and Kertész: *Night* in the Context of Hungarian Holocaust Literature." in: Alan Rosen (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching Wiesel's Night*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2007. pp. 69-75.

<sup>34</sup> For an elaboration of the autobiography/testimony versus fiction issue concerning Kertész's oeuvre, see Rita Horváth, "'In Order Not To Have To Talk About It:' Artist and Witness in Imre Kertész's Oeuvre," in: Johannes-Dieter Steinert – Inge Weber-Newth (eds.), *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution*. Osnabrueck: Secolo Verlag, 2008, pp. 295–305.



#### iv) Determining the stages of the witness' experience

Between the ghettoization and the DP camp, the testimony recounts a few more stages of the witness' experience:

- **Ghetto**
- **Train ride to Auschwitz**
- **Selection and admission to Auschwitz**
- **Life in Auschwitz**
- **Mühldorf Labor Camp**
- **Train ride to be executed**
- **Liberation**
- **Back to Hungary**
- **Aschau Children's Center**

#### v) Identifying the historical meanings of special terms and concepts

There are special terms used in connection to the Holocaust such as “Action” or “deportation,” that have specific meanings in this historical context. Holocaust terminology is comprised of official terms used at the time of the Holocaust by the perpetrators, terms invented by journalists and historians later to describe specific events of the Holocaust, and also by words used by the victims.

A distinct sub category, concentration camp language, which is, again, made up by a mixture of official terms used by the perpetrators such as *bewaggonirozas* 'en-trainment', *disinfection*, or *zählappel* 'roll call,' and usually German terms used by the inmates to denote everyday notions and events in the camps. Therefore, all the words of camp language had been in use in the camps during the Holocaust.

Camp inmates spoke all sorts of languages. Camp-language thus was as varied as the camp population was. German words infiltrate ‘camp speak’ both in their German forms and in various translations making up the special ‘camp speak’ of the various groups of inmates.

Embedded in this testimony are numerous camp-language terms:

I am AG. I was born in Hungary, in Debrecen on October 17, 1931.

Like the rest of my Jewish brethren, together with my family, I too was **dragged away** to a **ghetto** (on) May 15, 1944. After one month of ghetto life, we were taken to a **brick factory** and from there to **Auschwitz**.

On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of us by a **cattle-car** with wired windows, together with a couple of lunatics, we arrived in Auschwitz. Men dressed in striped clothes **unloaded** [*kivagoníroz* = **detrained**] us. And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives [the period is missing] We marched past **Mengele** and by chance I was also put [assigned] among the workers. After **disinfection** I got into **Lager E**. or [also called as] **the Gipsy Lager**. After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, I was taken to the Mühldorf **work camp** [**work lager**], where I succeeded to get into the **potato peeler (brigade)**, and later, I became the **lackey** [*csicskás* = **pipel**] of the **boss of the S.S. store-house** [S.S.



*magazin séf*] [the period is missing] Later they put us into cattle-cars and sent us towards an unknown aim. The aim was machine-gunning. Along the way we had an air raid and I got wounded. At the same time the *transportführer* also died, who would have executed the machine-gunning and thus we came through. The S.S. men fled and the U.S. Army [liberated—this word is missing and the sentence is not grammatical] us on April 29, 1945, after 10 months of a sore trial I was free once again.

After four months of vacationing I returned to Hungary, where I joined one of the Zionist movements in the framework of which I hit the road again on January 26, 1946. Now here, in Aschau, I wait for aliya, which brings my only aim: the building of ERETZ ISRAEL.

The terms appearing in AG's testimony can be roughly categorized into two groups:

### General Holocaust terminology:<sup>35</sup>

*Dragged away* - In Hungarian, this specific word denotes the ghettoization and deportation of the Jews.

Ghetto

*Brick factory*: Hungary had a large number of brick factories with adjoining industrial train lines. Thus, these places were used as *entrainment centers* from where Jews were deported to the camps.

Auschwitz

*Cattle-car*: These were used in the deportations. 75-100 Jews were crammed into each car.

*Kivagoníroz*: The word denotes 'unload' or 'detrain' (Its antonym is *bevagoníroz* = entrain)

S.S.

### Camp language:

*Mengele*: Josef Mengele

Disinfection

*lager*: camp

*Lager E. or [also called as] the Gipsy Lager*: This was a family lager for Gypsies in Birkenau which was emptied out because the system had expected the arrival of the Jews from Hungary. The Nazis began to transfer the able-bodied Gipsy men to work camps in the spring of 1944. The Gipsy Lager was supposed to be empty by May 19, but the Germans gassed all the remaining Gipsy inmates on August 2, 1944.

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<sup>35</sup> For useful glossaries of such terms see: "About.com: 20<sup>th</sup> Century History: Holocaust Glossary" <http://history1900s.about.com/library/holocaust/aa081997.htm> , or "A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust" <http://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/RESOURCE/glossary.htm>

*Work lager*: work camp

*Potato peeler (brigade)*: It was a great privilege to be part of that brigade, because it was possible to have extra food.<sup>36</sup>

*S.S. magazin séf*: the boss of the S.S. store-house

*Transportführer*: the commandant of the batch of inmates who were taken somewhere

*Lackey* [*csicskás* in Hungarian is *pipel* in camp-speak]

The last term, *lackey* [*csicskás* in Hungarian, which is *pipel* in camp-speak] requires a longer explanation, since it constitutes one of the traumatic centers of AG's testimony:

The witness relates that he was a *pipel*. This is one of the most terrible aspects of AG's suffering. *Pipels* were young boys, whom the dignitaries of the camp abused in all imaginable ways, including sexual abuse. However, for a child, this was the only conceivable way to survive. Many *pipels* became abusive monsters themselves in the camps.

### Illustrative Sources on Pipels:

- ❖ Dr. Zoltán Vass (before the Holocaust, a well-known dentist in Kolozsvár in Transylvania (today Cluj-Napoca in Romania), who was deported to Auschwitz, wrote down his observations in a notebook. He did this most probably immediately after liberation, presumably in order to use the notes for writing a detailed testimony, possibly a book-length memoir. Dr. Vass describes for example, how Capos killed inmates lying on the ground by putting a spade handle across their throats and ordering two *Pipels* to swing on each side of the handle.

*Pipels* were thus generally feared and hated. Definitely not every *pipel* became a monster, but since many of them did, that was the image, which the notion of being a *pipel* automatically called up in all the survivors' minds.

- ❖ Elie Wiesel in his *Night* also talks about the typical *pipel*, but, at the same time, it is important for him to counteract the stereotype. Wiesel depicts in detail the death by hanging of an angelic *pipel*, whereas he describes a stereotypical, extremely cruel *pipel* only in passing:

"In Buna, the *pipel* were hated; they often displayed greater cruelty than their elders. I once saw one of them, a boy of thirteen, beat his father for not making his bed properly. As the old man quietly wept, the boy was yelling: 'If you do not stop crying instantly, I will no longer bring you

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<sup>36</sup> See description in Kertész, Imre's *Fatelessness*. Trans. Tim Wilkinson. New York: Vintage International, A Division of Random House, 2004.

bread. Understood?’ But the Dutchman’s little servant was beloved by all. His was a face of an angel in distress.”<sup>37</sup>

From AG’s testimony, we do not get any information on the individual fate of the witness as a pipel, only that it was important for him to state the fact that he was one.

#### **vi) Source Criticism: Verifying the dates, place names and events in the testimony**

Since these testimonies were collected by a large-scale historical-memorial project initiated by the *She’erit Hapletah* (The Surviving Remnant) aiming at documenting the events of the Holocaust, the witnesses were asked to provide as many facts as possible: names, dates, place names, and numbers.

The date of the ghettoization is accurate: Jews had to move into the ghetto by the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 1944 in Debrecen (see Supplement 1)

The train ride to Auschwitz usually lasted 2-4 days. The last two transports left Debrecen on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, so the date of arrival seems accurate.

The date can be verified as accurate through another source:

Kinga Frojimovics in her article entitled “‘Landmark-Stones are the Highway toward Martyrdom...’: Holocaust Memorial Monuments in Hungary.” *Studia Judaica XIV*, 2006, pp. 115–128, describes and analyses the memorial day observed in Debrecen in 1950 by the only Statusquo Ante Jewish community remaining in post-war Hungary: “In Debrecen survivors observed the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, when deportees from Debrecen arrived in Auschwitz. (The 10<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz was July 1<sup>st</sup>, Shabbat, in 1944.) The fasting mourners gathered in the evening in the synagogue to say Kaddish together. The following morning they went together to the cemetery, where Rabbi Dr. Miksa Weisz delivered a speech before the martyr memorial monument. The mourners proceeded to the monument raised on the mass grave of murdered forced laborers on the outskirts of town. They then visited the graves of Jewish soldiers who had died in the First World War. Here, as at all the other sites, the Cantor said El Male Rachamim and the mourners said Kaddish. The next stage of the pilgrimage was a visit to the graves of the Soviet soldiers who died during the liberation of Debrecen. The pilgrimage ended at the symbolic grave of the Holocaust martyrs of Mikepércs near Debrecen, as not a single survivor returned to the settlement. The day of mourning concluded with the Sijjum ending the fast within the Mincha prayer. (Kinga Frojimovics describes the memorial service on the basis of the article entitled “A debreceni mártírok emlékezete,” “The Memory of the Martyrs of Debrecen” that appeared in the Jewish denominational periodical *Új Élet*, 1950. June 29. p. 6.)

#### **vii) Differentiating factual statements and evaluative or explanatory statements (also containing later knowledge)**

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<sup>37</sup> Wiesel, Elie. *Night, The Night Trilogy.*, Translated by Marion Wiesel, New York: Hill and Wang, A Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. p. 81.

“Men dressed in striped clothes unloaded us.” This is a simple statement of what happened.

“And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives. We marched past Mengele and, by chance, I was also put [assigned] among the workers.” AG did not know at the time that what happened to them was the first selection in Auschwitz, and those who were not admitted into the lager (German word for camp) were sent to the gas chambers immediately. He certainly did not know Mengele’s name. AG emphasizes that it is later knowledge as he states: “without our knowledge.” Moreover, he uses Mengele’s name to denote the selecting physician, since it is not sure at all that Mengele himself presided over the selection when AG and his family arrived in Auschwitz. What is certain, that one of the Nazi physicians conducted the initial selection on the ramp of Auschwitz.

The phrase “by chance” is evaluative and emotionally loaded. It is also historically accurate, as he was 12-and-a-half years old when he arrived in Auschwitz and the Germans were systematically killing children under 13. (Christian Gerlach - Götz Aly: *Das letzte Kapitel: Realpolitik, Ideologie und der Mord an den ungarischen Juden 1944/1945*. (Stuttgart, München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002) p. 291.) Moreover, the selecting physicians usually sent to the gas youngsters under 16. That was the reason why the inmates who were unloading the new arrivals in Auschwitz, still in the cattle cars, where no one could see them, usually warned the younger children to say that they are 16 or 18 years of age, and older people to say that they are 40 years old. Both Elie Wiesel and Imre Kertész emphatically relate this experience in their artistic memoirs: *Night* and *Fatelessness*.

#### **Visual enrichment:**

The famous Auschwitz Album, the only surviving visual evidence of the selections, features original photos taken by Nazi photographers, of a selection of Hungarian Jews upon their arrival on the ramp of Auschwitz.

The album can be accessed from the Yad Vashem website:

[http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/content1.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/content1.html)

Researching the actual story of the Auschwitz album and how it was discovered by Lilly Jacob is informative.

[http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/intro.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/intro.html)

## 5. Literary and linguistic analysis of the sample testimony

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We have chosen this testimony for analysis, because it displays most of the literary and linguistic attributes which are useful in testimony analysis in general. The majority of the testimonies feature less of these characteristics. Moreover, many testimonies feature these characteristics less clearly.

It is important to note that our analysis of AG's testimony is based solely on the text of the testimony the youngster gave in the Aschau children's center. The only background information we used is our general historical knowledge of the Holocaust in Hungary and in the concentration camp universe.

The literary and linguistic close analysis illustrated here proceeds from bottom-up: from text-based features to more macro, interpretive analysis. We began with specific language features and proceeded towards the overall patterns informing the testimony.

Unlike the historical analysis the analysis presented here focuses on the classroom. Therefore it is presented as a teacher-student interaction and includes, suggested questions and student activities. This format is based on experience gained in teaching this material in pilot courses.<sup>38</sup>

### A. Initial reading

Instructor reads the testimony as students follow along.<sup>39</sup>

### B. Students' comments on the testimony as a whole

- i. The testimony is very short, stark, laconic, emotionally dry and not very informative.
- ii. The language of the testimony is choppy (meaning that many pieces of information are not rendered in the usual order, requiring a lot of interpolations)
- iii. There are grammar mistakes (In connection to other testimonies, they also point out that there are many spelling mistakes as well)
- iv. AG has an inclination towards the grotesque (sarcasm, black humor)

We intend to show that the three last comments can serve the teacher to undermine the first one, which the students invariably make, because all the other comments themselves can be used to demonstrate that the text is actually overcharged with explosive emotions.

### C. Tracing emotions

The most important feature of the literary analysis aided by the linguistic one is the working out of the human significance of the historical trauma of the Holocaust. This

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<sup>38</sup> RH taught the module both in the English department of Bar-Ilan University (Ramat Gan, Israel) and in the Jewish Studies department at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary) in the Spring and Autumn of 2008.

<sup>39</sup> See the Hungarian original in Supplement 2.

is done by identifying the emotional foci of the testimonies. Through the close reading of the testimony, we demonstrate that even though the testimony is short, it is extremely emotional and informative.

### **Collaborative Learning Activity:**

Group work can create a dynamic working environment. Divide the class into groups and give each group a task. Each group will try to identify visual and other linguistic markers that carry indicate strong emotions within the testimony. The groups will then take turns and report their findings to the rest of the class.

One possible way of having the students present their findings is to project the testimony directly onto the white-board, and have them mark it up with different colored markers. This will help the visual learners follow the ideas more easily.

### **i) Handwriting**

Handwriting includes a wide range of features such as script vs. print, spacing, size and shape of letters, etc. Overall changes and contrasts as well as salient places should be identified.

Based on our review of several hundred testimonies, the following features should be noted as they indicate intense emotions:

- neatly written versus messier parts
- places where the pen or pencil has been pressed hard on the paper
- places where the writing continues even when the pen has run out of ink
- changes in letter-formation, e.g. elongated, or densely packed lettering
- spaces left between words
- inkblots

In AG's testimony we can observe that there are two places where AG pressed the pen hard on the paper. The original replica of the testimony in Hungarian appears in supplement 2. We highlighted the places where AG pressed the pen hard on the paper, in the following English translation:

I am AG. I was born in Hungary, in Debrecen<sup>40</sup> on October<sup>41</sup> 17, 1931.

Like the rest of my Jewish brethren, together with my family, I too was dragged away to a ghetto (on) May 15, 1944. After one month of ghetto life, we<sup>42</sup> were taken to a brick factory and from there to Auschwitz.

On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of us by a cattle-car with wired windows, [the italicized sections which follow are written with strong pressure on the pen, which fades gradually] *together with a couple of lunatics, we arrived in Auschwitz. Men dressed in striped clothes unloaded [kivagoníroz = detrain] us. And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives. We marched past Mengele and by chance I was also put [assigned] among the workers. After disinfection I got into Lager E. or [also called as] the Gypsy Lager. After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, I was taken to the Mühldorf work camp [work lager], where I succeeded to get into the potato peeler (brigade), and later, I became the lackey [csicskás = pipel] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf]. Later they put us into cattle-cars and sent us towards an unknown aim. The aim was machine-gunning. Along the way we had an air raid and I got wounded. At the same time the transportführer also died, who would have executed the machine-gunning and thus we came through. The S.S. men fled and the U.S. Army [liberated—this word is missing and the sentence is not grammatical] us on April 29, 1945, after 10 months of a sore trial I was free once again.*

*After four months of vacationing I returned to Hungary, where I joined one of [the] Zionist movements in the framework of which I hit the road again on January 26, 1946. Now here, in Aschau, I wait for aliya, which brings my only aim: the building of ERETZ ISRAEL.*

In AG's testimony we can observe that there are two places where AG pressed the pen hard on the paper. Both places relate events with special emotional importance for him. He presses the pen harder when he writes about his family's arrival in Auschwitz, the result of which, he remained completely alone, and when he relates his own choices that he made alone after liberation.

## ii) The use of emotionally charged words<sup>43</sup>:

Interestingly, some of the words that are inserted into the text especially in order to convey emotions and that are powerful in a normal context prove to be utterly inadequate in the context of such an enormous suffering. Hence, the initial feeling of the students, that the testimony is bereft of deep emotions which are adequate to the enormity of the events.

Examples in AG's testimony: "unparalleled suffering" and "sore trial."

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<sup>40</sup> See the historical data on Debrecen's Jewish community during the Holocaust in Supplement 4

<sup>41</sup> Throughout the Hungarian original, the same formula is used to give dates: 1931. X. 17. The months are referred to by Roman numerals.

<sup>42</sup> Here the Hungarian grammar does not require the specification of the pronoun.

<sup>43</sup> Lexical choice: The lexicon in some schools of linguistics is claimed to serve the output of syntax. In other schools, it is the focus of research on retrieval and production. The orientation here takes a pragmatics/stylistics approach, where the lexicon is the primary source of intention and a major indicator of emotional coloring.



In other testimonies such examples include: “unfortunately” and “sadly.” For instance: “There [in the “C” Lager] I was informed that those who were separated from us were burned in the crematorium. *Sadly*, my parents were taken there too” [Rita Horvath’s translation from the Hungarian original]<sup>44</sup>

Precisely because of the above described phenomenon, we need to demonstrate that instead of the use of words that prove emotionally inadequate, strong emotions radiate from other linguistic features such as handwriting, code switching, grammar mistakes, etc.

Other emotionally charged expressions in AG’s testimony:

“And then came, without our knowledge, *the most important moment of our lives.*”

“by chance”

“I succeeded”

“dragged away”

“vacationing” (feelings of sarcasm)

### iii) Choppy language

The language of the testimony is choppy, meaning that many pieces of information are not rendered in the usual order, requiring a lot of interpolations. The choppiness of the text, which is an “atypical” formulation of one’s thoughts, has to do with being emotionally troubled. Linguist Deborah Schiffrin demonstrates that atypical elements in a text convey special emotions.<sup>45</sup>

In the following examples that which is atypical is the order of the rendering of pieces of information. It means that the testifier hastens or delays the rendering of specific pieces of information, and that obviously has to do with placing emotional emphases.

- An example of hastening the giving of a special piece of information:

“Like the rest of my Jewish brethren, together with my family, I too was dragged away to a ghetto (on) May 15, 1944.”

A more emotionally neutral (typical) order would be:

I was dragged away to a ghetto together with my family, like the rest of my Jewish brethren (on) May 15, 1944.

If we compare the sentence from the testimony to this more emotionally neutral version, we see that those parts of the sentences that are not rendered in their usual place, receive special emphases: “Like the rest of my Jewish brethren” and “together with my family.” The word of extra-emphasis, “too,” would not be needed either in case of a typical rendering.

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<sup>44</sup> Hungarian Jewish Archive: HJA DEGOB Protocol No. 1001.

<sup>45</sup> Schiffrin’s example is that in a testimony, the testifier has used the atypical pair “daughter and mother,” even though generational pairs are often genderless (parent and child) or, if gendered, the older member of the pair is typically first, i.e. ‘mother and daughter’. By this atypical formulation the testifier “herself marks her mother’s relevance within her oral history.” Deborah Schiffrin, “Mother/Daughter Discourse in a Holocaust Oral History: ‘Because Then You Admit That You Are Guilty’,” *Narrative Inquiry* 10:1 (2000), pp. 1-44; p.7.

AG is eager to state his point: he was not special in any conceivable way. By giving his reference point first in the form of a comparison, “like the rest of my Jewish brethren,” AG implies that he was not unique. Here, we can call the students’ attention to the fact that child survivors usually emphasize that the calamities not only happened to them; they are not special in anyway. This is one of the reasons then why AG emphasizes that he was part of a community: whatever happened to the community, happened to him. Emphasis on not being special is a distinctive feature of children’s testimonies, differentiating them from the majority of adult testimonies.

- An example of delaying the giving of a special piece of information:

"On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of us by a cattle-car with wired windows, together with a couple of lunatics, we arrived in Auschwitz."

This example demonstrates that giving information in an atypical order causes the quality of choppieness and works as a device for slightly delaying the rendering of especially painful pieces of information. In the example above Auschwitz is the last word of a very long sentence.

Arrival at Auschwitz is one of the focal points of the traumatic memories of those Holocaust survivors who had experienced it.<sup>46</sup> Arrival is traumatic for a number of reasons, but here we will demonstrate during our analysis that AG most probably lost all of his family during the first selection upon arrival on the ramp of Auschwitz. For actually specifying the trauma, viz. writing down the name of Auschwitz, the testifier-self needed a bit more emotional preparation; that is why the name of Auschwitz is the last word of the sentence. Moreover, the previous sentence already displayed this pattern of delaying: Auschwitz is the last word of that sentence too: “After one month of ghetto life, we were taken to a brick factory and from there to Auschwitz.”

#### iv) Grammatical Irregularities

AG relates the crucial experience of his liberation by an ungrammatical sentence: “The S.S. men fled and the U.S. Army [liberated—this word is missing and therefore sentence is not grammatical] us on April 29, 1945, after 10 months of a sore trial I was free once again.” A word is missing, and as a result, two sentences are pushed together. Information is rushing out; AG cannot wait to report his freedom. The pace of writing could not keep up with the testifier’s rush of emotions: it is like cutting himself short, cutting into his own words. (This phenomenon narrows the gap between written and oral testimonies.)

Another important example of ungrammatical rendering is that AG does not employ the appropriate definite article when he talks about his joining the Zionist movement: “After four months of vacationing I returned to Hungary, where I joined one of [the] Zionist movements in the framework of which I hit the road again on January 26,

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<sup>46</sup> For more concerning arrival in Auschwitz see Rita Horváth, “[She] Was Not Married *at All*”: The Relationship between Women’s Pre-deportation Social Roles and Their Behavior upon Arrival in Auschwitz.” in: Zygmunt Mazur et al. (eds.), *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Women and the Holocaust*. Kraków: Jagiellonian UP, 2007. pp. 193-202.

1946.” The definite article, which appears in bold, is missing, making the sentence ungrammatical but perfectly understandable.

This grammatical mistake together with not specifying the youth movement which he joined serve, in fact, as an assertion of AG's major life goal: to participate in the creation of a unified Jewish community. The mechanism of this assertion and the emotional investment in this very goal will be explained in depth in section E, which focuses on self construction.

A third example of a grammatical error within the testimony relates to punctuation marks. AG makes two mistakes concerning punctuation, which are significant, since he usually employs punctuation in a very sophisticated way. Complex and correct use of punctuation is rare among child testimonies. AG's normal use of punctuation strengthens the readers' experience of the text as choppy.

The two places where the periods are missing:

- Between Sentences No. 7 and No. 8: “And then came, without our knowledge, the most important moment of our lives [there is no period here] We marched past Mengele and by chance I was also put [assigned] among the workers.”
- Between Sentences No. 10 and 11: “After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, I was taken to the Mühldorf work camp [work lager], where I succeeded to get into the potato peeler (brigade), and later, I became the lackey [csicskás = pipel] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf] [there is no period here] Later they put us into cattle-cars and sent us towards an unknown aim.”

Sentence 7, which is one of the most sophisticatedly punctuated sentences in the text, is one of the emotional centers of the testimony, and sentence 10 relates the other focus of AG's trauma. That precisely those sentences which relate the child's most traumatic experiences do not end with a period suggests that these traumas are not over, there is no real closure. The sentences cannot contain the trauma.

#### v) Dark Humor and Cynicism

AG has an inclination towards the grotesque, signifying an outlook on life as a fragile thing that is constantly threatened by bizarre, surreal, and arbitrary forces. If one wants to preserve his/her sanity then this reality can only be portrayed through black, even cynical, and very painful, humor. Towards the beginning of the testimony, AG writes the following sentence:

“On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of us by a cattle-car with wired windows, *together with a couple of lunatics*, we arrived in Auschwitz.”

AG could have been referring to Jewish patients of mental hospitals whom the Hungarian authorities deported together with the rest of the Jewish population from the Ghettos. Another possibility is that AG refers to people gone mad as a consequence of extreme thirst and fear during the journey towards Auschwitz. While factually speaking what AG relates is correct, his formulation emphasizes the sinister surrealism of the situation. Moreover, after a nice cliché-like beginning: “in the

morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock," the continuation of the sentence is not expected.

The fact that he mentions "the lunatics" in this very short testimony emphasizes AG's notion that all the victims were denied their dignity on a journey that for the majority of them turned out to be their last. By using the word 'couple,' which usually applies to objects, in connection to people, AG effectively dehumanizes "the lunatics" in order to call attention to the dehumanization of the deportees in general. However, this technique of using a linguistically dehumanized group of people as a symbol—symbolizing the situation of all the other deportees—is morally highly questionable. The moral problem is demonstrated by the fact that in order to use a group as a symbol, he needs to single them out, to separate them, ultimately, to reject them. In effect, as symbols of utter, undignified defenselessness, AG denies "the lunatics" the status of belonging to the community of the "real" victims: there is an "us," and there are the "lunatics." The attempt to make a point by using people as symbols sets in motion a linguistic automatism resulting in the division between "us" and "them," which is the inadvertent byproduct of black humor. It is especially painful to observe this mechanism in the context of the Holocaust in which dehumanization was a crucial device employed by the perpetrators.

### **Making connections:**

Connecting a detail from AG's testimony to a similar one in Elie Wiesel's literary testimony can serve to enhance both texts. Reading a passage from Wiesel's book *Night*, which refers to an example of a woman who went mad on the train ride to Auschwitz, fills in the gaps that exist in AG's short testimony. This textual connection also adds a factual dimension to Wiesel's literary work, rendering it more forceful.

Depending on the students' knowledge of the book, teachers may choose to focus only on the following description, while others may find it necessary to read chapter two in its entirety:

We had a woman with us named Madame Shächter. She was about fifty; her ten-year-old son was with her, crouched in the corner. Her husband and two eldest sons had been deported with the first transport by mistake. The separation had completely broken her...

Madame Shächter had gone out of her mind. On the first day of the journey she had already begun to moan and to keep asking why she had been separated from her family. As time went on, her cries grew hysterical...<sup>47</sup>

Another example of black humor, in this case harmless, but nonetheless capable of emphasizing the inherently grotesque nature of extreme victimization is AG's use of the word "vacation" later in his testimony.

Moreover, in connection to the places where black humor erupts, the emergence of multiple voices within the text of the testimony can be observed: "On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of us by a cattle-car with wired windows, together with a couple of lunatics," and "After four months of vacationing" sounds like quotations without using quotation marks, since its "adult" style differs

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<sup>47</sup> Wiesel, Elie. *Night*, Translated by Francois Maurice, New York: Bantam Books, 1982, p. 22.

from the rest of the text. That AG chose to include precisely these quotations demonstrates his own inclination towards the grotesque.

#### vi) Multilingual codeswitching and borrowing

Codeswitching is a bilingual phenomenon whereby speakers and writers make use of words and phrases from more than one of their languages. Once thought to be random/erratic use of language, codeswitching has been shown to follow grammatical as well as semantic constraints. Psycholinguistic codeswitching should be distinguished from sociopragmatic ones. The psycholinguistic variety reflects use of a word from another language due to difficulties in lexical retrieval or due to the fact that the word in the other language is more frequent or salient. Sociopragmatic codeswitching shows emphasis, focus, emotional charge. Our interest here is more in the pragmatic and stylistic functions of codeswitching. Thus, we focus primarily on nouns and noun phrases, which account for more than 90 percent of instances of codeswitching in just about all studies of the phenomenon.

In addition, the phenomenon of codeswitching should be differentiated from borrowing. Whereas codeswitching signifies the use of foreign words that have not been integrated into the dominant language of the utterance, borrowings are grammatically integrated.

AG's testimony was written primarily in Hungarian, but one can identify codeswitching and borrowing from three distinct languages: English, Camp Language, and Hebrew.

AG writes the "U.S. Army" in English within his Hungarian text:  
"Az S.S.ek elszöktek és minket az *U.S. Army* 1945. IV. 29.én, 10 hónapi keserves megpróbáltatás után újra szabad voltam."

In Hungarian, the definite article "az" is not grammatically correct in front of a consonant. It should be "a." And since "U" of U.S. begins with a consonant sound, like a "J," the definite article preceding it should be "a." and not "az." Therefore, the *U.S. Army* is not integrated grammatically into the Hungarian text. By contrast, the Hungarian suffix added to the word SS in the same sentence, integrates the Camp-Language (German) word seamlessly into the dominant language of the utterance.

AG concludes his testimony with a sentence containing two Hebrew words: "I wait for *aliya*, which brings my only aim: the building of *ERETZ ISRAEL*." These words are grammatically fully integrated into the Hungarian text.

We can, therefore, differentiate between grammatically integrated and not integrated foreign words. AG employs the English word for the liberating army without integrating it grammatically into the Hungarian; in other words, he is involved in codeswitching. By contrast, the words and expressions of the Camp Language or the special language of deportation, such as "kivagoníroz" (=unloaded us by using the special Holocaust-language term), "lager" (camp), "S.S. magazin séf," "transzportführer," "SS," are grammatically completely integrated into the Hungarian text. They are borrowed and feel completely "natural" to the speaker. The Hebrew words are also fully integrated as far as grammar is concerned. This implies that the horrifying worlds of the Holocaust and the chosen aim, the self-governed world of

Jews are both integrated parts of the youngster's reality, whereas the unequivocally happy event, the miracle of liberation is not.

There is one very important place, where AG emphatically does not employ the camp term, but a Hungarian word. He said that he "became the lackey ["csicskás" in Hungarian; "pipel" in the camp jargon] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf]." By not actually writing the extremely hated camp word, AG manages to insert a little emotional distance from his own terrible testimony while still saying exactly the same painful truth. (That this linguistic technique had worked, we can see from the attached, contemporary Yiddish translation, which misunderstands AG's testimony and does not translate the Hungarian word "csicskás" back into "pipel.")

#### D. Identifying the emotional foci of the witness's trauma

Two foci of the witness's trauma emerge clearly within the text. One is stated: he was a pipel, a lackey of a camp functionary, and the other is only implied: the loss of his family during the first selection upon arrival in Auschwitz. Linguistic features, such as pronouns and the use of repetition, will pinpoint the implied focus of trauma.

##### i) Pronouns: *Singular versus Plural* pronouns coupled with *active versus passive voice*

AG mentions his family only once at the beginning of the testimony, and then we learn only indirectly that his loved ones disappeared. The text implies that they were probably gassed upon arrival in Auschwitz only through the change in the personal pronouns: until arrival in Auschwitz, he uses plural pronouns: 'we', 'us', 'our' and after marching past the physician conducting the selection, he uses only the first person singular: "I."

After one month of ghetto life, **we**<sup>48</sup> were taken to a brick factory and from there to Auschwitz.

On July 1, 1944, in the morning on a rainy Saturday at 6 O'clock, 90 of **us** by a cattle-car with wired windows, together with a couple of lunatics, **we** arrived in Auschwitz. Men dressed in striped clothes unloaded [kivagoníroz = detrain] **us**. And then came, without **our** knowledge, the most important moment of **our** lives [the period is missing] **We** marched past Mengele and by chance **I** was also put [assigned] among the workers. After disinfection **I** got into Lager E. or [also called as] the Gipsy Lager. After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, **I** was taken to the Mühldorf work camp [work lager], where **I** succeeded to get into the potato peeler (brigade), and later, **I** became the lackey [csicskás = pipel] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf].

In addition to the change in the pronouns indicating the loss of AG's loved ones, further down in the testimony, there is another significant change in the use of pronouns signaling another major change in AG's life. After remaining completely alone, AG uses the first person singular as long as he remains active in some way:

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<sup>48</sup> Here the Hungarian grammar does not require the specification of the pronoun.



After 10 weeks of unparalleled suffering, **I** was taken to the Mühldorf work camp [work lager], where **I** succeeded to get into the potato peeler (brigade), and later, **I** became the lackey [csicskás = pipel] of the boss of the S.S. store-house [S.S. magazin séf]

By using the pronoun “I,” AG assumes some sort of responsibility for these events, which he in a way chose in order to survive.

AG relates that he has been taken to the work lager in the passive voice indicating that his choices were severely limited, but the use of the first person singular pronoun, “I”, suggests that he probably volunteered or did something to get out of Birkenau and get into a group which was selected to be taken to work. Saying “I succeeded” implies taking responsibility, as well as the acceptance of the notion that to become privileged was the only way for him to remain alive. AG makes his confession of becoming a *pipel* by drawing upon the same assumption. Since being a *pipel* entailed unspeakable abuse, he does not say the happy word “succeeded” in connection to that, but none-the-less, he assumes responsibility.

When AG loses his privileged position and becomes once again an indistinguishable element of the mass destined to be murdered, completely at the mercy of chance, he begins to use the collective pronoun again together with the passive voice. The sole exception is when he tells us that he got wounded during an air raid.

After liberation however, he becomes an individual who is free to make his own choices. This time, he resolutely and proudly employs the active voice to accompany the emphatic use of the word “I”:

April 29, 1945, after 10 months of a sore trial **I** was free once again.  
After four months of vacationing **I** returned to Hungary, where **I** joined one of [the] Zionist movements in the framework of which **I** hit the road again on January 26, 1946. Now here, in Aschau, **I** wait for aliya, which brings **my** only aim: the building of ERETZ ISRAEL.

## ii) Repetitions

AG not only revises the concept of travel by repetition, he also fills the word “aim” with new meaning through identical repetition. Twice he uses the word in order to signify the goal of others, which is to murder him, then, he appropriates the same word to establish the meaning of his life.

## E. Self construction

AG’s testimony is very successful in respect that he is able to establish within the text of the testimony a viable survivor-self with an aim which he himself finds important and valuable. AG at first relates how he made responsible decisions as a free human being to go back to Hungary, to join a Zionist youth movement and then to “hit the road again.” Now, he is not “dragged away” as a helpless part of a group, but actively



selects a community for himself and chooses to hit the road. Then, he is able to announce his goal: the building of Eretz Israel.

The fact that AG implies how he wants to achieve his aim gives special weight and seriousness to the statement of the goal itself. AG does not name the specific youth movement which he joined. The ideologies of the various youth movements were very different, therefore it mattered which one a person joined. Moreover, people routinely, simply named the youth movement they entered. We find an example of this in the case of another adolescent, MLG, born in 1930. In his testimony also given in the Aschau DP camp: "When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist Movement."<sup>49</sup> By not naming the specific youth movement he joined, AG signifies that he does not approve divisions among Jews. Furthermore, AG makes a slight grammar mistake by leaving out the definite article, a grammatical device for emphasizing self-contained separateness, because it is so important for him not to highlight divisions among Jews. Therefore, building Eretz Israel for AG means to participate in the construction of a unified Jewish community.

Why is unity within the community so important to him? Why would acknowledging divisions hurt him? Because AG perceives the Jewish community in terms of a family. Already at the beginning of the testimony, he uses a word: "brethren" from the terminology of the family to denote the Jewish community. Moreover, he employs it as part of a simile, "like the rest of my Jewish brethren," structurally calling attention to a hidden simile that structures the entire testimony: the community of Jews is like a family.

This simile facilitates survival and gives a special weight to the statement of his otherwise too abstract aim. However, precisely finding a way to sublimate this overwhelming loss into something constructive and thus being able to survive the loss of one's entire family makes it impossible to directly report the actual loss. Moreover, since feelings of guilt do not let the solution—the experiencing of an actively constructed community as one's family, that is "replacing" one's family—appear verbally, it informs the deep structure of the testimony instead.

Since a particularly strong self emerges in the testimony that has an aim, which in a way sublimates one of his major traumatic losses, AG becomes able to actually report his other major trauma: being a *pipel*. As a sharp contrast to the loss of the family, which is only implied, the trauma of being a *pipel* is stated clearly. But unlike the loss of the family, it does not become a structural element informing the entire testimony, so it can be hopefully left behind. Therefore the sublimation of one of the main traumas together with the successful construction of the survival self make it possible for the testimony to be a deeper confession than the majority of the testimonies, in other words, to become a better historical source. Testimonies admitting being a *pipel* are extremely rare. There are many testimonies relating terrible details about *pipels*, but admitting being one is truly exceptional.

#### **F. Recognizing Patterns of Silence and Direct Statement**

In addition to the pattern of silence and direct verbalization concerning the two foci of the witness's trauma, another pattern is present in AG's testimony. He talks about the linear movement of aliya and his life goal that is connected to it, but there are circular

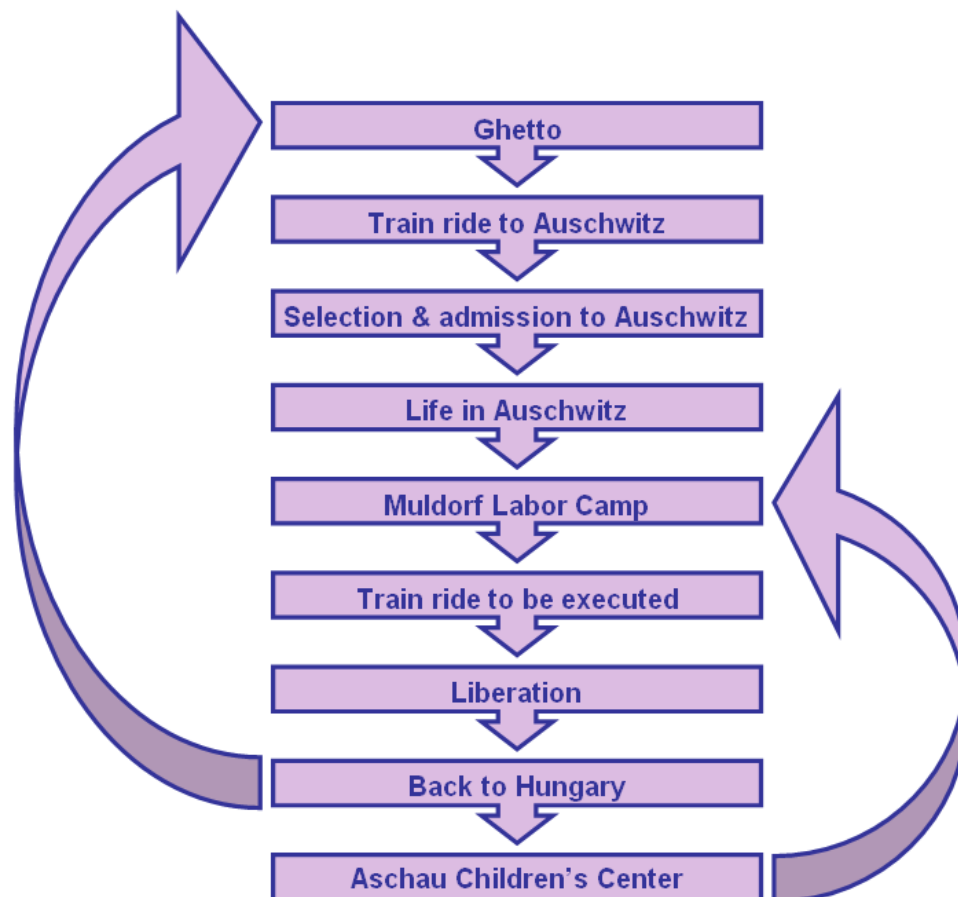
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<sup>49</sup> Rita Horvath's translation "Mikor haza érkeztem egy pár napi othon lét után beléptem bnéj ákibá cionista mozgalmába" (Yad Vashem Archives M-1/E 162).

movements, which AG merely implies. AG himself talks about one return: his return to Hungary, but only to leave it behind once and for all. However, instead of completing his aim involving a linear movement, *aliya*, he must return to Germany. To make matters even worse, the DP camp in Aschau is not far from the Mühldorf work camp. Therefore, instead of completing a linear movement, AG is actually threatened with return to the place of trauma in the most concrete way. That is the reason why he states so strongly his aim that involves leaving Europe behind all together in order to embark on a mission of constructing a new life.<sup>50</sup>

### The use of graphic organizers:

Graphic organizers form a powerful visual picture of information and allow the mind to see undiscovered patterns and relationships. In addition to the linear movement that is directly stated in AG's testimony, the following diagram also demonstrates the circular movements which he merely implies. The objective time is chronological; spatially it contains two returns to places of abuse: one is to Hungary, and the second is to the Muldorf Labor Camp. This opens up the possibility of experiencing time not objectively, but subjectively as circular.



<sup>50</sup> See Rita Horváth's article titled "Trauma and Development in post-Holocaust Jewish Kunstlerromans," in press. It was delivered at the "The Legacy of the Holocaust: The World Before, the World After" Conference, Jagiellonian University, Kraków (Poland), May 2007, and appears in: Zygmunt Mazur et al. (eds.), *The Legacy of the Holocaust* Kraków: Jagiellonian UP, 2009.

## 6. Guided analysis of two additional testimonies from Aschau

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In order to reveal the extent to which students understood and internalized the process of analyzing testimonies, we asked them to decode two other testimonies that were written by children in Aschau. This application of acquired skills and techniques allows students to feel that they are able to deal with authentic material on their own. In addition, by comparing these testimonies, students will be exposed to various possible ways of constructing or deconstructing a viable survivor self.

We have chosen the following testimonies, because the stories of these children have common points and complement one another. All three children are from the same region of Hungary: two are from the same village. Two were ghettoized and deported from the same town—Debrecen: one to Auschwitz and one to Strasshof.<sup>51</sup>

### YVA M-1 /E 164

D.P. CAMP. ASCHAU. U.N.R.R.A. TEAM. 154.

Name: JF      born: 1930. April 18.

Ed.[ucational] Lev.[el]: 4 classes of higher elementary school<sup>52</sup>

Address before the war: Hungary. Berettyóújfalú. Bánffy u. 4.

How did I pull through the times of the German regime!

On 19 March, 1944, late in the Sunday afternoon, the first German occupying troops appeared. From this moment on, the constant dread and agitation began. The population, sensing a stronger force backing it, began tormenting the Jewry. The smashing in of windows[,] window-shops and heads were a common occurrence.<sup>53</sup> On March 25 the gendarmerie carried out a large raid. Every Jew whom they found on the street was taken into the gendarmerie barracks. I too was among these unfortunate people. From dawn until the evening of the following day, they were providing us with heaps of beatings.<sup>54</sup>

Horrible, increasingly severe laws followed one another. For April 5, the law of wearing the star appeared which completely paralyzed our lives. On April 17, my dad joined his unit. [JF does not specify, probably because it is so obvious, that his father was called up for forced labor service within the framework of the Hungarian army. RH] He left me with my mom and 5 little siblings, a half-year-old brother among them, and two old grandparents. Day after day, worse and worse news arrived.

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<sup>51</sup> Recommended sources on the Hungarian Holocaust that appear in English are: the works of Randolph Braham and Kinga Frojimovics – Géza Komoróczy – Viktória Pusztai – Andrea Strbik, *Jewish Budapest. Memories, services, history*. Edited by Géza Komoróczy. Budapest: Central European UP, 1999.

<sup>52</sup> A special kind of school in the Hungarian school system before and during WWII.

<sup>53</sup> In Hungarian JF uses an expression: The smashing of windows[,] window-shops and heads were “on the daily agenda.” The sentence containing a pun is grammatically incorrect: JF uses the words ‘windows’ and ‘window-shops’ in plural, which is incorrect according to Hungarian grammar.

<sup>54</sup> This sentence is especially awkward in Hungarian; there is no such expression as “heaps of beatings.”

All of our relatives were taken to ghettos and deported. Every day we had been expecting with dread our transfer to a ghetto.

At dawn on June 7, the gendarmerie together with the military occupied all the Jewish houses, giving 10 minutes for packing they herded the Jewish inhabitants of the village to a lumberyard.<sup>55</sup> From here, in the evening, they entrained [bevagoniroztak] us with the help of rifle butts and gendarme's bayonets. We traveled for one day. Until Nagyvárad, a 30 km-distance. From here they pushed us into an enormous stable 1000 people.<sup>56</sup> We had been languishing here for three weeks. Meanwhile the detectives picked out the older and richer people and amongst horrible beatings, they interrogated [them] concerning the whereabouts of hidden riches. On a Saturday afternoon the Gestapo appeared in the ghetto and summoned my granddad, who was a chief-rabbi of Berettyóújfalu, and the other rabbis. They ordered the gendarmes to place the rabbis and their families in a separate room. Thus we were separated. It was forbidden to be in contact with the other inhabitants of the ghetto.

At dawn on Monday, about 200 sickle-feathered beasts [JF means gendarmes] made their appearance in the courtyard of the ghetto. They [in the Hungarian the pronoun does not refer to people but to animals or inanimate objects] with their customary plundering method, (with rifle butt and bayonet) herded together the inhabitants of the ghetto and drove [them] into the cattle car.<sup>57</sup> Towards the evening the Gestapo appeared. It took us to the station; by boarding a train, the next day we arrived in Budapest.

They took us to Aréna Bulvard No. 55. In the house that was under the Gestapo's auspices, the people brought from the other ghettos had been already waiting. They brought us here for the purpose of taking us through Germany to Erec. In the third day an aliya indeed went away, which is already in Erec today. After the departure of the aliya, they transferred us to No. 46 Colombusz Street. We lived here under the auspices of the Gestapo until mid mid-aug[ust], when the protecting guards went away. Life in the Colombusz Street was quite good under the circumstances. Then came Oct. 15, the famous day. Horthy's asking for an armistice, and Szállasi's rise to power.<sup>58</sup> At noon, Horthy issued a proclamation to the Hungarian army and to the Hungarian nation to end the senseless fighting. The Jews of Pest breathed a sigh of relief. The stars came off the houses and the coats.

But unfortunately the happiness was short-lived. Szállasi's [the name is misspelled] arrow-cross gangs were waiting only for this moment. After overcoming smaller resistances the power was completely in arrow-cross hands.

This naturally signified for us, Jews, that we were doomed. On Oct. 16, we were placed under the protection of the International Red Cross. However, this protection lasted only until Dec. 2. On Dec. 2, arrow-cross bands and police squads attacked the Colombusz Street, and took its inhabitants to the Kisok stadium. [Colombusz Street stands for the Colombusz Street camp] Here they separated the men between 14-50 years of age and the women between 14-40 years of age and sent them on foot towards Germany. [These are the ill-famed death marches] We, on the other hand, were taken to the ghetto of Pest. Here, battling with death from starvation, we lived through the terrible days of the siege. The word live through emphasizes the time of the happening. By contrast, survive emphasizes the result, he time after]

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<sup>55</sup> It is not correct grammatically: two sentences are pushed into each other.

<sup>56</sup> The sentence is ungrammatical: it has two subjects: us and 1,000 people.

<sup>57</sup> The Hungarian sentence is grammatically incorrect in a number of ways: the object, "them," is missing and a false concord appears pertaining to the act of herding the ghetto's inhabitants into the cattle cars of the departing train.

<sup>58</sup> In Hungarian it is not a grammatical mistake to write a sentence without a verb, therefore this sentence is grammatically correct.

Beside us, the people were dropping down dead as a result of the starvation and the bombs. A week before liberation my grandfather died of starvation. The survival of each and every person was a special divine miracle. At last on Jan. 18 in the small hours the liberating Russian troops appeared, and we could become free people once again.

J F<sup>59</sup>

### YVA M-1 /E 163

**Address:** D.P. Camp Aschau Unnra Teám. 154.

**Name:** Jákob Weisz born: 1931. January 21

**Ed.[ucational] Lev.[el]:** First year of High School

**Address before the war:** Hungary, Berettyóújfalú, Bocskai St. 1.

How did I pull through the times of the German regime. On 19 March, 1944, the German bandit troops appeared. The Hungarian population, seeing this, started to display the hatred for J.[ews] The smashing of windows and heads started. [It is a pun in Hungarian, which is funny and grammatically correct (ablaktörés = breakage of windows, fejtörés = racking one's brain)] On March 25[,] the village gendarmes carried out a large raid in the village. On April 5 the wearing of stars started. As a war orphan I was exempt from [wearing] the star for a little while, I traveled to Berettyóújfalú during this time. On April 15[,] we returned to Debrecen with travel permits. [It is condensed, but JW wants to convey that he was able to travel when other Jews had already been unable to do so, because he was "exempt from [wearing] the star." So he took the opportunity, and traveled home. He could return to the city with other Jews only with a special travel permit.]

On April 20[,] the walls of the ghettos of Debrecen was shut.<sup>60</sup> In Debrecen the American planes appeared and it carried out a large air raid against Debrecen.<sup>61</sup> A bomb fell next to the ghetto. We were in the ghetto until June. On June 12[,] excise men surrounded the ghetto. They closed down every house, they subjected everybody to manual search, they took away every piece of Jewelry. After the manual search they took us to the brick factory on foot. 34 [of] us lived in a territory [of] 3 m<sup>2</sup>. On June 22 [, there was] a raid [=a round-up, not an air raid].<sup>62</sup> On 23[,] vaggonirozing [=entraining] 83 persons into 1 [cattle]car without food and drink [traveling] for 3 days.<sup>63</sup> On 26[,] we get off in Strázhof /26 Kms from Vienna/ in a disinfection place.<sup>64</sup> On June 30 we went to Vienna to the 15<sup>th</sup> District to a three-storied school.

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<sup>59</sup> JF's testimony, which was translated from the Hungarian [by Rita Horvath], follows the original text very closely. Any awkwardness that appears in the English version corresponds with some kind of awkwardness in the Hungarian original.

<sup>60</sup> In the Hungarian, the walls are in plural but the verb is in singular.

<sup>61</sup> In the Hungarian, the planes are in plural and the thing, "it," that carried out the bombing is in singular.]

<sup>62</sup> In Hungarian it is not a grammatical mistake to write a sentence without a verb, therefore this sentence is grammatically correct.

<sup>63</sup> There is no punctuation in the Hungarian, so without relationships between the phrases, it is ungrammatical. Moreover, a needed verb is missing.

<sup>64</sup> As opposed to all the other verbs in the testimony, "get off" is in present tense in the Hungarian original.

Later we regularly went out to work to the 20<sup>th</sup> District. /factory district/ Bombs were a common occurrence.[In Hungarian, JW uses an expression: The bomb was “on the daily agenda.”]

On March 21, 1945, we were taken to Strászhof, in order to [be taken] further on from there. We were in the cattle car when the American bombs appeared. The second cattle car was hit directly.

On April 10 the Russians came in and I am staying in Germany since then.<sup>65</sup>

## A comparison of self construction

M1 E-168 is completely successful in constructing a viable self. This emerging witness-self can bring himself to state plainly his most unspeakable trauma: being a pipel. He can do this, because by writing the testimony, he turns his other major trauma, the loss of his entire family, into a worthy aim: to help construct the Jewish nation as a family-like community. The testimony conveys a viable self who has important life goals to pursue.

M1 E-163, by contrast, is a complete failure from the point of view of self construction. From the text we can see that J. W. resents the project of testifying, but since it is required in school, he does it anyway. He begins to copy from another child who came from his village, and after the copied sentences, in lieu of verification, he states that he was somewhere else implying that whatever he had written up to that point is not valid. Then he stops copying and his writing falls apart. There are many ungrammatical sentences as well as spelling mistakes, and even the handwriting becomes messier. No causal relationships of any kind emerge in the testimony, and we do not get a lot of information. His personal trauma is connected to bombardments, but nothing solid emerges from the testimony. A complete chaos is revealed. The ending of the composition reveals no joy, no aim, and no agency: “The Russians came in on 10 April and since then I am staying in Germany.” He never mentions what happened to his family either.

M1 E-164: this child was together with prominent adults, and he is aware of the special importance of his knowledge of the events. He has a wide overview and he knows that his testimony is important from a historical point of view. Thus, he does not build his testifying self during the testimony; he has constructed it previously. It comes through from the text that one of his self-preserving survival strategies had already been to listen to the adults around him and take mental notes in order to become a witness. He is aware of the special nature of his experiences as a family member of a rabbi; he was chosen to be taken to Budapest from the ghetto in the framework of the Kasztner-operation (the family is mentioned in other historical sources).

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<sup>65</sup> JW’s testimony, which was translated from the Hungarian [by Rita Horvath], follows the original text very closely. Any awkwardness that appears in the English version corresponds with some kind of awkwardness in the Hungarian original.



## 7. Conclusion

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Children are always the victims of wars raging between adults, and wars give rise to horrendous experiences of children. World War II, in this regard, was no different than prior wars and even much worse. In this war civilian populations were targeted and bombed as an act of war; a strategic decision first made by the Germans and then followed by the Allies. Bombing of towns with their civilian population was deemed crucial by the allies who did not see any other way of striking back at the Germans and hampering their war efforts other than such attacks. But it was not only about bombings. The flux of war, ravaging towns and communities in mechanized high power campaigns also took its toll of civilians. So did policy decisions by German authorities to starve civilian population in order to feed the German population. For these reasons the death toll of civilians, children among them, was enormous.

But the case of Jewish children was different: they were set up as targets for extermination by the Germans. Their fate was not the 'collateral damage' of the confrontation between the rivaling armies but rather the result of an extermination campaign with a rationale of its own. Targeted for extermination, Jewish children did not have much chance for survival and about 1,500,000 of them were murdered during the Holocaust. Their murder epitomizes Nazi evil and cruelty.

The experience of Jewish children during the Holocaust was as varied as the experience of war. But it was a zero sum game – the final destination was death. Theirs was not just a case of staying out of harms way, it was a struggle for survival. The few Jewish children who did survive the Holocaust tell of the ordeals they went through: loss of parents and family, starvation, deprivation, hiding in sub-human conditions. The stories told by surviving children provide a unique window into the experiences of Jewish children during the Holocaust. This project aims at bringing the children's experience during the Holocaust into the academic discourse.

The module demonstrates how an analysis of children's testimonies through a multidisciplinary lens allows a much deeper understanding of the child's frame of mind and personal experiences of the Holocaust. By adding the linguistic and literary tools of analysis to the historical ones, students learn how to uncover the emotional hotspots pointing to the most traumatic experiences embedded within these seemingly simple testimonies.

## Supplement 1: The Geography of evil

### A. Debrecen

Kinga Frojimovics

#### **"Debrecen: A short history of the Jewish Communities, the ghetto, and the deportation"**

This supplement is based on the entry written by Kinga Frojimovics that will be published as part of Yad Vashem's Ghetto Lexicon

*AG was deported from Debrecen. Cross reference the information here with that in AG's testimony.*

Debrecen is a large town in Hajdú County. It is the county seat.

According to the 1941 census, which was the last nationwide census taken before the Holocaust, 9,142 Jews lived in Debrecen. Jews made up about 7.3% of the total population. Between the two world wars, most of the Jews were merchants and artisans. Many of the landowners owning large and medium-sized estates around Debrecen were also Jews.

Two Jewish communities operated in Debrecen from 1886: a larger Statusquo Ante Jewish community and a smaller Orthodox one. The Jewish elementary school opened its doors in 1886. In 1906, the Jewish community established a higher elementary school for girls. A separate Orthodox elementary school opened its doors in 1900. In 1944, 399 pupils studied in this school. Since the two high schools of Debrecen, the Roman Catholic and the Calvinist high schools, did not accept Jewish students from the 1921/1922 academic year on (130 Jewish students applied for acceptance into the two high schools), a Jewish high school was established in the autumn of 1921. This high school was open until March, 1944.

From 1938, the Hungarian government introduced a series of anti-Jewish laws as part of the Hungarian anti-Jewish policy. As a consequence of the enactment of the First (anti-)Jewish Law in 1938, the economic situation of the Jews became increasingly difficult. Many people wanted to emigrate. The Jewish high school offered them English, French, and Hebrew language courses and courses for acquiring various trades. In 1940, many young Jewish men were drafted for forced labor service within the framework of the Hungarian Army. They worked in various places in Hungary. In 1942, there was a new wave of calling up Jewish men for forced labor. Most of them were sent to the Eastern front, to the Ukraine, where many of them perished.

In the summer of 1941, the Hungarian authorities deported a number of Jewish families from Debrecen that could not prove that they were Hungarian citizens, to a region in the Ukraine which was under German occupation. The vast majority of the Jews deported at this time were murdered by German units on the 27<sup>th</sup> and on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August at Kamenets-Podolsk.

The German army occupied Hungary on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 1944. The German authorities ordered the Central Council of the Hungarian Jews to take a community census probably in order to assess the assets of the Jewish communities and to

facilitate the deportation of the Jews. According to this census, which was taken in the second week of April, 1944, 3306 Jews belonged to the Orthodox Jewish community of Debrecen. The Statusquo Ante Jewish community of Debrecen did not respond to the questionnaire of the census.

The German troops arrived in Debrecen on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, 1944. The Gestapo dissolved the two Jewish communities and ordered the establishment of a Jewish Council. Rabbi Dr. Pál (Meir) Weiss (the rabbi of the Statusquo Ante Jewish community) became the president of the Jewish Council. Jenő Ungár (the last president of the Statusquo Ante Jewish community), Ernő Bernfeld (merchant, the last president of the Orthodox Jewish community), Miksa Weinberger, and Albert Waldmann were its members.

After the German occupation, the Hungarian administration remained intact and in force. It rapidly introduced dozens of anti-Jewish decrees. The ghettoization and the deportation of the Jews happened on the basis of the decrees and orders of the Hungarian national and local authorities. László Szilassy, the comes (the highest official in a Hungarian county, appointed by the government) of Hajdú County, ordered the establishment of ghettos in his county in his decree No. 11.743/1944. As a consequence of this decree, the mayor, Dr. Sándor Kölcsey, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, designated the territory of the ghetto in a part of Debrecen where the majority of the inhabitants were Jews (Decree No. 21.838/1944.) Since the mayor was against ghettoization, Dr. Lajos Bessenyei, the comes of Debrecen, dismissed him. Jews had to move into the ghetto by *the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 1944*. According to the daily reports received by the Central Council of the Hungarian Jews in Budapest, the ghetto was sealed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 1944. The ghetto in which 8,964 people lived consisted of two parts: the so-called little ghetto and the large ghetto. They were separated from each other by a street. When the Jews moved in, they could bring with them food for two weeks, something to sleep on, and 3,000 Pengő (Hungarian currency). Dr. Gyula Szabó, the head of the police department, was the commandant of the ghetto. A separate section of the Jewish Council led by the physician Dr. Dezső Fejes Friedmann organized the health service of the ghetto. Dr. Dénes Gyenes was Dr. Fejes Friedmann's deputy. Both a hospital and a pharmacy operated in the ghetto. Béla Lusztbaum, a former captain, was the commander of the Jewish police, which was responsible for keeping order in the ghetto. Lusztbaum's deputy was Géza Csengeri.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, the inhabitants of the little ghetto, about 3,000 people, were suddenly taken to the large ghetto. They were not allowed to bring anything with them.

During June, the war factories in the city demanded more and more workers. At the end, even children of 13-14 and people of 70 had to work. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, Debrecen was bombed by the English-American forces. Since the rails of the railway were damaged, the police ordered the men from the ghetto to clear away the rubble in the railway station.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 1944, the inhabitants of the ghetto were taken to the Serly brick factory in the outskirts of the city. This was an entrainment center into which the Jews from the other ghettos of the county had already been taken during the previous week. Jews from the ghetto of Békéscsaba (Békés County) were also brought here. Gyula Sziládi gendarme colonel was the commandant of the entrainment center in the brick factory. Two German consultants, Dr. Siegfried Seidl Hauptsturmführer and Halmar Hansy Obersturmführer, aided the commandant as advisers. Both Szabó, the

commandant of the ghetto of Debrecen, and Sziládi, the commandant of the entrainment center, were executed in 1945.

The Jewish council established a community kitchen in the brick factory. They were cooking soup in bathtubs, but they could not cook enough for everybody. There was only one water-tap in the entire territory of the brick factory. They used the water almost exclusively for cooking.

The Hungarian gendarmes tortured the inhabitants of the brick factory in order to reveal their hidden valuables. A number of people committed suicide in the brick factory. The gendarmes who guarded the camp laid the dying people on the edge of the camp and did not allow anyone to help them.

According to the report of László Ferenczy gendarme lieutenant colonel, from the 25<sup>th</sup> until the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 1944, one transport left per day, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, two transports left the city. The first 2 transports arrived in Strasshof in Austria carrying altogether 6,641 Jews. (All of the deportees were entrained in the brick factory except for the 1st transport: on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, the first group of deportees was compelled to go on foot to Hajdúszentgyörgypusztá. They were deported from there. During the train ride Emánuel Sebők committed suicide.) Jews deported from Hungary to Austria were under the authority of *Der Höhere Befehlshaber der SS und Polizei in Ungarn – Sondereinsatzkommando – Aussenkommando Wien* headed by Hermann A. Krumey SS-Obersturmführer. These Jews worked in various industrial and agricultural plants and farms in East-Austria and in Vienna. Many of them worked in various factories of the Todt-organization. Families lived together in the camps. The other three trains took 6,868 deportees to Auschwitz.

#### After WW2

4,350 Jews belonged to the reestablished Orthodox Jewish community and about 4,500 Jews belonged to the reestablished Statusquo Ante Jewish community in Debrecen in 1948. (It does not mean that this is the number of those survivors who had lived formerly in Debrecen. Many of them were survivors from smaller villages and towns in the vicinity of Debrecen, who moved into the larger town after the war.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Concerning the communal life of the survivors in Debrecen see Kinga Frojimovics's "'Landmark-Stones are the Highway toward Martyrdom...': Holocaust Memorial Monuments in Hungary." *Studia Judaica* XIV, 2006, pp. 115–128

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## **B. Auschwitz and Hungarian Holocaust**

*AG was deported here and later, he was taken to a work camp from here.*

Auschwitz was the largest camp-complex in the Nazi concentration camp universe. It became to symbolize the entire Holocaust. During its existence—from 1940 until 1945— all-in-all, about 1.3 million people were deported here and about 1.1 million of them perished in Auschwitz. Ninety percent of the murdered people were Jews. From Hungary, the Germans, with the efficient help of the Hungarian authorities, deported about 430,000 Jews within ten weeks to Auschwitz. Seventy five-eighty percent of the new arrivals were gassed immediately.

## **C. Mühldorf labor Camp**

AG was taken to Mühldorf from Auschwitz

Constant Allied air raid forced Nazi Germany to construct underground manufacturing facilities of the war effort. The S.S. provided concentration camp inmates to construct these facilities and work in them. Therefore the inmates were taken to satellite camps near the war factories. The Mühldorf work satellite camp complex (in Bavaria) belonged to the Dachau concentration camp. It was established in the summer of 1944 to provide labor for an underground airplane factory manufacturing Messerschmitt 262s. „According to the account of a prisoner who turned over the camp's administrative files to American authorities, the Mettenheim camp held some 2,000 inmates, a nearby women's camp 500 persons, the “forest camps” (*Waldlager*) about 2,250 male and female inmates, while two other camps held a total of 550 persons. *Most of the prisoners were Hungarian Jews*, but there were also Jews from Greece, France, Italy as well as political prisoners from Russia, Poland, Germany, and Serbia. The surrounding area also contained numerous forced-labor and prisoner-of-war camps to supply workers for the factory.”<sup>67</sup>

A great number of the inmates of the Mühldorf camp complex perished either as a result of selections or died on site from overwork, abuse, shootings, and disease. *In late April, as the U.S. Army approached the camps, the SS guards evacuated some 3,600 prisoners from the camp.*<sup>68</sup> The U.S. Army liberated the camp on May 2, 1945.<sup>69</sup>

Ironically, after the war the camp complex became a home for DPs. Aschau was one of its satellite DP camps.

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<sup>67</sup>*Holocaust Encyclopedia*: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10006172>)

<sup>68</sup> *Holocaust Encyclopedia*: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10006172>)

<sup>69</sup> International Tracing Service, Verzeichnis der Haftstaetten Unter dem Reichsfuehrer-SS (1933-1945), p. 81-82



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D.P. Camp Aschau, U.N.R.R.A. Team 154.

G. A. . Magyarországon, Debrecenben,  
1931. X. 17.-én születtem.

Mint többi zsidó testvéremet, engem is családommal együtt ghettóba hurcoltak 1944. V. 15. Egy hónapi ghettóélet után téglagyárba vittek és onnan Auschwitzba.

1944. VII. 1.-én egy esős szombati nap reggel 6 órakor érkezünk meg, drótos ablakú vagonokban 90-en, pár örülttel együtt Auschwitzba. Csikos ruhás emberek vagonirozta ki bennünket. És akkor jött, tudtukon kívül, életünk legfórtosabb pillanata Elvonultunk, Mangela előtt és véletlenül engem is a munkások közé osztottak. Fentőtlenítés után az E. vagy Cigány lágérba kerültem. 10 hetes pártizlak szenvedés után a mülhdonfi munkás lágérba vittek, ahol sikertelen bejuttam a krumplipucolóba és később az SS. magazinséf csicskásaleten Később vagonokba vették bennünket és ismenetlenül cél felé indítottak bennünket. Acél gépfegyverszórás volt. Ut közben légitámadást kaptunk melynek megsebesültem. Vagyis ekkor meghalt a transzportführer és, ki a gépfegyvereszt végrehajtotta volna és így megmenekültünk. Itz SS.ek elszökték és minket az U.S. Army, 1945. IV. 29. én 10 hónapi keskenyes megpróbáltatás után újra szabad voltam.

Négy hetesi nyaralás után visszatértem Magyarországra, ahol belepertem egyik ciouista mozgalomba melynek keretén belül ismét útnak indultam 1946. I. 6. én. Most itt Aschauban várom az aliját mely egyetlen célomat hozza EREC IZRAEL felépülését.

# Supplement 3: A Map of the Aschau Camp Layout

