

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

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

**Module 3: Children on the Run**

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# Table of Contents

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1. Introduction	Page 2
2. Rózia's Testimonies	Page 10
3. Fredzia's Testimonies	Page 36
4. Topic Analysis of the Testimonies	Page 51
5. Supplement	Page 54

## **MODULE 3: Children on the Run**

# 1. Introduction

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This teaching module focuses on children's experience of being relentlessly hunted. As Jews, they were persecuted as unremittingly and mercilessly as adults. In fact, this phenomenon, in a way, encapsulates the essence of the German Final Solution: Jewish children hiding in forests and working on farms did not pose any danger to the German Army and there were no economic reasons to annihilate them either. Yet, it was a regular activity of the German local security forces to go 'Jew hunting' (Judenjagd), i.e. to kill all Jews who were found.

The present module focuses on the experiences of children, mainly from cities, towns or small towns, whose upbringing did not prepare them in any way for being able to sustain themselves in the countryside. These children, usually after suffering the gradual diminishment of their families, at one point, found themselves completely alone and had to fend for themselves in an extremely hostile countryside. Through the testimonies of two girls, Rózia Pinczewska and Fredzia Student, we show that they needed to go through and actively devise various degrees of identity changes in order to survive. The identity changes had always been connected to their encounters with non-Jews: perpetrators, bystanders, and helpers/rescuers. Every single contact spelled mortal danger. Therefore, the ability to respond adequately to every new encounter was a basic survival skill that the children had to develop, which entailed the presentation of the identity appropriate for the situation. Moreover, since it was impossible to get this right every time, we learn about the children's mistakes as well as the correction and the consequences of those mistakes. Obviously, we only learn about those mistakes that were eventually somehow corrected, since we do not have access to the stories of those who perished.

By reading the testimonies of Rózia and Fredzia, we learn about the experiences of hunted children on the run. On the basis of many testimonies and other, more indirect, sources, we can assume that the girls' experiences are representative. In other words, a great number of Jewish children experienced them during the Holocaust. However, we will never know the number of those children! Obviously, we have the testimonies of only the survivors and we will never know the stories of those who were murdered. The mistakes that the survivors relate in their testimonies are enough to demonstrate that in Nazi occupied Europe, it was a question of pure luck whether a Jew survived the persecution.

### **The Testifying Child Survivors**

Each girl gave two early post-war testimonies, and they also gave testimonies later in life. Since the four early testimonies that will be discussed in this module are all edited by the collectors of the testimonies, and or the publishers, we will conduct a more topic focused analysis of the testimonies than if we would have the children's original compositions in their own hand-writing.

The areas of Rózia's and Fredzia's wandering during the Holocaust are quite small in radius (obviously, as they were wandering on foot most of the times, and even when means of transportation were used, they were not taken far) but they are only about 80 miles apart. Rózia's story took place in the Kielce District and Fredzia's in the Lublin District of Poland.

Their social background was different. This has consequences for their experience during the Holocaust. Rózia's wealthier family had the means to pay their rescuers much longer than Fredzia's family that had more modest means. Fredzia's family had to leave their hiding place much sooner, so Fredzia's roaming the countryside with her mother, during which they endured the abuse of the villagers, started earlier. We can only state that the former social statuses of the two families are reflected in their stories, but we cannot judge whether it was better for one or the other. First of all, both girls lost their entire family and remained completely alone, and even though Rózia's family could pay for staying longer with their paid helpers, they were starved and abused by them well before their money ran out completely.

Rózia Pinczewska was born in Lodz in 1931. Her father and grandfather were corn merchants and the family was quite well-to-do. When the situation in the city became unbearable, the family moved to the small town (townlet) of Polaniec [Plontch], where the father was from. They lived in the grandparents' house. The ghetto in Polaniec was established in April, 1942. After the ghetto was liquidated, the father, the mother and their two children— Rózia and her younger brother—were hidden by a peasant family in exchange for payment. They suffered many privations. The father was murdered while looking for food or trying to recover some of the family's belongings in order to be able to continue to pay the rescuers. Soon, the rest of the family was attacked, and the mother with the son were murdered by the very same people who had initially hid them. Rózia escaped and survived by passing as a Christian. Following liberation, she returned to Polaniec, where was a pogrom. After that, she arrived to the children's home at the Jewish Committee of Czestochowa. She gave her first testimony there in July 1945. Her second testimony, which was published as entitled "My Experiences during the War," in *Fun Lezten Hurban Volume 6*, August, 1947, Pages 58-61., was sent to the Central Commission from the trade school in the Greifenberg DP Camp.

**The geographical framework of Rózia's story in Poland:**

--Lodz

The major part of the story takes place in the Kielce area:

--Polaniec: townlet in Sandomierz County, Kielce District [During the war: General Gouvernement, Radom District] and its vicinity. (In her earlier testimony, she mentions two villages near Polaniec.)

Following is a German map of the Polaniec area from 1942:

[http://www.plontch.net/1942\\_german\\_map.htm](http://www.plontch.net/1942_german_map.htm)

This is a detailed map that the Germans used also for the purpose of Jew hunting.

--Czestochowa: County Seat, Kielce District [During the war: General Gouvernement, Radom District]

Fredzia Student was born in Gorzków in January 1935 to Fishl and Haya Student.<sup>1</sup> The family owned a general store catering for the needs of the townlet and its vicinity. After the German occupation, the family was expelled to Izbica. On the way there, they deposited her uncircumcised baby brother with a Polish peasant family. Later, the family escaped and found refuge in a barn of a Polish peasant who hid them for payment. Fredzia's father was soon murdered when he had to go out to provide for his family's needs. Then Fredzia with her mother were forced to wander in the countryside begging for food. They were caught and brought to the prison in Hrubieszów. There, the mother was murdered and Fredzia, who posed as a Pole, was given to Polish women and eventually she was sent to a convent. After the war, she was reclaimed from the convent by Devora Fleischer, known as Marysia, who was one of the operatives of the Koordynacja,<sup>2</sup> and joined a child survivor group going to Eretz Israel. Her first testimony was taken right after joining the group and published in the Tenenbaum anthology of child testimonies in Hebrew in 1947 in Tel-Aviv. Her second testimony was a part of a collection the testimonies of the children in her group. It was done in the British detention camp in Cyprus where the group was held after trying to reach Eretz Israel illegally.

### **The geographical framework of Fredzia's story in Poland:**

The major part of the story takes place in the Lublin area:

-- Gorzków: A small town in the region of Krasnystaw in the Lublin District [During the war: General Gouvernement, Radom District]

-- Izbica: Izbica was the largest transit ghetto located between **Belzec** and **Sobibor**. Except from German, Czech, Austrian and Slovakian Jews, about 4,000 Jews from

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<sup>1</sup> On the website: [http://ellisland.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas\\_poland/pol7\\_00118.html](http://ellisland.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol7_00118.html), you can find much data on Fredzia's hometown: Gorzków (Region: Krasnystaw; Province: Lublin, 50°57' / 23°01'). ["Gorzgow" - Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Poland, Volume VII]

Translation of "Gorzgow" chapter from *Pinkas Hakehillot Polin* Published by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. This is a translation from: *Pinkas Hakehillot: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities, Poland, Volume VII*, pages 118-119, published by Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. Translated by Morris Gradel.

<sup>2</sup> About Marysia, the Jewish organization called Koordynacja and the controversial phenomenon of reclaiming Jewish children from convents and their Christian rescuers, see Nahum Bogner: *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009. (Especially Chapter 10 entitled "Redeeming the Children" pp. 257-295. and Emunah Nachmany Gafny: *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009. (Especially Chapter 4: "Working Methods: Searching, Locating, and Negotiating for the Removal of Children" pp. 185-214).

One can sense, how controversial these issues are already from the differences in the titles of the books and their chapters. The most painful issue is, whether it was a good decision to remove orphaned Jewish children from the rescuers who loved them individually in order to place them into Jewish institutions.

**Possible Student activity:** Think about all the issues pertaining to this problem in that particular historical moment from individual and collective points of view. Compare the titles! Bogner's book focuses on the phenomenon of rescuing Jewish children, and one of the last chapters of the entire process is the "Redeem[tion of] the Children." [[On the basis of this title, what do you think, what is Bogner's position concerning the issue of reclaiming Jewish orphans?]] By contrast, even the title of Gafny's book that focuses entirely on that issue, suggests a different stance. [[What is your opinion?]] Pay special attention to the different connotations as well as inherent value judgment of the words: "redemption" and "removal" with special emphasis on the prefix "re."

**Zamosc** and some groups of Polish Jews from nearby small towns and villages in **Krasnystaw** county were relocated to Izbica during the final phase of the ghetto liquidations in the **Lublin** district. The Izbica Ghetto was not closed because its location in the valley, surrounded by hills and a river, facilitated the separation of the victims.<sup>3</sup> In November 1942 the Germans assembled the Jews of Gorzków and the nearby villages in the market square, and from there they were marched 12 kilometers to the ghetto at Izbica - the assembly point for all the Jews of the area. In the autumn of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 all the inhabitants of this ghetto were removed to their deaths in Belzec.

- Hrubieszów
- Turkowice Convent

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<sup>3</sup> Downloaded on Aug 26/2010 from  
<http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/transit%20ghettos.html>



A map of Poland in 1944<sup>4</sup>

## Jew Hunting – The German Perspective

Nazi Germany's project of exterminating Europe's Jewry was characterized not only by mass killings and by deportation to death camps but also by relentless pursuit of those who escaped the machinery of destruction. German security forces conducted searches and patrols in order to ferret out the last remaining Jews and to kill them.

<sup>4</sup> This map is from the wikimedia commons. Commons is a freely licensed media file repository.

The well researched and contested case of Battalion 101 of the Order Police (*Ordnungspolizei*) is illustrative of these actions.<sup>5</sup> It was one of about 38 battalions of the Order Police that took part in implementing the Final Solution. Its men were responsible for the shooting of about 38,000 Jewish men, women and children and the deportation of about 45,200 others to the death camps. This battalion was the one that operated in the Lublin District at the time when Fredzia was running for her life there. They were the hunters and she was the hunted.

The battalion, composed as it was from, mostly, over-aged rank and file men of non-Nazi background, was a far cry from an ideological, well trained genocidal murder team, yet its members partook in major mass murder actions. Moreover, they were sent repeatedly into the countryside to search for Jews who eluded the murder operations or the deportations to the death camps. These searches were always lethal. The orders mandated the shooting of all Jews found outside the Ghettos and camps. (The *Schiessbefehl*): “Whenever the men of Police battalion 101 learnt (often from Polish informers) or suspected that Jews were living or hiding in a certain area,” writes Goldhagen, “they formed a detachment of a size sufficient for the expected task, sought out the Jews and killed them.” The Jews in question, including many children, did not take part in any combat activity. Yet they were killed on the spot “we were right before the bunker” testified one of the men, “when a five year old boy came out crawling, he was immediately grabbed by a policeman and led aside. The policeman then set the pistol to his neck and shot him.”<sup>6</sup> In some cases Jews were degraded and humiliated before they were killed, in others they were killed immediately. There was no lack of volunteers for these patrols, which they called a “Jew hunt.” For their participants “it was a hunt, pure and simple, the purpose of which was to denude the countryside of offending beasts.”<sup>7</sup>

### **The Burden of Survival as it Informs the Testimonies**

Being constantly active and alert is a large part of the experience of the hunted children. They had to move around a lot and live from one encounter to the other. In the face of incessant danger, they had to adapt constantly, change their identity, all the while hiding their emotions. These children had to be extremely resourceful and, most of the times, they managed not to break down. However, precisely these survival skills, in addition to their traumatization, led to much pain and confusion that impeded their post-war rehabilitation and surfaced as well as structured their testimonies.

In order to sense the depth of the identity crises the children were experiencing, and many of the survivors still continue to suffer from, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, see Joanna B. Michlic’s comprehensive socio-historical study of identity problems and survivor children: “Who Am I?: Jewish Children’s Search for Identity in Post-War Poland 1945-1949.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher R Browning, *Ordinary Men – Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Harper Collins, New York, 1992. And Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Goldhagen p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> Goldhagen p 237

<sup>8</sup> *Polin*, vol. 20 (2008), pp. 98–121.



To register some of the terrifying post-war consequences of the experience of being hunted, it is informative to read one of Ida Fink's short stories entitled: "Cheerful Zofia." Fink herself is a survivor, who wrote her short stories based on her own horrific experiences and on the basis of the experiences of survivors from her own region (Galicia), whom she interviewed for the Yad Vashem Archives.

The short story "Cheerful Zofia," describes an interview with a survivor, who, as a young child, spent "two winters" in an abandoned barn completely alone: "That means I came in the autumn, then there was the first winter, then spring, summer, the second autumn, the second winter, and then a little bit of the second spring."<sup>9</sup> The protagonist of the short story does not remember anything about herself or how she remained alone; she only remembers "that she wandered in the forest for a very long time before she hid in the old barn."<sup>10</sup> By relating a tale of complete adaptation to the existence of a hunted animal, the child's story, which does not contain encounters with anyone, only successfully avoided encounters, come to symbolize a crucial aspect of all hunted children's experience, who were fending for themselves: that of losing one's identity together with any feeling of continuity. The short story demonstrates that the necessary activities of survival: adaptation, self-effacement, becoming one with one's role in order to be able to live it (viz. able to live), cause a kind of a death: the complete loss of one's identity. Even the title of the short story, "Cheerful Zofia" indicates that the survivor does not exist. In her case, there is no survival. "Zofia" is not her name, but a name of ancient Greek origin, which she chose for herself in the children's home after she had been rescued. Moreover, cheerfulness is not her personality trait, but a symptom of her trauma. The protagonist herself concludes the interview with a question that confirms the paradox of her non-existence: "Did you ever see someone who was killed in the war but who is still alive?"

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<sup>9</sup> p. 144. Ida Fink: "Cheerful Zofia" in *Traces* [Translated by Philip Boehm and Francine Prose] New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997. pp. 143-146.

<sup>10</sup> pp. 145-146.

### Introductory Student Activity:

- On the basis of Lenore Weitzman’s “Living on the Arian Side in Poland: Gender, Passing, and the Nature of Resistance,” in Dalia Ofer, Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale UP., 1998), pp. 187-222, which deals with the experience Jews passing as non-Jews on the “Arian side” in occupied Poland, describe what do you think it was necessary to survive by pretending to be a non-Jew.
- From the article list the major terms, such as “passing” and “Arian side,” and define them. (Pay a special attention to the paradoxes inherent in some of the terms, such as the “Arian side.” Who is “Arian” according to German racial theory? What does it mean then if it was common to refer to everything outside of the ghettos and camps as the Arian side? In your opinion, what does this paradox reveal about Nazi ideology and aims?
- Differentiate between passing in the city and in the countryside.
- Specify the special difficulties of passing, such as, fork work or rent a room, one needed to register himself/herself with valid identity papers, and one needed official food stamps to be able to buy food, etc.  
What were the signs that made people suspicious?
- Think about the fact that if it was so unbearably difficult for adults, what could it be for children?! What are your expectations concerning children’s testimonies after reading Weitzman’s article? What could be the similarities and the differences between the experiences of adults and those of children?

## 2. Rózia's Testimonies

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This section will render Rózia Pinczewska's two early post-war testimonies. Her first was taken by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland. Her second testimony was collected by the Central Historical Commission (CHC) in Munich. That testimony was then chosen to appear in the Yiddish language periodical *Fun Letzen Churban*. Before giving the translation of Rózia's testimonies, we will describe the testimony collecting project which recorded them. Following the two translations, a comparative table will be presented, which by clarifying the structure of the testimonies, highlights the thematic differences between the two.

### **The History of Rózia's First Testimony: Children's testimonies taken by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland**

With the gradual liberation of Europe by the Allied forces in 1944–1945, surviving Jews established the first Holocaust research institutes and took up the task of documenting the destruction.<sup>11</sup> The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland was established in August 1944. By March 1945, the commission had moved to Łódź and opened twenty-five regional branches including Cracow, Katowice, Wrocław, Białystok, Tarnow, and Lublin. The liberation and restoration of Warsaw prompted the commission to move there, but some regional commissions, such as the one in Kraków, kept a great measure of independence. Among the Commission's activists were Dr. Philip Friedman, who served as its first head, and Rachel Auerbach, who was one of the surviving members of the Oneg Shabbat underground archive in the Warsaw ghetto. The collection of testimonies was a priority for the Commission, and in its 76 Holocaust and Genocide Studies first two years of existence it collected 6,000. Commission members unearthed files from the Oneg Shabbat archive in Warsaw and from the Łódź ghetto, as well as from other community archives and German documentation. From its early days, the Commission published documents, monographs, and testimonies about the murder of the European Jews.

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<sup>11</sup> See: Boaz Cohen, "Bound to Remember, Bound to Remind- Holocaust Survivors and the Genesis of Holocaust Research," in Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth, eds., *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution* (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 2005); Rita Horváth, "'A Jewish Historical Commission in Budapest': The Place of the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary [DEGOB] among the Other Large-Scale Historical-Memorial Projects of *She'erit Hapletah* After the Holocaust (1945-1948)," in: David Bankier – Dan Michman (eds.), *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, New York: Bergham Books, 2008, pp. 475–496.; Shmuel Krakowski, "Memorial Projects and Memorial Institutions Initiated by *She'erit Hapletah*," in Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf, eds., *She'erit Hapletah, 1944–1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), pp. 388–398. Natalia Aleksion: "The Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland 1944-1947." *Polin* Vol. 20, 2007. pp. 74-97.

Hundreds of children's testimonies can be found in the Commission's archives. These were collected mainly in children's homes (orphanages), dormitories, and places of day care that were established in various Polish cities and towns immediately after the end of the war. Testimonies collected by the Commission are all based on oral interviews with child survivors that were conducted according to the official guidelines on how to research Jewish children's wartime experiences. The guidelines were issued in 1945 by the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of Polish Jews.<sup>12</sup> After the interview, the interviewer composed a first-person narrative and then had the witness authorize the testimony and sign it.

Thus in order to professionalize the collection of testimonies, interviewers working for the Commission received explicit instructions formulated in the "General introduction to the Questionnaire for Children" written by Gita Silkes, and issued by the Commission:

After gathering the material together, one needs to put the notes in order and compile the testimony. One must not postpone the work, because the local color and freshness of the narration, as well as its uniqueness, can be erased. The notes and abbreviations will be forgotten and your personal observations will lose their value and immediacy.

Immediately after conducting the discussion, you must reconstruct the entire testimony in the order in which it was conducted. The material rewritten in such a way can be chronologically and thematically arranged according to the schema of the questionnaire, while as much as possible retaining the style of the narrator telling the story in the first person.<sup>13</sup>

Rachel Auerbach, one of the leading figures in the Commission, and later the founder and director of the department for the collection of testimonies in Yad Vashem in Israel, described the system used in interviews and its problematic character. She recounted that "the witness was retelling his experiences and the interviewer was, from time to time, reformulating the testimony in his own words and summarizing them. In this way some unique personal characteristics of style and language would be lost". In this method the witness had to be stopped occasionally in order for the interviewer to write down what he heard. These pauses, she claimed "exhausted the... tension, dramatic energy and narrative" of the testimony. She wrote that more than once she felt that stopping the witness from talking was a "barbaric act".<sup>14</sup>

Although the shortcomings of this method are obvious, in the case of children's testimonies, it enabled children whose verbal qualifications were much better than their written ones (most did not have a chance to attend school during the war) to give a more complete testimony.

Interviewers were also encouraged to comment on the children's behavior during the interview on the interview sheets. We do not have such comments in Rózia's case, but when we do, they

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<sup>12</sup> *Instrukcje dla badania przeżyć dzieci żydowskich w okresie okupacji niemieckiej*, Seria II. Prace Metodologiczne, Vol. 3, Łódź, Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich, Komisja Historyczna, 1945. 1-16.

<sup>13</sup> Gita Silkes, "Algemayner araynfir tsum fregeboygen far kinder," *Metodologishe onvizungen tsum oysforshen dem Khurbn fun Poylishe yidntum* ("General Introduction to the Questionnaire for Children," *Methodological Instructions for the Research of the Destruction of Polish Jewry*) (Ło'dz': Central Council for Jews in Poland, 1945)

<sup>14</sup> Rachel Auerbach, "Mekorot u'drachim hadashim l'geviyat eduyot" ("New Ways and Methods for Taking Testimonies"), *Yediot Yad Vashem* no. 2, 29 July 1954.

give us further insights into the children's personalities and the unwritten aspects of the testimony. This was especially true in cases when the interviewer was an educator by profession. The comments were supposed to help determine how to facilitate the child's healing: "The accumulated facts of the subject's life," explained the guidelines, "allow us a closer acquaintance with the child, and to determine the existence or lack of psychological problems, and to take steps for their eventual sublimation."<sup>15</sup>

Some of the interviewers did indeed comment on the children. Gita Silkes, who formulated the guidelines mentioned above, for example, gave educational-psychological evaluations of the children, as in the case of Pearl Freitag. In the first years of occupation, Pearl wandered from place to place, later, in spite of her young age she worked in the HASAG German ammunition plant. She survived alone of her parents and six siblings. In January 1948, she was interviewed by Silkes in the Children's Home in Łódź. Silkes, herself a teacher in the Warsaw ghetto, commented on the behavior of Freitag in the children's home and the school:

Tall, full body, black hair, black eyes. Soft, distinctly Semite facial features. Serious wherever she is, modest, silent humility, a bit melancholic, what she went through shows in her sensitivity. Disciplined, diligent, responsible. Likes sports, traveling, swimming, being in motion. Does everything with exemplary seriousness. She is seldom seen laughing. At school she is very active, takes part in the student council, liked by all the children.<sup>16</sup>

As an additional example, see how interviewer "Vaic" commented on 15 year old Dunia Berman's testimony taken in July 1945. Berman, a native of Horodenka, lost her entire family in the Holocaust. Though underage, she survived in the work camp at Tluste. Vaic wrote:

I'm under the impression that the child tells the truth. She behaves as an adult. She is wholly independent, knows what she wants and manages to get along. She is very active, has no patience to sit and study. She is a bit superficial, doesn't accept guidance and her expressions are clear, sharp and forceful.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. David Haupt, head of the Jewish Community Council in Przemysł, interviewed Rózia Liechter in the Jewish orphanage in the town. Rózia Liechter and her brother were the only survivors from their family. Their parents and five siblings were murdered by the Nazis and they survived by working for Polish farmers, all the time posing as non-Jews. In a footnote to the testimony he described the girl, 12 years of age at the time:

A thin girl, tall for her age. Good-natured facial expression. Features are non-Semite. Big brown eyes, a slightly melancholic look which is the only outward way to discern her Jewishness. She has a good (uses the term 'clean') Polish accent. When speaking she does not control her bodily movements, she moves incessantly, bends down,

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<sup>15</sup> Selkes, "General introduction".

<sup>16</sup> YVA. M49e/3616.

<sup>17</sup> Yad Vashem Archive (YVA) M49e/515 taken 15 July 1945. The M49e division of YVA is a copy of division 301 of the CJHC archive in Warsaw. File numbers are the same.

turns around. Quite good intelligence, expressed in the way she tells her harsh experiences during the Hitlerite occupation.”<sup>18</sup>

Publishing the testimonies was also one of the crucial aims of the Commission. In 1946, the Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow published the first collection of the early post-war testimonies of Jewish children in Poland *Dzieci Oskarżaja* (*The Children Accuse*). The book consists of fifty-five children’s testimonies and fifteen adult testimonies. The latter testimonies focus on children’s experiences in various ghettos in Nazi-occupied Poland, whereas the children’s testimonies are divided into six thematic sections: the ghettos, the camps, on the Aryan side, in hiding, the resistance and prison.<sup>19</sup>

### **The translation of Różia Pinczewska’s earlier Polish testimony given to the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Poland**

YVA M49-E/1566

Bogna Pawlisz’s translation from the Polish original:

#### **Interview with child / Polaniec, hidden/**

Pinczewska Różia, born 10. 12. 1932 in Lodz, father is a corn-merchant [“flour merchant”], today she is a pupil of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in an elementary public school. Now she lives in the children’s home at the Jewish Committee in Czestochowa

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In December 1939, I left Lodz for Polaniec with my parents (Father: Chaim, Mother: Bela) and brother Leon, born 1937. [Polaniec] is near Mielec. There, it was still permitted to live then. Jews were wearing the star of David on their Chest and back. I, a seven-year-old, was not wearing this sign (only from the age of 12). There were a lot of Jews living there then, from many different places of Poland [grammatically chaotic]. I with my parents lived at grandma and grandpa’s home Jankel and Chaja Pinczewsky, also corn-merchants. There, I lived with my family until November 14, 1942. Then came an order to expel us, but we, father, mother and brother, hid ourselves in a bunker close to Polaniec (the bunker was under the barn that belonged to the peasant Bucek Waclaw) [The name Bucek has 2 variants in the text: once it is written: Bucyk]. We agreed to pay monthly 4,000 zloty for hiding us. And for that, he gave us twice a day a bit of potatoes and cabbage. His neighbors did not know about us.

We lived like that for 18 months. We did not leave the place even for taking one step. In February 1944, our money ran out completely. We did not have anything of value anymore: no clothing, not even underwear, because my parents were giving them, one after the other, to Bucek to sell them in order to earn money for us. When father said to Bucek that we do not have

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<sup>18</sup> YVA M49e/882.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss,eds. *The Children Accuse*, London, Portland, OR, Vallentine Mitchell, 1996. (Translation from Polish by Bill Johnston). Joanna B. Michlic: *The Children Accuse, 1946: Between Exclusion from and Inclusion into the Holocaust Canon*” *Newsletter of the Society for the History of Children and Youth*, H-Childhood, No. 9, February 2007, [www.history.vt.edu/Jones/SHCY/Newsletter9/michlic.html](http://www.history.vt.edu/Jones/SHCY/Newsletter9/michlic.html)

even a penny, he ordered us to leave. Father was begging him to continue to keep us. Because one day the war would be over and then his cousins whom he has in America will send the money and he will pay to the last penny and even he will add interest. Bucek did not want to agree to that. He ordered us to leave immediately. And then, in the end, answering to father's request, he agreed to keep us until it would be a little warmer that we could go to the forest because this is what my father was asking for.

On April 25, 1944, father left at night for the village to take back some stuff from peasant Glogowski which we gave him for safekeeping. Father never came back. Only after three days came our Bucek and declared that Cossacks (Ukrainian SS) killed father. But it was not true, because father was murdered by AK (partisans) [Armia Krajowa - Home Army]. They were peasants from the same village. I was told this by peasants when I have already left the bunker and was pretending to be a Pole.

On June 2, 1944, Bucek came at night and he had a weapon and belonged to AK, [as] he himself said this to us when my father was still alive. He declared that AK will come and kill us. Therefore, he will take us out to the field. He himself will be watching his horses (taking them to pasture) and we will sit next to him. He will take care of us. Mother was afraid to go with him, because she did not trust him. He threatened us, so we had to go with him. We agreed, and he put us on top of a cart and took us out at night to the field next to the river "Czarna." When the cart stopped, Bucek's brother, who lived in the same house with us, jumped out of the bushes and started to shoot at us. I was the first to jump down from the cart and started to run in the field. Bucek's brother ran after me and he was shooting (at me) and in the end he caught me by the hand. I pulled at his gun, because he was aiming at me. I begged him to spare me. He did not want to. Waclaw came and took the rifle from his brother and in front of my eyes he shot to death my little brother. That night, there was moonlight. I started to scream very loudly. But he wanted to shoot me. I escaped and ran into the water. I went through to the other side of the river and, this way, I saved myself. I heard then two other shots and my mother's screams" "Gewalt"-- -- [Yiddish-Polish] After the two shots, the screaming stopped.

I was marching in the darkness for a long time. I have seen houses. I was sure that it was already another village, but it turned out that it was still the village of Polaniec. I hid myself in a barn and this is how I waited till early morning. I was completely wet and shaking from the cold [and] hunger. I entered a house: "I am a Pole from Warsaw, please, give me something to eat and wear." This peasant woman kindly invited me in and gave me coffee with bread. She dried my clothes and kept me for the day. I told her that my parents are no more and that they were sent to forced labor. She looked at my skin. It was summer. She declared that I look too white. She ordered me to say the *pacierz* [Our Father (*Ojcie Nasz*) and Hail Mary (*Zdrowa's Mario*) constitutes it]. I did not know how to, I admitted that I am Jewish. She was frightened and declared that as soon as I will be dry I have to leave her house. [S]he also told me in the future to say that I am from the Ukraine.

Next day I went to another village: Niedzialk. Here I already presented myself to a house as a Ukrainian. There they accepted me and I was watching the cows for two days. Bucek, when he heard about me, came on a bike, but I was in the field. When I came back to the house, the owner [male, but this must be a mistake] told me that there was here a man who came for me. [S]he described him to me, this is how I understood that it was Bucek, who actually had my father's bike. So I admitted to this woman [female house owner] [my situation] and she said that I should not be afraid and she would not let me to get hurt. Within a few days, he came again. I

saw him and he saw me as well. He wanted to take me with him, but I said that I would not go with him. The female hose owner, Jagusiowa, ran out from the house to rescue me.

“Do you know who she is?”

“And who is she?”

“Jewish”

“So let it be Jewish, she can also be alive”

“They will come here for her and they will kill all of you too.”

“Let them kill”

Then Jagusiowa’s sons came out of the barn. He called to them and he was saying something to them. Then I ran away from there and went to another village “Szczeka.” There, a female owner, Kuraska, accepted me as a shepherd. I was in her house until the Soviet Army came and set me free on August 2, 1944. I stayed at her house until December 1944.

In January 1945, I came back to Polaniec and lived here with the Jewish Bergers, but AK in April 1945, at one night, attacked Jews. They killed 5 Jews and wounded another 3. I ran away then into the field and after that, together with the wounded, I left for Czestochowa. One of the wounded Jews, Szmil Brand told me that he saw a Polish policeman who shot at Jews from revolvers together with the bandits.

I have 4 cousins in America in Frinidad (Reiferowic) and in Palestine (Apelbaum Motel). I live in a Children’s home at the Jewish Committee of Czestochowa. I go to 5<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school. In the home I feel very well, there is a lot of food and [it is] good. The care [provided] is also good.

12.7.1945

Pinczewska Rózia

Copied from the original 1946 19 July, Katowice

Even though the earlier testimony was set down in writing as a composition by the interviewer, the child’s meaningful idiosyncratic formulations break through in places and became preserved in the adult’s rendering. For example: “There, it was still permitted to live then.” The emotionally laden nature of this sentence is conveyed by the fact that we have the following adverbs together in that very short sentence: “there,” “still,” and “then.” Moreover, these adverbs all contain negative comparisons: “there” [Polaniec] is contrasted to Lodz, where it became impossible to live, “then” is contrasted to later, when it became impossible to live for Jews in Polaniec either, and “still” contains a contrast with both before and after. So many contrasts fill a sentence with emotional energy.

The sentence “There were a lot of Jews living there then, from many different places of Poland,” which the translator judged dramatically grammatically chaotic, also preserves the child’s emotions by the same means as the previously analyzed sentence, but also by the grammatical chaos.

## **The History of Rozia's Second Testimony**

She wrote a Yiddish-language testimonial composition in school, in the Greifenberg DP Camp, in the framework of the testimony collection project of the Central Historical Commission in



Munich. The signature number of the testimony in the Yad Vashem Archives is: YVA M-1/E 368.<sup>20</sup> This testimony was then chosen by *Fun Letzen Hurban* for publication. Before the publication it was edited. Here in the module, we will publish the English translation of the edited version of Rozia's second testimony, which appeared in *Fun Letzen Hurban* (Volume 6, August 1947, pages 58-61). The reason why we chose to work here on the edited version of the testimony is that the rest of the testimonies presented in this module are edited, and therefore bear the intervention of the an adult (interviewer, editor, caretaker, or educator).

The fact that this testimony was chosen to be published in *Fun Letzen Hurban* shows that the publishers felt it displayed a powerful and representative experience, which is relevant to their DP audience.

### **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.

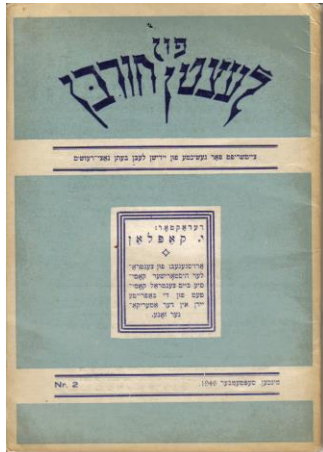
Israel Kaplan, a teacher from Kovno, and Moshe Figenboim, an accountant, both Holocaust survivors, were appointed to head the CHC. Through their leadership, the Commission's workers and activists collected 2,500 testimonies, 8,000 filled-in questionnaires mainly in Yiddish, but also in Hebrew, Polish, 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."<sup>21</sup> Ten to twelve thousand copies of the journal were published in all. In the early

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<sup>20</sup> For understanding the signature of the document see the supplement.

<sup>21</sup> Israel Kaplan, The protocol of the first meeting of the [historical] workers of the Historical Commission, Munich. 11 - 12/ 5/1947 (Yiddish), YIVO Archive 1258/476.



1950s after the Historical Commission closed, its entire collection was deposited in Yad Vashem.

For Israel Kaplan,<sup>22</sup> a teacher in pre-war Kovno, children were a distinct group whose voice had to be heard. As a teacher he saw great importance in collecting these stories for both the teachers who needed to better understand their students and for the children themselves. Kaplan initiated a project aimed at collecting testimonies from children Holocaust survivors in the DP camps. "Of great significance to our work is inspiring children to write about what they endured", he said in 1947. "We have already gotten in touch with children's camps, youth groups ('kibbutzim') and schools for this."<sup>23</sup>

The testimonies collected by the Central Historical Commission from children were usually taken by their teachers or other educators who were in constant connection with them. The testimonies thus were usually collected in schools. The children were asked to write a testimonial composition with given titles, such as "How did I live through the war."

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

Though hundreds of children's testimonies were collected Kaplan admitted that reaction to this initiative among teachers and educators wasn't all enthusiastic: "Up to now only a few have responded properly, despite the numerous reminders." He claimed that teachers were overtly shielding the children, fearing to "bring back the wounds that have already healed." While he accepted that this was possible, he claimed that "It is nevertheless doubtful whether it is always and in every case preferable to have the young people forget their deep and meaningful experiences". He doubted "whether when they grow older the children will be grateful to their teachers for their excessive warm-heartedness." In order not to cause unnecessary pain to the children he suggested that once teachers attempt "with the appropriate pedagogical approach" to have a child give a full version of his experiences, a copy would be deposited in a school archive,

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<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> Israel Kaplan, *Day to Day work in the Historical Commission*, [a lecture] given at the meeting of the Historical Commissions, Munich 12 may 1947, Published by the Central Historical Commission of Liberated Jews in the American Zone, p. 16.

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.<sup>24</sup> It is apparent that this experience contributed to Kaplan's commitment to the collection of children's testimonies.<sup>25</sup>

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

### *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.

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.

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<sup>24</sup> On this issue see Shalom Eilati (Kaplan's son), *Crossing the River*, (Hebrew) Jerusalem 1999.

<sup>25</sup> On Kaplan and his work on children's testimonies see: Boaz Cohen, "Representing Children's Holocaust: Children's Survivor testimonies published in *Fun Lezten Hurban*, Munich 1946-1949", in Avinoam Patt and Michael Berkowitz (eds.) *We are here: New Approaches to Jewish Displaced persons in Postwar Germany*, in print.

*Fun Letzen 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.”<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

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.

### **The translation of Rózia Pinczewska’s later Yiddish testimony**

*Fun Letzen Hurban* (Volume 6, August 1947, pages 58-61)

Translated by Judy Grossman

#### From the Series of Children's Works

"My Experiences

during the War"\*<sup>28</sup>

When the war broke out in 1939, I was in the city of Łodz. The Germans entered Łodz in September. The day the Germans entered the city was hell. Right from the beginning decrees were passed stating that the Jews couldn't walk on the main streets and Jewish shops had to have

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<sup>26</sup> Israel Kaplan, The protocol of the first meeting of the [historical] workers of the Historical Commission, Munich. 11 - 12/ 5/1947 (Yiddish), YIVO Archive 1258/476.

<sup>27</sup> Israel Kaplan, *Day to Day work in the Historical Commission*, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> The work is presented with only the necessary amendments in language.

signs with a yellow Star of David. Then people were grabbed for work from every house and they were given the hardest work. Then another decree came out that Jews had to wear yellow badges. After that you could recognize who was a Jew. Then they beat us terribly in the street, so that we really couldn't go out in the street. Consequently our family decided to leave Łódź. Four months later we all left Łódź for Polaniec (in the region of Kielce, Poland), because they had set up a terrible ghetto. My grandmother lived in that little town, and we all lived with her and began to live our lives there. Things were better for us there than in Łódź. My papa began to engage in commerce and made a living. And that is how two not so calm years passed. There were various deportations in a minor format. SS men invaded the town and took a few people away each time. One day we heard the news that the whole town would be liquidated. So my papa and mama decided to send me to a peasant woman, and they would pay her. My family was hidden in a bunker specially created as a hiding place, which my father had built. I knew where the hiding place was, but I didn't know what it looked like. One morning in September 1942 the peasant woman came to us. (p. 59 starts here). My mother dressed me in good clothes and she didn't give me any food, only money, because the peasant woman was supposed to keep me for payment. You can't imagine my parting with my parents. I will never forget it as long as I live. I can't even describe it. And regretfully I had to leave my parents. But later on something occurred, where with G-d's help I met my family.

When I left the house with the peasant woman, we were supposed to go to the village where the peasant woman lived. When we had already walked for three kilometers and were in the forest, she said that she had to arrange something and had to leave for ten minutes. I waited for half an hour. I saw that she wouldn't return. I understood that she had taken the money and run away. It was already evening when I left the forest and remained standing in a field, where herdsmen were pasturing their cattle and were on the way home. When I approached them they didn't recognize that I was a Jewish child. I asked them where the road to Polaniec was. They showed me the right road, and afterwards I found the bunker where my family and parents were hidden. I called to my mama because I didn't know where the entrance was to enter the bunker. They were very amazed to see me. I was also very amazed to see the bunker, where we needed to live and who knew for how long. It was a stable, where hay lay. Under the hay and under the ground there was a kind of pit lined with boards. It was perhaps 1 meter high and 3 meters wide. On the floor lay bedding and we had to lie on the bedding, because we couldn't stand. The owner of the stable demanded 5,500 zloty a month in payment. At night my father went out for water and for food that the peasant had prepared. That is how life in the bunker was at the beginning. But later the peasant said that he no longer wanted to take risks and buy food for us. From that time on the hardest and bitterest time in our lives began for us and because of that my father was killed. The supply of food ran out and we remained without hope. My father went out every night for food, but he no longer brought bread, only raw potatoes, cabbage leaves and beets, and so we lived from that for the entire (p. 60 starts here) year of 1943 and half of 1944. My mama had terrible stomach problems and was very ill.

My brother held on somehow, and so did I. My father said nothing, but you could see on his tense face that he suffered greatly from hunger, and also in morale, because it hurt him greatly that he couldn't help us. And he made even more efforts to help us. The hunger and pain tortured us and we could see no end to the war. One day, on April 25, 1944, my father went out of the bunker at night with the intention of walking for 5 kilometers to another village to buy bread,

because my mama could no longer eat the cabbage leaves. He went and didn't return. I cried all night long. My mama began to feel much worse, and we had no news of our father. So I said to my brother that he should go out and discover what had happened to our father. My brother went out and returned and said that he had heard that the peasants had caught our father. What the peasants did to my father I don't know to this day. We cried night and day, but our father didn't return.

Our luck began to run out. Two months later the peasant, to whom the bunker belonged, came and told us that the Russians had broken through the front and that the Germans were running away and were searching all houses and fields. Because of that he was afraid to keep us. He also said to us that we should give him money, and he would guide us to a deep forest where we could hide, and he would help us. We did what he asked; we had no other choice. Early the next morning, when it was still dark out, a cart drew up behind the bunker and we came out of the hidden bunker. Coming out of the bunker we couldn't walk. All three of us got into the cart; my brother and I carried our mama onto the cart because she was very weak, and we drove away. After a half hour the cart stopped beside a body of water. The peasant told us to get out of the cart. The peasant's brother stood by the water. Then a terrible picture began, which I will never forget. He quickly, brutally, took my mother off the cart and threw her into the water. He beat me and then my little brother cruelly, but in a second I tore myself out of his hands and (p. 61 starts here) sprang into the water. I began to walk in the water, over to the other side. It was dark, and I didn't have the strength to walk. With the last of my strength I barely walked 5-6 kilometers without stopping. I spied the next village. I went up to the house of the first peasant, knocked on the door and entered, and told the peasant woman that I was Ukrainian and that the Russians had invaded and so I had run away from there. I asked her to hire me to pasture the cattle. The woman had pity on me and took me on. I worked there for quite a long while and things were very good for me. The woman treated me very well, like her own child. But one day, the same peasant who had killed my mama and brother arrived. He had discovered that I was there and told the peasant woman that I was Jewish and a communist and she shouldn't keep me. While he was saying this to her in the front room, I heard it in another room. When I hear it I feared that she would hand me over and I ran away through the second door. I ran for the entire time, until I ran to another village and there I also went to a peasant woman, worked very hard and didn't have enough to eat. But I wasn't there for long and finally the Russians entered that village and I was liberated, but sadly alone. The day of liberation was August 22, 1944. After several weeks, which I spent in that village, I saw how Poles were killing Jews immediately after liberation, so I went to Częstochowa.

Roza Pintczewski

Born Dec. 10, 1931 in Łodz

Submitted by the trade school in Greifenberg.

(פאכשול גרייפנבערג (צ.ה.ק. 368)

### A comparison of Rózia's Two Testimonies:

Structure	Earlier Polish testimony YVA M49-E/1566	Testimony published in <i>Fun Letzen Hurbn</i>
Łodz	This testimony starts with	Łodz

	leaving Łodz	<p>When the war broke out in 1939, I was in the city of Łodz. The Germans entered Łodz in September. The day the Germans entered the city was hell. Right from the beginning decrees were passed stating that the Jews couldn't walk on the main streets and Jewish shops had to have signs with a yellow Star of David. Then people were grabbed for work from every house and they were given the hardest work. Then another decree came out that Jews had to wear yellow badges. After that you could recognize who was a Jew. Then they beat us terribly in the street, so that we really couldn't go out in the street. Consequently our family decided to leave Łodz. [[Repetition:]] Four months later we all left Łodz for Polaniec (in the region of Kielce, Poland), because they had set up a terrible ghetto [in Łodz].]</p>
Polaniec:	<p>In December 1939, I left Lodz for Polaniec with my parents (Father: Chaim, Mother: Beila) and brother Leon, born 1937. [Polaniec] is near Mielec. There, it was still permitted to live then. Jews were wearing the star of David on their Chest and back. I, a seven-year-old, was not wearing this sign (only from the age of 12). There were a lot of Jews living there then, from many different places of Poland [grammatically chaotic]. I, with my parents, lived at grandma and grandpa's home Jankel and Chaja Pinczewskcy, also corn-merchants. There, I lived with my family until November 14, 1942. [Repetitions]</p>	<p>My grandmother lived in that little town, and we all lived with her and began to live our lives there. Things were better for us there than in Łodz. My papa began to engage in commerce and made a living. And that is how two not so calm years passed. There were various deportations in a minor format. SS men invaded the town and took a few people away each time.</p>
liquidation of the ghetto: <i>News of the liquidation of the ghetto and the family's</i>	<p>Then came an order to expel us.</p>	<p>One day we heard the news that the whole town would be liquidated. So my papa and mama decided to send me to a peasant woman, and they would pay her. My family was hidden in a bunker specially created as a hiding</p>

<p><i>reaction</i> implied: the grandmother's or both grandparents' disappearance. Maybe, the grandfather died earlier, but the grandmother was with them in the beginning in Polaniec)</p>		<p>place, which my father had built. I knew where the hiding place was, but I didn't know what it looked like. One morning in September 1942 the peasant woman came to us. My mother dressed me in good clothes and she didn't give me any food, only money, because the peasant woman was supposed to keep me for payment. You can't imagine my parting with my parents. I will never forget it as long as I live. I can't even describe it. And regretfully I had to leave my parents. But later on something occurred, where with G-d's help I met my family.</p>
<p>1<sup>st</sup> encounters with Poles, which is mentioned only in the later testimony (She is alone, but she still has a family to turn to):</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup>) the paid rescuer who takes the money and abandons her</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup>) Poles, to whom she successfully presents herself as a non-Jew</p>		<p>When I left the house with the peasant woman, we were supposed to go to the village where the peasant woman lived. When we had already walked for three kilometers and were in the forest, she said that she had to arrange something and had to leave for ten minutes. I waited for half an hour. I saw that she wouldn't return. I understood that she had taken the money and run away. It was already evening when I left the forest and remained standing in a field, where herdsmen were pasturing their cattle and were on the way home. When I approached them they didn't recognize that I was a Jewish child. I asked them where the road to Polaniec was.</p> <p>They showed me the right road,</p>
<p>Bunker</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup>) Polish peasant rescuers who</p>	<p>but we, father, mother and brother, hid ourselves in a bunker close to Polaniec (the bunker was under the stable that belonged to the peasant Bucek Waclaw). We agreed to pay</p>	<p>and afterwards I found the bunker where my family and parents were hidden. I called to my mama because I didn't know where the entrance was to enter the bunker. They were very</p>



turn murderers	monthly 4,000 zloty for hiding us. And for that, he gave us twice a day a bit of potatoes and cabbage. His neighbors did not know about us. We lived like that for 18 months. We did not leave the place even for taking one step.	amazed to see me.  I was also very amazed to see the bunker, where we needed to live and who knew for how long. It was a stable, where hay lay. Under the hay and under the ground there was a kind of pit lined with boards. It was perhaps 1 meter high and 3 meters wide. On the floor lay bedding and we had to lie on the bedding, because we couldn't stand. The owner of the stable demanded 5,500 zloty a month in payment. At night my father went out for water and for food that the peasant had prepared. That is how life in the bunker was at the beginning.
Cause of distress  (changing the contract)	In February 1944, our money ran out completely. We did not have anything of value anymore: no clothing, not even underwear, because my parents were giving them, one after the other, to Bucek to sell them in order to earn money for us. When father said to Bucek that we do not have even a penny, he ordered us to leave. Father was begging him to continue to keep us. Because one day the war would be over and then his cousins whom he has in America will send the money and he will pay to the last penny and even he will add interest. Bucek did not want to agree to that. He ordered us to leave immediately. And then, in the end, answering to father's request, he agreed to keep us until it would be a little warmer that we could go to the forest because this is what my father was asking for.	But later the peasant said that he no longer wanted to take risks and buy food for us. From that time on the hardest and bitterest time in our lives began for us and because of that my father was killed. The supply of food ran out and we remained without hope. My father went out every night for food, but he no longer brought bread, only raw potatoes, cabbage leaves and beets, and so we lived from that for the entire year of 1943 and half of 1944. My mama had terrible stomach problems and was very ill. My brother held on somehow, and so did I. My father said nothing, but you could see on his tense face that he suffered greatly from hunger, and also in morale, because it hurt him greatly that he couldn't help us. And he made even more efforts to help us. The hunger and pain tortured us and we could see no end to the war.
Murder of the father	April 25, 1944, father left at night for the village to take back some staff from peasant Glogowski which we gave him for safekeeping. Father never came back. Only after three	One day, on April 25, 1944, my father went out of the bunker at night with the intention of walking for 5 kilometers to another village to buy bread, because my mama could no longer eat the

	<p>days came our Bucek and declared that Cossacks (Ukrainian SS) killed father. But it was not true, because father was murdered by AK (partisans) [Armia Krajowa - Home Army]. They were peasants from the same village. I was told this by peasants when I have already left the bunker and was pretending to be a Pole.</p>	<p>cabbage leaves. He went and didn't return. I cried all night long. My mama began to feel much worse, and we had no news of our father. So I said to my brother that he should go out and discover what had happened to our father. My brother went out and returned and said that he had heard that the peasants had caught our father. What the peasants did to my father I don't know to this day. We cried night and day, but our father didn't return.</p>
<p>Murder of the family</p>	<p>On June 2, 1944, Bucek came at night and he had a weapon and belonged to AK, he himself said this to us when my father was still alive. He declared that AK will come and kill us. Therefore, he will take us out to the field. He himself will be watching his horses (taking them to pasture) and we will sit next to him. He will take care of us. Mother was afraid to go with him, because she did not trust him. He threatened us that we have to go with him. We agreed and he put us on top of a cart and took us out at night to the field next to the river "Czarna." When the cart stopped, Bucek's brother, who lived in the same house with us, jumped out of the bushes and started to shoot at us. I was the first to jump down from the cart and started to run in the field. Bucek's brother ran after me and he was shooting (at me) and in the end he caught me by the hand. I pulled his gun, because he was aiming at me. I begged him to spare me. He did not want to. Waclaw came and took the rifle from his brother and in front of my eyes he shot to death my little brother. That night, there was moonlight. I started to scream very loudly. But he wanted to shoot me. I escaped and ran into the water. I went through to the other side of the river</p>	<p>Our luck began to run out. Two months later the peasant, to whom the bunker belonged, came and told us that the Russians had broken through the front and that the Germans were running away and were searching all houses and fields. Because of that he was afraid to keep us. He also said to us that we should give him money, and he would guide us to a deep forest where we could hide, and he would help us. We did what he asked; we had no other choice. Early the next morning, when it was still dark out, a cart drew up behind the bunker and we came out of the hidden bunker. Coming out of the bunker we couldn't walk. All three of us got into the cart; my brother and I carried our mama onto the cart because she was very weak, and we drove away. After a half hour the cart stopped beside a body of water. The peasant told us to get out of the cart. The peasant's brother stood by the water. Then a terrible picture began, which I will never forget. He quickly, brutally, took my mother off the cart and threw her into the water. He beat me and then my little brother cruelly, but in a second I tore myself out of his hands and sprang into the water. I began to walk in the water, over to the other side.</p>

	and this way I saved myself. I heard then two other shots and my mother's screams" "gwaltu!"---- [Yiddish-Polish] After the two shots, the screaming stopped.	
1 <sup>st</sup> time completely alone, without the hope of being reunited with her family	I was marching in the darkness for a long time. I have seen houses. I was sure that it was already another village, but it turned out that it was still the village of Polaniec. I hid myself in a barn and this is how I waited till early morning.	It was dark, and I didn't have the strength to walk. With the last of my strength I barely walked 5-6 kilometers without stopping.
1 <sup>st</sup> encounter with a Pole after remaining completely alone  (Only in the earlier testimony)	I was completely wet and shaking from the cold [and] hunger. I entered a house: "I am a Pole from Warsaw, please, give me something to eat and wear." This peasant woman kindly invited me in and gave me coffee with bread. She dried my clothes and kept me for the day. I told her that my parents are no more and they were sent to forced labor.  She looked at my skin. It was summer. She declared that I look too white. She ordered me to say the <i>pacierz</i> [Our Father ( <i>Ojciec Nasz</i> ) and Hail Mary ( <i>Zdrowa's Mario</i> ) constitutes it]. I did not know how to; I admitted that I am Jewish. She was frightened and declared that as soon as I will be dry I have to leave her house. [S]he also told me in the future to say that I am from the Ukraine.	
2 <sup>nd</sup> encounter	Next day I went to another village: Niedzialk. Here I already presented myself to a house as a Ukrainian. There they accepted me and I was watching the cows for two days. Bucek when he heard about me, came on a bike, but I was in the field. When I came back to the house, the owner	I spied the next village. I went up to the house of the first peasant, knocked on the door and entered, and told the peasant woman that I was Ukrainian and that the Russians had invaded and so I had run away from there. I asked her to hire me to pasture the cattle. The woman had pity on me and took me on.

	<p>[man, but it seems to be a mistake] told me that there was here a man who came for me. [S]he described him to me, this is how I understood that it was Bucek who actually had my father's bike.</p> <p>So I admitted to this female house owner [my situation] and she said that I should not be afraid and she would not let me to get hurt. Within a few days, he came again. I saw him and he saw me as well. He wanted to take me with him, but I said that I would not go with him. My female owner, Jagusiowa, ran out from the house to rescue me.</p> <p>“Do you know who she is?”  “And who is she?”  “Jewish”  “So let it be Jewish, she can also be alive”  “They will come here for her and they will kill all of you too.”  “Let them kill”</p> <p>Then Jagusiowa's sons came out of the barn. He called to them and he was saying something to them.</p> <p>Then I ran away from there</p>	<p>I worked there for quite a long while and things were very good for me. The woman treated me very well, like her own child. But one day, the same peasant who had killed my mama and brother arrived. He had discovered that I was there and told the peasant woman that I was Jewish and a communist and she shouldn't keep me. While he was saying this to her in the front room, I heard it in another room. When I heard it. I feared that she would hand me over and I ran away through the second door.</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> encounter	<p>and went to another village “Szczecka.” There, a female owner, Kuraska, accepted me as a shepherd. I was in her house until the Soviet Army came and set me free on August 2, 1944. I stayed at her house until December 1944.</p>	<p>I ran for the entire time, until I ran to another village and there I also went to a peasant woman, worked very hard and didn't have enough to eat. But I wasn't there for long and finally the Russians entered that village and I was liberated, but sadly alone. The day of liberation was August 22, 1944.</p> <p>After several weeks, which I spent in that village,</p>
After liberation: Polaniec again	<p>In January 1945, I came back to Polaniec and lived here with the Jewish Bergers, but AK in April 1945</p>	<p>I saw how Poles were killing Jews immediately after liberation,</p>

+ pogrom	at one night, attacked Jews. They killed 5 Jews and wounded another 3. I ran away then into the field and after that, together with the wounded, I left for Czestochowa. One of the wounded Jews, Szmil Brand told me that he saw Polish policeman who shot at Jews from revolvers together with the bandits.	
Czestochowa	[...] I live in a Children's home at the Jewish Committee of Czestochowa. I go to 5 <sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school. In the home I feel very well, there is a lot of food and [it is] good. The care [provided] is also good.  She also gives the information: "I have 4 cousins in America in Frinidad (Reiferowic) and in Palestine (Apelbaum Motel)."	so I went to Czestochowa.

### Historical Terms and Student Activities:

- **Armia Krajowa** (AK or Home Army): the dominant Polish resistance movement in World War II German-occupied Poland. It was formed in February 1942. It was loyal to the Polish government in exile. "From not a few Polish sources it is possible to learn quite easily that racist, anti-Semitic tendencies were widespread in a large part of the AK." Krakowski, Shmuel (1973). "Policy of the Third Reich in Conquered Poland," in v.9. *Yad Vashem Studies on the European Jewish Catastrophe and Resistance*. While this was certainly the case, and the results of this are shocking, the picture is much more nuanced as geographically, AK was divided into regional branches. Its attitude towards the Jews widely varied from assisting them to murdering them from unit to unit but especially from region to region. The ethnic composition of a region was the main factor in deciding the attitude of the local AK forces towards the Jews.
- **Student activity:** check the ethnic composition of the region and the specific history of the AK in the region where Rózia's story took place both during and after the war.

In order to pass as a Catholic, Jewish children had to learn the traditional daily Christian prayers, the Our Father (*Ojcze Nasz*) and Hail Mary (*Zdrowa's Mario*), which constitute what is called in Polish *pacierz*. [See Joanna B. Michlic, "Who Am I?: Jewish Children's Search for Identity in Post-War Poland 1945-1949," in *Polin*, vol. 20 (2008), pp. 98–121.]

- **Discussion Questions:**

- a. Why do you think it was a useful idea to say that she was Ukrainian?

In Poland the Ukrainians were a minority. They were Christians, but not Roman Catholics like the Poles, so for a Pole, it was not so easy to check whether she tells the truth by asking her to recite the Catholic prayers since they did not know the exact customs and prayers of the Ukrainians.

- b. What are the particular attributes that made Poles suspicious that someone is Jewish? Why? How did the child try to dispel suspicion?

For example: being too white, which signaled that someone was hiding  
or being too thin, suggesting starvation  
or being alone as a child  
etc.

What do people mean by “coffee” in Eastern Europe up until about the 1960s?

When they meant coffee in today’s sense, they usually used the word “bean-coffee.”

- **What are the major differences between the two testimonies?**

- 1) In contrast to the second testimony, there are many names in the early testimony. Both the victims, but especially the perpetrators and witnesses are named. Also, the non-Jewish helpers or bystanders are named. Place names are also carefully given.

A possible reason for this is that early testimonies were also collected for legal purposes. Therefore, the interviewer probably stressed the importance of giving names as accurately as possible. Whereas in the case of the later testimony, given in a DP camp, far away from Poland, the place of the crimes, on her way to leave Europe forever, the immediate legal purposes of testifying seemed minimal.

- 2) There are stories and descriptions that are mentioned only in one of the testimonies but not both.

What are those and why do you think it happens?

- a) The case of the description of Lodz (only in the second testimony)

Probably in the earlier testimony, Rozia together with the interviewer was concentrating on the core of her experiences. Lodz, which the entire family left behind intact, faded in comparison. By contrast, in the later testimony, like the other children who gave their testimonial composition to the Central Historical Commission in Munich, she was asked to write about the entire period of the “Hitlerist occupation.” That is why we find a description of Lodz in Rózia’s later testimony. (It is also possible that in the earlier testimony the rules of wearing the yellow star of David is connected to Lodz, but it is mixed with the Polaniec scene.)

- b) Some encounters with Poles are missing from both testimonies

Possible reason for this:

As Cognitive psychologist Robert N. Kraft acutely formulated, survivor testimonies are emphatically episodic.<sup>29</sup> The majority of the episodes are optional, they illustrate certain periods (Deborah Schiffrin calls them illustrative narratives), but they are not instrumental in moving the storyline forward. In the stories of people on the run, all encounters with Poles spelled mortal danger, therefore, it seems quite inconsequential from the point of view of the main story of the testimony, how many of these stories the testifier actually renders. There are certain encounters, which move the story: they are rendered in both.

The testifier experiences each encounter as an uncanny repetition of similar terror and/or relief, so it is dependent on external factors (the person of the interviewer or other facilitator, the immediate situation, the life period of the testifier, etc,) which and how many episodes/stories containing the element of repetition, the witness can bear to render in any given testimony.

In literary terms, the episodic nature of the testimony can be compared to the structure of the picaresque novel genre. In picaresque novels, such as Fielding's *Tom Jones*, with the exception of the frame-story, one could leave out any of the self-contained stories of the novel without feeling that one had missed a story that is instrumental in the understanding of the plot. This does not mean, however, that we would read the same novel if we left out or added episodes, since the stories establish all sorts of connections with one another, enter into various relationships with one another, and form metanarratives.

Let's see now how different from one another the metanarratives formed by the stories of encounters with Poles in Rozia's two testimonies.

In her first testimony, Rozia emphasizes the important role that good-hearted and, in the second case, heroic peasant Polish women played in her survival. She tells the story of a woman who was afraid to keep her in her house but instead of denouncing her, gave her sound advice, dried her clothes, and gave food as well as shelter for a day when she needed it most, viz. right after the murder of her mother and younger brother. She also tells in detail, how a peasant Polish woman shielded her from the murderous man who had killed her family. Rozia shows by reporting the actual dialog that took place between Bucek and the woman how heroic and selfless the woman was. On the other hand, Rozia also indicates that, in that society, against her sons, she would have been powerless. That is the reason why, Rozia had to run away when she saw that Bucek was approaching the woman's sons. She was sure, drawing upon her experiences and her knowledge how society works, that the sons, once they learn who she is would not risk their lives and their families' life for trying to save her.

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<sup>29</sup> p. 316. Robert N. Kraft, "Archival Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Oral Testimony," in *Poetics Today*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2006), pp. 311-330.

In the second testimony, Rozia emphasizes her own role. By relating as her first encounter with Poles, the story of the woman who took the family's money and did not save her, but left her alone in the forest, she demonstrates how untrustworthy paid helpers could be. Then, she meets with Poles and able to ask for directions without being detected as a Jew. This is a very important victory for her! She had proven for herself that she can pass as a non-Jew. Lenore Weitzman noted that an initial victory like this is part of the majority of life accounts of Jews who survived by passing on the Arian side. After relating the murder of her mother and brother, Rozia leaves out the source of the advice that she should pretend to be a Ukrainian and not a Pole and simply writes: "I went up to the house of the first peasant, knocked on the door and entered, and told the peasant woman that I was Ukrainian and that the Russians had invaded and so I had run away from there." Moreover, she does not dwell on the heroism of the other woman either, rather she stresses her own vigilance: "While he was saying this to her in the front room, *I heard it in another room. When I heard it, I feared that she would hand me over and I ran away through the second door.*" [*Italics are ours*]. This testimony emphasizes her terrible experiences with Poles. Even in connection to the last place where she works as a shepherd, she mentions that she was starving, which she did not find important to mention in the first testimony.

In the later testimony, there is nothing to alleviate the terrible betrayal of paid helpers, no human goodness is emphasized. (Probably the reason for this fact is that considerable time has passed since her survival and she continuously had to deal with the fact that she has lost her entire family. No human goodness can alleviate the pain of being alone and losing her entire family because of paid helpers who betrayed them. Human goodness could not counteract this betrayal!

Probably both metanarratives are true: her skill to pretend to be a non-Jew and resourcefulness helped her to survive as much as the women were instrumental to her survival who gave her good advice, food, and temporal shelter and actively shielded her from harm. The difference between the testimonies is caused by the overall emphasis of the narrator.

- **Student activity:** Analyze the thematic repetitions in both testimonies as they are connected to the main meta-narratives

--In the first testimony two stories emphasize the repeated occurrence of human goodness. In the second testimony, Rozia's first separation from her family prefigures her final separation. (Her emotions are verbalized in connection to the first separation rather than to the final separation.)

--Her first successful passing as an Aryan, which is linked to the supposed rescuer's betrayal, prefigures all her subsequent successes.

- 3) The difference between the two renderings of the cause of the family's distress in the bunker and consequently, those of the father's murder:  
The main difference here lies not in the facts but in the explanations



The earlier testimony's explanations are more coherent, make more sense, and the description contains concrete data. Again, it is probably connected to the logical interpretation of the interviewer, who was thinking about post-war trials.

However, both methods that are mentioned in the testimonies of getting rid of the Jews who became a dangerous burden were a common practice in occupied Poland: (neglecting/starving the hidden or sending them away (even denounce them). Therefore, both explanations are feasible and probably both were applicable to the family's situation. Historian Jan Grabowski studied the phenomenon of paid help: Jan Grabowski, *Rescue for Money: Paid Helpers in Poland, 1939-1945* (Search and Research Series 13) Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008)

Grabowski writes about rural areas of Poland:

Anonymity, difficult in an urban setting, was practically impossible to achieve in a village. The prices of shelters grew therefore accordingly. A peasant from Brzesko Nowe, who - in the fall of 1942 - sheltered Mordko Boruch Elbinger and his family, asked for 1,200 zlotys weekly for his trouble. On monthly basis it equaled 10 cubic meters of rye, which at that time could be had on the open market at 500 zlotys per cubic meter. The exorbitant sums demanded by the peasant went hand in hand with every-day terror which the hidden Jews had to endure: "he wanted to grab a knife, to slaughter us all, but his children hid the knives, so he beat me up so badly, that I was in pain for several weeks. He even molested my wife, and when I wanted to help her, he beat me up once again and told us to give him all the money, and to go away". [...] Most often, however, the payments were done in kind. Maria K. from village Falkowa in the Tarnow area for five weeks kept a Jewish woman under her roof. In December 1942 her neighbors "found out about the Jewess" and surrendered her to the Germans. "She had a lot of undergarments" - Maria K. testified after the war - "bed linens, 5 strings of pearls and a 20 \$ banknote. We took good care of her, all the more so, since she promised us that, should she survive the war, she would handsomely reward us."

From this, we can see that the price Rozia remembers was feasible. The difference between the two prices in the testimonies could be explained that the price was different earlier and later as it went up because of the inflation.

Grabowski also writes about the typical methods "dishonest helpers" employed to get rid of the Jews:

Emmanuel Ringelblum once noted that "the people who helped the Jews only for money, and who were not compelled morally to do so, sooner or later got rid of the dangerous ballast and kicked the Jews out of their apartments". This generalization does not render justice to many paid helpers who fulfilled their obligations until the very end. It is true, however, that the cases of treason, denunciation, and murder were much more

frequent among the people who treated Jewish life as just another merchandise. Especially then, when helpers felt threatened, or when the Jews ran out of money. The “breaking of the contract” could happen in a variety of ways, although usually the paid helper would simply hike the rent beyond the means of his “guests.” The Jews were in no position to negotiate. [...]

Sudden increases in rent could indicate that the paid helper wanted to get rid of his charges. The Jews, fearfully listening to every change of tone, or a new expression on the faces of their hosts, dissecting every rumor coming from the outside world, knew fully well that their survival depended only on the whim of the paid helpers. “I am afraid that the Poles” - noted one of the Jews hiding in Otwock - “having financially exploited their tenants, they will try to bring the whole thing to a logical end.” Another method of forcing the Jews out involved cutting off the supply of food and “starving them out.” The Jews could also be doomed because of the rumors of “blockades” in the neighborhood, or on account of suspicious neighbors, or simply before an unannounced visit by cousins, or in the wake of a major drinking binge of their hosts. In order to expel the unwanted guests, paid helpers could also denounce them to the authorities. Denunciations were made even easier since the German offered, for time to time, blanket pardons for people who surrendered their Jews. On August 27, 1942, in the previously mentioned Otwock, the authorities put up posters promising pardon to all Poles who revealed their Jewish refugees. In other cases, the German followed a policy of pardon for all paid helpers, as long as their tips led to the arrest of the Jews. In other cases - most frequently in the rural areas- the penniless and robbed Jews were murdered, or surrendered to the hands of the Polish “blue” police.

That the paid saviors themselves turn into murderers was a shocking but wide-spread phenomenon. As Boaz Cohen calls attention to this fact,<sup>30</sup> three out of the eight child testimonies published in *Fun Lezten Hurban* contain this element: those of Rozia Pincewska, Arje Milch,<sup>31</sup> and Genia Shurz.<sup>32</sup>

Arie Milch recounted that the gentile he and his uncle and brother had hidden with for almost a year wanted to "hand us over to the German murderers, but the Red Army was already in our city, so he let us live."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> See supplement

<sup>32</sup> Genia Shurz, "My Experiences During the War", *Fun Lezten Hurban Volume 10*, December, 1948. pages 123-130.

<sup>33</sup> Milch, p. 67.

Genia Shurz relates that the initially kind rescuer became angry at having to hide Genia's entire family instead of the two people, whom he invited: "He stopped giving us food", she wrote, "we began to suffer hard times, it was hot and we were hungry and thirsty." The Shurz's were sure that their rescuer had changed his mind and intended them to die:

The gentile had decided not to give us food until we died. We suffered so greatly that it can't be described. Once a day we received a small pot of food; no bread, no water, no change of shirts. So we became filthy; the dirt ate at us. We sat that way for five months.<sup>34</sup>

Eventually they got into a heated argument and told the rescuer that he was "worse than Hitler." Miraculously, this brought some improvement in their situation. "But I was already sick, and we looked like skeletons", she wrote. They decided that "if one of us died, we would revenge ourselves against that gentile after liberation and not let him live either".<sup>35</sup>

Grabowski feels important to quote Yitzhak Cukierman's view according to which "the critical issue [in evaluating paid helpers] was thus not whether the helpers gained financially, or not, but whether they were ready to respect and honor their "contractual" commitment to the Jews. If the paid helper and his "guests" negotiated the rent (even an outrageously high one), and had an understanding as to the living conditions (even if they were to be more than modest), and if the Aryan host did not unilaterally change the terms of the contract, then such an arrangement was considered not only normal, but praiseworthy." (Yitzhak Cukierman, one of the commanders of the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa [ŻOB], a Jewish armed group established in the Warsaw ghetto on July 28, 1942, when mass deportations were in full swing.)

- 4) The difference between the two renderings of the murder of her mother and brother as well as her escape

In contrast to the rendering of the father's death, where mainly the explanations differed from each other in the two testimonies, here the facts are rendered differently.

The reason for the different rendering most probably is that this is the emotional center of the testimony, and as unfortunately and extremely unjustly is the case with survivor testimonies, this event and the witness's very survival engenders feelings of guilt that keeps torturing the survivor. The source of guilt that makes the story's rendering different is that she was saving herself without trying to save her loved ones, especially her

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<sup>34</sup> Shurz, p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

younger brother. That is the reason for the fact that even though the story in the first testimony would be terrible to endure, for Rozia, it is more difficult to live with the fact that she has left her still living younger brother behind without trying to save him. In order to render palpable how unjust these feelings of guilt are, it is enough to remember that we are talking about an eleven-year-old girl fighting with two grown and armed men!

## 3. Fredzia's Testimonies

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### The History of Fredzia's First Testimony: The Tenenbaum Project<sup>36</sup>



Benjamin Tenenbaum

The first testimony was collected by the testimony collecting project linked with Benjamin Tenenbaum's name. Benjamin Tenenbaum (1914–1999), an author and translator of literature from Polish to Hebrew, emigrated from Warsaw to Palestine in 1937. With friends from the Hashomer Hatsair movement (Young Guard—left Zionists), he established Kibbutz Eilon in the Western Galilee. When news of the destruction of Polish Jewry reached Palestine, Tenenbaum felt an urgent need to return to Warsaw to see it with his own eyes. He established close relations with exiled Poles, and especially with the poet Władysław Broniewski. After the war, Broniewski arranged for the Polish Ministry of Culture to invite Tenenbaum to travel to Poland for the purpose of collecting materials for anthologies of Polish literature and poetry.

Tenenbaum planned to stay in Poland for two months. His wife and baby son remained in the kibbutz. The intensity of the experience of his encounter with surviving Jews forced Tenenbaum to extend his stay in Poland for more than a year. During that year, he helped Polish Jews abroad make contact with their surviving relatives and met with important Jewish and non-Jewish cultural figures. But above all, he devoted his time and energy to Jewish children who had survived the Holocaust.

His work with children began after a chance meeting at the headquarters of the Hashomer Hatsair in Poland at 18 Narutowicz Street in Łódź, one of the first places he visited. Upon his arrival, Tenenbaum learned that the building was also used as a home for Jewish child survivors. It was there that he became aware of the surviving children's situation and of the homes established to care for the youngest survivors.

Nesia Orlovitch (later Reznik), one of the caretakers of the children at the Narutowicz Street home, was openly critical of his plan to work on literary anthologies. "You really believe that this is your task today?" she asked; "Shelve your anthologies, you can prepare them at home in Eretz Israel." She called on him to join her and her friends in working with the children. "We need you," she said, "to teach them Hebrew, to give them encouragement, to be a father figure in

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<sup>36</sup> The description of the two testimony-collecting projects are based on Boaz Cohen's research: "The Children's Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust" in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 73–95

lieu of the fathers they lost.” She urged him to go to the children’s homes “to meet the children and tell them all about Eretz Israel and the Kibbutz.”<sup>37</sup>

Tenenbaum was captivated by the children, who had “aged prematurely,” but had, despite the horrors they had experienced, come back to life “with no less force than a tree whose roots split rocks.” Initially, he found it difficult to establish contact with these children, who had lost their faith in the adult world: “I tried to get close to them, to find a way to their hearts, but I failed. Whenever I thought I was succeeding, I noticed that they put their spikes out as if warning ‘don’t touch.’”<sup>38</sup>

Besides his educational work with children, Tenenbaum also aimed at recording the “breathtaking” personal stories of Holocaust survivors. Just a few days after his arrival in Poland he wondered: “Why don’t I ask them [survivors] to put their recollections in writing? We cannot allow such life stories to be forgotten! We must take testimonies, write down everything: what happened and how—the whole story of the Holocaust from beginning to end.”<sup>39</sup>

Tenenbaum began his work with survivor accounts by undertaking to translate testimonies collected by the Central Jewish Historical Commission in Warsaw. He was soon disappointed, and returned them to the commission with the comment that the testimonies were “unfit for translation.” He judged them so, because the testimonies he was given were mainly from people who had held some sort of public office in Jewish Councils and/or in other Jewish organizations. Tenenbaum wrote that, in their testimonies, these survivors aimed “mainly at whitewashing themselves, to show that they did not collaborate with the Germans.”<sup>40</sup> After this experience, he concluded that only children’s testimonies could be free of apologetics, and therefore “Jewish children [had] to be made to sit down and write their life stories.”<sup>41</sup>

In the winter of 1946, Tenenbaum began collecting testimonies. In his memoir he wrote: “I was so engrossed in this mission that I neglected all my other tasks.”<sup>42</sup> He was aware that two great obstacles stood in his way. First, the number of Jewish children living in Poland at the time was small and dwindling as more and more children were taken from Poland to Western Europe and beyond. Second, persuading the children to cooperate was not easy. Tenenbaum started taking testimonies at the children’s homes in which he taught. In addition to his own collection, a colleague brought him sixty essays written by children from the children’s home in Ludwikowo. These first testimonies made a lasting impression on Tenenbaum and strengthened his commitment to his project.

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<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Tene (Tenenbaum), *El ir neuray (To the City of My Youth)* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1979), 75–76.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

He began collecting testimonies in children's homes run by the Hashomer Hatsair movement, but later obtained authorization from the Central Council of Jews in Poland to collect testimonies from their children's homes as well. He spent his nights traveling by train to children's homes all over Poland. "I distributed notebooks to the children," he wrote; "and after giving out presents, such as color crayons, I asked them to write on their experiences in the war years. The children acquiesced and wrote." Tenenbaum termed these essays "autobiographies." It did not take long for Tenenbaum to understand that "the majority of [the surviving] Jewish children [were] in the DP camps in Austria and Germany on their way to Eretz Israel."<sup>43</sup> He recruited Marian Klinowski, who had fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, to travel to the DP camps in Germany. Klinowski collected hundreds of additional testimonies.

In 1947, after his return to Palestine, Tenenbaum published a compilation of the testimonies he had collected. Tenenbaum's book entitled *One of a City and Two of a Family: A Selection from amongst One Thousand Autobiographies of Jewish children in Poland* contained eighty testimonies of children who had survived the Holocaust.<sup>44</sup> Some testimonies were given in full, some were broken down into two parts, and some were excerpted. The testimonies were organized geographically and thematically. One chapter each was devoted to Warsaw and Wilno, and the remaining chapters were "Ghettos," "In Villages and Woods," "Camps," and "Partisans." The testimonies chosen were "typical," according to Tenenbaum. He wrote: "[Together they form] a complete picture: the life-story and struggle for life of a generation of children growing up, maturing, and perceiving the world in its darkest days."<sup>45</sup> Pictures of children taken during the Holocaust and photos of the original children's testimonies are interspersed between the testimonies, no doubt to add to the book's credibility.



The cover of *One of a City and Two of a family*

In the preface, Tenenbaum stated that the testimonies, which he had translated into Hebrew, had undergone a process of editing. "I did not add anything, neither did I use high language," he wrote. "On the other hand, the poor language of the children has a special music that cannot be replicated and is fraught with problems. I did not always dare to walk this path and decided—after much deliberation—to copy them into language that was simple but free of mistakes, as is usual with translators. [. . .] Sometimes I shortened and I always added punctuation marks."<sup>46</sup>

Two further comments must be made regarding Tenenbaum's work. The first relates to ideology: although the book is about children's experiences in the Holocaust, it has a clear Zionist slant. Most of the children who survived were educated in children's homes in which the program

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Tennebaum ed., *One of a City and Two of a Family: A Selection from amongst One Ohousand Autobiographies of Jewish children in Poland*, (Hebrew) Published by the "Sifriat Poalim" - Workers Book-Guild (Hashomer Hatzair), 1947 Palestine.

<sup>45</sup> Tenenbaum, Ehad me-ir, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

content was ideologically Zionist-socialist. Some gave testimony on their way from Poland to Eretz Israel, and others bore witness to their experiences only after they were returned to Germany along with other immigrants from the Exodus 1947, ship caught by the British. The core issue was aliyah (Hebrew for ascent), the Zionist term for immigration to Palestine. This educational leaning reveals itself often in the concluding sentences of the testimonies. “I strongly want to leave this land soaked with our loved ones’ blood, and go to Eretz Israel,” wrote 15-year-old Hadassah Rozen. “Here in the kibbutz, we’re waiting impatiently for the day when the word would come: aliyah.” She added: “No one can stop us. Our will is stronger than life and death.”<sup>47</sup> Shmuel Krol, a 13-year-old in transit with his group from the Hashomer Hatsair children’s home in Łódź to Palestine, wrote: “From far away shines the sun of Eretz Yisrael. There I’ll be a faithful son to my homeland and if need be, I’ll die for her.”<sup>48</sup>

How are these statements to be evaluated? In his introduction, Tenenbaum claims that this was not the parroting of propaganda, but the conclusions that the children reached after reflection on their experiences and present situation. He also maintained that Zionist education gave children hope for the future, which facilitated their rehabilitation. He wrote: “A new dream dawned on them: the dream of a homeland, of aliyah and striking roots in the land.” The lack of “hate or passion for revenge” in the testimonies is explained, Tenenbaum asserted, by the channeling of the children’s energy “into one redemptive channel: dreams of building and creativity.”<sup>49</sup> It is on this note that Tenenbaum concludes the foreword: “Here sit the children on the ruins in Poland, learning Hebrew and preparing for aliyah. Their voices, singing a Hebrew song, come forth on Germany’s soil and on the beaches of France and Italy. They embark and sail on illegal-immigrant ships, knock with their small fists on our house’s doors but the doors are locked. They are dragged and placed on the great empire’s ships and taken to camps in Cyprus. [ . . . ] While we offer the public and our children the life-stories of the little immigrants [to Palestine—*ma’apilim*], we offer our hands over barbed wire fences and oceans and adopt the little wanderers to be our sons and brothers.”<sup>50</sup>

Tenenbaum’s view is explained by the fact that the book was published in Palestine in the heat of the struggle for a Jewish state, however, this issue of the extent of the children’s identification with Zionism was, obviously, more complex. The children and adolescents entered children’s homes out of necessity and not because of ideology. While identifying with the fervent Zionist teachings there, they did not automatically renounce their Polish or even Christian identities. Children carried the burden of this dissonance at least through the early postwar years.

The second comment relates not to the testimonies Tenenbaum chose for the book but rather to those he did not. Tenenbaum collected many testimonies from children who had survived the war in relative safety in Siberia or Soviet Central Asia. These testimonies feature harrowing stories of hunger, disease, deaths of parents and siblings, and anti-Semitism. Not one of these

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 11-12.



testimonies has been included in the book. Why did Tenenbaum choose to ignore these testimonies? One possible answer is that Tenenbaum, like other Jewish authors of the day, was wary of antagonizing the USSR, whose support was needed in the struggle for a Jewish state. The pro-USSR leanings of the Hashomer Hatsair movement may also have influenced the editorial choices.

The first testimony in Tenenbaum's collection was taken not by him but by Nesia Orlovitch, who ran the children's home where he first encountered child survivors. The context for the writing of this testimony was not historical but therapeutic. Berko, a teenager who had fought with the partisans, was highly depressed following his experiences and traumatized by the loss of his leg. "I was worried about his depression," Orlovitch wrote, "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 young Berko's condition.<sup>51</sup>

### The translation of Fredzia Student's earlier testimony

Tenenbaum 1947<sup>52</sup>

Translated by Judy Grossman

Fredzia Studan [Student], 11 years old (4 years old on the outbreak of war)

I was born in Gorzków in January 1935 to my father Fishl and my mother Haya. I don't remember my mother's maiden name. Before the war my father had a general store. I didn't go to school then, because I was too young. I don't remember how the war broke out. My father had Polish acquaintances and when the war broke out our whole family hid in the granary of a Polish family. A hole was dug under the threshing floor, and inside it burned a carbide lamp. There was very little air to breathe. The owner brought us food in a little basket. He had to be wary of the neighbors.

Every night my father went out to try and get something so he could pay the house owner. Once he went out and didn't return, and to this day I don't know what happened to him. Then my mother decided that we should leave our hiding place and search for my father, but we searched for him in vain.

In this way we wandered from village to village, from town to town, until one time we were handed over to the Germans. They took us in a car to the *shtetl* of Hrubieszów, where my mother was murdered by the Ukrainians. I said that I was Polish, and my appearance saved me. Then I was brought to a convent.

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<sup>51</sup> Tene, El ir neuray, 150.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Tennebaum ed., *One of a City and Two of a Family: A Selection from amongst One Ohousand Autobiographies of Jewish children in Poland*, (Hebrew) Published by the "Sifriat Poalim" - Workers Book-Guild (Hashomer Hatzair), 1947 Palestine.

In the convent there were many nuns and also 300 children. I cried a great deal. I couldn't get used to them. I did 4 years of school there. Every Sunday the children's parents came to visit and no one came to see me. Then I would stand beside a tree or in a corner and cry bitterly. I always remembered that I was Jewish.

Once a nun called me and asked me if I still remembered the Yiddish language. I told her that I didn't. She said: "You have been baptized, and once you have your communion you will be a real Polish girl." I answered her that I didn't agree. I was Jewish and would remain Jewish. Then the sister said to me: "You have to have your communion!"

I started to study several days later and when I knew everything, I had my communion. I wore a white dress and they placed a wreath of immortality flowers on my head. When I received the communion wafer from the priest, I immediately spit it out into my handkerchief. From then on I had to get up at 4 AM so I wouldn't be late for prayers.

A woman named Dubzinska came to redeem Jewish children. Then the nun called me and said: "This lady who has come is Jewish. Do you want to go with her?" I answered her that I wanted to go. The sister said: "Nevertheless we won't let you go because you are a talented girl. Stay with us." – But I didn't want to. The sister said that she would go and ask the Mother Superior. In the evening she came and said that everything had been arranged, but I had to go with the girls to prayer again.

The next day I went to the storeroom and took clothes. When I was already on my way the children shouted after me: "Jew! Jew! You take blood for matzo!" I was happy that I was leaving there.

I wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel.

Sentences like "I didn't go to school then, because I was too young" and "I don't remember how the war broke out" show clearly that there was a questionnaire and the child was supposed to answer questions.

## The History of Fredzia's Second Testimony

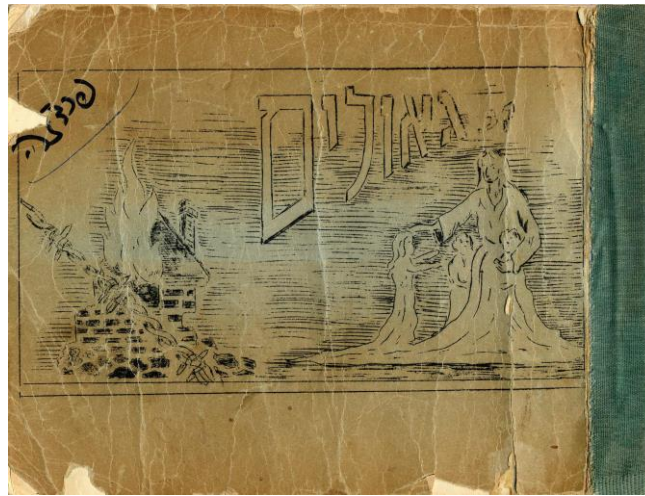


Chasia, initiator of the Geulim project, on the left

Chasia Bielicka (Bornstein), whose children's home was one of the first to leave Poland, organized the writing of a collective testimony booklet by "her" children while they were incarcerated in a British detention camp in Cyprus. Bielicka, who appears on the left in the photograph, was a courier in the resistance during the war, and founded the children's kibbutz in Łódź. With her charges, she embarked on an odyssey that took them through Germany, on the illegal-immigrant ship Theodore Herzl to detention in Cyprus, and finally to Palestine. In her memoirs, she explained that the interim period in the British detention camp was just the right time, "to tell our story so that it will not be forgotten or lost in the depth of time."<sup>53</sup> She wrote: "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 in the world knew more than we knew."

<sup>53</sup> Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka, *Ahat mi-me'atim: Darkah shel lohemet u-mehanekeh, 1939–1947 (One of the Few: The Path of a Fighter and an Educator)* (Tel Aviv: Moreshet, 2003), 324.

The effect on the children, recounted Bielicka, was “readily apparent.” The few weeks spent on this group project of drafting, writing and illustrating were “like opening a wound and extracting the pus. It was as if the children were throwing up whole chunks of painful matters and easing their pain accordingly.”<sup>54</sup> For a detailed description of this fascinating project, see Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka and Neomi Izhar: *One of the Few: A Resistance Fighter and Educator, 1939-1947*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2009.



Geeulim booklet cover

## The Translation of Fredzia Student's later testimony

Translated by Judy Grossman

Fredzia  
My Life

When the war broke out I was not yet five years old. After the German occupation, we remained in our *shtetl* for an entire year. All the Jews began leaving the *shtetl*, running away from death. Our family didn't want to leave and decided to go to the Poles, to the Aryan side. We went to a good Pole who took us in. The bunker was very small and narrow. We could neither sit nor stand in it. We had to lie down all day long. A small lamp barely lit the hiding place. My father had to go out every day to the other Poles, to earn something to pay the owner of the house. No one wanted to care for us for free. We spent two months in that bunker. My parents sensed that we were being followed. My father went out to look for a new hiding place. Several days later he returned with the news that he had found a new place for three people only, i.e. for my parents and me. We absolutely didn't want to be separated from the whole family, because in [...] times

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 325.

we were together. At the end we parted from my grandparents and left. And again I sat in a dark airless bunker. From that time on I don't know what happened to all the family.

My father had to leave the shelter. The Poles knew he was in the village, were chasing after him, but couldn't find him. More than once while sitting in the bunker I asked myself: "What did I do? Why do I have to sit in this dark cellar, why can't I play and be happy like all the other children, listen to the chirping of birds?" But then I thought to myself – "Stupid, I'm a Jew."

One day my father went out and never returned. I remained alone with my mother. We had to leave the bunker. My mother was at a loss about what to do; she took me by the hand and we went to wherever the wind carried us. We walked for days. We passed through villages and forests without tasting a piece of bread, without lying down to sleep at night. We frequently ended up sleeping in barns and stables with the horses, or in pig sties. At every step they shouted at us that we were Jews from the ghetto.

Once when we were being chased by Polish ruffians, we fell into mud and I lost my shoes. From then on I walked barefoot in the cold. My mother picked me up and we ran away. Suddenly we saw an SS man on a horse, as though he had grown out of the ground. In the first minute we could have fled, but my mother didn't want to. She said that all was lost, that we wouldn't remain alive anyway. The SS man rode up to us and began to beat us with a stick and to prod us to go forward.

And thus he brought us to some kind of yard and threw us into a dirty cell. They plugged the way and all the cracks, lest, Heaven forbid, any air should enter it. They didn't give us anything to eat for two days, while they themselves ate, in order to taunt us.

We were sure that they would kill us. On the third day, they opened the door and threw us onto a car and brought us to Hrubieszów. On the way my mother cried bitterly and tore out handfuls of hair from her head. I became very frightened when I looked into my mother's eyes and began to cry loudly. My mother began to pacify me. She asked me not to recognize her, not to admit that she was my mother. I didn't understand; why shouldn't I befriend my mother, I asked in fear.

In Hrubieszów I was separated from my mother. She was taken to one cell, and I was taken to another one. Through the wall I heard crying. My mother kept repeating "Mein Kind" [my child]. In this way she revealed me with the known word. I stubbornly insisted that she wasn't my mother. Several days later, when the SS men were convinced that that woman really wasn't my mother, we were taken outside. There the following sight was revealed to me: A Ukrainian armed with a rifle was standing in the center and forcing a group of Poles to do calisthenics. Whoever didn't do the movements according to the rhythm was shot by the Ukrainian. Every few minutes another victim fell. I stood and trembled in fear.

I found the window of my mother's cell, looked inside but immediately fell back. The woman lay on the floor dressed in rags, with terrible eyes gazing blindly at the ceiling. The dress on her body was worn out. She lay and whispered incessantly: "My child, my child." I recognized her by the eyes. My mother had beautiful black eyes, and now they looked so terrible. I suddenly received a blow on my back with a rifle stock. I was forced to move away from the window. We were brought to the head of the Gestapo. He picked me up and began to play with me. He was certain that I was Polish and said that he would take me to a Polish woman, where I would be treated well. This Polish woman loved me very much. She didn't know what to do with me. We lived near the town.

Every day I would go up to the fence to see my mother. One day I witnessed a terrible scene: a woman with unkempt hair dressed in black, who could barely stand, was taken out of the cell. Suddenly I heard a shot and the woman fell to the road. It was my mother. I immediately

recognized her. She was dressed in black, in the same dress. I can still see the expression on her face in the last moment of her life. I shouted from fear and began to cry bitterly. The Polish woman took me home. I couldn't be calmed for a long time. Days went by and I was taken from the Polish woman and handed over to another one. This one also wanted me greatly. She wanted to force me to call her mother. I couldn't agree to call a strange woman by my mother's holy name. She frightened me with threats but I didn't agree. After I had been there a short while, some man came and said that I was being sent to a convent. The Polish woman didn't want to hand me over and I didn't want to leave her either. I was very afraid of the convent. But my agreement or disagreement were not taken into account. They packed my things and brought me to the convent. When I got off the train a group of children came running up, took my packages and carried them off to the house. I went and looked around. All the children surrounded me. They were dressed in rags and I noticed that some of them were handicapped. I had the feeling that they were all very wretched and miserable. I cried bitterly. The sisters tried to calm me. The children surrounded me and I made plans to escape from there. I was brought to a large hall. Pictures of saints hung on the walls. Everything looked sad and forlorn. And then the thought went through my mind that I would have to stay there for a long time. I sat and cried all day. Everyone tried to console me. In our dormitory there were about a hundred beds. When I used to wake up in the morning hugging the bars of the bed, I had the feeling that I was hugging my mother. It took a long time until I became accustomed to kneeling and praying all day long. My knees hurt from continuous kneeling. I began to prepare for the religious rite.

I got up early in the morning, at four o'clock, said my prayers and went to the priest for confession. I got so used to my surroundings that I forgot that I was Jewish. I believed in Jesus and the Holy Mother and kissed the crucifix around my neck innumerable times. And so the days, months and years passed, and the war ended. Parents began to come for the children that were with me. Mothers and fathers came to visit them, they received letters and packages, and I was alone.

One day the sister called me and asked me if it was true that I was Jewish. I was afraid to admit it and denied it. But when the sister said that a Jewish woman had come to me and I had regards from my father, I didn't know what to do. On the one hand I was afraid to return to the Jews, and on the other hand, I very much wanted to see my father. I hesitated for a long time. After talking with the Jewish woman Marysia, I decided to leave the convent.

Fredzia

### A comparison of Fredzia's Two Testimonies:

Structure	Tenenbaum Project	Chasia Bornstein-Bielicka's project
Introduction	I was born in Gorzków in January 1935 to my father Fishl and my mother Haya. I don't remember my mother's maiden name. Before the war my father had a general store. I didn't go to school then, because I was too young. I don't remember how	When the war broke out I was not yet five years old.

	the war broke out.	
1 <sup>st</sup> bunker for the entire family		After the German occupation, we remained in our <i>shtetl</i> for an entire year. All the Jews began leaving the <i>shtetl</i> , running away from death. Our family didn't want to leave and decided to go to the Poles, to the Aryan side. We went to a good Pole who took us in. The bunker was very small and narrow. We could neither sit nor stand in it. We had to lie down all day long. A small lamp barely lit the hiding place. My father had to go out every day to the other Poles, to earn something to pay the owner of the house. No one wanted to care for us for free. We spent two months in that bunker. My parents sensed that we were being followed. My father went out to look for a new hiding place. Several days later he returned with the news that he had found a new place for three people only, i.e. for my parents and me. We absolutely didn't want to be separated from the whole family, because in [...] times we were together. At the end we parted from my grandparents and left.
2 <sup>nd</sup> bunker for the nuclear family  Implication: the death of the grandparents	My father had Polish acquaintances and when the war broke out our whole family hid in the granary of a Polish family. A hole was dug under the threshing floor, and inside it burned a carbide lamp. There was very little air to breathe. The owner brought us food in a little basket. He had to be wary of the neighbors.	And again I sat in a dark airless bunker.  From that time on I don't know what happened to all the family.  My father had to leave the shelter. The Poles knew he was in the village, were chasing after him, but couldn't find him. More than once while sitting in the bunker I asked myself: "What did I do? Why do I have to sit in this dark cellar, why can't I play and be happy like all the other children, listen to the chirping of birds?" But then I thought to myself – "Stupid, I'm a Jew."
The disappearance of the father	Every night my father went out to try and get something so he could pay the house owner. Once he went out and	One day my father went out and never returned. I remained alone with my mother. We had to leave the bunker.

<p>+ Leaving the bunker</p> <p>+ wandering in the extremely hostile countryside</p>	<p>didn't return, and to this day I don't know what happened to him.</p> <p>Then my mother decided that we should leave our hiding place and search for my father, but we searched for him in vain. In this way we wandered from village to village, from town to town,</p>	<p>My mother was at a loss about what to do; she took me by the hand and we went to wherever the wind carried us. We walked for days. We passed through villages and forests without tasting a piece of bread, without lying down to sleep at night. We frequently ended up sleeping in barns and stables with the horses, or in pig sties. At every step they shouted at us that we were Jews from the ghetto.</p>
<p>Being caught</p>	<p>until one time we were handed over to the Germans.</p>	<p>Once when we were being chased by Polish ruffians we fell into mud and I lost my shoes. From then on I walked barefoot in the cold. My mother picked me up and we ran away. Suddenly we saw an SS man on a horse, as though he had grown out of the ground. In the first minute we could have fled, but my mother didn't want to. She said that all was lost, that we wouldn't remain alive anyway. The SS man rode up to us and began to beat us with a stick and to prod us to go forward.</p>
<p>The first prison</p>		<p>And thus he brought us to some kind of yard and threw us into a dirty cell. They plugged the way and all the cracks, lest, Heaven forbid, any air should enter it. They didn't give us anything to eat for two days, while they themselves ate, in order to taunt us. We were sure that they would kill us.</p>
<p>Being brought to Hrubieszów</p> <p>-The way</p> <p>-The prison</p> <p>-The murder of the mother</p> <p>-Fredzia's passing and being taken in by a Polish woman</p>	<p>They took us in a car to the <i>shtetl</i> of Hrubieszów, where my mother was murdered by the Ukrainians. I said that I was Polish, and my appearance saved me.</p>	<p>On the third day, they opened the door and threw us onto a car and brought us to Hrubieszów. On the way my mother cried bitterly and tore out handfuls of hair from her head. I became very frightened when I looked into my mother's eyes and began to cry loudly. My mother began to pacify me. She asked me not to recognize her, not to admit that she was my mother. I didn't understand; why shouldn't I befriend my mother, I asked in fear.</p>

		<p>In Hrubieszów I was separated from my mother. She was taken to one cell, and I was taken to another one. Through the wall I heard crying. My mother kept repeating "Mein Kind" [my child]. In this way she revealed me with the known word. I stubbornly insisted that she wasn't my mother. Several days later, when the SS men were convinced that that woman really wasn't my mother, we were taken outside. There the following sight was revealed to me: A Ukrainian armed with a rifle was standing in the center and forcing a group of Poles to do calisthenics. Whoever didn't do the movements according to the rhythm was shot by the Ukrainian. Every few minutes another victim fell. I stood and trembled in fear.</p>
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I found the window of my mother's cell, looked inside but immediately fell back. The woman lay on the floor dressed in rags, with terrible eyes gazing blindly at the ceiling. The dress on her body was worn out. She lay and whispered incessantly: "My child, my child." I recognized her by the eyes. My mother had beautiful black eyes, and now they looked so terrible. I suddenly received a blow on my back with a rifle stock. I was forced to move away from the window. We were brought to the head of the Gestapo. He picked me up and began to play with me. He was certain that I was Polish and said that he would take me to a Polish woman, where I would be treated well. This Polish woman loved me very much. She didn't know what to do with me. We lived near the town. Every day I would go up to the fence to see my mother. One day I witnessed a terrible scene: a woman with unkempt hair dressed in black, who could barely stand, was taken out of the cell.



		Suddenly I heard a shot and the woman fell to the road. It was my mother. I immediately recognized her. She was dressed in black, in the same dress. I can still see the expression on her face in the last moment of her life. I shouted from fear and began to cry bitterly.
		The Polish woman took me home. I couldn't be calmed for a long time.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Polish woman		Days went by and I was taken from the Polish woman and handed over to another one. This one also wanted me greatly. She wanted to force me to call her mother. I couldn't agree to call a strange woman by my mother's holy name. She frightened me with threats but I didn't agree.
Being brought to the Turkowice Convent	Then I was brought to a convent.	After I had been there a short while, some man came and said that I was being sent to a convent.  The Polish woman didn't want to hand me over and I didn't want to leave her either.
The Convent	In the convent there were many nuns and also 300 children. I cried a great deal. I couldn't get used to them. I did 4 years of school there. Every Sunday the children's parents came to visit and no one came to see me. Then I would stand beside a tree or in a corner and cry bitterly. I always remembered that I was Jewish. Once a nun called me and asked me if I still remembered the Yiddish language. I told her that I didn't. She said: "You have been baptized, and once you have your communion you will be a real Polish girl." I answered her that I didn't agree. I was Jewish and would remain Jewish. Then the sister said to me: "You have to have your communion!" I started to study several days later and when I knew everything, I had my communion. I wore a white dress	I was very afraid of the convent. But my agreement or disagreement were not taken into account. They packed my things and brought me to the convent. When I got off the train a group of children came running up, took my packages and carried them off to the house. I went and looked around. All the children surrounded me. They were dressed in rags and I noticed that some of them were handicapped. I had the feeling that they were all very wretched and miserable. I cried bitterly. The sisters tried to calm me. The children surrounded me and I made plans to escape from there. I was brought to a large hall. Pictures of saints hung on the walls. Everything looked sad and forlorn. And then the thought went through my mind that I would have to stay there for a long time. I sat and cried all day. Everyone

	<p>and they placed a wreath of immortality flowers on my head. When I received the communion wafer from the priest, I immediately spit it out into my handkerchief. From then on I had to get up at 4 AM so I wouldn't be late for prayers.</p>	<p>tried to console me. In our dormitory there were about a hundred beds. When I used to wake up in the morning hugging the bars of the bed, I had the feeling that I was hugging my mother. It took a long time until I became accustomed to kneeling and praying all day long. My knees hurt from continuous kneeling. I began to prepare for the religious rite.</p> <p>I got up early in the morning, at four o'clock, said my prayers and went to the priest for confession. I got so used to my surroundings that I forgot that I was Jewish. I believed in Jesus and the Holy Mother and kissed the crucifix around my neck innumerable times. And so the days, months and years passed, and the war ended. Parents began to come for the children that were with me. Mothers and fathers came to visit them, they received letters and packages, and I was alone.</p>
<p>Being claimed by a Jewish organization</p>	<p>A woman named Dubzinska came to redeem Jewish children. Then the nun called me and said: "This lady who has come is Jewish. Do you want to go with her?" I answered her that I wanted to go. The sister said: "Nevertheless we won't let you go because you are a talented girl. Stay with us." – But I didn't want to. The sister said that she would go and ask the Mother Superior. In the evening she came and said that everything had been arranged, but I had to go with the girls to prayer again.</p> <p>The next day I went to the storeroom and took clothes. When I was already on my way the children shouted after me: "Jew! Jew! You take blood for matzo!" I was happy that I was leaving there.</p> <p>I wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel.</p>	<p>One day the sister called me and asked me if it was true that I was Jewish. I was afraid to admit it and denied it. But when the sister said that a Jewish woman had come to me and I had regards from my father, I didn't know what to do. On the one hand I was afraid to return to the Jews, and on the other hand, I very much wanted to see my father. I hesitated for a long time. After talking with the Jewish woman Marysia, I decided to leave the convent.</p>

The second testimony is much longer and detailed than the first. Fredzia reveals much more pain in the second testimony as well as many guilt inducing issues concerning her identity conflicts. She experienced terrible identity crises both in connection to her mother—when she had to deny their bond repeatedly, when she was ordered to call a Polish woman “mother,” and in her relationship to Mary, the “Holy mother”— and her Jewishness in the convent.

In the first testimony, she represents herself as a person who was able to hold on to her Jewish identity during her long stay in the convent, and she describes the other children as well as the nuns as adversaries. However, the picture emerging from the second testimony is much more nuanced and conflicted. She relates how people were nice to her in the convent and how she found comfort in Christian beliefs.

In our opinion, the major differences are caused by the difference in the testimony-collecting project.

Student activity:

List the differences in detail, and after reading our descriptions of the two testimony-collecting projects, think about what could cause the differences. We are talking about two Jewish projects after all. Pay special attention to the role the educator and the other members of the group (all of them child survivors) played in the emergence of the testimony.

The two emotional centers of the testimony saturated with feelings of pain and guilt are clearly marked also by Fredzia’s later statements. (Statements that she made during her many testimonies she gave after the first two, which we quoted here in full.) Fredzia frequently spoke and wrote about her childhood experiences. Now we would like to bring two quotations from her from a book written by her husband about her:

Shmuel Rothbard (Fredzia’s husband, and a child survivor himself): *A Little Dove in a silent Garden* Tel Aviv: Moreshet Publishing House, 2003.

Shmuel Rothbard based the book on Fredzia’s testimonies, but he made a story out of it with a clear plot. He interspersed the narrative with quotations from Fredzia:

“For many years after the event I could not tell it. I could not bring myself to utter it, and tell others how I, the daughter, was denying my mother and how I left her to die there in the courtyard. Could I have done otherwise? A girl of 9? Until today I am full of guilt and dark feelings. Maybe she also had a chance to survive! The terrible thing is that I have no answer to these questions.” [p. 163.]

“After many months I got used to convent life and started to forget that I am a Jew. And I even started to believe in Jesus and the Holy Mother. Sometimes I kissed the cross on my neck given to me by the sister. Only sometimes I am overwhelmed by the strong longing for Mom and Dad and I remind myself not to forget who I really am. I am afraid that I might forget my real name.” “I embroidered my family on a piece of cloth and sewed it to the inside of my jacket. This way I would not forget my family name. [p.178]

## 4. Topic Analysis of the Testimonies

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### **Guidelines for a comparative study of the testimonies of the two girls:**

In many ways the experiences of the girls are comparable and represent the experiences of many children on the run. They experienced first the gradual diminishing of their family, then the loss of their immediate family. Some of the losses were horrific because of the loved ones they have lost (Grandparents, father), but they also witnessed the murder of their family members. After remaining alone, they had to fend for themselves in an extremely hostile environment, in which every new encounter was a source of mortal danger on the one hand, and necessary for survival, on the other hand. Because they could never relax, never feel safe, the intensity of the testimony does not fluctuate like in testimonies of other survivors with different experiences, but remains almost constant. The testimonies of the girls relate not one story of survival, but each relates many, in which a great number of stories are equal in their intensity. Therefore, encounters with non-Jews—who either endanger/murder them or save them—structure all of these testimonies.

Moreover, these encounters, especially after they remained alone, usually meant that the Jewish children had to pretend that they are Christians, and had to adopt entirely new personalities, pasts, manners, etc. For example, they could not show sadness, since that was considered a Jewish trait. In many testimonies, we can read how children who were passing as Aryans, forced themselves to laugh a lot in order not to look like Jews.

Their survival depended on how well they adopt their role as non-Jews, how well they can suppress their own personal past, their own horrific family history. They had to identify with their role in order to play it well. This obviously led to deep identity crises, especially in the beginning of the experience and after liberation.

Both Rozia and Fredzia witnessed the murder of their mothers, and they could not do anything about it. On the contrary, they had to actively save themselves at the time by running away in Rozia's case and by firmly denying her connection to her mother, in Fredzia's case. This obviously, led to terribly unjust feelings of guilt.

Three topics emerge then from the girl's testimonies that deserve special attention:

- 1) The characterization of non-Jews

Christopher R. Browning in his *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* studies the experience of Jews in a labor camp. However, some of his conclusions are important in understanding the experiences of others as well. Browning claims that: “for the prisoners [in the labor camp], the ability to distinguish

between German perpetrators was one key to survival.”<sup>55</sup> Then, according to the descriptions contained in survivor testimonies, Browning establishes roughly 4 categories:

- the dangerous Germans
- the corrupt Germans
- helpers
- indifferent bystanders

Browning’s statement is true for the children on the run as well: their survival depended on being able to decide what kind of person the non-Jew whom they encountered was: are they selfless helpers, can they be turn into helpers by offering them money or labor, are they inimical anyhow, or are they basically indifferent, which one can turn into an advantage.

There are three major categories of non-Jews from the point of view of helping Jews:

--Righteous gentiles (According to Yad Vashem’s definition, The Righteous Among the Nations are non-Jews who, during World War II, saved persecuted Jews, and did so at the risk of their own lives as well as those of their family, without financial reward. These criteria were defined by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the national Holocaust memorial authority of the State of Israel, with the creation of the title of “Rightheous Among the Nation” in 1953.<sup>56</sup>)

--Honorable paid helpers

Even though, as Grabowsky states: “people who were helped by the Righteous gentiles had much better chance for survival than those, who had to pay a day-to-day and month-to-month ransom for their safety,” the real difference between helpers was whether they honored their commitment till the end. Honorable and trustworthy paid helpers are worthy of praise.

--Paid helpers who, in the end, abandoned their charges, or actively murdered or denounced them

Student activity:

Please, categorize all the non-Jews appearing in Rozia’s and Fredzia’s testimonies and assess these categories as well as the individuals falling into the categories whenever it is possible.

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<sup>55</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 53-54.

<sup>56</sup> For an important case study concerning the Righteous Among the Nations, see Jeannine (Levana) Frenk: “Righteous Among the Nations in France and Belgium: A Silent Resistance” Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 2008.

- 2) The question of their own identity, as they were able to survive only by taking up false identities.

One of the major problems with taking on and identifying with false identities is that one has to change his/her alliances and to whom as well as to what ideals to be loyal.

Student activity:

Please, assess the complex issues of identity and identity crisis in the above testimonies. Pay special attention to the personal (family and family history) and national-religious aspects (Judaism versus Christianity).

Concerning the issues of Christianity and monasteries, see Joanna Beata Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Survival and Polish-Jewish Relations during the Holocaust as Reflected in Early Postwar Recollections* (Search and Research Series 14) Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008).

- 3) The mother-daughter relationship

Student activity:

Pay special attention to the problem when the child has to play the role of the adult in saving her life. What are the textual consequences of this terrible predicament. In what way Rozia feels that she did not take on the role of her ailing mother? How did Fredzia enable to go through with her mother's plan to deny her even after her mother broke down completely?

**Concluding student activity:**

- A. Read a literary representation of the experience of being hunted: Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (New York: Vintage International, 1998).
- B. Compare Jacob's fictional experience with the above testimonies.
- C. Think about what we could possibly gain by our comparison with a literary, or poetical representation.

## 5. Supplement:

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### On Arje Milch's testimony:

Arje Milch's testimony was the first child testimony to appear in the journal.<sup>57</sup> 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.

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.<sup>58</sup> The translation stayed very close to the Yiddish text: wherever the English is awkward

<sup>57</sup> 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.

<sup>58</sup> 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.

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, 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