

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

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

Module 2: Children in the Midst of Mass Killing Actions (Aktzyas) – Eastern Galicia

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MODULE 2: Children in the midst of Mass Killing Actions (Aktzyas)—Eastern Galicia

1. Introduction

This educational module deals with testimonies of children from Jewish communities in Eastern Galicia - today the western Ukraine. These communities experienced pre-war Polish rule, the Soviet occupation from September 1939 to June 1941, and the German occupation from then on until liberation by the Soviet Army in 1944. During the time of German occupation, the Jewish population in the entire area was wiped out by the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators. Between the summer of 1941 and the winter of 1943, Galician Jews were subjected to three massive waves of killings resulting in the murder of more than 500,000 Jews out of the 600,000 who had resided there before the war.¹ The surviving children were witness to periodically reoccurring waves of killing and terror, "Aktzyas" as they were called at the time, and their testimonies, presented in this teaching module, center around this experience.

The Terror of the Aktzya (Action)

For Jews under Nazi rule, life alternated between 'relative calm', during which they experienced "mere" oppression, violence, forced labor, hunger and disease, and times of sheer terror: small-scale or massive 'Actions' perpetrated by the Germans, during which hundreds of thousands were murdered by bullet or gas. Sometimes Actions targeted a particular segment of the Jewish population such as the intellectuals, women, children, the elderly, the sick, or simply Jews living in a designated area. At other times entire communities were wiped out. Nachman Blumental, one of the early researchers of the Holocaust, in a paper published in 1960, set out to convey to his readers what Aktzyas were and how the victims experienced them²:

The word "Action" (Aktion in German) is probably the most cruel word the Jewish people remember from the period of the catastrophe. Much has been

¹ For more on the Holocaust of the area, see Omer Bartov's "Guilt and Accountability in the Postwar Courtroom: The Holocaust in Czortków and Buczacz, East Galicia, As Seen in West German Legal Discourse" pp.1-40. in *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University: Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Geocide, and Caste*; Oct. 27-29, 2005. Yale Univ., New Haven, Connecticut (<http://www.yale.edu/glc/justice/bartov.pdf>)

² Blumental, Nachman, "'Action'", *Yad Vashem Studies* 4 (1960) 57-96. The paper can be found at www.lekkt.com

written on a popular level on this subject in Yiddish, Polish and Ukrainian. The word “action” in the new connotation given to it under Nazi rule is to be found in the post-War literature of nearly all the European languages. But, of course, it was first used by the Nazis in their documents and public announcements. The term was also used by the German organizers in their conversations and consultations, as well as by those who took part in the “actions” etc.³

The impact of recurring waves of Actions on Eastern Europe's Jewish population is shown by Jechiel Dinur, a survivor of Auschwitz and author, who adopted the name “Ka-tzetnik,” signifying camp inmate. In his novel *The House of Dolls*, Ka-tzetnik writes of the Jews of Zagalebie (Polish Upper-Silesia) and their dread of the next Action:

Everyone wondered: whose turn will it be next? When will the next action strike? What will it be like? Will it be again the shops? Or will it be a children's "action"? Or maybe the women this time?⁴

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 reflection and discussion:

1. What are your associations with the region Galicia? (Ask student to find maps of this region on the Internet, and then discuss historical and political differences reflected in the maps, and show how even geographical maps are not politically neutral.)
2. Which issues do you associate with multi-ethnicity and especially multi-ethnic regions in Europe?
3. What do you know about the term "Aktzya"?
4. Did you encounter this term in testimonies, diaries, or novels that you have read?
5. Where did these Aktzyas take place?
6. Who initiated and carried out these Aktzyas?
7. In your opinion, why is it important to study and research this aspect of the Holocaust?

³ Ibid, p. 57.

⁴ Ka-tzetnik 135633, *House of Dolls*, New-York 1955, p. 57.

2. Eastern Galicia: Geography, Politics and History

Eastern Galicia is a territory with a long and complex history involving a great deal of conflict and animosity among the major ethnic groups: Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. It was a multilingual area as well, the major languages being Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish. Previously a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in the interwar years it became part of Poland.

The Soviet army invaded Eastern Galicia in September 1939 and annexed the region to the USSR, becoming a part of Western Ukraine. Following the German invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941, this territory was occupied by German forces and, in parts, by their Hungarian allies. Soon after (July 16, 1941), the area was severed from the German administration of the Ukraine (RKU, *Reich Kommissariat Ukraine*) and incorporated within the General Government of Poland as *District Galicia*.

The Jews in the district were subject to all anti-Jewish legislation already in force in the General Government, but they were also the victims of the murderous policies implemented in the areas captured from the USSR, which consisted of killings of Jews who were active in the Soviet administration, and mass killing "Actions." In the General Government such Actions began only in March 1942. The attitude of the Ukrainian population that welcomed the Germans enthusiastically and enlisted support from their auxiliary police added to the cruelty of the anti-Jewish actions. This cruelty fed on age old anti-Semitism that became exacerbated during Soviet rule in which many Jews participated, and manifested itself in a wave of anti Jewish pogroms in the first days of the occupation. Ghettos were established only in a small number of cities in the district and many of these were open. In most places ghettos were established only in 1942 concurrent with the mass extermination of Jews at that time.⁵

On the fate of the region's Jews writes Thomas Sandkühler:

The "final solution" in Galicia claimed over half a million Jewish victims; beginning in October 1941, they were murdered in mass executions and subsequently and above all in the gas chambers of the Belzec extermination

⁵ Based on Yitzhak Arad, *History of the Holocaust: Soviet Union and annexed territories Vol. 1*, (Hebrew) Yad Vashem Jerusalem 2004.

camp...The extermination of the Jews began considerably earlier than in the rest of the General Government.⁶

In the following pages we present an overview of the life and destruction of District Galicia's Jews under Nazi rule. It aims at providing the knowledge needed to evaluate and analyze the children's testimonies which follow. The sources quoted in the footnotes enable more in-depth study of this bleak chapter of human history.

⁶ Thomas Sandkühler, "Anti-Jewish Policy and the murder of the Jews in the District of Galicia, 1941/42", in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, Berghahn Books, New York Oxford, 2000, pp 104 - 127.

3. Killing in Stages

As we have said, Eastern Galician Jews were murdered in three distinct waves. The first wave lasted from the invasion of the region by the Germans on 22 June 1941 until the end of the winter of 1942. The second wave was from the spring of 1942 to the winter of 1943 and the third from early spring 1943 to the end of the summer in 1944.

The waves were influenced by the course of the war, policy decisions connected to the 'Final Solution', inter-factional conflicts in the Nazi power structure, and by the number of Jews in the various areas. Local and temporary need for Jewish labor influenced the frequency of mass killings, as had technical issues such as the availability of German or auxiliary forces needed for the mass murders and seasonal weather conditions - winter and frozen ground hampered digging of mass graves.

A. The First Stage of Killing: 22 June 1941 – end of winter 1941/1942

Killing of Jews started with the arrival of German troops and even before that by Local Ukrainian mobs. Behind the forward troops came *Einsatzgruppe C* commanded by Otto Rasch. Like other similar units, it was ordered to establish order behind the front and to liquidate Russian ruling elites. "Because in the minds of the Germans as well as the Ukrainian nationalists the Soviet state apparatus was dominated by Jews, this order applied above all to Jews. Therefore the Einsatzgruppen had been instructed to stage as inconspicuously as possible pogroms by local anti-Semites."⁷

Such pogroms started in some places even before German troops arrived and accompanied the Ukrainian nationalist's nascent and short-lived attempt at the establishment of a provisional Ukrainian government.⁸ The arrival of the *Einsatzgruppe C*'s units intensified the killings and by October 1941, the Germans were killing Jews in mass actions.

The historian Dieter Pohl gives two reasons for the beginning of mass killings in early October 1941, both resulting from the understanding of the German civil administration that 'their' Jews will not be resettled in the East in the near future. If ghettos were now the feasible solution, then excess Jews have to be disposed of. This was exemplified by the Aktzya in Stanislaw to be described shortly. The second reason, claims Pohl, was the "overall radicalization of Jewish policy throughout Eastern Europe". In lieu of

⁷ Sandkühler, "Anti-Jewish Policy" p. 108.

⁸ On 30 June, 1941, in Lwow, the Bandera faction of OUN, which had organized the Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists to fight with the Germans against the Bolsheviks, proclaimed the re-establishment of the Ukrainian state in Western Ukraine and formed the Ukrainian State administration under Y. A. Stetsko. This government was suppressed by the Germans on 12 July and its members as well as leading OUN members were arrested

complicated plans for deportation and resettlement discussed before, the authorities chose the "more simpler methods": the shooting of every Jew for whom there was "no room, no food, no work".⁹

The biggest aktzya in the early days of occupation was in Stanislaw and its vicinity. This area was briefly held by the Hungarians during the first days of the invasion and they expelled thousands of "stateless" Jews from the Carpatoruss there.

Stanislaw was the second biggest Jewish community in Eastern Galicia after Lvov. In the second half of 1939 thousands of Polish Jews escaping the Germans came there and now the Hungarians brought thousands more. The original community of about 25,000 grew to 35,000-38,000 thousand. In the beginning of August 1941, 500 of the Jewish intelligentsia were murdered and this was but a prelude to the great Action that took place on 12 October. 20,000 Jews were taken from their homes to the center of the town after being ordered to wear their best clothes and bring their valuables with them. They were taken to the Jewish cemetery, ordered to undress and hand over their valuables and then shot to death in groups near pre-prepared pits. Meanwhile, their homes were ransacked by the local mob. By night time close to 12,000 Jews were murdered and the rest were ordered to return home. This was the biggest action at the time but until the end of 1941, Jews were killed in their thousands in communities throughout this area.¹⁰

Forced Labor and Extermination: The Durchgangsstrasse Road Project

Jews were pressed into forced labor from the first days of occupation. While the building of ghettos was forbidden by Hans Frank (head of the General Government), he was open to another idea tried out in the General Government – forced work camps, a network of which soon covered Eastern Galicia.

The Germans found out that a large part of the skilled labor force in the area was Jewish. The German military was interested in utilizing this labor force. The issue was addressed by Otto Rasch, commander of Einsatzgruppe C which operated in the Northern Ukraine. On 17 September 1941 he "recommended a strategy combining roadwork... with the annihilation of the Jews".¹¹

In the western and central Ukraine, Jewry is almost identical with the urban stratum of workers, craftsmen and traders. Should Jewish labor be dispensed with completely, the economic reconstruction of Ukrainian industry as well as the strengthening of urban administration centers will be almost impossible.

⁹ Dieter Pohl, "The Murder of the Jews in the General Government", in Ulrich Herbert (ed.), *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies*, Berghahn Books, New York Oxford, 2000, pp 83 – 103, p. 88.

¹⁰ Arad, *History of the Holocaust*, p. 409. Dieter Pohl, *Ibid*, puts the number at 60,000.

¹¹ Andrej Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor: Jews and Thoroughfare IV in Central Ukraine", in Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower (Eds.), *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2008. Pp. 190-223.

There is only one possibility, which the German administration in the General Government has underestimated for a long time.
Solving the Jewish question through the extensive use of Jews for labor.
That would lead to the gradual liquidation of Jewry – a development that would be in line with the economic conditions of the country.¹²

The dilapidated condition of the road system in Eastern Galicia and the USSR was an obstacle to the German invasion. The army had to be supplied on the axis of advance towards the Caucasus and Stalingrad. The planned economic exploitation of the Ukraine and the Caucasus oil wells needed a good road system. The solution was to build a new thoroughfare running for 2,175 km. (ca. 1360 miles) from Lvov in District Galicia to Taganarog (Seaport city on the north shore of the Sea of Azov just west of the mouth of the Don River). The Durchgangsstrasse (DG) road project had great strategic importance and its western segment passed through District Galicia. Apart from the road's military importance, it was also crucial to the initial Nazi plans of deporting the millions of the General Government's Jews to the inner reaches of the conquered USSR. Work started in early September 1941 and on the 20th of that month the Jewish population was notified of its obligation to work (Arbeitszwang).¹³

Fritz Katzmann the SS and police leader in District Galicia was "charged with applying the idea [of Eintragsgruppen C] on the stretch of DG IV under his preview." Accordingly, Katzmann's "men initially focused on annihilating what they saw as "the work-shy and asocial Jew[ish] riff-raff" before turning to the rest."¹⁴ However it seems that for Katzmann "killing his Jewish workers was more important than their work" as can be seen by the staffing of key posts along DG IV "with outspoken antisemites" who worked their Jewish workers to death in atrocious conditions. Simultaneously, orders were given by Katzmann to shoot Jews who were unfit for work and to execute the entire work unit in case of any successful escapes.¹⁵ "Soon", writes Sandkühler, "a direct connection became evident" between the establishment of Belzec and the work-camps: "Those who could work were used in road construction, those who could not were murdered in Belzec."¹⁶

¹² Ibid. p. 193-194.

¹³ Sandkühler, "Anti-Jewish Policy" p. 111.

¹⁴ Angrick, "Annihilation and Labor" p. 194.

¹⁵ Ibid. 195.

¹⁶ Sandkühler, "Anti-Jewish Policy" p. 115.

B. The Second Stage of Killing: Belzec

But Belzec was not planned as a repository for segments of the Jewish population who were incapable of work. It was to be one of three extermination camps designed to eliminate all of Poland's Jews 2,284,000 in number. Together with Treblinka and Sobibor it became one of the focal points of *Aktion Reinhard* – the biggest Nazi murder project of the war and the murder site for no fewer than 434,500 Jews. Action (or Operation) Reinhard is characterized by Timothy Snider:

An adequate vision of the Holocaust would place Operation Reinhardt, the murder of the Polish Jews in 1942, at the center of its history. Polish Jews were the largest Jewish community in the world, Warsaw the most important Jewish city. This community was exterminated at Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor. Some 1.5 million Jews were killed at those three facilities, about 780,863 at Treblinka alone. Only a few dozen people survived these three death facilities. Belzec, though the third most important killing site of the Holocaust, after Auschwitz and Treblinka, is hardly known. Some 434,508 Jews perished at that death factory, and only two or three survived. About a million more Polish Jews were killed in other ways, some at Chelmno, Majdanek, or Auschwitz, many more shot in actions in the eastern half of the country.¹⁷

The Action Reinhard operation was accompanied by a change in the Nazi power structure in the General Government. In order to speed up extermination, on June 3, 1942, all authority for Jews in the General Government was transferred to Himmler's SS and the Sicherheitspolizei (the secret police, abbreviated as *SiPo*). Following a tour of the Action Reinhard camps in mid July 1942, Himmler ordered that the expulsion (euphemism for extermination) of Jews in the General Government, should be complete by December 31, 1942.

Belzec – Establishment and Operation

Work on the Belzec camp started in November 1941 and it was the first of the three camps established for the Action Reinhard. The camp was commanded by Christian Wirth. Wirth was on the staff of the Euthanasia program, the Nazi project for exterminating invalids and the mentally retarded. He used his experience and staff from the program to build a three gas-chamber facility whereby Jews would be killed by diesel fumes. This first facility was technically not up to the task of mass killing and a new six chamber concrete facility was built. In this facility 1000 people could be killed at a time enabling the Germans to murder up to 15,000 people a day.

¹⁷ Timothy Snider, "Holocaust: The Ignored Reality", *The New York Review of Books* Vol. 56 No. 12 16 July 2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22875>, writes:

Extermination officially started on 17th March 1942 the date given as the beginning of Action Reinhard. A straightforward murder technique was developed by Wirth for Belzec and copied to other camps. It was based on two principles. The first was deception: the victims were kept in the dark as much as possible and were misled to believe they reached a transit camp on the way to labor camps, until they were in the gas chambers. The second was speed: the whole murder process was carried out with extraordinary speed so as not to give victims a chance to orient themselves and resist.¹⁸

Trains with as many as 40-60 train cars with 100-130 Jews in each would reach the Belzec station. A batch of 20 cars would be moved into the camp. The passengers, 2000-2500 Jews, would be disembarked and told that they would have to undergo disinfection in order to prepare for their transit to work camps. Men and women were separated, undressed and with screaming and violence by the guards were rushed to the 'showers,' as the gas chambers were described to them. Once inside the engine was started and carbon monoxide flowed in. It took 20-30 minutes for all inside to die. The bodies were cleared out and the process began again. At first the process took the Germans 3-4 hours but with experience they shortened it to 60-90 minutes. The camp was run by Wirth with 20-30 German staff and between 90-120 Ukrainian collaborators. Wirth's proficiency at mass killing was recognized by his superiors and on August 1st 1942 he was appointed to the post of Inspector of all Action Reinhard camps.

Many Jews of District Galicia were murdered on the spot before being deported. 350,000 Jews who were deported were murdered in Belzec or by mass shootings. Death from hunger and forced labor increased the death toll to more than 400,000 for this period.

¹⁸ Arad, p. 504.

C. The Third Stage of Killing – Ghettoization and Mass Shootings

As shown above Himmler's order was for the General Government Jews to be exterminated by the end of 1942. Yet, between 135,000 to 150,000 of Eastern Galician Jews were alive by the end of the year. Moreover, many of the district's 30 Ghettos were established at the fall of 1942 following the deportations to Belzec.¹⁹ Why were these Jews left alive?

The answer lies in the manpower shortage plaguing German industries serving the army - the Wehrmacht. Even the more rabid Nazis could not ignore the importance of the Jewish workforce: "Owing to the peculiarity that almost 90 percent of the artisans in Galicia consisted of Jews, the problem to be solved could only be carried out gradually, as an immediate removal of the Jews would not have been in the interest of the war economy."²⁰ The Germans were torn between their need of Jewish labor and their ideological decision to exterminate all the Jews. The establishment of ghettos in this stage, writes Martin Dean,

was closely linked to the final stages of concentration and forced labor exploitation. Thus the ghettos performed an important function in concentrating the Jewish population, facilitating its exploitation for work, controlling its food supply, and also preparing for its destruction.²¹

Nazi ideology had the upper hand over economic and even military concerns. Fear of revenge by surviving Jews also hastened the decision to exterminate remaining Jews. In the spring of 1943 the Germans embarked on the extermination of the remaining Ghettos. As Belzec was not operating and trains were not available because of the deteriorating military situation, the Germans reverted to mass shootings – as in 1941.

This process was summed up by SS-Gruppführer Fritz Katzmann, in his "Final report on the Solution of the Jewish Question in the District of Galicia" from June 30, 1943.

When the Higher SS and Police Leader again intervened in the Jewish question in general on November 10, 1942, and a Police Order was issued for the formation of Jewish quarters, 254,989 Jews had already been evacuated or resettled. Since the Higher SS and Police Leader gave further instructions to accelerate the total evacuation of the Jews, further considerable work was necessary in order to catch those Jews who were, for the time being, to be left in the armaments factories. These remaining Jews

¹⁹ Dieter Pohl, *Nationalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien, 1941–1944* [Munich, Oldenbourg, 1996 p. 244.

²⁰ Fritz Katzmann, "Solution of the Jewish Question in District Galicia, The SS and Police Leader (SS-und Polizeiführer) in the District of Galicia Lvov, June 30, 1943"
http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/documents/part2/doc159.html

²¹ Martin Dean, "Ghettos in the occupied Soviet Union: The Nazi System", *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: Symposium Presentations*, September 2005, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2005, pp. 47-70. p. 46.

were declared labor prisoners of the Higher SS and Police Leader and held either in the factories themselves or in camps erected for this purpose. For Lvov itself a large camp [the Janowska Road Camp] was erected on the outskirts, which holds 8,000 Jewish labor prisoners at the present time. The agreement made with the Wehrmacht concerning employment and treatment of the labor prisoners was set down in writing [...]

In the meantime further evacuation was carried out vigorously, with the result that by June 23, 1943, all Jewish quarters could be dissolved. Apart from the Jews in camps under the control of the SS and Police Leader, the District of Galicia is thus free of Jews (judenfrei).

Individual Jews occasionally picked by the Order Police or the Gendarmerie were sent for special treatment. Altogether, 434,329 Jews had been evacuated up to June 27, 1943.... [This is followed by a list of 21 camps in which there were still 21,156 Jews.]²²

It is important to conclude with the way the process described above was experienced by its victims. Therefore we choose to conclude this section with an excerpt from the testimony of Fannie Szechter (b. 1903) describing her experiences in the Borszczow ghetto from late 1942 to June 1943. Her testimony gives us a glimpse into the fate of one Jewish community on its way to annihilation:

The next Aktzya was on [the Jewish holiday of] Sukkot [26th September] 1942. The victims were taken to Belzec. After that started the mass killings. The Jewish holidays were the German's preferred days for murdering Jews. On the first Passover one of our brothers was murdered, on the second (Passover, a year later) our mother. Every Holiday was tearful. Borszczow had eight Aktzyas. The final one was on June 7, 1943, the (Jewish) Holiday of Shavuot in the cemetery. People were ordered to undress, pushed into the pits and shot. The Ukrainian Militia was pulling out people's gold teeth while they were still alive. They were carrying the teeth from the cemetery in buckets. Many people were buried alive and the ground was moving/heaving over the graves. From time to time the Germans ordered the mass grave to be opened and the bodies carried away.²³

²² Fritz Katzmann, "Solution of the Jewish Question in District Galicia" *ibid.*

²³ YVA M49E/2181. This testimony was collected in the Polish town of Bytom on the 27th of October 1946 by Ida Glikzstein of the Jewish Historical Commission in Poland.

Visual Enrichment:

Visual enrichment activities often augment learners' interest and help them understand and internalize the content at hand. In order to illustrate a typical Aktion, teachers can show a segment of the movie "Schindler's List." In one of the most famous scenes of the film, Schindler is riding his horse, in full view of the Jewish ghetto. He then witnesses the Aktion in which the ghetto is liquidated. Knowing full well that this is not an authentic footage but a feature film representation, and the Aktion that occurs in Schindler's list takes place in Western Galicia, whereas this unit focuses on Aktions that took place in Eastern Galicia, it can still serve as a visual illustration of an Aktion.

Checking for Understanding – Killing in Stages:

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. Which general factors influenced the three stages of killing?
2. How is the Durchgangsstrasse Road Project related to the first killing stage?
3. Timothy Snider writes: "Belzec, though the third most important killing site of the Holocaust... is hardly known." Why do you think this is so?
4. According to Fannie Szechter, who describes her experiences in the Borszczow ghetto, when did the Germans usually carry out their Aktions? Why do you think they chose those dates?

4. An In-depth Analysis of a Child's Testimony

In this module we render an in-depth analysis of a testimony by a child survivor, whose account relates the typical ordeal of the Jews of Eastern Galicia. The child, whose testimony will be analyzed, was also confined in the Borszczow ghetto similarly to Fannie Szechter.

Following is a careful analysis of the testimony of a child survivor given in the DP camp of Neu-Freiman – Munich.

Yad Vashem Archives M-1/E 644/535

No.	Lang	Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	DP Camp	Title of the Composition	Date of Composition
M-1/E 644/535	Hebrew	Berman, Chana	1932 09. 17	-----	Neu Freiman	My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis	-----

A. Immediate Context of the Testimony: Date and Setting

This testimony was collected as a part of a campaign of the Jewish Historical Commission in Munich to gather testimonies of child survivors. Chana Berman's testimony is not dated, but in the Yad Vashem Archives there are 5 testimonies from the Neu Freiman DP camp given by children who are about the same age. All of these testimonies are in Hebrew, have the same title, and had been consecutively numbered by the organization collecting the testimonies. There is a mistake concerning the numbering: the testimonies are numbered from 643/533 to 643/537. 643/535 is missing, and Chana Berman's testimony is 644/535. Thus, the number of Chana Berman's testimony should be 643/535.

From these facts and from external historical sources concerning how children were asked in DP camp schools to write compositions about their wartime experiences in the framework of the Historical Commission's campaign, we can infer that the 5 youngsters were studying together and their testimonies were given at the same time in class. Typically, the children were asked to write a composition under a given title. The testimonies in Chana's class were all titled "My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis." (On the Historical Commission's campaign, see Supplement p. 40-43)

None of the 5 testimonies are directly dated, but one girl in the group (No. M-1/E 643/534) wrote down not only her date of birth, 1933, but also her age at the time of writing the testimony: she was 13 years old. We thus learned that she was giving the testimony in 1946. Therefore, we can safely date Chana's testimony to 1946 as well.

The Five Testimonies Collected in Chana's Class

No.	Language	Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	DP Camp	Title of the Composition	Date of Composition
M-1/E 643/533	Hebrew	Orlender, Michael	----	Lvov?	Neu Freiman	My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis	-----
M-1/E 643/534	Hebrew	Fischelberg, Mila (Miriam)	1933	Brzesko? (West Pomeranian Voivodienship-Poland)	Neu Freiman	My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis	1946
M-1/E 643/536	Hebrew	Szmukler, Sara	1933	Iwje (Byelorussia)	Neu Freiman	My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis	-----
M-1/E 643/537	Hebrew	Schiffenbauer, Miriam	1933 03. 31	Sokal (Yid. Sikal; Galicia, Lwow dist., Poland, today Ukraine)	Neu Freiman	-----	-----
M-1/E 644/535	Hebrew	Berman, Chana	1932 09. 17	-----	Neu Freiman	My Life Under the Occupation of the Nazis	-----

B. Language Policy in the DP Camp Schools:

The testimonies were given in Hebrew, which was certainly not the youngsters' mother tongue. Although a few children might have had some prior knowledge of Hebrew as a second or third language, they were reaching proficiency only in the DP camp school.²⁴ The group was probably learning Hebrew and studying in Hebrew in the DP camp.

The choice of language in the DP camps and their schools depended on both ideological and practical considerations. The choice of language itself amounted to a statement of identity as well as it aided the management of the survivors' traumatic past. Language served as a means of identity construction and establishing one's membership in a community. Moreover, choosing a common language actively helped to create that community. Simultaneously, language choice could also signify the rejection of one's past victimization, as well as certain countries and nations.

Boaz Cohen, in his article entitled "And I was only a Child': Children's Testimonies, Bergen-Belsen 1945"²⁵ writes about the choice of language in the high school established by the survivors in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp:

²⁵ Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History Vol.12 summer/autumn 2006, No. 1-2. pp. 153-169.

The ideological factor was prominent in the choice of a teaching language for the school. The first students spoke mainly Polish as did the teachers who had also taught in this language before the war. Still, it was decided that teaching would be carried out in Jewish Languages – first in Yiddish and later in Hebrew. This was deemed more appropriate for the school's educational message of Jewish nationalism and Zionism. It also became more practical, as more and more children from Hungary and Romania joined the school. One of the testimonies shows the students' identification with the school's language policy: 'Unlike the need we had for using Hungarian and Polish, we can now speak in Yiddish or Hebrew. It's much nicer to hear Yiddish. We have nothing to thank the Poles and Hungarians for. They are the diligent disciples of Hitler's annihilation ideology. It's wrong and unnecessary to use these languages, especially after the pogroms there'²⁶. (pp. 156-157)

C. The Language of Hebrew Testimonies

Chana's mother tongue was probably either Yiddish or Polish. Ukrainian was also spoken in her region, but for a Jewish child with an obviously Jewish, unassimilated name, Ukrainian was unlikely to be a mother tongue. She thus came from a multilingual region and in the DP camp, she was also submerged in a multilingual environment.

The fact that the youngsters wrote their compositions in a language which they had been studying only for a short time, greatly influenced the content of the testimonies. They had to express themselves more simply than they probably wanted to, owing to the limitations that their yet insufficient knowledge of Hebrew imposed upon them. The Hebrew of the testimonies is quite broken and in many places one can hear phrases translated word-by-word from the survivors' mother tongue. Limitations pertaining to writing in a language that they were in the process of acquiring are probably responsible for some of the repetitions, most of the simplistic expressions, as well as for many of the spelling and grammar mistakes.

On the other hand, there are considerable advantages of testifying in Hebrew. First of all, precisely because Hebrew was not their mother tongue, the youngsters had to pay conscious attention to their language, which sometimes results in especially precise formulations of their thoughts. Moreover, writing in Hebrew, might have helped in two different ways the child survivors to testify. First, Hebrew is a language that belongs to the past and future of the victims; a language that was not used by the perpetrators and was not implicated in the perpetration. Second, for the youngsters, Hebrew was a new language; they did not experience the Holocaust in it. And precisely this newness could have the effect of alienating the experiences from the traumatized consciousness resulting in the dulling of the livid pain that usually accompanies the emergence of the memories just long enough for the testimony to be written.

²⁶ After the Holocaust both in Poland and Hungary there were pogroms against Jewish survivors. The large pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946, in which 42 Jews were killed and about another forty were badly wounded, resulted in a great wave of emigration from Poland and from eastern Europe in general.

Ruth Wisse claims this for Hebrew in connection to Aharon Appelfeld's writing: "Appelfeld's Hebrew creates an atmosphere of remoteness [...]. The language of remoteness also insulates him from the past, as though the Hebrew narrative were the closed scar over the wound."²⁷ Alan Rosen in his book also calls attention to the fact that both Yaffa Eliach and Jonat Sened have suggested in general that "writing in a new language can buffer the survivor-writer from the trauma." Rosen makes explicit their underlying assumption as well: "implied in Eliach's and Sened's remarks is the proposition that language [...] in which the pain was experienced sharpens the pain."²⁸ Rosen quotes Eliach: "For sometimes then language stands between the writer and the horrors of the Holocaust, in that it permits him to grapple with the Holocaust in a language other than that in which he experienced it. Consciously, or perhaps unconsciously, the new language has the power to attenuate slightly the fiery pain."²⁹

Speakers of all languages had to alter their tongues to different degrees in order to accommodate the reality of the Holocaust. Words for previously unknown notions and concepts of mass extermination had to be invented, translated, transferred, and incorporated into the vocabulary. How are the special German terms of the Holocaust to be called in other languages, such as Aktion? Writing about the Holocaust in its immediate aftermath in Modern Hebrew, a language that was still evolving, engendered numerous additional problems of expression and understanding.

Chana evidently struggled with the problem of naming the most terrible experience that the inhabitants of the ghettos of Eastern Galicia had to undergo repeatedly. Probably, precisely because she was writing in Hebrew, she did not want to employ the German word. We can guess this, because except designating the perpetrators with their own words as Nazis, she does not employ the German terminology of the mass extermination of the Jews. Instead of the "liquidation" of the ghetto, for example, she uses "destruction" in Hebrew. She employs the word ghetto, but that word, besides being a part of the German terminology of the Holocaust, is also inseparable from the long history of the Jews.

If we compare this testimony to the one closely analyzed in this project's Teaching Module No. 1, in which AG freely employs camp-language terms and the special terms of the Holocaust in the languages of the perpetrators, Chana's conscious effort not to use the actual words of the Nazis become even more apparent. Chana, as opposed to AG, uses Hebrew terminology exclusively. She calls, for instance, the train "iron machine."

²⁷ *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey through Language and Culture*. (Boston: The Free Press, 2000. p.219.

²⁸ Alan Rosen: *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press. 2005. p. 11.

²⁹ Alan Rosen: *Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press. 2005. p. 11. Rosen quotes from Yaffa Eliach, "Discussion" 716. In Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf, eds., "Discussion: The Holocaust and Concentration Camps in Literature." In *The Nazi Concentration Camps: Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, Jerusalem, January 1980 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1984), 715-717.

Chana's insistence on using Hebrew terminology exclusively indicates that for her writing in Hebrew is indeed a statement; an assertion of her identity.

Chana's numerous spelling and grammatical mistakes point to the fact that the testifier's Hebrew is not sufficient yet. For example, the use of the above quoted incomprehensible word is coupled with a grammatical mistake that is also repeated identically: instead of "bemikre," meaning "by chance," Chana wrote "betor mikre," which means "as an example."

Another example of Chana's insistence on using Hebrew is her use of the unfamiliar term *Gzerat machteret* to denote Action. Chana obviously consulted her teacher and coined a new term, *Gzerat machteret*, to denote Action, which is completely alien for speakers of Modern Hebrew. From this coinage we can infer that the teacher himself acquired his Hebrew in Eastern Europe and not in the new Hebrew-speaking Jewish community in *Eretz Israel*. From the context, we can be sure that the expression "*Gzerat machteret*" signifies Action. We can probably also identify the origins of the coinage, which is not in the direction into which Modern Hebrew developed. "*Gzera*," meaning decree or edict, is an ancient term that signifies draconian anti-Jewish decrees of non-Jewish rulers. "*Machteret*" is underground in Modern Hebrew, but here it goes back to the Biblical and Talmudic usage of the word referring to a situation in which a thief who comes clandestinely is legally taken as someone, who is prepared to kill. Thus the term refers to lurking danger coming to kill. It is also possible that the origin of the expression refers to terrible measures taken against the Jews who were, in effect, forced to hide. Whenever the perpetrators wanted to give a reason for the mass killing and the rounding up of Jews, they announced that they take measures against partisans and all forms of resistance.

Another expression, used twice in the testimony: "and by chance "*nitpahti*" I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers" is also completely incomprehensible for a speaker of Modern Hebrew. We understand that "*nitpahti*" must mean "I escaped," or "was saved" only from the context.

That Chana relies on the teacher's help to formulate and record crucial pieces of information, explains the strange phenomenon that once in the testimony, there are dots in place of a word: "After the destruction of the ghetto, we ran away to our town and there we (~~hid~~) were [for] 9 months in..... . The hunger and the fear were very great." Probably she wanted to ask the teacher later about the correct spelling of the missing word or the correct word itself, but she never got around to do it.

The fact that Eastern European, so-called "*Tarbut-school*"³⁰ Hebrew was taught in class reinforces the dating of the testimony as an early one, since the educational system in the DP camps was established on the initiative of the survivors, who also taught in the schools. It took until 1947 for modern Hebrew-speaking teachers to arrive from *Eretz Israel* as members of the so-called teachers' delegation.

³⁰ *Tarbut-schools*, Hebrew-language, Zionist, secular educational institutions ranging from kindergartens through high schools and teachers' seminaries, operated all over Eastern Europe between the two world wars.

The other consequence of learning Eastern European Hebrew is that Chana frequently employs archaic Biblical and Talmudic expressions, sometimes making her language awkward for readers of Modern Hebrew, but in other cases, elevating her style. For example, her use of “machane,” according to its Biblical meaning, signifying a military unit, sounds obsolete. (In modern Hebrew, “machane” means “camp.”) However, the horrific Biblical expression: “The blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets,” makes her style literary even when she relates something horrifyingly concrete. An adult survivor, “Tzipora Birman, one of the Bialystok ghetto fighters described the ghetto after an Action as follows: “After the Action the ghetto looked like a large blood bath [...] *Blood flowed like water in the gutters and sewers.* Blood-stained pillows, houses in ruins, goods and chattels lay in mud, corpses on all sides.”³¹

D. The Timeframe of the Testimony:

Chana Berman was

--7 years old when the Red army moved into the region where she lived and introduced to the Soviet system. In her testimony she does not mention this, but her schooling was probably interrupted or seriously disturbed.

--9 years old when the German and Hungarian armies occupied her region

--almost 12 years old when she was liberated

--14 years old when she gave the testimony

Chana does not mention the Soviet occupation. The reason for this is probably that her family's problems under the Soviet rule were completely eclipsed by what came to pass later. Also, the announced title of the composition did not ask information about the Soviet period. Taking the given title seriously, Chana carefully relates the events from the Nazi occupation until liberation.

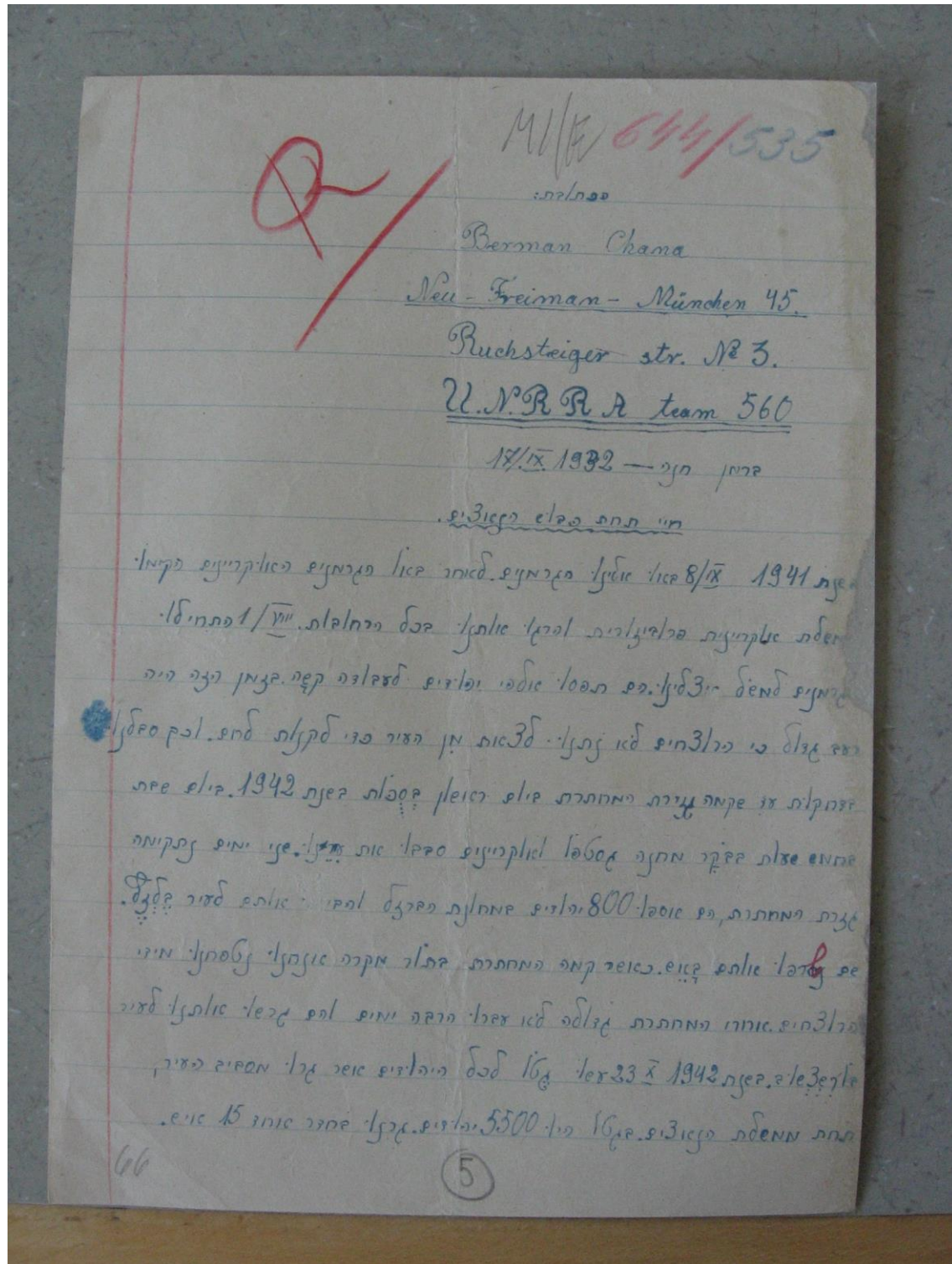
She mentions two dates for the arrival of the Germans, which can be a sign of yet another omission: that of the short occupation by the Hungarian allies of Germany. Chana's reason for not naming the Hungarians, can be attributed to the fact that for her the Holocaust had three protagonists: 1) the victims, i.e. the Jews, and the perpetrators: 2) the Germans and 3) the Ukrainians.

³¹ Blumental, Nachman, "Action", *Yad Vashem Studies* 4 (1960), p. 90-91.

E. Chana Berman's Testimony

Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), under No. M-1/E 644/535

For a detailed explanation of the testimonies' reference number see supplement 2.



בחודש כסלו בשנת 1942 אוספו 120 אנשים והביאו אותם סוף העיר טאטרקוה
 אוסף שכלל אותם מכלת קצח. אחריו עברה ימים שם לטא. לשם עזרו
 רחמי ימים והאנשים אשר שם מכות-פסלר חללי טאטו, אלה ממש אמת.
 מספרו הצפיפות הגדול המופיע סגור בכל אנשי קטלא. 2 חודשים מתו 800
 אנשים. הוא 18 חודש אחר בקרי מחנה גרמני, אלקריניס סבא את הגטו
 אכא. 200 אנשים הם פילודוס נשפך ברחוב במוס. המחנה נא. תפסו אותי
 ארצי לפרנקין אהרן מקרי נלפחתי מידו וכל צחיס. הוא 20 בחודש ניסן
 בשנת 1943 הגרמנים סבא. הוא פסס את הגטו אלקריניס המחנה התחילה
 איהם אחרו כהן 12000 יהודים. אחרי המחנה גזלה הוא נשאל. למי
 פסל את פתוחיה השחורה הגטו אשר נתקומח 15 יום אחרי פשיטת הגטו
 שם עזרין. אש (מחנה) קינן 9 חודשים. פסס אהרן חיה גזל
 אחר כל הוא חרטי יחוס ברחובות. אהרן חיה אורלין. פסס כחודש חמת
 מחנה חרובים. 2 יום לחודש ניסן בשנת 1944 יצאנו למוסביש. אמן
 5500 אנשים אשר חיו. גטו נשאר אחר 200 יהודים חללים אחרים.

(6)

67

The text of the testimony is translated from the Hebrew original [by Boaz Cohen and Rita Horvath]: The translation stayed very close to the Hebrew text: wherever the English is awkward and/or faulty, the Hebrew original is also like that.

Berman, Chana (her name is written both in Latin and Hebrew letters)
Neu-Freiman – Munich 45
Ruschsteiger str. No. 3
UNRRA team 560
17/09/1932

My Life under the Occupation of the Nazis

In the year 1941 [on] 8/IX the Germans came to us. After the Germans came[,] the Ukrainians set up a provisional Ukrainian Government and killed us in all the streets. [On] 1/VIII the Germans started to rule in our place. They caught thousands of Jews for hard work. This time there was a great famine because the murderers did not let us leave the town in order to buy bread. And so we suffered privations until the Action [gzerat hamachteret] happened on the first day of Sukkoth in the year 1942. On Saturday on the 5th hour in the morning[,] a Gestapo unit and Ukrainians surrounded our town. The Action [gzerat hamachteret] lasted for two days, they gathered [rounded up] 800 Jews in a train [iron machine] and took them to the town of Belzec. There they burned them in/by fire. When the Action [hamachteret] happened, we[,] by chance[,] escaped / were saved from the hands of the murderers. After the big Action [machteret,] not many days had passed and they expelled us to the town of Borszczow. In the year of 1942 [on] X 23 [,] they made a ghetto for all the Jews who lived around the town, under the rule of the Nazis. There were 5500 Jews in the ghetto. We lived 15 people in one room. [15 people/room] In the month of Kislev in the year of 1942 they gathered [rounded up] 120 people and took them to the town of Chortkow where killing blows were dealt to them. [the text says: “they killed them killing blows. From the next sentence it becomes clear that they were not killed but brutally beaten] After ten days[,] they returned to the ghetto. Not many days passed and the people who had returned from the prison became ill with typhoid fever, and the majority of them died. Because of the great crowdedness[,] the epidemic hit all the people of the ghetto. In 2 months[,] 800 people died. On 17 Adar in the morning[,] a German unit and Ukrainians surrounded the ghetto and killed 200 people. The blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets. In this Action [machteret] they caught me and wanted to kill me and by chance I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers. On the day of 20 in the month of Nisan in the year of 1943, the Germans again surrounded the ghetto and the Action [gzerat máchteret] started and in one day they killed 12000 Jews. After the big Action [machteret] on the 1st day of the festival of Shavuot[,] the destruction of the ghetto started[,] which lasted for 15 days. After the destruction of the ghetto, we ran away to our town and there we (~~hid~~) were [for] 9 months in..... . The hunger and the fear were very great. All day they killed Jews in the streets. And thus passed for us the bad years under the rule of the Nazis. On the 12th day of the month Nisan in the year 1944[,] we became free. And out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 sick and weak Jews.

F. Historical Analysis of Chana Berman's Testimony

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

In order to establish the chronology of Chana Berman's testimony and the stages of her recorded experience, underline and identify first:

- 1) the place names
- 2) the dates
- 3) the numbers
- 4) the terms that she uses
- 5) people

Secondly, highlight the following items:

- 6) the events
- 7) the descriptions of the physical conditions

Collaborative Learning Activity:

Group work can create a dynamic working environment. Divided the class into groups, and give each group a task. Each group will try to identify specific information within the testimony from the above items. The groups will then take turns and report their findings to the rest of the class.

One possible way of having 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.

Background information for these items:

Place names: Belzec, Borszczow, Chortkow

From the three place names she mentions, we can identify the region where she was from: Eastern Galicia, the vicinity of Borszczow and Chortkow.

She did not name her birthplace, but she said that she had eventually been taken to Borszczow together with the other survivors of the September 26 Action in her hometown in 1941. There are three small-towns near Borszczow: Mielnica, Skala, and Korolevka. The Jews of these places suffered an Action on September 26, 1941, and the

survivors were expelled to Borszczow.³² Even though the above three small-towns seem feasible, it is also possible that Chana's hometown is one of the following places or their vicinity: Ozeryany, Krzywczé Gorne, Zloczow, or Czortkow, from where the Borszczow ghetto also absorbed Jews.³³

For more information, see the "Borszczow" chapter, from: *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Poland, Volume II*, pp. 102-106, Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; (translated and submitted to the Yizkor Book Project by Lancy Spalter) http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol2_00102.html [In this module this is referred to as *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin*]

The events afflicted on the Jewish community in Borszczow were recorded in one of the chapters which appeared in *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Poland*. The entries of *Pinkas Hakehillot* were mainly based on survivor testimonies. The writers drew upon testimonies of adults. At the end of each entry, they listed all the testimonies from which they extracted information. Therefore, we can efficiently employ the information given in these entries as adult survivor testimonies corroborating or contradicting the facts related by the child survivor's testimony upon which we are focusing.

Dates and Events:

Chana Berman takes her role as a witness very seriously; she strives to render details as accurately as possible. She gives dates and numbers, as well as describes events and conditions in detail. Some of the dates and events that she renders are surprisingly accurate even for an adult, let alone a child. A number of the dates and events can be corroborated by testimonies of other survivors.

Also, because she takes her role as a witness extremely seriously, Chana Berman narrates her story in a strict chronological order. Only once, at the beginning of the testimony, she deviates from the chronological rendering of the facts, or she mixes up two dates: "In the year 1941 [on] 8/IX the Germans came to us. After the Germans came[,] the Ukrainians set up a provisional Ukrainian Government and killed us in all the streets. [On] 1/VIII the Germans started to rule in our place."

Chana gives three chronological points for the early days of the occupation:

- 1) the 8th of September, when the "Germans came to us"
- 2) "after the Germans came[,] the Ukrainians set up a provisional Ukrainian Government and killed us in all the streets"
- 3) the 1st of August is when "the Germans started to rule in our place."

One must remember that, as shown in the introduction, this was a time of great fluidity and rapid changes with Hungarian, Ukrainian and German forces alternately controlling the area. The Hungarian Army occupied parts of Eastern Galicia in July and handed over

³² *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin*

³³ *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin*

the rule to the Germans in various places either in late August or early September. Chana was right about the second date she gave for the German occupation, which denotes the transfer of rule from the Hungarians to the Germans in early September. On the other hand, the establishment of the Provisional Ukrainian Government happened earlier than she wrote. This is understandable, considering the fact that it did not concern her directly. The pogroms perpetrated by the Ukrainians, however, did have a direct affect on her since they “killed **us** in all the streets.” These pogroms occurred locally at times of change of occupying forces and they were not connected to the establishment or the suppression of the Provisional Ukrainian Government. What she means by the 1st of August date, however, remains a mystery.

The historical data, which the students identified in the text, constitutes the structure of the testimony through the chronology of the events. Placing this information within a table clarifies and brings to the fore this structure.

	Date in Testimony	Event	Comments	Confirmation*
1 st Large-scale killing	“After the Germans came”	[the Ukrainians] “killed us in all the streets.” ³⁴		In several places, the Ukrainian population perpetrated terrible pogroms
Forced labor and famine	“until the Action happened”	--“They caught thousands of Jews for hard work.” --“there was a great famine” --“we suffered privations”	The Action is the reference point	Many survivors describe this period in similar terms, drawing attention to the forced labor and the famine.
1 st Action	On the first day of Sukkoth in the year 1942; On Saturday on the 5 th hour in the morning [Saturday, September 26, 1942] “The Action lasted for two days.”	“a Gestapo unit and Ukrainians surrounded our town.” <i>Number of Victims:</i> “they gathered [rounded up] 800 Jews in a train [iron machine] and took them to the town of Belzec.” <i>What happened to her:</i> “When the Action happened, we by chance were saved from the hands of the murderers.”	The witness uses the Jewish Holidays as the chronological point of reference.	The date of the Action is confirmed! In addition to that, the first day of Sukkoth in 1942 fell on a Sabbath.
Expulsion	“After the big Action not many days had passed”	“and they expelled us to the town of Borszczow.”	The Action is the reference point	corroborated

³⁴ In Borszczow, the Ukrainian takeover happened as follows: “On July 6, 1941, after the Soviet evacuation, the local Ukrainians took over the town’s administration, causing tension between them and the Jewish population. A moderate local Ukrainian leader, who was in good terms with the Jewish leadership, interceded and aggressions were prevented.” In other localities, however, terrible atrocities were carried out against the Jews.

ghetto	"In the year of 1942 [on] X 23"	"they made a ghetto for all the Jews who lived around the town, under the rule of the Nazis." <i>Description of the ghetto:</i> "There were 5500 Jews in the ghetto. We lived 15 people in one room."	Only Gregorian calendar	In fact, the ghetto of Borszczow was created earlier, on April 1 st , 1942, but Jews from the surrounding areas had been brought here only later, when the Borszczow ghetto had to absorb Jews from Mielnica, Skala Podolskaya, Ozeryany, Korolevka and Krzywczce Gorne as well as Jews from Zloczow and Czortkow. Therefore, the Jews from the vicinity of Borszczow arrived at about the time given in the testimony. Maybe it is the date of her arrival in the Borszczow ghetto.
Round-up, imprisonment and torture	"In the month of Kislev in the year of 1942"	"They gathered [rounded up] 120 people and took them to the town of Chortkow where killing blows were dealt to them."	The witness uses the Jewish Holidays as the chronological point of reference.	The horrible torture in the Chortkow prison is corroborated by other survivor testimonies. The date given by Chana's testimony is confirmed as well ³⁵
	After ten days	they returned to the ghetto.		
Epidemic	Not many days passed In 2 months	and the people who had returned from the prison became ill with typhoid fever, and the majority of them died. <i>Consequence:</i> Because of the great crowdedness [,] the epidemic hit all the people of the ghetto. 800 people died.	The inhabitants of the ghetto perceived this as the direct result of the previous round-up.	This information is also confirmed that Jews of the area believed that the origin of the typhoid fever epidemic was connected to the transports to and from the Chortkow prison. ³⁶
2 nd Action	On 17 Adar [Adar II 17: March 24, and Adar I 17 is Febr. 22, 1943] in the morning"	"a German unit and Ukrainians surrounded the ghetto and killed 200 people." <i>Number of Victims:</i> "200 people" <i>Description and personal experience:</i> "The blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets." "In this Action they caught me and wanted to kill me and by chance I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers."	Only Jewish calendar	According to other sources, on March 13, 1943, close to 400 people were sent to Belzec. ³⁷
3 rd Action	On the day of 20 in the month of Nisan	"the Germans again surrounded the ghetto and the Action started and in	The witness uses the	The date is corroborated, but the number of victims

³⁵ Alicia Appleman-Jurman: *Alicia: My Story*. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988. The author herself was deported to the Chortkov Prison from Buczacz. She relates her experiences in the chapter "In Chortkov Prison" pp.63-83. Her cousin, Etunia Bauer Katz, in her memoir, *Our Tomorrows never Came*. New York: Fordham UP. 2000., also relates the story as she heard it at the time from other Jews, who had been fleeing. Etunia with her family were hidden by a Polish schoolteacher. "Sometime in May 1943 two young brothers, the Breshers, wandered in from the city, and she let them stay as well. They told the story of the Chortkov prison and that the Germans deliberately infected the Jews with typhoid fever." p. 71-72.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ It is possible that it was a continuous Action or she misremembers the exact date. Her mistake possibly is that she wrote the 17th of Adar instead of the 6th of Adar.

	in the year of 1943, [Sunday, 25 April, 1943]	one day they killed 12000 Jews.”	Jewish Holidays as the chronologic al point of reference.	seems to be way too high.
4 th Action	After the big Aktion, on the 1 st day of the festival of Shavuot [June 9, 1943] The 4 th Action “lasted for 15 days”	“the destruction of the ghetto started”	Jewish calendar + the “big Action” is used as a point of reference	This information is corroborated. This action, which lasted at least five-days, constituted the liquidation of the ghetto. We can perceive the unbearable intensity of this five day killing from the fact that Chana writes that it lasted for 15 days, which is exaggerated.
Jew hunting	“After the destruction of the ghetto,” [for] 9 months.	“we ran away to our town and there [in our town] we (hid) were [for] 9 months in.... .” <i>Description:</i> “The hunger and the fear was very great. All day they killed Jews in the streets.”	The liquidation of the ghetto is the reference point—a new era	The hunting of Jews in hiding was very intensive in that area.
Liberation	“On the 12 th day of the month Nisan in the year 1944” [5 April, 1944, Wednesday]	“we became free” <i>Description and Summarizing statement:</i> “And out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 sick and weak Jews.”		The liberation of Eastern Galicia by the Red Army is a complex story and we do not know where the witness is exactly located. ³⁸

* The confirmation comes from other testimonies and independent historical data.

This young girl managed to get the majority of the dates (especially those of major Actions) right regarding her long-term traumatic experience. It seems that the major Jewish Holidays help her to orient her memories as far as remembering dates is concerned.

Numbers:

To estimate numbers is very difficult. Although, there is a discernable drive in the overwhelming majority of testimonies to render exact numbers, and it is especially

³⁸ See for example, Omer Bartov: “Guilt and Accountability in the Postwar Courtroom: The Holocaust in Czortków and Buczacz, East Galicia, As Seen in West German Legal Discourse” pp.1-40. in *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University: Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Geocide, and Caste*; Oct. 27-29, 2005. Yale Univ., New Haven, Connecticut (<http://www.yale.edu/glc/justice/bartov.pdf>) p.10.

characteristic of Chana's testimony, the numbers are almost never accurate. However, numbers are usually inaccurate in adult testimonies to the same extent as in children's testimonies. More exact numbers are given only by survivors who had been in a special position by which they had access to data and did not rely on estimations and/or rumors concerning numbers. For instance, they worked in the administration of a concentration camp or a ghetto.

G. Literary Analysis

In order to identify the emotional arch (structure) of the testimony, locate the emotional centers of the testimony by highlighting or identifying the following items:

- 1) the emotionally laden words
- 2) repetitions (Try to differentiate between repetitions caused by the witness's inefficiency in Hebrew and repetitions that are structural elements of the testimony, signaling intense emotions. It is possible that some of the repetitions are determined by both of the above enumerated reasons.)
- 3) the structure of the testimony (pay attention to the relative lengths of each part)
- 4) features of the script, such as retouches, inkblots, messier handwriting, spaces between the words, pressure on the paper, etc.
- 5) generalizations
- 6) evaluations
- 7) establishing causal relationships and providing explanations
- 8) tropes such as: simile, metaphor, metonym, synecdoche (pars pro toto), (example: she uses the word "bread" to denote food in general)
- 9) layers of language: identify for example language from the Bible or from Jewish prayers
- 10) code switching (see also our note on Chana's insistence on using Hebrew words instead of switching to actual terms the perpetrators used) and code interference
- 11) grammatical, spelling and other mistakes (see also our notes on her Hebrew and language policy)

Upon the first reading, early testimonies in general seem stark, laconic, and emotionally dry. However, by conducting a close reading, we can demonstrate that the texts are, in fact, extremely emotional. The items on the above list can be signs indicating emotional "hot spots" in the text.

- 1) Words that usually convey emotions:

In the year 1941 [on] 8/IX the Germans came to us. After the Germans came[,] the Ukrainians set up a provisional Ukrainian Government and killed us in all the streets. [On] 1/VIII the Germans started to rule in our place. They caught thousands of Jews for hard work. This time there was a great famine because the murderers did not let us leave

the town in order to buy bread. And so we suffered privations until the **Action** [gzerat hamachteret] happened on the first day of Sukkoth in the year 1942. On Saturday on the 5th hour in the morning[,] a Gestapo unit and Ukrainians surrounded our town. The **Action** [gzerat hamachteret] lasted for two days, they gathered [rounded up] 800 Jews in a train [iron machine] and took them to the town of **Belzec**. There they burned them in/by fire. When the **Action** [hamachteret] happened, we[,] by chance[,] escaped / were saved from the hands of the murderers. After the big **Action** [machteret,] not many days had passed and they expelled us to the town of **Borszczow**. In the year of 1942 [on] X 23 [,] they made a ghetto for **all** the Jews who lived around the town, under the rule of the Nazis. There were 5500 Jews in the ghetto. We lived 15 people in one room. [15 people/room] In the month of Kislev in the year of 1942 they gathered [rounded up] 120 people and took them to the town of **Chortkow** where killing blows were dealt to them. [the text says: “they killed them killing blows. From the next sentence it becomes clear that they were not killed but brutally beaten] After ten days[,] they returned to the ghetto. Not many days passed and the people who had returned from the prison became ill with typhoid fever, and the majority of them died. Because of the great crowdedness[,] the epidemic hit all the people of the ghetto. In 2 months[,] 800 people died. On 17 Adar in the morning[,] a German unit and Ukrainians surrounded the ghetto and killed 200 people. The blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets. In this **Action** [machteret] they caught me and wanted to kill me and by chance I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers. On the day of 20 in the month of Nisan in the year of 1943, the Germans **again** surrounded the ghetto and the **Action** [gzerat machteret] started and in one day they killed 12000 Jews. After the big **Action** [machteret] on the 1st day of the festival of Shavuot[,] the destruction of the ghetto started[,] which lasted for 15 days. After the destruction of the ghetto, we ran away to our town and there we (hid) were [for] 9 months in..... . The hunger and the fear were **very** great. **All day they killed Jews in the streets**. And thus passed for us the **bad** years under the rule of the Nazis. On the 12th day of the month Nisan in the year 1944[,] we became free. And out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 **sick and weak** Jews.

Chana differentiates the Actions even from the other large-scale killings. She distinguishes them from murders by the Ukrainians and from the hunting of hiding Jews. These two kinds of killings are connected by the repeated phrase, expressing shock: “[...] and killed us in **all the streets**.” and “**All day they killed Jews in the streets**.”

The Actions, however, are different, in their being the result of meticulously organized military operations of the Germans, who also used Ukrainian auxiliaries: “On Saturday on the 5th hour in the morning[,] a Gestapo unit and Ukrainians surrounded our town.”; “On 17 Adar in the morning[,] a German unit and Ukrainians surrounded the ghetto and killed 200 people. **The blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets**.”; “On the day of 20 in the month of Nisan in the year of 1943, the Germans **again** surrounded the ghetto and the **Action** [gzerat machteret] started.”

The emotional centers of the testimony are clearly the Actions, and the role Chana Berman assumes is that of the objective witness who aims at recording the experiences of

her community. This is a crucial role, which has intrinsic value and it does not require the witness to relate her personal traumas and losses. In fact, a more personal tone could be perceived as a factor that lessens the objectivity of the historical account. In harmony with this view, Chana Berman's testimony is strangely dominated by the absence of her personal losses; the absent center of the testimony could be the fate of her family.

Taking her role as a witness, a spokesperson for a murdered community, extremely seriously, she even corrects her writing as she composes her testimony. Chana Berman relates with amazing accurateness all the actions that were carried out against the Jews of her town and later the ghetto, but does not talk about the fate of her own family even though it must have been becoming smaller and smaller as a consequence of the Actions. She makes a special effort to record accurately the dates of the Actions and the numbers of those who were killed, but she does not record her personal story. She relates the story of the Actions in chronological order and the pronouns: "we" and "us," always refer to the suffering Jewish community. By this use of the personal pronouns, she establishes her role as an authentic witness without getting really personal. In other words, we only learn about her suffering as part of the collective.

Only in two places, the use of the personal pronoun is different: "When the Action [hamachteret] happened, we[,] by chance[,] escaped / were saved from the hands of the murderers." (Here the "we" is significant as opposed to what happened to the "I" during a later Action: "in this Action [machteret] they caught me and wanted to kill me and by chance I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers") and "After the destruction of the ghetto, we ran away to our town and there we (~~hid~~) were [for] 9 months in....."

With the exceptions of these places, the first-person plural personal pronouns refer to the entire Jewish community of her shtetle. These are the only instances, when she writes about her personal community, probably, her family.

Obviously, Chana Berman was one of those surviving Jews who were liberated "on the 12th day of the month Nisan in the year of 1944," and about whom she writes: "and out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 sick and weak Jews," but we do not learn whether anyone else of her family survived. Until this point with the one above mentioned exception, "we" always denoted the entire Jewish community of her shtetle. However, when the overwhelming majority of the Jews were murdered during the liquidation of the ghetto, she continues to use the first-person plural personal pronoun to relate her escape. This "we" is much more personal than the previous use of "we"s denoting the community. This "we" seems to denote her own personal community: probably the remainder of her family. We ache to learn whether she was with her family, but she never gives away that information and quickly returns to her role as an authentic but emotionally distant observer employing eventually a third person narration: "And out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 sick and weak Jews." The unique "we" about which we have been talking seems to be merely an unconscious slip.

Nevertheless, precisely her insistence on not telling the story of her family, in addition to the above described slip, signal her terrible losses. It is possible that she is among those

very few children from Eastern Galicia who had some close family members that survived, but most for sure were murdered. Even if a family member atypically survived, she nonetheless suffered terrible losses. The peculiar fact is that we do not learn anything about her family's fate at all.

The structure of the testimony also highlights that the Actions constitute the center of trauma. Chana relates four Actions in chronological order. Proving herself a valuable historical witness, she supplies descriptions, explanations, as well as explanatory and illustrative narratives.³⁹ It is very interesting that we can discover in Chana Berman's short written account these types of narratives, which social linguist Deborah Schiffrin identified in oral life-history interviews.

Explicit explanations:

--"by chance"

--she explains hunger by "because the murderers did not let us leave the town in order to buy bread."

--explains the death toll of the epidemic by the crowdedness of the ghetto

--explanatory and illusory narrative: the story of the Chortkow prison

The second Action receives an added emphasis in Chana's testimony. It is not the largest Action, yet in connection to this one she adds the Biblical description: "the blood of the Jews ran like water on the streets." The reason for this is probably that she, personally, almost died: "in this Action [machteret] they caught me and wanted to kill me and by chance I escaped/was saved from the hands of the murderers." Like all Jews during Actions, she was in mortal danger at the time of all of the Actions, but in this one she experienced the danger more closely than at other times.

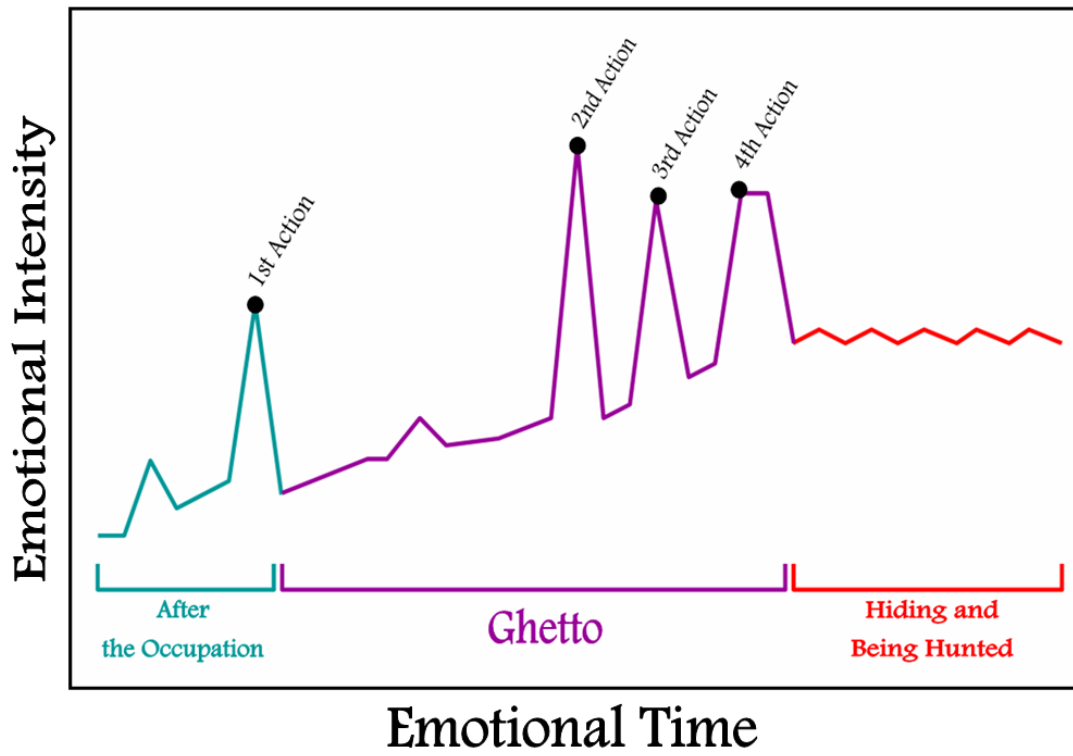
As long as the Actions organize the testimony, being the reference points as well as the foci of the experience and its narrative representation, it has a very clear structure. After the destruction of the ghetto, however, Chana's narrative becomes much more disoriented. She also seems to be aware of that as she concludes the testimony promptly and abruptly, but with a sort of summary: "And thus passed for us the bad years under the rule of the Nazis." She, therefore, indicates that it is a proper ending. Then, after relating briefly and objectively their liberation, she finishes her testimony on a bleak note emphasizing the losses, especially the loss of the multifaceted vibrant Jewish presence which had filled her region in the prewar era: "And out of 5500 people who were in the ghetto there remained 200 sick and weak Jews."

³⁹ 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. Schiffrin distinguished types of narratives in oral history life-interviews. pp. 8-9.

The use of graphic organizers - The Emotional Arch:

Graphic organizers form a powerful visual picture of information and allow the mind to see undiscovered patterns and relationships. The following diagram enables a visual perception of the emotional intensity as well as its changes within the testimony. Even though we cannot quantify the emotional data, we can show the internal hierarchy of the emotional peak points. The focus is not about absolute values, but the emotional relation of one event to another. Since the entire testimony recounts horrific series of historical and personal traumas, there are no emotionally neutral parts in it and that is why the diagram starts on a high scale. The testimony ends on a very sad note, and even though sadness is usually pervasive but not intense feeling, here we are faced with an intense traumatic kind of sadness.

Correlate the diagram below with the text of the testimony, through the verbal and structural elements signaling emotions. Refer to the elements listed above in the Literary Analysis section (Section G).



5. Theoretical Significance

Chana Berman's testimony is a good example to demonstrate how literary and non-literary testimonies verify one another and together deepen our understanding of the Holocaust and its memory. Through a striking example, we can show how early and late survivor accounts corroborate and illuminate one another. We can observe this phenomenon by reading in one another's context testimonies rendered by survivor children in DP camps immediately after the Holocaust and late, artistic survivor testimonies.

Creative artist, Ida Fink, an adult survivor from the same region, employs very similar literary devices in her oeuvre to those employed by child survivors. Therefore, it is informative to analyze together Ida Fink's short story: "A Scrap of Time" and Chana Berman's testimony.

Ida Fink was born in 1921 in the town of Zbaraz (then Poland, now in the Ukraine) to an educated, professional family, well integrated into Polish culture. Her father was a physician, and her mother had completed graduate work. At home, they spoke Polish and German but not Yiddish. She began to study music, intending to become a pianist. The Nazi invasion of Poland, when Fink was 18 years old, interrupted her studies. Together with her family, Fink resided in the ghetto until 1942, when she and her younger sister were able to escape together with false identity documents. They lived through numerous Actions. The two sisters survived in the "Arian side" by concealing their identities. A fictionalized account of the war years appears in her novel: *The Journey* (1992). After the war Fink married, and in 1957, she moved to Israel with her husband and daughter. From then on, she lives in Israel and writes in Polish about the Holocaust. She published 3 collections of stories: *A Scrap of Time*, *The Journey*, and *Traces*.⁴⁰ Since Ida Fink chose to write in a fictional form, the literary devices are more consciously prominent, making it easier for the reader to identify. Horowitz brings Ida Fink's own explanation for her controversial decision to write about real historical events disguised as fiction, instead of the usual testimonial genre.

Fink has explained that the events detailed in her stories "actually happened," that they are "authentic" and "true" stories about her own life and the lives of people she knew during the war years, but she chooses to write fiction rather than autobiography, memoir, or reportage, in part because fiction is the genre in which she feels most comfortable. In addition, the vehicle of fiction offers a necessary distance, so that her own privacy and that of others is respected. Most important perhaps, fiction

⁴⁰ Sara R. Horowitz, "Ida Fink." in: S. Lillian Kremer (ed.), *Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work*. New York, London: Routledge, 2003. pp. 348-356.

offers a writerly freedom to give a narrative the artistic shape that enables it to communicate the unspeakable—the experience of living through (or dying in) Nazi atrocity, and the implications and aftereffects of the Nazi genocide.⁴¹

Ida Fink opens one of her most famous stories that also serves as an introduction to her entire short story sequence, with the following lines:

I want to talk about a certain time not measured in months and years. For so long I have wanted to talk about this time, and not in the way I will talk about it now, not just about this one scrap of time. I wanted to, but I couldn't. I didn't know how. I was afraid, too, that this second time, which is measured in months and years, had buried the other time under a layer of years, that this second time had crushed the first and destroyed it within me. But no, today, digging around in the ruins of memory, I found it fresh and untouched by forgetfulness. *This time was measured not in months but in a word—we no longer said "in the beautiful month of May," but "after the first 'action' or the second or right before the third. We had different measures of time, we different ones, always different, always with that mark of difference. . . . [Italics are ours]*⁴²

We can see that Ida Fink contemplates how the Actions structure both the Holocaust experience and its rendering. We can observe this clearly in Chana Berman's testimony as well. Nachman Blumental, a linguist and an important early researcher of Holocaust history, who also traces the origins and the use of the word "action," (pp.57-65.) calls attention to this peculiar phenomenon as well:

When an "action" lasted some time, the Jews counted the days according to the duration of the "actions." They would say—and the survivors still use this method today— "on the first day of the "action," on the tenth day of the "action," etc. without mentioning the specific date. [...] A child who was saved by a miracle relates: "The first 'action'—that satanical word has been deeply engraved in my memory." The word has entered our vocabulary and will never be erased from that child's memory nor from the memory of the entire people. [...] It is interesting to note that they [the Jews in those days] did not use the well-known word "pogrom." It seems that they realized the difference between the two terms. There is a similarity between the words "action" and "deportation" (Aussiedlung), because it was very rarely that there was a deportation without an "action."⁴³

⁴¹ Sara R. Horowitz, "Ida Fink." in: S. Lillian Kremer (ed.), *Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work*. New York, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 349.

⁴² Ida Fink, *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories* [Translated from the Polish by Madeline Levine and Francine Prose], Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995, p. 3.

⁴³ Blumental, pp. 64-65.

In the continuation of the same story "A Scrap of Time," Fink goes on to talk about the coining and the development of the term "Action":

I don't know who used the word first, those who acted or those who were the victims of their action; I don't know who created this technical term, who substituted it for the first term, "round-up"—a word that became devalued (or dignified?) as time passed, as new methods were developed, and "round up" was distinguished from "action" by the borderline of race. Round-ups were for forced labor.

We called the first action—that scrap of time that I want to talk about—a round-up, although no one was rounding anyone up; on that beautiful, clear morning, each of us made our way, not willingly, to be sure, but under orders, to the marketplace in our little town, a rectangle enclosed by high, crooked buildings—a pharmacy, clothing stores, an ironmonger's shop—and framed by a sidewalk made of big square slabs that time had fractured and broken.⁴⁴

Ida Fink not only discusses the fact that the Holocaust is structured by the Actions for the sufferers in the short story entitled "A Scrap of Time," but also enacts this by giving the title "A Second Scrap of Time" to another short story of hers, which appears in her second short story collection, *Traces*. As the titles suggest repetition, the opening of the second short story reopens the question of how this term came about and by whom:

A vast distance separated the old time from the new, the space between the first SS operation – which is still called roundup –and the second, which for the first time we called by its proper name, *Aktion*. This new time did not displace the new time all at once; we had grown accustomed to the old time, we felt at home in it – so that the process occurred slowly, almost imperceptibly. But the change was nevertheless inevitable, and by the end of the second *Aktion* (which was the first to be called that), the new time was firmly established.⁴⁵

In this story, the narrator once again emphasizes the uncanny power of the term *Aktion*:

Our vocabulary sprouted new expressions and strange acronyms for long names, but the word *Aktion* towered above them all. It dominated that time that some people – in their misguided naïveté – continued to call wartime.

The employment of actions as universal reference points is similar to Chana Berman's rendering of her testimony, and underlines Blumental's astute observation which identifies this very orientation as a characteristic speech and writing pattern of Jews from Eastern Galicia: "When an "action" lasted some time, the Jews counted the days according to the duration of the "actions." They would say—and the survivors still use

⁴⁴Ida Fink, *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ida Fink, *Traces* [Translated from the Polish by Philip Boehm and Francine Prose], New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997, p. 53.

this method today— “on the first day of the “action,” on the tenth day of the “action,” etc. without mentioning the specific date. [...] A child who was saved by a miracle relates: “The first ‘action.’”⁴⁶

Moreover, Ida Fink, very much like Chana Berman, has to coin a term “A Scrap of Time” to denote “Action,” because she cannot bring herself to use the German term and thus be defined by it even in the post-Holocaust era. Fink, therefore, feels that she needs to break the uncanny power of the word that had dominated Holocaust reality by a new coinage to dominate post Holocaust reality. Chana Berman also coins and/or employs a special term, “Gzerat Machteret,” to denote “Action,” which seems as idiosyncratic and poetic as the artist’s coinage.

The consequence of Ida Fink's conscious decision to use fictional genres to relate true testimonies is that it highlights and explains literary features that form an integral part of other, more conventionally rendered testimonies as well. Therefore, we can demonstrate how late artistic survivor testimonies help to bring out and clarify the literary and linguistic devices of expression that already characterize early testimonies.

⁴⁶ Ibid, Blumental.

6. Additional Testimonies for Analysis from Galicia:

No.	Language	Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	DP Camp	Title of the Composition	Date of Composition	Form Signed	Date of Composition
YVA M-1/E 159	Yiddish	Milch, Arje	1932 06. 25	Podhajce	Aschau bei Kraiburg DP Kinder lager UNNRA Team 154 Block 14	My Survival	1946	signed in Hebrew	1946

The text of the testimony was translated from the Yiddish original by Yiddish scholar Vera Szabó.⁴⁷ The translation stayed very close to the Yiddish text: wherever the English is awkward and/or faulty, the Yiddish original is also like that. In addition, the English also follows the Yiddish literally in order not to lose in translation important aspects of the original. This point can be demonstrated by the sentence: “We lived there until the Germans came to us.” The English translation would sound less awkward if she had written ‘came into our town,’ but then the translation would overwrite the intimate and informal style of the author of the text. Almost all of the child survivors who wrote testimonial compositions express a strong feeling of ownership of their lost home as the emphatic use of the possessive pronouns demonstrate: bay undz, undzer, tsu undz.

301/159

My Survival

Milch Arje

Current address:

Aschau b/Kraiburg

D.P. Kinder lager. Blok 14. U.N.R.R.A. Team 154

My parents were called: my father Avrom, my mother by her maiden name Etl Lerer. I was born in Podhajce, not far from Tarnopol, on June 25, 1932. Because of the outbreak of the world war, I could not finish more than three classes, two Ukrainian and one Yiddish. When in 1939 the Russians came in, we moved to Mikulince. We lived there until the Germans came to us. The Germans came to us on July 4, 1941. On July 8, 1941,

⁴⁷ Vera Szabó, born and raised in Budapest, Hungary, studied Yiddish in Oxford, Jerusalem and at Columbia University, New York. She has taught Yiddish language, literature and folklore at various universities, including YIVO/New York University and the University of Michigan. Her translations from Hungarian, Yiddish, English and German have been published widely.

the Germans murdered my mother. After my mother's death, we lived with our good acquaintances for a short while, and then we went back to our town. When we arrived, we found out that the Germans had already created a Judenrat, which was [In the Yiddish original, there is a grammar mistake here: it is rendered in the present tense: "which is"] to be the connecting organization between them and the Jews. The townspeople forced my father to join the Judenrat. They created a Jewish police which was called "ordnung-dinst" (order-service). The ordnung-dinst was exploited by the Germans as a will-less tool more than once to carry out various gruesome acts against Jews. Then came the period of the so-called lapankim [roundups], in which the Ukrainian police played the greatest role, and the folks-Germans (Poles). The men were in danger. People were building hiding places. On Yom Kippur, early in the morning on September 16, 1942, the Gestapo and the SS men came to us and they made a pogrom. In the last minute, I looked at the front window, and I saw an SS man with his rifle on his shoulder, who had already gathered a group of people. On the side, there were two SS men going with revolvers in their hands, and I immediately went into the bunker. [These two sentences are 1 run-on sentence in the original.] The pogrom went on for an entire day and 1500 people were killed. We were crammed in the bunker without water and without air for a full day, and in the evening we came out of the bunker. The town was desolate. The people were taken away to Belzec. Life went on, but with the difference that there were orphaned children. On October 30, 1942, was the second pogrom in our town. On that day 1500 Jews were killed. Among the 1500 people was my father. After the pogrom, we stayed with my uncle. After the second pogrom, the Germans gathered the people from the area and created a ghetto in our town. There was a terrible dearth [of everything] in the ghetto. Ten people lived in one small room. Typhus was spreading around. My brother also had this disease. The entire ghetto was taken over by panic. Night after night, people were standing by the windows watching if the German murderers were coming again. On the night of April 17, 1943, my brother, my uncle, and I left the ghetto and went to hide with a Gentile. First it was good for us there. But then, things turned bad. The Gentile provided us with newspapers. We read that the Red Army was progressing. We started to have hope. In the morning of June 6, 1943, the Gentile came to us and said that the ghetto was attacked, and the last annihilating pogrom took place. The Germans gathered together all the people, led them out of the city and shot them. [These two sentences are one long run-on sentence in the original.] To the rest of the people who managed to hide themselves they said that they had to take with themselves their most important belongings and they would be transferred to the Tarnopol ghetto. They went outside of the town, [and] there [the] Gestapo jumped out from among the sheaves. There were graves already prepared (German word – vorbereit), and they shot the people. [These two sentences are one long run-on sentence in the original.] The town became "Juden-frei." They started to break into and plunder the houses. We shed tears and continued to live with hope. The Red Army was progressing. Town after town was taken. Their divisions were already fighting in Tarnopol, 70 km from us. [These three sentences are one long run-on sentence in the original.] The Gentile wanted to give us up to the German murderers. But the Reds were already in our town, so he let us live. Finally, came the bright hour when the Red patrol was already in our town. This was on March 28, 1944. After 52 weeks of being hidden in a cellar, we came out for the first time from the dark grave and with our thirsty lungs gulped the air that made us drunk with its freshness and

announced to us that we were finally free, paying for this [freedom] by being called one of the few surviving orphans of Polish Jewry.

Milch Arje

Analyze this testimony by employing the methods learnt from the analysis of Chana Berman's testimony.

1) Additional Terms:

a) **Judenrat (Jewish Council)**

The German occupying forces, or after the German occupation, the local collaborating authorities established Jewish councils. These organs had a double task: they were made responsible for the complete implementation of the orders and regulations of the Nazi administration, but they were also in charge of organizing and overseeing the life of the Jews in the ghettos as well as providing basic community services. Since the Jewish councils were forced to implement Nazi policy, including selecting Jews to be deported, the subject of the Jewish councils has always been and still is a very painful and controversial issue.

Dan Michman discerns two distinct schools of thought among historians concerning the institution of the Jewish councils.⁴⁸ Michman terms the first as the "Hilberg school" after the eminent Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg. This school regards the Jewish councils primarily as instruments carrying out the Nazi orders.⁴⁹ One of the most famous views belonging to this school of thought that stirred bitter controversies was that of Hannah Arendt's. She wrote in her book concerning the Eichmann trial⁵⁰ that "To a Jew this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story." (Arendt, 1964, 117.) "Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had been really unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and half and six million people." (Arendt, 1964, 125.)

The second approach, termed by Michman the "Trunk-Weiss school" for Isaiah Trunk and Aharon Weiss, emphasizes the councils' positive role in organizing the life of the Jewish masses forced into the ghettos.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Dan Michman, "Jewish 'Headships' under Nazi Rule: The Evolution and Implementation of an Administrative Concept", in: Dan Michman, *Historiography of the Holocaust from a Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003.

⁴⁹ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 122–125.

⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press, 1964.

⁵¹ Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation*. (New York: Stein and Day, 1977 and Aharon Weiss, "The Historiographical Controversy Concerning the Character and

b) Juedischer Ordnungsdienst (Jewish Police)

A Jewish police was created to enforce (i.e. physically carry out) all of the orders of the German authorities and those of the Jewish councils, including rounding up Jews for forced labor quotas, collecting valuables, and the facilitation of deportations to killing centers. The Germans did not hesitate to kill Jewish council members or policemen who they thought had failed to carry out orders.⁵²

c) Bunkers

The Jews called the hiding places they had built for themselves in the ghettos to avoid Actions and deportation "bunkers." (Modeled on this, later, for example in 1944 in Hungary, Jews called any prepared hiding places as bunkers.) In Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the Holocaust survivor, Vladek draws a sketch of the bunker he built. Partly he does that in order to describe the bunker, but partly to teach his son, who is taking down his testimony, how to prepare a good bunker when it is needed.⁵³ *Maus* is a graphic novel that was published in two volumes: the first in 1986: *My Father Bleeds History*, and the second in 1991: *And Here My Troubles Began*.

d) Folks-German (Volksdeutsche): ethnic Germans living outside the borders of Germany

e) "Łapankim" ["łapanka"] is a Polish word signifying a roundup. Its plural in Polish is "łapanki." Thus the added Hebrew plural "im" is an interesting result of the codeswitching.

Wallace Witkowski, a Polish witness, who, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's catalogue, "describes harsh living conditions for non-Jews in Poland [in his] 1990 interview," uses and explains this word: "Uh...we were...uh...terrorized by continuous...uh.. dragnets, 'łapanki,' [roundups] we called it in Polish. You walk on a street from your house to your aunt's house, and suddenly the street is closed by the gendarmes on both sides. And all the people are surrounded and asked to show their papers."⁵⁴

the Functions of the Judenrats", in: Y. Gutman and G. Greif (eds.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 679–696.

⁵² To read on this topic see Aharon Weiss's "The Relations between the Judenrat and the Jewish Police." 201-217. in *Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Nazi Europe 1933-1945*. Eds. Yisrael Gutman and Cynthia J. Haft. Proceedings of the Third Yad Vashem International Historical Conference Jerusalem, April 4-7, 1977. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977. and Dov Levin's "How the Jewish Police in the Kovno Ghetto Saw Itself" *Yad Vashem Studies* XXIX. 2001. 183-239. See the entire article: http://www.lekkt.com/Site_ViewDocument.asp?id=754&idPage=18136

⁵³ *Maus* pp.112-113.

⁵⁴ From the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Personal stories of Polish victims): http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/media_oi.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005473&MediaId=1238 (Info is taken on 26/01/2010)

2) Study Guide Questions and Tasks:

- a. Compare the ending of this testimony with Chana's
- b. Assess Arje's description of hiding with a gentile. How does the testifier judge the complex role of the gentile who helped them and then was ready to betray them? What were the gentile's motives for doing so? (Was money an issue, and if so, how?)
- c. What does it mean in your opinion that this child uncharacteristically denotes "Actions" with the traditional word "pogrom"? (Remember, N. Blumental wrote: "It is interesting to note that they [the Jews in those days] did not use the well-known word "pogrom." It seems that they realized the difference between the two terms." (Blumental 64-65.)
- d. Poles are not folks-Germans, so what could the witness possibly mean by the confusion of these terms and why?
- e. How did the advancement of the Red Army signal simultaneously both hope and a reality of final destruction?
- f. Assess Arje's description of the Judenrat and the Jewish Police. How do you know that it is an extremely emotional subject for him?
- g. Notice the way he writes the word SS with the "original" runic letters. Why do you think that is and what is the effect?

3) About the Testimony:

The importance of this testimony for the survivor community was confirmed by the fact that it was one of the 8 child testimonies that was chosen to be published in the first Holocaust research journal created by and for survivors, entitled *Fun Lezten Hurban* (English title: *From the Last Extermination, Journal for the History of the Jewish People during the Nazi Regime*).⁵⁵

On Fun Lezten Hurban

The Yiddish-language journal entitled *Fun Lezten Hurban* was published by the Central Historical Commission in Munich, which was established in December 1945 by The Central Committee for the Liberated Jews in Germany. It was published in Munich by and for the survivor community in the years of 1946-1948.

⁵⁵ For an extensive assessment of *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Israel Kaplan and the published children's testimonies, see Boaz Cohen "Representing Children's Holocaust: Children's Survivor testimonies published in *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Munich 1946 -1949" in Avinoam J. Patt and Michael Berkowitz (eds.), *We are here: New Approaches to Jewish Displaced persons in Postwar Germany*. Wayne State UP., 2010.

The Central Historical Commission collected thousands of testimonies from Holocaust survivors in the DP camps, amongst them hundreds from child survivors of the Holocaust. The drive to collect testimonies from children was initiated by Israel Kaplan, a teacher from Kovno (today Kaunas, Lithuania), who together with Moshe Feigenboim, led the Central Historical Commission. The child survivors and their stories held a strong fascination with Kaplan whose own child survived the Holocaust in hiding and being on the run.

Fun Lezten Hurban was edited by Kaplan, and the journal featured eye-witness accounts, testimonies, documents and photographs collected by the Historical Commission. It was aimed to “inspire every Jew from among the [Holocaust] survivors to give their testimony of their experiences under the Nazi regime.” And indeed, claimed Kaplan: “Since we started with the Journal we get a wider response from survivors.”⁵⁶ 10,000-12,000 copies of the journal were published in all.

The journal was seen by Kaplan as a “people’s project.” (*folks arbeit*). “It is still too early for serious scientific research,” he thought, “therefore, our purpose is simply a peoples (folk) journal with the participation of the masses.” “It is the role of the people themselves to recount their experiences and fill in ‘the great blank in our historiography’.” According to Kaplan’s vision, these testimonies would “furnish the historical material for the future scientific research and evaluations.” The journal was to represent “the frame of mind and experiences of the individual and the public,” because he was convinced that “in the destruction of a people, it is of course much more important to know the inner experiences, the people’s frame of mind itself” than anything else.⁵⁷

In this people’s project of recounting the Jewish story of the Holocaust, Kaplan gave a special place for the story of the Jewish child survivor. From among the hundreds of testimonies collected from children survivors by the staff of the Historical Commission during its four years of existence, eight were selected for publication in the journal.

The published versions of the testimonies were edited. Absence of editorial notes and protocols curtails our ability to reconstruct fully the editorial process. Yet, the Central Historical Commission’s archive, which was the clearinghouse for the testimonies collected in the DP camps (now in Yad Vashem), fortunately provides us with several of the testimonies in the children’s handwriting and some other relevant documentation. Thus the comparison of the originals and the published versions is an important task revealing the aims of the editors.

⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁷ Israel Kaplan, *Day to Day work in the Historical Commission*, p. 23.

On Arje Milch's testimony:

Arje Milch's testimony was the first child testimony to appear in the journal.⁵⁸ It was published in Vol. 3 of the journal (November 1946). He was born in 1932 in the town of Podhajcze in Galicia – a town occupied by the Russians in 1939. In July 1941 the German army occupied the town and four days later his mother was murdered. His father, a Judenrat member ("against his will" insisted Milch) was murdered a year later. Shortly before the liquidation of the Ghetto in 1943, Milch, his brother and an uncle went into hiding in a gentile's house and were liberated there in March 1944.

4) Further Study Guide Questions:

- a. What are the features of this testimony that survivors could have found so appealing, special, and representative that it was published in *Fun Lezten Hurban*?
- b. Think about our sources and limits as researchers concerning being able to answer the above question.

⁵⁸ Arie Milch, "My Experiences During the War," *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Vol. 3, November 1946, pp. 65-67. The child's name, spelled like this, is on the English-language back-cover of the journal. The editors gave an Anglicized version of the children's names.

[illegible]

No.	Language	Name	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	DP Camp	Title of the Composition	Date of Composition	Form Signed	Date of Composition
YVA M-1/E 169	Yiddish	Flescher Nuchim	1930 07. 15	Bołszowce (Poland)	Aschau bei Kraiburg DP Kinder lager UNNRA Team 154 Block 14	-----	1946	-----	1946

The text of the testimony was translated from the Yiddish original by Yiddish scholar Vera Szabó. The translation stayed very close to the Yiddish text: wherever the English is awkward and/or faulty, the Yiddish original is also like that. In addition, the English also follows the Yiddish literally in order not to lose in translation important aspects of the original. However, since the grammar of this testimony is especially confused and chaotic, the translator had to interpret certain features of the original in order to be able to render it in English. That the child could not write in Yiddish is indicated by the fact that the testimony is written in Latin characters. The translator inserted much of the punctuation as well.

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BOŁSZOWCE

Aschau UNRRA Team 154

Flescher Nuchim, born on July 15, 1930 in Bołszowce (Poland)
 Education: 6 classes of elementary school. Lived in Bołschowce [different spelling of the town's name], until the war, among the Poles, until the Germans came in. Two months after they came in, in 1941[the "in 1941" seems to be inserted later as the writing is lighter and it is placed where there was space for it.] the German Gestapo carried out an Aktion – they took out the people in transports to Belzec. I managed to hide and so I did not fall among those who were taken away. The next day, they gave us an order that within 24 hours we must leave the [town] and go to the ghetto. Life in the ghetto was very bad. Children Aktionen and adult Aktionen did not evade us one day. In a short while, at the beginning of 1942, they liquidated all the ghettos in Galicia, including the ghetto in our town Rohatyn. We sat in the bunker for three days and on the fourth day we went to a forest, not far from our town. We stayed there for one week and then went to another [forest/place]. I and my sister went to look for bread, and when we got back, we did not find anyone there. We are going, but we don't know where. [grammar mistake: present tense!] We went closer to the partisans. We found the partisans and they took us in with great care. We were there until the Russian Army liberated us on April 15, 1944.

Flescher Nuchim

Analyze this testimony by employing the methods learnt from the analysis of Chana Berman's testimony.

Discussion question:

-- What do you think about the fact that the report of the "Aktionen" is rendered by emphatic negations: "Children Aktionen and adult Aktionen *did not evade us* one day?"

BOLSZOWCE

M/E

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Aschau UNRRA Team 154.

Flescher Nuchim, geb. 15. VII 1930 In Bolszowce (Polen)
von Bildung 6 Klassen Volksschule gewohnt in Bolszowce bis dem
Krieg bei die Polen bis die Dajzen senen arajn. 2 monat in 1941
nach dem arajnkumen fun ze' hot die Dajze gestapo
ajsgesirbt ain akcije wie me hot arajsgesirbt die mertzen
in transporten kein Betrec. Mir ist sich gelungen ajberkhat
ten in nist arajn ufahn suwivan di awesgesirbt. In wajten
tog hot men uns gegeben ain befehl bis 24 noch zu farten
die un men muss awes in gettos leben in getto iz
gewesen sehr schlecht kinder alices un alten alices, haben
uns nist ojsge mit ain tog. In ajn rajt land in anfang
1942 joch hot men likwidirt iiberhapt di getos in galizien
in unser getto in der stat Rohatyn ajchet. Drei tog
senen mir gewesen in den bunker in dem ferdan
tog, senen mir awes in ajn wald nist wajt
fun unser stat dorten sene mir gewesen a woch
zeit in awes in dem anderen ich mit main
szwestet senen mir gegangen noch brajt zichen un
numendix zwik nist kejnem getroffen. Mir gejen
un weismir nit alejn wijhin zu gehen awesgegangen
nenter zu partizaner. Getrofen di partizaner

un mit großer mühe un genommen. Geweissin
dorten bi in jehr ~~reisen~~ 1944 15 april haben uns befreit
di Russische Armee.
Flescher Michim.

7. Supplements: Providing the historical Context for the Testimonies

The material in this appendix appears in module no. 1 of the Voices of Child Survivors Project. It is brought here for the benefit of lecturers who are starting off with this module.

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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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.

Supplement 1: To testify or not to testify? Children's testimonies collected by the Central Historical Commission (CHC) in Munich

Children's testimonies in DP camps 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.

⁵⁹ 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.

⁶⁰ 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.

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.



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."⁶¹ 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,⁶² 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."⁶³

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."

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² Based on Boaz Cohen's extensive assessment of *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Israel Kaplan and the published children's testimonies, see Boaz Cohen "Representing Children's Holocaust: Children's Survivor testimonies published in *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Munich 1946 -1949" in Avinoam J. Patt and Michael Berkowitz (eds.), *We are here: New Approaches to Jewish Displaced persons in Postwar Germany*. Wayne State UP., 2010.

⁶³ 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.

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 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.⁶⁴ It is apparent that this experience contributed to Kaplan's commitment to the collection of children's testimonies.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶

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

⁶⁴ On this issue see Shalom Eilat (Kaplan's son), *Crossing the River*, (Hebrew) Jerusalem 1999.

⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶ Benjamin Tene (Tennenbaum), *To the City of my Youth*, (Hebrew) Tel Aviv 1979, p. 150.

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."⁶⁷ 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."⁶⁸

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 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.

Supplement 2: The Explanation of the Testimonies' Reference Number (Signature)

YVA M-1/E 644/535: In the Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), under No. M-1/E 644/535

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.

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.

⁶⁷ Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka, *One of the Few*, (Hebrew) Moreshet, Tel-Aviv 2003. p. 324.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 325.