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The Survival of the Human Spirit Through Resistance

The Resistance of the Jewish people was physical, but even more often, spiritual, maintaining the survival of the human spirit. Judgment based on speculation that the Jews did not wage effective, significant, and sustained fight or opposition against the Nazi's. Nazi's, and those under the Nazi rule, assume that there was no resistance at all. The incorrect suggestion that the powerlessness of the Jews suggests passivity is a conclusion that is misunderstood and a wide spread misconception, even seventy years after the Liberation.

The choices that lied before them were often incomprehensible and from the installation of the Nuremberg Laws, the basic rights of the Jewish people were torn from them, leaving them very limited options. The systematic breakdown of their families and their communities, leaving them in a state of survival, tore at their humanity, but did not squelch their spirit. The evidence of this is clear in the countless forms of resistance from fasting on Yom Kippur, to the armed partisans hiding in the forest. The artists, poets, and writers who maintained their faith by made toys for children, or a girl constructing a comb for her hair, although her head was shaved, displays the fact that the human spirit endures, as it still does today. I have committed to the Survivors, that I have been fortunate enough to speak to and befriend, I will carry on their work and message “We Have Endured”¹

¹Eva Mozes Kor, January 27th, 2015).

The Faith Preserved: Resistance, Our Faith Will Prevail:

In August 1935, Rabbi Leo Baeck created a letter or message titled “The Reichvertretung, Speaks to us”, to be read at synagogues at the beginning of Yom Kippur. Rabbi Baeck's message directly confronts and challenges the anti-Semitic ideology of the Nazi's, condemning it and lies and slanders. Upon the discovery of this letter, the Gestapo forced The Reichvertretung to send telegrams to the synagogues, forbidding the reading of Rabbi Baeck's plea. The prayer's clearly resounding message “We Stand Before our G- -¹.” subsequently, Rabbi Baeck was arrested for several days in Berlin.

The Zionist underground movement, 1940, led by Jizchak Schwercenz, with his students from the Youth Aliyah School, where he was a teacher. His goal was to keep the youth and Jewish people focused on Jewish values, to fill their day to day lives with spiritual values based in Judaism. Schwercenz worked with Edith Wolff, called “Ewo”, a convert to Judaism, who was the child of a mixed marriage. Edith used her contacts with Christians to provide the Jews who were evading deportation with false documentation, shelter, and even food ration books. “Ewo” claimed “*Every Jew was morally obligated to save his or her life for the goal of building a Jewish homeland after the war, and, for the sake of the Jewish community in general. Jews must not go meekly to slaughter like an animal.*”² (A resistance group of between twenty and forty members was created. The group succeeded in saving many of it's members and lasted until the end of the war.

On February 27th, 1943, a massive “Factory Action” took place in Germany to

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- 1 Rabbi Leo Baeck: “Words of Consolation” English translation from *Remember The Holocaust in the Words and Voices of Its Survivors*
 - 2 Exerpts from Jizchak Schwercenz *Machteret Chaluzim B'germania Hanazit* Hakibutz Hameuchad Publishing House and Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot, 1969

deport Jewish slave laborers to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Four thousand Jews escaped, and this is what prompted Schwersenz and Wolff to form The Chug Chalutzi, an illegal group.

Spiritual Resistance Through Writings, Drawings, and Poems: Our Spirits and Minds Resisted- You Can't Take Our Thoughts:

The book “...*I never saw another butterfly...*” compiles work from children from Terezin from the years 1942 till 1944. This work clearly demonstrates the outpouring of the human spirit. Often, there's a peaceful serenity in the work, the horror is obscured (I found this most fascinating), and, to me, shouted the importance of their story being told in whatever means possible. Often, paper to draw was discarded, and their art supplies were discarded boxes and wrappings, whatever could be salvaged and hidden. A total of fifteen thousand children, under the age of fifteen, passed through the Terezin camp, between the years of 1942 and 1944. Fewer than one hundred survived. The legacy of these children lives on, and their beautiful creative truth tells the narrative of the lives of the children with all the pure, raw, and witness of the world they came from, to the world they now lived in, and their hopes for future inheritance.

This poem inspired the play “I Never Saw Another Butterfly” by Celeste Raspanti:

The Butterfly

The last, the very last

So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow

perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a white

stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high
It went away I'm sure because it wished to kiss the world
good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found what I love here
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court
Only I never saw another butterfly
That butterfly was the last one, Butterflies don't live in here
in the ghetto.³

Poet Hannah Senesh, a resistance writer, stated “*We are the only ones who can help, we don't have the right to think of our own safety. We don't have the right to hesitate. Even if there is only a slight chance of success, we must go, if we don't go, for fear of our lives, a million Jews will be massacred. If we succeed, we can open up an escape route that will save millions.*”⁴

Another expression of resistance was the validation of the young persons feelings, growth, and development, expressed in their diary writings. The most famous and widely read of these diaries is The Diary of Anne Frank, which gave The Holocaust a three dimensional character. The reader could imagine that Anne Frank was any little girl living next door to them.

On November 12th, 1942, Yitzchok Rudashevski, a fifteen year old boy in the

Vilna Ghetto, wrote in his diary with promise, “*The ghetto resounds with good*

³ Multiple authors: *...I never saw another butterfly* New York Schocken Books, 1993

⁴ Senesh, Hannah *Hannah Senesh: Her Life and Diary*. Westminster, Md. Schocken Books, Incorporated, 1972

*news...the Germans have suffered defeat at Stalingrad.*¹” then, in April 1943, after hearing news of continued deportations and mass murder, he concluded “*We must not trust, nor believe anything. We may be fated for the worst.*”⁵ He did not despair. Clearly, Anne Frank in hiding, and Yitzchok Rudashevski in the ghetto, though both were restrained physically, their minds were resistant.

Pianist Adela Bay and other artists in ghettos and slave labor camps used their resources to sustain hope and preserve meaning in their lives. Defying hunger, misery, and forced labor, Bay and others used inner resources to maintain their identity and their humanity. They wrote poetry without pen and created musical performances and puppets, gifts out of scraps or stolen material. Humor, satire, and always prayer, were symbolic weapons to defy their Nazi oppressors. The consequence of them getting caught was capital punishment. It is said of Adela Bay “*What was in her head, nobody could take away.*”⁶ A tribute to her human strength.

Art, theatre, plays, cabarets, puppet shows, and music, including such operas as: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Tocsa*, and *Cavalleria Rusticana* were performed in Terezin. Terezin flourished with creativity partly due to the large number of artists & musicians, who were sent there, and Terezin was staged as the “model camp” and used for the purposes of Nazi propaganda. These camp artists such as: Rafael Schechter, a gifted composer and pianist established a choir of 150 people in the camp and was the musical director for fourteen operas as Terezin.

These talented artists were later transported to Auschwitz where they died. Hanz

1 Zapruder, Alexandra, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1973, 2015

5 Zapruder, Alexandra, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1973, 2015

6 Bay, Adela Oral History of Adela Bay. Interview by Leonard Wacholder, 1977. Yaffa Eliach Collection, donated by The Center for Holocaust Studies

Krasa, of Prague a student from the German Academy of Music in Prague, composed several pieces as well in Terezin, his best known piece, *Brundibar* was even filmed by the Nazis as propaganda to show “the world” that their “inmates” were being treated properly, and flourishing artistically. Hans Krasa, after *Brundibar* was performed fifty-five times was sent to Auschwitz and died in the gas chambers on October 17, 1944. Other pieces such as Petr Kien's, *Emperor of Atlantis*, of which two versions were written, the first extremely critical of Hitler and the Reich henchmen, the second was “toned-down” so it might be performed. Books such as; Fritz Taussig's *Tommy's book* a touching book of drawings created to celebrate his son's third birthday, Tommy, his son was the first baby born in Terezin. The birthday album is filled with beautiful illustrations, that were hidden by Taussig and discovered after the war. Taussig's wife died at Terezin, he was sent to Auschwitz where he died. The little boy, Tommy, miraculously survived and was adopted by Leo Haas, after the war. The resistance in the arts ranged from beautiful work that glorified the lives of its victims to works of horror that stand as witness and testimony to the atrocities suffered by the Jews. Both share the resistance of the human spirit.

Partisans: Armed Resistance

Yitzhak Wittenberg successfully blew up several German trains in defiance. The Nazi's were desperate to catch Yizhak, they told the Judenrat of the Vilna Ghetto that they'd burn it down unless they surrendered Yizhak. Yizhak, to avoid the burning down of the ghetto, surrendered to the SS, who executed him. The remainder of Yizhak's resistance group fled from the ghetto to nearby forests to fight as partisans.

Resistance acts of sabotage occurred in slave labor, work, in factories, even

digging ditches. Mistakes were purposely made, especially in the production of ammunition and weapons. These usually went uncaught and unnoticed. Any prisoner or worker caught in the act of sabotage was killed immediately. In fact, many accidents were viewed as potential sabotage, and executions were carried out. Resistance within the ghettos was a common place occurrence.

Underground newspapers discussed Nazi lies, the progress of war, the death camps, and the partisans successes. Partisans would explain how to make explosives to those who they communicated with in the ghettos.

Resistance in the Ghetto: Uprising and Armed Resistance:

Another form of resistance in the ghettos were buried metal boxes containing documents of life in the ghettos, a time-capsule of resistance. Aaron

Dereczynski, a Polish Jew, who participated in Resistance efforts near Vilnius,

Lithuania, stated: *“And we cut down the telephone lines, we cut down the bridges...and in very many instances, we blew up trains. ...I wasn't a hero, but I was part of the...underground. I was active as anybody could be.”*¹

The famous Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began in January 1943. Jews shot at the Nazi's coming to remove them from deportation. Many of the Jewish fighters were killed in this uprising, but, their brave efforts gave some of the Jews in the ghetto an opportunity to hide. The Germans deported about 5,000-6,500 Jews instead of the whole Ghetto. The fighters built underground bunkers and gathered weapons for the next fight. On April 19th, 1943, the ghetto appeared to be empty when the Germans entered, but the ghetto population was hiding in their bunkers. The armed resistance forced the Nazi's to retreat outside the walls of the Ghetto, dozens of Nazi's were killed. After about two days of fighting, the

1 Rebecca Love Fishkin: Heroes of the Holocaust, Compass Point Books, pg 24

Nazi's returned with larger German forces and began to destroy the ghetto, house by house. Jews hid and fought for nearly a month, until all were nearly killed, captured, sent to extermination camps, only a few survived, able to escape through the sewers. *"Something happened beyond our wildest dreams: The Germans twice ran away from the ghetto. One of our units held out forty minutes, another more than six hours."*² This was written by Mordechai Anielewicz, a Warsaw Ghetto resistance leader, on April 23rd, 1943.

The partisans were the most well known resistors. *Rather Die Fighting*, the title of a memoir of World War II by Frank Blachman, who was sixteen years old when the war broke out. Frank, a Pole, like many, had made the decision *"He was not going to be deported or shut up in some Ghetto or camp."*⁷ Frank's brave journey took him from the fields to the farmhouse of his friends, and then to the Bratnik Forest.

There, Frank, like so many partisans, began making weapons and even trading civilian clothes for rifles. Many farmers in the countryside had rifles that they kept hidden away. Frank, like many, found "Jew hunters", and after interrogating them, discovered that the Germans had a vast network of informers, with one or two agents in each village. *"We felt that by disrupting the German's information network, we were carrying the fight to the enemy, and in this way, we were beginning to make good on the promise to avenge the death of our families."*⁸

The business of the partisans often included setting up hidden bases to operate

² Rebecca Love Fishkin: *Heroes of the Holocaust*, Compass Point Books, ph 31

⁷Blaichman, Frank: *Rather Die Fighting: A Memoir of World War II* (New York, Arcade Publishing, 2009)

⁸Blaichman, Frank: *Rather Die Fighting: A Memoir of World War II* (New York, Arcade Publishing, 2009)

and plan. They would pick up spies and collaborators, and try to find out the plans of the Germans and their accomplices. The partisans would then disrupt the Germans plans for operation of killing the Jews in Europe. Frank's group, and the other partisan groups carried out sabotage missions that included explosions, derailment of trains, and many other resistance activities. The Jewish partisans eventually worked closely with the Russian partisans and the Russian government, utilizing their weapons and fight against the German war machine.

One particular partisan who I identified with, and who's story resonated with me was that of Faye Schulman. Born on November 28th, 1919 in Lenin, Poland, she learned to be a photographer, Moishe, and assisted him in his photography business. On August, 1942, the Germans killed 1,850 Jews from the Lenin, Poland ghetto. Faye's parents, sisters, and younger brother were killed, only twenty six people that day were spared, and Faye was one of them, due to her photographic abilities. The Germans insisted Faye photograph the massacre and develop these photographs. Faye, in a incredible, brave resistance, made secret copies for herself. A partisan raid allowed Faye to flee to the forests and join the Molotava Brigade, a group of partisans mostly made up of escaped Soviet Army POW's. Faye was accepted into the group because her brother in law was a doctor and she had knowledge about medicine.

Faye became the Molotava nurse from September 1942 to July 1944. During a raid on Lenin, Poland, Faye succeeded in saving and recovering her old photographic equipment. During the next two years, Faye would take over 100 photographs, developing the negatives under blankets and making "sun prints"

during the day. On military partisan missions, Faye buried her camera, tripod, and equipment to keep it safe. Faye's wisdom and resistance demonstrate a very rare side of partisan life and activity.

In the film “Daring to Resist: Three Women Face The Holocaust” (A Film by Barbara Attie and Martha Lubell), a quote from Faye herself says “*I want people to know that there was resistance. Jews did not go like sheep to the slaughter. I was a photographer. I have pictures. I have proof.*”⁹ Faye is the only known Jewish partisan photographer. Her life, unwavering courage, and motivation to continue her photography, no matter what the risk, was so inspiring to me. Faye's spirit of resistance covers almost all levels of resistance

Irene Gut Opdyke, who was a seventeen year old Polish girl studying to be a nurse, when Germany invaded Poland. She was forced to work in a German mess hall due to her ability to speak German very well. She was near Glinice Ghetto and, each day, she fed those inside:

*“...I had just seen the Germans' answer to the “Jewish Problem”. The next afternoon I slipped outside and made a hole in the fence that backed onto the ghetto. From the pail of potato peelings I took out a tin box I had filled with cheese and apples. I wedged it into the hole and hurried back into the kitchen. The next day the box was empty. I collected it and went back to work for the Nazis. Every day now I found a chance to slip food under the fence.”*¹⁰

When the German army was moved to Lvov and then Ternopol, Irene was with them and she was now responsible for the laundry:

⁹ Daring to Resist: Three Women Face The Holocaust (A Film by Barbara Attie and Martha Lubell)

¹⁰ Opdyke, Irene Gut *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. Westminster, Md.: Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1999

*The laundry used Jewish workers from the local work camp. There were twelve of them. "I'll bring you food when I can." I said "I'll look after you." Moses Steiner, a stooped and gloomy man, made a small shrug. "You're only a young girl", he said. "What can you do?"*¹¹

Irene continued to smuggle food out, then, one day, Herschl Morris asked her to help he and his brother to join the Partisans in the forest, so she began to smuggle Jews to Janowka Forest. Irene continued to smuggle more people and food to the forest on a regular basis. The Russian army began to close in, so the Germans moved again, this time to Kielce. In Kielce, Irene ran away and actually joined a group of partisans:

*"I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, a defier of the Nazis all at once. First steps are always small: I began by hiding food under a fence. Now I was smuggling Jews to Janowka forest...They have me small jobs to begin with, to test my nerve and loyalty. I tucked my messages into the thick bun of my hair and carried them between the partisans and their spies who worked for the Germans. Sometimes I carried packages of money, smuggled in from England, to buy guns or to pass on to a group further up the line. I was never told more than I needed to know."*¹²

Irene was arrested as a partisan, but escaped. At the end of the war, she was in a displaced persons camp, from there she emigrated to the USA.

Resistance by Hiding: Resisting the Deportations Enforced by the Nazis

11 Opdyke, Irene Gut *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. Westminster, Md.: Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1999

12 Opdyke, Irene Gut *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. Westminster, Md.: Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1999

Resistance by hiding was commonplace, but of course, very risky for both the hidden, and those who assisted those in hiding. The most well known family to hide were The Franks, made famous by Anne Frank's Diary that was published by her father Otto, the only survivor in the family.

“Wednesday, 4 August, 1943

*Dear Kitty, Now that we have been in the “Secret Annex” for over a year, you know something of our lives, but some of it is quite indescribable. There is so much to tell, everything is so different from ordinary times and from ordinary people's lives. But still, to give you a closer look into our lives, now and again, I intend to give you a description of an ordinary day. Today I'm beginning with the evening and night.”*¹³

Anne's diary chronicles not just day to day life, but the deepest feelings of an adolescent girl, Anne's book has put a human face on the victims of the Holocaust, and is read worldwide, translated in most every language.

Youth Resistance: Not to Join the Hitler Youth , But To Fight Against Their Lies, Propaganda, and Murderous Reign Of Terror

The Edelweiss Pirates and the Navajo Gang that actively fought Hitler's Youth Groups concerned the Nazis about young resistance. One of the Edelweiss Pirates said:

*“It was The Hitler Youths own fault I left. It changed so all we did was march and every order I was given came with a threat.”*¹⁴

To combat the resistance, the Nazis publicly hanged anyone found helping Anti-Nazi groups, no matter what their age or how young they were.

Resistance in writing is chronicled in a secret diary that describes the life and

13 Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl, Washington Square Press Book, p. 86

14 Rees, Laurence. *The Nazis: A Warning from History*. New York: The New Press, 1999

experiences of ghetto life, including the Judenrat (Jewish Council) that ran the events in the ghetto, this chronicle is the only surviving day to day account of the events in the ghetto. The Nazis did not know about "*The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto.*" Had the Nazis known of the writers documentation, they would have hung the writers. There are also photos of the ghetto, some taken publicly by the Nazi officers and others taken secretly by Jewish photographers.

Partisan Resistance Fighters: Battling the Nazi War Machine

Other Partisan groups include the famous Bielski Partisans, who lived in the woods near Novogrodek, in Nazi-occupied Russia. These partisans, led by the Bielski brothers, helped people escape from the Novogrodek ghetto. They also attacked Nazi headquarters in nearby towns and the Nazi troops as they moved. Dov Cohen, who escaped from the Novogrodek ghetto to join the Bielski's, recalls his feelings at the first sight of these partisans:

*"We could hardly believe our eyes: Armed Jewish men I knew well from Novogrodek, who had escaped from the ghetto. They were no longer pale, frightened, and downtrodden. They stood tall and proud. And, most important of all: they were armed with pistols, rifles, sub-machine guns, and even machine guns."*¹⁵

The Partisans disrupted Nazi rule, attacks were made on moving soldiers, war supplies, and a favorite target were railway lines, which stopped the trains keeping soldiers and war supplies from moving, it also stopped the transport of the Jews to the death camps. The Partisans could not beat the entire German army, but the Nazis were infuriated that they could not catch them. There were about 20,000 just in the Nalibocka Forest in Poland, so many thousands of

15 Kagan, Jack and Dov Cohen. *Surviving the Holocaust with the Russian Jewish Partisans* Portland, Oreg.: Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, 2000

people working against the Nazis, even on a much smaller scale than they, caused a great deal of damage. One mission from the Rudnicka Forest Partisans in Poland blew up a train carrying ammunition, destroying guns, their ammunition, and killing fifty soldiers. Blowing up and burning down Nazi headquarters, damaging roads, bridges, and the railway lines all disrupted the Nazi Reich of order. Ambushing a truck of German weapons not only stopped the Nazis from using those weapons, but it armed the partisans, hence affording them the ability to attack the German army on the march. Partisans were hard to catch because they lived in hiding, and often in forests that they knew well and the German soldiers did not know at all. Resistance workers also carried on ordinary lives, often pretending to help the Nazis.

Although the resistance movement included men and women, old and young, the young were a sizable number of the total resistance movement. For this reason, the Nazis were trying to get a Nazi supporter into the resistance, either as a worker or escapee. If this supporter could fool the escape line into believing he was a British airman who had been shot down, he could travel along the whole escape line, thus finding out who all of the members were.

Help for the partisans came from many Catholic priests and Protestant pastors, who aided these partisan groups by passing messages and supplies. Irene Gut Opdyke recalled that the local Catholic priest performed a special ceremony for joining the partisans. Children were “taken in” and kept safe, to be passed off in orphanages run by Catholic and Protestant churches. These organizations gave these children different identities, passing them as Christians, although many were allowed to celebrate their Jewish faith, in some cases, others lost their Jewish identity.

Resistance in the Ghettos: Smuggling food in, and Smuggling people out two of the ways; however, Actual Armed Resistance and Fighting also Took Place In The Ghettos:

In 1939, the Nazis set up the ghettos in the big cities, relocating the Jews into these ghettos from the city and surrounding countryside. Warsaw, one of these cities, was “walled off” in October of 1939, it was the biggest ghetto of them all. Wladyslaw Szpilman, who survived the ghetto, remembers that even after increasing harsher laws against the Jews, the “sealing off” of Jews came as a surprise:

*“In the second half of November, without any explanation, the Germans began barricading the north end of Marzalkowska street with barbed wire. We were told we had to wear white armbands with a blue star of David when we were out of the house. Then the Jewish deportees from the west began to arrive. The gates of the ghetto were closed on November 15.”*¹⁶

The Jewish Council, or Judenrat, ran the ghetto. Led by Adam Czerniakow, he was sure that as long as the Jews worked for the Nazis, they would be kept alive, so he cooperated with them. However, Czerniakow soon found out that, even cooperating with the Nazis, and supplying them with slave labor, would not secure their survival.

By July of 1942, over 100,000 people died in the Warsaw ghetto, mainly from starvation and disease. Despite the soaring death rate of three to four hundred a day, there were still about 380,000 alive, many of them to sick and starving. In July of 1942, the Nazis told the Judenrat that the people in the ghetto were to be

¹⁶ Szpilman, Wladyslaw. *The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1935-1945*. New York: Picador USA, 1999

resettled on farm land in the east. The Nazis told Czerniakow to provide them with 7,000 “non-productive” Jews a day for the resettlement. They preferred the old, the sick, and the babies and other less likely workers for the resettlement, this would continue seven days a week. Czerniakow suspected that this was a slaughter and rather than continue “selecting” these persons each day, he killed himself. The Judenrat cooperated, and between July 22nd and Sept 21st, 366,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka death camp and killed. Between July of 1942 and January of 1943, Jewish fighting organizations decided to fight back. Their slogan was “Brothers, Don't die in Silence. Let's Fight!”. They wanted to die fighting, killing as many SS as they could. These ghetto resistance fighters appealed to people “outside” the ghetto to smuggle in weapons. In January of 1943, the resistors shot Nazis who were rounding up deportees, and in four days, 20 SS members were killed, and 50 more were injured. Between August 1st and Sept 15th, 1943, 1,000 Jews took part in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The SS left the ghetto alone, staying outside, fearing the resistance. Then, Polish resistance workers, seeing the Jews fighting, began smuggling in more weapons and ammunition. With the SS gone, more people were willing to join up. The groups began tunneling between cellars of houses so they could move around the ghetto underground, expecting the SS return. At 2 AM on April 19th, 1943, the SS returned. Jurgen Stroop led a command of troops to “liquidate” the ghetto, kill or deport those left to Treblinka. Stroop expected this liquidation to last three to four days. One of the resistors, Zivia Lubetkin, recalls:

“Even though we were prepared, had even prayed for this moment, we turned pale. We felt both joy and fear, but we sat on our emotion and reached for our

guns.”¹⁷

Stroop decided marching was too dangerous, since snipers and boobytraps were set. So, he decided to move through the ghetto, street by street, destroying all the buildings from furthest distance, and working in. Buildings would be bombarded with fire and flame throwers, anyone running out would be machine gunned, soldiers would “pick off” any survivors. The SS had 3,200 troops for this resistance fight, the Jewish fighting organization had only 1,200. The Nazis had 135 machine guns, the resistance fighters 2, the Nazis had 1,358 rifles, the resistance fighters had 15, the Nazis had tanks and heavy artillery, the Jews had none, the Nazis had huge supplies of ammunition and hand grenades, the resistance fighters had some grenades and homemade gasoline bombs. However, as uneven as this “battle” was, the Jewish resistance held out for one month. Some of the fighters escaped through tunnels and sewers, one among them, Mordecai Anielewicz wrote his last letter to his friend saying:

*“Peace be with you, my dear friend, who knows when we shall meet again? My life's dream has come true: Jews are defending themselves in the Ghetto. I have seen the magnificent, heroic struggle of Jewish fighters.”*¹⁸

On May 16th, 1943, Stroop's final act was to blow up the synagogue. About 7,000 Jews, resistors, and unarmed people were killed. The final 10,000 were rounded up, deported to be killed, most died in Treblinka. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising inspired Hirsh Glick, a poet in the Vilna ghetto, to write a song that was spread around the ghettos and partisan groups. The Nazis meant to destroy the Warsaw ghetto as a warning to Jews, but it did not stop the resistance. Glick too was sent to a labor camp and did not survive the Holocaust, but his song

17 Gilbert, Martin. *Never Again: A History of the Holocaust*. New York University Publishing, 2000

18 Gilbert, Martin. *Never Again: A History of the Holocaust*. New York University Publishing, 2000

gave many people encouragement and kept them going. His song is still sung, the first verse is:

*“Never say that you have reached the very end
Though leaden skies a bitter future may portend
The hour for which we yearned will yet arrive
And our marching step will thunder:
We survive!”¹⁹*

Uprisings in Sobibor, Poland on October 14th, 1943 closed the death camp for good. Alexander Pechersky, a Soviet officer who was Jewish, led the breakout from Sobibor. Twelve SS and twelve Ukrainian guards were killed. Of the 600 Jews in the camp, 200 were killed escaping, and 100 more were captured, then killed. Although 300 escaped, only 30 survived the war.

Terezin's Victims Resistance Chronicled: Forever Remembered in the Thousands of Writings, Art, Drawings, and Songs. Perseverance of The Human Spirit, and Resistance Documentation Forever Stands as Testimony:

Much of the art, writings, and music during the Holocaust, is chronicled in Terezin. Artists such as young Helga Weissova documented in drawings and writings what happened in Terezin:

“I was lucky, my fever went down exactly on the day when everyone who's fever went over 100.4 degrees, had to go to the sick bay. It's Typhoid...my fever did not go up, and they did not put me in the sick bay. This is the second day I've been sleeping in the corridor because of the bedbugs. There are seven of us girls sleeping outside because we've all been bitten...I hope that I have created a

19 Gilbert, Martin. *Never Again: A History of the Holocaust*. New York University Publishing, 2000

testimony of those times, one that ensures that the past should not be forgotten, so that something similar will not happen again.”²⁰

Approximately 15,000 children passed through Terezin ghetto between 1941 and 1944, only 100 would survive the war, most of them would die in Auschwitz, but they are remembered by their collection of 4,000 pictures, 100's of poems, that have survived these children who suffered cruelty, disease, and starvation. Their poems show us longing, fear, and the horrors that these children saw in their day to day lives, however, they tell the story of what really happened, and their spirit soars through their work. A group of teenage boys produced a very carefully handwritten and creative secret magazine, it was done exclusively by the boys and concealed in their barracks, known to them as “The Republic of Shkid”. Their magazine contained poems, drawings, and articles. The Vedem (In the lead) was saved when the boys were sent to Auschwitz, the magazine was saved by one of the survivors.

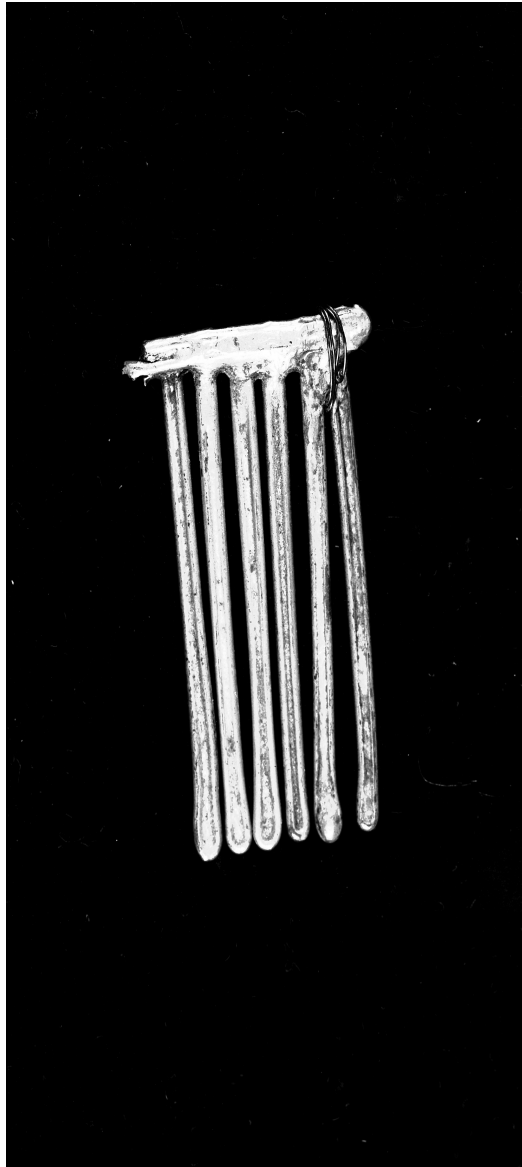
Resistance and Sabotage in the Death Camps:

Adults and children alike resisted in the camps for as long as they could, even though survival, especially for children was very brief. Small objects were crafted as “toys” for children, while they were alive parents tried to spare their children total despair. Young people , often lied about their age so they might be able to serve as labor in the camps, rather than to be selected for death. Young people resisted the Nazis in many ways, both physically and spiritually.

On October 7th, 1944, in Poland at the Auschwitz concentration camp, Polish, Hungarian, and Greek Jews used explosives stolen by four young Jewish girls, to blow up crematoria number 4 at Auschwitz. Resistance by the young in

²⁰ Weissova, Helga *Transport Leaving Terezin & Zeiche, was Du siehst (Draw what you see, a child's Drawing from Theresienstadt)*, 1998

Auschwitz in labor by producing and manufacturing goods that were inefficient and not what was ordered by the Nazis, such as faulty munitions, and manufactured goods that were not made correctly, purposely as to resist the Nazi war effort. However, the spiritual resistance of the young girl of sixteen I found most inspiring and so very memorable. Ruth Grunberger, was working at Auschwitz and, although her head was shaved, she created, out of metal and wire that she stole from her work table, a comb to be placed in her hair. "Ruth's comb" is proof of spiritual resistance! Her hope and resilient spirit stands as testimony that she would one day not only have her hair back, but that her life as a young girl would resume again. I recall seeing this comb so many years ago, and its impact has stayed with me and has inspired me to write about the youth and resistance during the Holocaust.



²¹Metal Comb made by Ruth Grunberger at Auschwitz, 1944-1945

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