

Rita Horváth

## Children's Memory

### The Experiences of Hungarian Jewish Children as Forced Labourers in Vienna and its Vicinity in 1944/1945

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#### Abstract

Through an in-depth analysis of a testimony of a child survivor of the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity in 1944/1945, which he gave in a DP camp in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, this article examines crucial aspects of the experiences of the Hungarian Jewish forced labourers in Vienna and tests the usefulness of testimonies from children and young adolescents for historical research. The present study explores some of the unique features of the so-called Strasshof deportation within the Holocaust and investigates what it means for the story of the Viennese forced labour itself that we have to rely heavily on memories of children to learn about it.

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As with numerous other events of the Holocaust, historians need to rely heavily on testimonies – both life writings of survivors and oral history sources – in order to learn about the experiences of Hungarian Jewish forced labourers brought to Vienna and its vicinity in the so-called Strasshof deportation. Even though historians typically distrust these kinds of sources and prefer to use them merely as illustrations or as anecdotal evidence, such sources are indispensable, as many major events of the Holocaust, especially towards the end, are barely documented by any other sources. Obviously, certain aspects of the experiences of the victims (for example concerning their individuality and various group identities) can be studied only by scrutinising documents created, at least partly, by the victims themselves. It has moreover become clear by now that even when historians set out to answer basic questions of traditional historical research concerning place, time, events, and activities, (the order of these things as well as possible relationships between them, such as causality), they have to turn to the wealth of information that is contained in survivor testimonies and to utilise these sources systematically.

Identifying the events and places of the Strasshof deportation offers a typical example, as the ongoing project of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) entitled “Jüdische Sklaven in einer ‘judenreinen’ Stadt. Die Topographie der ungarisch-jüdischen Zwangsarbeit in Wien 1944/45”<sup>1</sup> clearly shows. In order to pinpoint the places and discern the facts relating to the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity, the researchers rely heavily on oral history sources and life writings.

Other quite recent research projects also demonstrate that the use of survivor testimonies is necessary. For example, Christopher Browning’s research on a Nazi slave labour factory in Radom County and its evacuation to Birkenau was a milestone in

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1 <https://ungarische-zwangsarbeit-in-wien.at/> (8 November 2019). The project was financed by the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ).

the process of accepting the necessity of relying on survivor testimonies.<sup>2</sup> Another characteristic example of events that are mainly documented in survivor testimonies are the infamous death marches of Jews from Budapest towards the inner parts of the ‘Third Reich’. Kinga Frojimovics reconstructed the main routes of the death marches on the basis of early post-war testimonies given in Hungary in 1945/1946 to the National Relief Committee for Deportees in Hungary (Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság, DEGOB).<sup>3</sup> A further example based chiefly on survivor testimonies is Daniel Uziel’s research concerning Jewish camp inmates working in the German aviation industry. His sources consisted of 236 survivor testimonies from the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, which he drew upon not only to reconstruct daily life in the factories and camps, but also to understand the production processes in the factories and to determine what exactly was being produced.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the question is not whether we should rely on survivor testimonies, but how to do so in the most efficient and ethical way.<sup>5</sup>

The focus of my long-term research is to develop a methodological toolkit for analysing texts and interviews by survivors in order to glean as much historical information from them as possible. The development of a comprehensive methodology – combining historical, linguistic, literary, psychological, sociological, and anthropological methodologies – is indispensable. The analysis of trauma narratives, especially those concerning long-term traumas, necessitate the use of special hermeneutic devices developed by the fields of literary scholarship, linguistics, and psychology. Drawing on Cathy Caruth’s research on trauma, Anna Menyhért stressed the fact that “literary texts that deal with traumatic experience develop a specific language: the language in which trauma is recitable”.<sup>6</sup> Menyhért, a literary scholar and creative writer, focussed on literary texts. However, by studying a large number of testimonies, I argue that all trauma narratives – whether deliberately artistic or not – develop a special language necessitating specific hermeneutics on the part of the research-

2 Browning carefully reflected on his methodology, too. See: Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories. Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, Madison 2003, 37-85.

3 See: A magyarországi munkaszolgálat a második világháború alatt [Forced Labour Service in Hungary during the Second World War] (in Hungarian and Hebrew): [http://www.tm-it.co.il/avodat-kfiya/show\\_item.asp?levelId=65137](http://www.tm-it.co.il/avodat-kfiya/show_item.asp?levelId=65137) (8 November 2019).

4 Daniel Uziel, “We were specialists ...”. Jewish Slave Workers in the German Aviation Industry; Paper delivered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Summer Workshop for Holocaust Scholars of the Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research in Jerusalem entitled *The Persecution and Murder of Jews. Grassroots Perspectives* on 6 July 2010.

5 Éva Kovács’s historiographical paper focusses systematically on ethical issues as part of the theoretical basis and methodology of historical research concerning Holocaust testimonies: Éva Kovács, *Testimonies in the Digital Age. New Challenges in Research, Academia and Archives*, in: Werner Dreier/Angelika Laumer/Moritz Wein (ed.), *Interactions. Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video Testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Berlin 2018, 76-89. She also published a more comprehensive study in Hungarian: Éva Kovács, *Post-testimony. A tanúságtétel helye a soá történeti elbeszélésében* [Post-Testimony. The Place of Testimonies within the Historical Discourse on the Shoah], in: *socio.hu*. 107-119; DOI:10.18030/socio.hu.2018.3.107 (8 November 2019).

6 Anna Menyhért, *Traumaelmélet és interpretáció. Nagy Gabriella Eset című írásának elemzése* [Trauma Theory and Interpretation. An Analysis of Gabriella Nagy’s Writing Entitled “Eset”/“Case”], 168-182, 182; [http://studia.lib.unideb.hu/file/6/124/szerkeszto/szerkeszto\\_02\\_12\\_09\\_Menyhert\\_Anna.pdf](http://studia.lib.unideb.hu/file/6/124/szerkeszto/szerkeszto_02_12_09_Menyhert_Anna.pdf) (8 November 2019).

er.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, besides combining the literary, linguistic, and psychological hermeneutic devices, the study of survivor testimonies of long-term historical traumas requires adding the methodologies of historical research, especially those of source criticism.

For my goal of developing a methodology for analysing trauma texts, the testimonies recounting the Strasshof deportation are especially illuminating for several reasons. First of all, due to special circumstances, in order to learn about the story of the Strasshof deportation, it is not only necessary to analyse a large number of survivor testimonies, but we also have to deal with testimonies that are considered especially suspicious by historians: those given by former deportees who were children or young adolescents at the time. Some of the child testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation were given immediately after the Holocaust, but the majority of them were given much later, when the survivors were adults.

That the testimonies of those who were children at the time are disproportionately important sources for historical research concerning the Strasshof deportation is due to both the special circumstances of this deportation and the post-war milieu. The majority of the survivors of the Viennese forced labour belonged to groups from a specific geographical region, social status, as well as age. The Hungarian Jewish forced labourers were deported to Strasshof from four entrainment centres in southern Hungary and many more children and adolescents survived than did other deportees taken from the Hungarian provinces, as the latter had been taken to Auschwitz. In addition, most of the survivors of the Strasshof deportation remained silent in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, because compared to the experiences of Auschwitz deportees, they felt that they had nothing to say. Consequently, the majority of the Strasshof survivors who eventually related their witness accounts did so much later, mainly in the course of the large-scale testimony collecting projects of the last third of the twentieth century. By that time, it was mainly the former child deportees who were still alive and well enough to testify.

Trauma narratives requiring special hermeneutic devices as they test the boundaries of representation and memory are suspicious in the eyes of traditional historians in general, but children's narratives as sources of reliable information – mainly because of the scope of their understanding and interest – are feared to be even more problematic. Children's testimonies are generally thought to be less valuable for historical research than those of adults, because children usually have a much more limited understanding of their surroundings than adults do and children's interests

7 In addition to what happens within testimonial texts relating to traumas, especially long-term social traumatisations, scholarly texts analysing trauma narratives for historical, social-historical, sociological, or psychological research also become more personal, involved, and committed. Scholarly texts register this way certain phenomena within and in connection to the texts created by the survivors. Not only does the language of the survivors leave traces in the texts that analyse them, but the fact that the audience (interviewers, researchers, and so forth) need to turn their entire being into a hermeneutic tool during the analysis also makes the language of the resulting studies more personal, using more tropes, sometimes becoming even more poetic. A good example of poetic language use is the ground-breaking Hungarian manuscript by Tihamér Bakó and Katalin Zana entitled *A transzgenerációs trauma és terápiája* [Transgenerational Trauma and its Therapy], which will be published by Routledge in 2020. For quite a long time, psychoanalysts, literary scholars, and anthropologists have dealt with the consequences of using the methodology of turning the observer's entire being into a hermeneutic device. Psychoanalysts employ the term "free-floating attention" to denote this mode of listening with one's entire being. In the first chapter of her book, *Személyes olvasás* [Personal Reading], Anna Menyhért showed the genesis of the concept of personal reception and its contexts in Hungarian literary scholarship, concluding that a personal mode of reception of trauma narratives, resulting in a more personal style of scholarly writing, is more adequate for writing about trauma narratives than less personal, traditional scholarly styles. See: Anna Menyhért, Elmondani az elmondhatatlant. Trauma és irodalom [To Tell the Un-speakable. Trauma and Literature], Budapest 2008, 11-60.

are more focussed on their immediate environment than on the ‘bigger picture’. Children’s memories are thought to be more fragmented, more visceral and sensual, thus less intellectualised than those of adults. Moreover, children are viewed as less capable of differentiating among the sources of their thoughts, knowledge, and feelings than grownups.

Therefore, the testimonies documenting the Strasshof deportation serve as an important test case for studying the usefulness of children’s testimonies in learning about historical traumas. It is also a methodological imperative to find out how the fact that we see Viennese forced labour through the eyes of former child deportees influences our knowledge about that particular site of the Holocaust. In other words, we have to explore what it means for the story itself that in learning about it we have to rely heavily on memories of children.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the testimonial texts concerning the Viennese forced labour of the Hungarian Jews facilitate research focussing on theory and methodology because they include a variety of texts, ranging from memoir-novels belonging to high literature through school compositions to oral history testimonies. A large number of testimony-collecting projects with their specific ideologies and aims were involved in recording the testimonies, which are, as a result, formulated according to various genres. Also, different techniques were used to record the testimonies, which exist in various written or audiotaped or videotaped forms. All of the genres, methods of collecting, and the presence of real and/or posited audiences (interviewers, fellow survivors, researchers, and/or any other listeners) influenced the testimonies in various ways. It is also important that we have many testimonies that were rendered by child survivors coming from all sorts of social and religious backgrounds, from the ultra-orthodox through the neolog to the secular.

The different kinds of testimonies studied together illuminate crucial features of one another. As literary tools are crucial both in encoding historical information and decoding them, it is especially advantageous that we have a wide variety of literary and non-literary testimonies concerning the Viennese forced labour. Moreover, those artists who testified by writing literary pieces also gave other types of testimony that can be compared with one another. For example, Mária Ember, who was thirteen years old when she was deported to Strasshof, gave an interview to the USC Shoah Foundation.<sup>9</sup> Pál Bárdos (eight years old when deported to Strasshof) testified to the project led by Júlia Vajda.<sup>10</sup> István Gábor Benedek (BIG) who was seven years old when deported to Strasshof, also gave a number of interviews to various testimony-collecting projects.<sup>11</sup>

8 In this article, I aim to examine crucial aspects and special features of the so-called Strasshof deportation as well as to understand the complex role played by child survivors of Viennese forced labour in relating that unique experience in the history of the Holocaust. Therefore, the primary context of this study consists of other testimonies and ego documents of survivors of the Viennese forced labour and not the crucial research done on child forced labour during the Second World War. However, the context of child forced labour during the Second World War constitutes an efficient way of developing this research further. On child forced labour during the Second World War, see for example: Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Deportation und Zwangsarbeit. Polnische und sowjetische Kinder im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa 1939–1945*, Essen 2013; Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Die Heeresgruppe Mitte. Ihre Rolle bei der Deportation weißrussischer Kinder nach Deutschland im Frühjahr 1944*, in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation. 3 (2016) 1, 54–63, as well as Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Holocaust und Zwangsarbeit. Erinnerungen jüdischer Kinder 1938–1945*, Essen 2018.

9 USC Shoah Foundation Institute, VHA/49300.

10 OSA Archivum, HU OSA 419 Júlia Vajda Totalitarianism and Holocaust Interview Collection, <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/jD7PkvrB> (8 November 2019).

11 For instance, he also gave an interview to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, VHA/49300.

These artist survivors also facilitated the giving of testimonies for others, for example by acting as interpreters.<sup>12</sup>

The artistic testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation moreover belong to various literary genres, encompassing various forms of novel, short stories, short story collections, and Chassidic tales. Ember and Bárdos, for instance, used different methods to turn their memories into novels.<sup>13</sup> The major difference can be found in their respective ways of authenticating their childhood memories. Benedek (BIG) related his memories in short story sequences.<sup>14</sup> Similar to this genre, there is an interview concerning the Strasshof deportation that is included as a Chassidic tale in Yaffa Eliach's collection of testimonies *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*.<sup>15</sup> The tale entitled *A Holy Book*, which relates the story of the miraculous survival of a large Chassidic family, the Berkovitzs, illuminates and epitomises crucial and unique features of the Strasshof deportation within the history of the Holocaust.

The story of the Berkowitz family plays a crucial role in the overall structure of Eliach's collection of Chassidic tales. The tale's importance is stressed by the fact that it is a self-reflexive Chassidic tale that thematises Chassidic storytelling itself, by making it a part of the tale: "In the cold, long evenings of fall and winter [in the Strasshof camp] they [the large family] huddled together, sitting in the dark and listening to Grandfather's hasidic tales, many of them about the family's holy book."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this tale alludes heavily to an important Chassidic tale about the role of storytelling that "has passed through the hands of philosophers, scholars, and storytellers – notably Martin Buber, S. Y. Agnon, Gershom Scholem, Walter Kaufmann, Elie Wiesel, and Abba Kovner."<sup>17</sup> Levi Cooper identified this tale as central to various layers of Jewish culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and analysed many variants in chronological order. Eliach herself quoted this much cited, central tale in her foreword.<sup>18</sup>

By relating the tale of the survival of the Berkowitz family, Eliach forcefully captured both the marginality as well as the importance of the story of the Hungarian Jewish forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity in 1944/1945 within the Holocaust of the Jews of Hungary. The paradox of the story's marginality, uniqueness, and simultaneous centrality to the story of the Holocaust of the Jews of Hungary is finely balanced. Eliach achieved this informative balance by including only one tale about the Strasshof deportation in an entire collection filled with stories of Hungarian Jews who were deported to Auschwitz or were forced labourers in the framework of the

12 Mária Ember, for example, not only connected Deborah Dwork to survivors in order to interview them, but also helped Dwork as an interpreter to interview, for instance, András Garzó, a survivor of Auschwitz and Mühldorf. See: Deborah Dwork, *Children with a Star. Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, New Haven CT 1991.

13 Mária Ember's *Hajtúkanyar* [Hairpin Bend] was published as part of a series of Ember's collected works: Mária Ember, *Hajtúkanyar*, Budapest 2007; Pál Bárdos, *Az első évtized* [The First Decade], Budapest 1986.

14 István Gábor Benedek, *A komlói tóra* [The Torah of Komlós], Budapest 1994, and István Gábor Benedek, *Bergeni keringő* [The Bergen Waltz], Budapest 2011.

15 Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, New York 1988, 92-94. I have presented my argument that Yaffa Eliach's collection of Chassidic tales contain testimonies of Holocaust survivors that are crucial oral-history sources of historical research and that the attacks on the testimonies are entirely unwarranted at a number of conferences. See for example: Rita Horváth, *Hasidic Families under Pressure. An In-Depth Analysis of the Holocaust Testimonies Collected by Yaffa Eliach*, paper delivered at the international conference *The Holocaust and its Aftermath from the Family Perspective* in Prague, 15/16 March 2017, and Rita Horváth, *Jewish Experiences of the First Months of the Nazi German Occupation of Poland as They Emerge in Literary Holocaust Survivor Testimonies*, paper delivered at the international researchers' workshop *The Initial Turmoil of the International Institute for Holocaust Research*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 21–24 June 2015.

16 Yaffa Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, New York 1988, 92.

17 Levi Cooper, 'But I Will Tell of Their Deeds'. Retelling a Hasidic Tale about the Power of Storytelling, in: *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 22 (2014), 127-163, 127-128.

18 Foreword to Eliach, *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, XIX-XX.

Hungarian army, and assigning to that one tale a crucial role in the book's organising narrative structure. Moreover, the uniqueness of the Strasshof deportation is emphasised by the fact that the protagonists, the Berkowitz family, were able to live their entire Chassidic tradition largely unchanged during their Strasshof experience. Even the hierarchy within the family remained unchanged and the head of the family had multiple means (mainly his prayer book and the telling of Chassidic tales about its merits) to transmit an unchanged Chassidic tradition. This is unique in Eliach's book, which otherwise focusses on drastic changes within Chassidic society and tradition as a consequence of the Holocaust.

Thus, the artistically rendered testimony concerning the Strasshof deportation in Eliach's collection, through its positioning in the overall thematic structure of the book as a unique yet crucial story, exposes one of the central paradoxes of the Strasshof deportation which all the testifiers registered and somehow encoded into their accounts. This paradox has to do with the fact that a certain amount of normalcy could be retained during the experience of the Viennese forced labour, which was truly unique in the Holocaust. The consciously literary testimonies are crucial for my research not only because – like Eliach's rendition of the testimony concerning the Berkowitz family – they highlight as well as bring into focus many crucial features of the Holocaust, but also because they illuminate those special literary techniques that all witnesses rely on to various degrees while testifying. Therefore, literary trauma texts help us to develop a general tool kit for analysing all trauma texts, especially those concerning massive human-made social traumas.

On 7 June 1944, the mayor of Vienna requested Hungarian Jewish forced labourers from the head of the Reich Main Security Office to work in the war industry.<sup>19</sup> This, in combination with Rezső Kasztner's negotiations with Adolf Eichmann, is probably the reason why some Jews from the Hungarian provinces were not deported to Auschwitz but were sent to labour camps in the vicinity of Vienna and in the city itself.<sup>20</sup> Between 25 and 28 June 1944, five trainloads of Jews from four deportation centres (Baja, Debrecen, Szeged, and Szolnok) in southern Hungary, a total of 15,011 people, were transported to the Strasshof camp near Vienna.<sup>21</sup> By the time of the deportation, the ghettoised Jewish families were no longer intact. As the majority of Jewish men of military age had already been drafted for forced labour within the framework of the Hungarian army, the deported families predominantly consisted of women, children, and elderly people.

Even though many survivors related bits and pieces of information and rumours about the selection process for the Strasshof transports in the four entrainment centres, we actually know very little about it. However, we do know that as a result of this process, many large families with a great number of children together with elderly

19 Brief des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, an den Bürgermeister von Wien, SS-Brigadeführer Blaschke vom 30. Juni 1944, Dok. 3803-PS, in: Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof, Vol. XXXIII, Nuremberg 1947, 168-169.

20 Judit Molnár, Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók. Válogatott tanulmányok a magyar holokauszt történetéből [Gendarmes, Officials, and Jews. Selected Studies from the History of the Hungarian Holocaust], Szeged 2000, 194-197.

21 The data concerning the number of the deportees was provided by Edith Csillag, a deportee herself, who worked in the camp office (DEGOB testimony No. 3628), cited in: Kinga Frojimovics/Éva Kovács, Jews in a 'Judenrein' City. Hungarian Jewish Slave Laborers in Vienna (1944–1945), in: Hungarian Historical Review 4 (2015) 3, 706-736. On Szeged and the Strasshof deportation, see: Judit Molnár, Embermentés vagy árulás? A Kasztner-akció szegedi vonatkozásai [Rescue or Treason? The Kasztner Action as Seen from Szeged], in: Judit Molnár, Csendőrök, hivatalnokok, zsidók, 183-197, here 191-197. See also: Szabolcs Szita, Utak a pokolból. Magyar deportáltak az anektált Ausztriában, 1944–1945 [The Way Out of Hell. Hungarian Deportees in Annexed Austria, 1944–1945], Budapest 1991, 41-45.

family members were taken to Strasshof. Furthermore, unlike in the case of the overwhelming majority of Hungarian Jews who were deported to Auschwitz, the children and the elderly who had been deported to Strasshof stood a chance of surviving as there was no initial selection upon arrival in the Strasshof camp, and because in most cases the families arriving together were allowed to stay together and so the family members were able to help one another. Thanks to these circumstances, the majority of the Jews deported to Strasshof survived.

The majority of the Jews who had been deported to Strasshof from the Hungarian provinces learnt after the war at the latest how 'lucky' they had been compared to the overwhelming majority of the Jews from the Hungarian provinces who had been deported to Auschwitz.<sup>22</sup> This effectively silenced the survivors of the Strasshof deportation for years and resulted in the story of the Strasshof deportation becoming marginal within the history of the Holocaust. This process was aided by the phenomenon that historians were not much interested in this topic for a long time as it did not primarily involve the most shocking features of the Holocaust: death camps and mass murder. The survivors' continued awareness of the marginality of the entire story of the Viennese forced labour also renders the testimonies as special test cases for historical analysis.

The stories the former child forced labourers of the Strasshof deportation told are unique partly because the survivors describe the ghettos and the entrainment centres of Hungary more emphatically and, in many cases, in more detail than the deportees who later arrived in Auschwitz did, as the horrors of the death camp did not cancel out for them the initial shocks of their first places of captivity.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the testimonies of Strasshof deportees focussed more on social issues arising between the deportees who had remained together, especially on the changing relationships among family members. They usually recounted, sometimes merely implied, the testifiers' changing feelings towards their mothers and siblings and the types of work as well as other tasks that each family member had to do in order to survive.

All of the features mentioned above characterise the testimony that I will analyse in depth in what follows.<sup>24</sup> A close reading of this testimony reveals the kinds of information one can gain from such a source and how testimonies of children and adolescents can often be extremely useful for historical research, in some cases precisely because of their foci of interest. I was able to claim many of my points through the analysis, because they resonate with a large number of other testimonies concerning the Strasshof deportation, including the linguistically more conscious literary/artistic testimonies.

The testimony itself is not typical insofar as it is among the few testimonies that were given by child survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, in this case in the Aschau children's camp in which 23 teenage boys born between 1927 and 1932 wrote testimonies in the form of compositions. Most of the testimonies have uniform titles, but some were left untitled. The testimonies arrived in the archives of the Central Historical Commission of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Munich and are now stored in Yad Vashem.<sup>25</sup> Eight of these testimonies were given

22 Mária Ember, for example, emphasised this in many of her testimonial works and interviews.

23 This is the main reason why Mária Ember's memoir-novel was so influential after its publication in 1975: Gábor Gyáni, *Hungarian Memory of the Holocaust in Hungary*, in: Randolph L. Braham/András Kovács (ed.), *The Holocaust in Hungary. Seventy Years Later*, Budapest 2016, 215-230, 227-228.

24 Yad Vashem Archives (YVA), M-1/E 162.

25 YVA, M-1/E 147-M-1/E 169.

in Hungarian and the rest in Yiddish. The boys from Kibbutz Atid wrote their accounts in Yiddish while seven boys belonging to Kibbutz She'ifa testified in Hungarian. There is an eighth testimony in Hungarian from a boy who belonged to Kibbutz Avoda. His testimony was presumably given separately, but the other seven boys writing in Hungarian wrote their compositions at the same time and in the same place, apparently in a classroom setting. This is suggested by the fact that it is possible to observe a certain group dynamic playing itself out within the testimonies.<sup>26</sup> Some of the boys (who were related to one another or lived in the same region before the Wehrmacht occupied Hungary) undoubtedly communicated with each other as they wrote the beginning of their testimonies. The boys probably discussed the project with one another at first as well as most likely with the respective authority figure: a teacher or youth group leader. Most of the testimonies began with the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht.

Certain pieces of information, especially the dates that are included in the beginning of the compositions, such as the date of the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht and the date of the decree about wearing the yellow star, are stated uniformly. It is easily conceivable that the information was discussed or even written on the blackboard.<sup>27</sup> Two boys made the same pun in similar sentences. Despite these similarities, however, we can observe a point in each of the testimonies after which the witnesses got sucked into their own story and stopped communicating with one another.

MLG's<sup>28</sup> testimony is long compared to the other testimonies written by the youngsters in the Aschau group. MLG's clear handwriting indicates that the testimony was written with much care. It is obvious that he took the assignment to write his testimony as a composition very seriously. He did not structure his composition using paragraphs, but utilised all the available space of the three pages, which he filled. I have translated the testimony from the original Hungarian into English. Since the analysis of the testimony focusses on its language usage, I took care to stay as close to the Hungarian original as possible. Therefore, wherever the text is awkward, strange, or grammatically incorrect in English, this is a deliberate reflection of the original Hungarian text. For example, in order to make the translation understandable, I had to insert some punctuation. However, when the punctuation is part of the original Hungarian text and it has a significance, I call attention to it. Naturally, the analyses are based on the Hungarian original.

From the heading we see that MLG was born at the end of November 1930, so he was thirteen and a half when ghettoised and deported. The Hebrew acronym "BH" [B'ezrat haShem, Hebrew for "with G-d's help"] written in the top right-hand corner of all three pages shows immediately that MLG was deeply religious.

26 Concerning the testimonies given in the Aschau Children Camp and for an in-depth analysis of three of them, see: Boaz Cohen/Rita Horváth, Young Witnesses in the DP camps. Children's Holocaust Testimony in Context, in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11 (2012) 1, 103-125, Rita Horváth/Katalin Zana, Trauma és szelf-narratíva. Gyerek holokauszt-túlélők tanúvallomásainak interdiszciplináris elemzése [Trauma and Self-Narrative. An Interdisciplinary Study of Child Survivors' Holocaust Testimonies], in: *Lélekelemzés* 2 (2013), 230-256, and Rita Horváth, Moving Forward or Being Trapped in Repetition. The DP Experience in Holocaust Child Survivors' Testimonies, in: Sabine Aschauer-Smolik/Mario Steidl (ed.), *Tamid Kadima – Heading Forward. Jewish Exodus out of Europe 1945–1948, Vienna 2010*, 317-325.

27 YVA, M-1/E 161: This is conceivable, even though some of the students got some of the data wrong. ML, for example, wrote April instead of March.

28 In this article, I refer to the testifiers by their initials.

“M1 E-162

1946

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

Testifier: M. L. G.

Born: 21 November 1930

Education: eight classes of elementary school

From Szarvas (a small town in Hungary); his pre-war address is included.

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

On 19 March 1944,<sup>29</sup> Sunday, in the late afternoon, the Germans occupied Hungary. From this moment on, we were terrified very much. They were always putting in effect new laws after new laws. On 5 April 1944, they issued the law about wearing the yellow star. On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?]<sup>30</sup> forced into ghettos. My Daddy was drafted for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not report for duty on the second day of Pesach, but only on the third day of Pesach. He was still able to observe the two Seder nights at home. When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad. The ghetto was very dirty. They took us to a chateau.<sup>31</sup> It was possible to leave the ghetto very rarely. Later, we were concentrated [the official word of the contemporary Hungarian administration] into Jewish houses. Until 19 May 1944, I was in the ghetto. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, they wanted to tear away our [initially MLG wrote “my,” then he wrote “our” over it] Mummy from us. For the chief constable there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. Therefore th [this th(at) is crossed out] because we were relatively well-to-do. They wanted to tear away Mummy. But we, kids, started to cry and implore, and that gendarme sergeant who came for Mummy was a very good man. And they did not tear Mummy away from us. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. When we boarded the [cattle] car, the inhabitants of the town made the announcement that that there are no return trips. When we arrived in Szolnok in a shaken up state, then came a bunch of policemen. They made us disembark the [cattle] cars. Where we got out of the [cattle] cars. There was a large pit. And the policemen made the announcement that if they saw a torn banknote then they would shoot [the person] there into the pit. We carried the heavy baggage on our shoulders and the policemen were hitting us. When we arrived in that designated sugar factory, then we saw that they were throwing many corpses rolled in white [cloth] into a large pit. Then I was overcome by such a bad feeling that it is not even possible to record it. When we arrived there was a heavy rain and [a lot of] puddles. And just outside [under the open free sky], beside the latrines, there was room [for us] to settle

29 The following formulation of the date is closer to the original: On the 19<sup>th</sup> of the third month, 1944. However, I think that the small differences concerning the formulation of the dates do not carry discernible additional information. They are chiefly due to linguistic conventions, so I made their rendering uniform in my translation.

30 Because of the Hungarian grammar rules, in many places of the testimony it is impossible to know whether MLG was signifying himself alone or referring to an “us”.

31 This has been identified as the Bolzor chateau. On the ghetto in Szarvas and the entrainment centres in the area, see the relevant entries in: Guy Miron/Shlomit Shulhani (ed.), *The Yad Vashem Encyclopedia of the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, Vols. I-II, Jerusalem 2009.

in. In Szolnok, they were hitting us constantly. We did not receive any food, we ate only what we brought with us from home and what we got by begging. When we were there for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two transports. The first is the more favourable one. We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been drafted, got into the more favourable transport. On a Saturday, we were seated in [cattle] cars and we went to Strasshof. We were disinfected in Strasshof, and after spending two days there, we left Strasshof [there is a mistake, as he wrote: into Strasshof]. From Strasshof, we were taken to Vienna and there we were handed over to a school janitor. We arrived in Sollenau on a Saturday. The mayor [of Sollenau] appointed a jup [sic, 'Jupo', from 'Judenpolizei', a Jewish policeman] from among us. When we arrived there, it was spring. On Monday, we already started to work. We were scraping bricks [made them reusable] for three months and we built houses. And we went to bring [roofing] tiles with automobiles. In the summer, we threshed. In the spring, the food was still bad [probably meaning not enough and of poor quality]. But when we went to the threshing machine, then the food was better. 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were five of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not work. Mummy, my younger brother and I worked. All three of us worked with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]. To a weaving factory owner named Richter. We were building a bunker for seven weeks. Then we went down to the cold weaving factory. Mummy and my sibling were assigned to a textile weaving machine. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. On the day near the liberation, he called the jup and showed him a pistol and bullets, and said that he had received this in order to shoot us. However, he will not shoot us, but we should flee to the woods. But we knew that he was saying this because he was afraid. [He was afraid] that we would betray how bad he was and that he stole the grub<sup>32</sup> from us and hit us. In spite of the fact that he had told us (in connection to the revolver), we did not flee and since he saw this, he took us into the building of the village council. After being there for 2 days, on 2 April 1945, the Russians liberated us. We arrived in Hungary after much difficulty. My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, but unfortunately our Daddy was lost. When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement."

First of all, it is informative to pay attention to the distribution of emotionally charged words, phrases, and statements alongside the distribution of official words, by which I mean words that MLG borrowed from official contemporary terminology. MLG sometimes stated his emotions directly, through which he introduced a layer of evaluation into the text, but in many cases, the emotions are encoded into repetitions, qualifications (by adjectives and/or adverbs), time concepts, parallel

32 This is translated from a similar slang word in Hungarian: "kaja". In other places, MLG uses a nicer word belonging to a higher register: "koszt" to signify food. When he happily remembered enough food, he enumerated the types: milk, bread and fruits. In two places, he employed the verb "eat".

structures, opposites, and so on. In what follows, I did not mark the emotional words signifying MLG's parents, because they constitute a self-contained parallel structure. I will concentrate on that structure separately in the next section of this article. The use of some official terms, such as "ghetto" and "[cattle] car", seem inevitable, but even these terms are significant, as other terms that also seem inevitable, like "Lager" or "camp", are not used, even though Strasshof, the Wohnlager, and Theresienstadt were routinely named as such. In the following, I used UPPER CASE letters to designate emotional terms and *bold italics* to designate official terms. There are two sub-categories of EMOTIONAL TERMS, so I used BOLD UPPER CASE LETTERS to designate directly reported emotions introducing evaluation into the testimony and regular UPPER CASE LETTERS to designate the otherwise marked emotionally charged words.

"How did I pull through the times of the German regime."<sup>33</sup>

On 19 March 1944, Sunday, in the late afternoon, the *Germans occupied Hungary*. FROM THIS MOMENT ON, WE WERE TERRIFIED VERY MUCH. They were ALWAYS *putting in effect NEW laws* after NEW laws.<sup>34</sup> On 5 April 1944, they *issued the law about wearing the yellow star*. On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?] FORCED INTO *ghettos*. My Daddy was *drafted* for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not *report for duty* on the second day of Pesach, BUT ONLY on the third day of Pesach.<sup>35</sup> He was STILL able to observe the two Seder nights at home. When on 15 April they took us [me?] to the *ghetto*. I BECAME VERY SAD. The *ghetto* was VERY dirty. They took us to a chateau. It was possible to leave the *ghetto* VERY rarely. Later, we were *concentrated* into Jewish houses. Until 19 May 1944, I was in the *ghetto*. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, they wanted to TEAR AWAY our [initially MLG wrote "my," then he wrote "our" over it] Mummy from us. For the *chief constable* there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. Therefore th [this th(at) is crossed out] because we were relatively well-to-do.<sup>36</sup> They wanted to TEAR AWAY Mummy. But we, kids, started to CRY and IMPLORE, and THAT *gendarme sergeant* who came for Mummy was A VERY GOOD man. And they did not TEAR Mummy AWAY from us. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. When we boarded the [cattle] *car*, the inhabitants of the town made the announcement that that there are no return trips. When we arrived in Szolnok IN A SHAKEN UP STATE, then came a bunch of policemen. They *made us*

33 It is a uniform title. Two other testimonies from the Aschau Hungarian-language testimonies have the same titles: M-1/E 163 and M-1/E 164. Two of them (M-1/E 161 and M-1/E 165) have no title, but exactly the same format as the three having the title: "How did I pull through the times of the German regime." Moreover, even though it is ungrammatical in Hungarian to place punctuation signs after titles, all three boys who used the uniform title did so. A boy who survived in Budapest ended the title with an exclamation mark (M-1/E 164) and two of the boys who had been deported to Strasshof ended the titles with a full stop (M-1/E 162 and M-1/E 163). Therefore, these unusual punctuation marks are emotionally significant.

34 The use of the word "always" and the repetition of the word "new" emphasises that there were many unexpected and unprecedented laws.

35 Emotion is obviously encoded into the repetition of the days of Pesach too. This refusal to shorten the sentence is a linguistic and psychological means to linger on the festive time during which the family was intact and the boy was still together with his father.

36 This full stop is completely ungrammatical and seems like an unconscious means to stop the threatening rush of emotions causing unbearable tension by artificial grammatical means.

*disembark*<sup>37</sup> the [cattle] *cars*. Where we got out [even though the word “disembark” is repeated here, in its active form it does not sound as official as in its causative form. That is why I have translated it with the less official “got out” in the second place] of the [cattle] *cars*. There was a LARGE PIT. And the policemen made the announcement that if they saw a torn banknote then they would shoot [the person] there into the PIT. We CARRIED [the connotation of the Hungarian word is that they carried the baggage with much difficulty] the HEAVY baggage on our shoulders and the policemen were hitting us. When we arrived in that *designated sugar factory*, then we saw that they were throwing many corpses rolled in white [cloth] into a LARGE PIT.<sup>38</sup> Then I WAS OVERCOME BY SUCH A BAD FEELING THAT IT IS NOT EVEN POSSIBLE TO RECORD IT. When we arrived there was a HEAVY rain and [a lot of] puddles. And JUST outside [under the open free sky], beside the latrines, was there room [for us] to settle in. In Szolnok, they were hitting us CONSTANTLY. We did not receive any food, we ate ONLY what we brought with us from home and what we got by BEGGING. When we were there for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two *transports*. The first is the more favourable one. We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been *drafted*, got into the more favourable *transport*. On a Saturday, we were seated in [cattle] *cars* and we went to Strasshof. We were *disinfected* in Strasshof, and after spending two days there, we left Strasshof [there is a mistake, as he wrote: into Strasshof]. From Strasshof, we were taken to Vienna and there we were handed over to a school janitor. We arrived in Sollenau on a Saturday. The mayor [of Sollenau] appointed a *jup* [sic, “Jupo”, from “Judenpolizei”, a Jewish policeman] from among us. When we arrived there, it was spring. On Monday, we ALREADY started to work. We were scraping bricks for [the duration of] three months<sup>39</sup> and we built houses. And we went to bring [roofing] tiles with automobiles. In the summer, we threshed. In the spring, the food was STILL bad [probably signifying not enough and of poor quality]. But when we went to the threshing machine, then the food was better. 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were 5 of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not WORK. Mummy, my younger brother, and I WORKED. All three of us WORKED with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken AWAY. TO TEREZIENSTADT. AND we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]. To a weaving factory owner named Richter. We were building a *bunker* for seven weeks. Then we went down to the COLD weaving factory. Mummy and my sibling were assigned to a textile weaving machine. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. On the day near *the liberation*, he called the *jup* and showed him a pistol and bullets, and said

37 This sounds more official than usual, but it is open to debate whether this represents a real official term or not.

38 I marked the word “pit” because it is repeated three times within six lines and twice it is qualified by the adjective “large”.

39 The phrase “for three months” appears twice in the testimony. However, in the first instance in the Hungarian, it is more emphatic than in the second: “for the duration of three months” versus “for three months”. The added stress can only be seen in the comparison.

that he had received this in order to shoot us. However, he will not shoot us, but we should flee to the woods. But we knew that he was saying this because he was afraid. [He was afraid] that we would betray how bad he was and that he stole the grub from us and hit us. In spite of the fact that he had told us (in connection to the revolver), we did not flee and since he saw this, he took us into the building of the *village council*. After being there for 2 days, on 2 April 1945, *the Russians liberated us*. We arrived in Hungary after MUCH DIFFICULTY. My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, but UNFORTUNATELY our Daddy was LOST. When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist Movement.”

Examining the phrases designated by UPPER CASE LETTERS and *bold italics*, we can observe that they are clustered together in the first part of the testimony. More precisely, the consciously evaluating emotional utterances together with indirectly emotionally charged words are clustered together with official phrases. This demonstrates that the main source of MLG’s overwhelming negative emotions (fear, anger, helplessness, and so on) springs from the official actions in Hungary and their consequences. Furthermore, the fact that he uses mainly words drawn from Hungarian official vocabulary rather than the German terminology indicates that he associates the main harm done to them officially with the Hungarian authorities. Therefore, official terms as MLG employed them in the testimony signify deep emotions as clearly as the otherwise emotionally charged words and phrases. In other words, official language use itself is emotionally strongly charged.

The distribution of the official words alongside the otherwise emotionally charged words and the fact that MLG used mostly the Hungarian official terms also indicate that the centre of his Holocaust trauma is Hungary. The most traumatic part of MLG’s Holocaust experience happened in Hungary and was perpetrated by Hungarian officials. This is a typical opinion among the Strasshof deportees.

As opposed to the first part of the testimony, in the second part, in which MLG related his experience as a forced labourer in Vienna and its vicinity, there are much fewer official words and the indirectly emotionally charged words are mainly related to food, work, and working conditions. However, the fact that the deportees lived in constant mortal dread is indicated by the fact that the ending of each phase of the experience as well as the liberation together with the consequences are again described using many emotional words.

Since both textual and psychological forces are complex, it is not possible to mark all the places in the testimony that carry extra emotional charge. Directly reported emotions introducing evaluation into the text are easy to mark, whereas it is harder to point out the significant emotional phrases that are otherwise signalled. In order to decide which ones to mark, I had to compare the carrier phrases to one another according to the intensity of the emotions they convey, the topic they are connected to, the method of carrying extra emotions, and their roles in the structural patterns of the text. Repetitions, for example, regularly carry extra emotional charge. Usually they interrupt the flow of the testimony by delaying the rushing of memories, sometimes they are employed as a means of stressing something of importance, and sometimes, repetitions are chiefly engaged in order to make sure that certain pieces of information are rendered precisely. These are merely a few typical possibilities.

There are also grammar mistakes carrying extra emotional charge, such as the grammatically incorrect placing of full stops. In MLG’s writing there are quite a few instances of that, such as: “When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad.”; “Where we got out of the [cattle] cars. There was a large pit.” The in-

sersion of the grammatically incorrect full stop indicates how much the testifier did not want to go on remembering. The Theresienstadt part is not actually grammatically incorrect in Hungarian, but the language is especially choppy, which also suggests emotional overcharge.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, there are also unbearable emotions condensed into uneven parallel structures, such as “My Mummy and we, the four siblings, remained alive, **BUT UNFORTUNATELY** our Daddy was LOST.” The opposite of “remained alive” is “died” and not “was lost”. However, the youngster could not bring himself to write that down. Moreover, much emotion is encoded into the fact that in the penultimate sentence of the testimony, he showed himself as a part of a group of survivors (he included himself twice: first in the group of the four siblings and then in the group of the family consisting of the mother and the four siblings together) and opposed this with the loss of the father, who was lost alone. The last sentence then features him completely alone: “When *I arrived home*, after a few days of being home, *I joined* the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement.” [*Italics are mine for emphasis*] He portrayed himself alone, cut off from his family, like his father, but made a choice and joined a new community. It is telling, though, that his words do not emphasise the communal nature of this new community, but the “movement away from something” aspect is stressed. However, because textual signs and processes are complex and overdetermined, the fact that even the name of the religious Zionist movement is connected to being a son of a heroic and dead father figure makes the ending especially emotionally complex and torturous.

MLG’s decision to move actively away (from his former home to make Aliya) stands in stark opposition to the fact that he was previously the passive victim of being dragged away from his home. This comes moreover after portraying his father as a hero who resisted being passively dragged away (from the family home to forced labour) as long as it was meaningful in religious terms. Furthermore, his entry into the Bnei Akiba Movement, which led him away from his former home, is presented in opposition to the twice-mentioned word “home”, in which he was emphatically alone after his father’s death. The loss of his father amounted to loneliness, which the survival of the other members of his family did not alleviate.

MLG’s age, just over 13, and the fact that he should have been the religious leader of his family in the absence of his father according to the tradition he observed, alerts us to the existence of an only implicitly indicated, silent trauma centre in the text concerning power relationships and ideological conflicts within the family. In addition, it is also implied that leaving his family signified abandoning his religious duty towards his family. This is a silent trauma centre in the testimony; and it is presented in stark opposition to the actions of the father, who stayed with the family longer than was permitted in order to perform his religious duties.

In conclusion, the entire testimony is emotionally charged – in fact, it is flooded with emotions. A number of trauma centres emerge in the writing. Moreover, the differences in the levels of being overwhelmed by emotions and the various ways through which emotions and their intensity are encoded into the text reveal patterns registering information concerning the events about which the witness was testifying.

By focussing on two emotional centres of the testimony that are both connected to MLG’s parents, we learn much about the boy’s way of thinking and a crucial aspect

40 “Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau].” The full stop ending the title can signify multiple feelings. It can serve as a declaration of the seriousness of MLG’s attempt to commit his experiences to writing, it can have a calming effect, but it can also convey his reluctance to go on remembering.

of the long-term damage that the historical trauma of the Holocaust caused within the surviving family members. Typically of the Strasshof deportation, the relationship between the surviving mother and her teenage children became deeply scarred.<sup>41</sup>

One of the major organising themes of the testimony, i.e. his relationship with his parents, is connected to MLG's deep religiosity. He described with pride and much emotion his father's religious/spiritual resistance (*Amidah*).<sup>42</sup> MLG presented his father's observance as a form of laudable resistance.<sup>43</sup>

MLG wrote about his parents by setting up a parallel structure: by juxtaposing them. His father is shown as a heroically active saviour figure who offered resistance. The father was able to help his family even in his absence: "We, because there were four kids *and my Daddy had been drafted*, got into the more favourable transport." [*Italics are mine for emphasis*] By contrast, the mother is shown as a passively dependent figure in constant need of rescue.

Moreover, even though one of the major threats related by the testimony is the fear of separation from the mother, MLG closed his testimony by relating his decision to separate from his mother and family by leaving for Israel. All of these pieces of information signal a long-term traumatising affecting his relationship with his mother, which is typical of teenage survivors of the Strasshof deportation.<sup>44</sup>

The parallel structure into which the text organises MLG's relationship to his parents needs to be observed together with the alternating passive and active voice and paying special attention to the use of possessive pronouns. In the following, I marked the presence or absence of possessive pronouns with *bold italics*. Whenever possessive pronouns were used in the text in connection to the parents, I marked them with *bold italics*, and whenever they were missing I marked their absence with *bold italics* for the letters or signs bordering the absence on each side. The use of *regular italics* designates text concerning MLG's father and UPPER CASE LETTERS mark text concerning his mother.

[...] On 15 April 1944, we were [or I was?] forced into ghettos. *My Daddy was drafted for the second day of Pesach, 1944. He did not report for duty on the second day of Pesach, but only on the third day of Pesach. He was still able to observe the two Seder nights at home.* When, on 15 April, they took us [me?] to the ghetto. I became very sad. [...] Until 19 May 1944, I was in the ghetto. On 15 May, they took us to Szolnok. Still before they took us to Szolnok, THEY WANTED TO TEAR AWAY *our* [[*initially MLG wrote "my," then he wrote "our" over it*]] MUMMY FROM US. For the chief constable there commanded that all the relatively well-to-do Jews should be taken to Szolnok separately from their children. THEREFORE TH [THIS TH(AT) IS CROSSED OUT] BECAUSE WE WERE RELATIVELY WELL-TO-DO. THEY WANTED TO TEAR AWAY MUMMY. BUT WE, KIDS, STARTED TO CRY AND IMPLORE, AND THAT GENDARME SERGEANT

41 See this very emphatically in Mária Ember's memoir-novels: Ember, *Hajtúkanyar*, and *El a faluból* [Out of the Village], Budapest 2002.

42 Amos Goldberg analysed the historiographical importance of Yehuda Bauer's conceptualisation of "Amidah", see: Amos Goldberg, *The History of the Jews in the Ghettos. A Cultural Perspective*, in: Dan Stone (ed.), *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, New York 2012, 79-100, 84. Recently, researchers became especially interested in a special category of "Amidah", i.e. spiritual/religious resistance. On religious/spiritual resistance, see: Esther Farbstein/Dan Michman, "Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust" and its Meaning. Some Theoretical Observations, in: *Dapim. Leheker Tekufat Hashoa* 12 (1995), 7-41.

43 The only other kind of resistance mentioned in the testimony is the fact that mere days before the liberation, the group of forced labourers did not obey their civil superior who tried to trick them.

44 This is one of the most painfully dominant themes in Mária Ember's and Pál Bárdos's memoir-novels.

WHO CAME FOR MUMMY WAS A VERY GOOD MAN. AND THEY DID NOT TEAR MUMMY AWAY FROM US. [...] When we were there [in the entrainment centre in Szolnok] for a day, a rumour was spreading that there would be two transports. The first is the more favourable one. *We, because there were four kids and my Daddy had been drafted, got into the more favourable transport.* [...] 5 times a day we got food at the threshing machine. There were five of us, and my younger sister and youngest brother did not work. MUMMY, MY YOUNGER BROTHER AND I WORKED. All three of us worked with the threshing machine. There, at the machine, there were such quantities of bread milk and fruits that it was enough not only for my siblings but also for the old people who were there. [...] MUMMY AND MY SIBLING WERE ASSIGNED TO A TEXTILE WEAVING MACHINE. And I [was assigned] to a terry clothes weaving machine. We worked in the weaving factory for 3 months. [...] We arrived in Hungary after much difficulty. *My MUMMY AND WE, THE FOUR SIBLINGS, REMAINED ALIVE, but unfortunately our Daddy was lost.* When I arrived home, after a few days of being home, I joined the Bnei Akiba Zionist movement.

In their testimonies, many child and young adolescent survivors of the Strasshof deportation talked or wrote about, or at least implied, a conflict mainly with their mothers, which was felt intensely and painfully in the post-war reality. This had much to do with the events and circumstances of the Strasshof deportation, specifically with the conditions of forced labour, the provision of food, and the social interactions between the deportees in the camps. Many of the testimonies – like the one I analysed above – present pieces of information implying conflict in those parts of the texts in which work, food provision, and the responsibilities of the forced labourer family members are described. Moreover, MLG's testimony as well as Mária Ember's memoir-novel emphatically connect the conflict with their mothers to the painful topic of resistance.

Since children's testimonies generally pay more attention to family dynamics than those of adults in the Holocaust and its aftermath, and because the story of the Viennese forced labour of Jews deported from Hungary include family dynamics as many families were able to stay together, we here have a chance to learn about this special issue within the history of the Holocaust.

Moreover, for a longer period than in most other theatres of the Holocaust, even though the circumstances endured by the deportees were extreme, the victims retained enough fragments of normalcy and familiarity (however minuscule) to establish a hermeneutic framework. This hermeneutic framework, even fragments of it, was needed for understanding and interpreting one's reality. This is certainly not true for every testifying Strasshof survivor, but more survivor children and adolescents of the Strasshof deportation experienced remaining fragments of orienting normalcy than did deportees who were transported to other places.

The testimony about the survival of the large Chassidic Berkowitz family during the Strasshof deportation that is included in Yaffa Eliach's *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust* epitomises exactly this crucial aspect of the experience of the Hungarian Jews of the Viennese forced labour in 1944/1945. *The Holy Book* is the only traditional Chassidic tale in the entire collection, in the sense that it perpetuates the traditional Chassidic values in an unchanged manner, as the Berkowitz family was able to observe their Chassidic tradition without fundamental changes due to the circumstances of the Strasshof deportation.

The tale about the Berkowitzes perpetuates traditional Chassidic patriarchal family structures and unchanged power relationships within the family unit. Furthermore, it even features a physical continuity in the form of the possession of a holy family heirloom. By contrast, in the overwhelming majority of the other Chassidic tales in Eliach's collection about the Holocaust, merely the memory or a mental image of significant religious objects assist the survival of individuals and help perpetuating basic Chassidic values. Whereas all the other testimonies in Eliach's collection demonstrate enormous changes in Chasidic society in every imaginable respect (such as the role of women, power relationships within the family and religious communities), the family depicted in *The Holy Book* remains not only alive but completely unchanged, as enough vestiges of normalcy were retained during the experience of the Strasshof deportation.

As an example of a fragment of normalcy resulting in the retention of intact pieces of a valid hermeneutic framework for the deportees, it is sufficient to call attention to MLG's emphasis on feeding the elderly people during their agricultural work in Sollenau. MLG mentioned old non-working people living with the workers. He wrote that, whenever possible, the workers provided food not only for their dependent family members, but also for other people, the elderly in this case, who could not work. He therefore implied that the minimum aim was to feed family members but, whenever possible, a wider social safety net was in place. These social activities together with larger family units being together were remaining fragments of the normal world allowing the survivors of the Strasshof deportation to understand and evaluate their experiences during and after the Holocaust.

In this respect, it is crucial that after writing about these particular vestiges of normalcy (the family unit, enough food, and helping other dependents), MLG had difficulties in reporting the end of that comparatively normal time period. He needed to report that many of the deportees, fourteen members of the group, were taken to Theresienstadt. The text shows that because of the relative normalcy of the period, MLG was tempted to use a normal, active term to denote leaving Sollenau. "There were 36 [of us] at Sollenau. Out of the thirty-six people, 22 wen [went is incomplete and crossed out] were taken away. To Theresienstadt. And we were taken to the weaving factory there [in Sollenau]." MLG almost wrote down the active verb "went", but then he crossed that out and wrote the more accurate passive form: they "were taken away".

In addition, the passage describing the relatively normal period is full of delays signifying the terrible way it ended: 22 people, who had helped one another and made up a sort of a community, were deported to a truly dreadful place, Theresienstadt. First, the original number was repeated unnecessarily, then, MLG closed the sentence with "22 were taken away" and a full stop. After the full stop, he added the destination as a separate sentence. Even though sentences without verbs are grammatically correct in Hungarian, they make the text both choppy and laconic. It signi-

fies the witness's continuous awareness of the fact that compared to the fate of those people, MLG and his family had been extremely lucky once again.<sup>45</sup>

The analyses of child testimonies including the above analysis concerning MLG's testimonial composition, thus far demonstrate that by contrast to the utter terror of the period of ghettoization and entrainment of the Jews in Hungary, the period of forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity contained vestiges of normalcy. For the majority of the children who gave testimonies, the period of the Viennese forced labour contained processable and interpretable information until near its end. Many testimonies, such as the one MLG wrote, reveal that terror ruled again in the final period as well as in the aftermath in the form of irrevocable losses.

Since children's testimonies concentrate on family dynamics more than those of adults, we can learn more about the facts concerning forced labour in Vienna and its vicinity and everything in connection to it by relying on the memories of children. MLG's testimony demonstrates clearly that the testimonies of child forced labourers are surprisingly rich sources of information.

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<sup>45</sup> Obviously, MLG wrote his testimony knowing much more than the forced labourers actually knew during the experience. By the time he wrote his testimony, he knew about Theresienstadt, which became much worse as a consequence of being the destination of many deportees towards the end of the war. MLG wrote this part of the testimony knowing what Theresienstadt was, just as he wrote the entire testimony knowing about Auschwitz. The inevitable phenomenon of mixing contemporary and later knowledge while testifying is encoded in the especially sophisticated timelines, time schemes, and timeframes of memoir-novels, such as Kertész's *Fatelessness* (Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness*, New York 2004) and Ember's *Hairpin Bend*. Some of the delays in MLG's testimony reveal the knowledge received later about the meaning of being deported to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. The deportees must have been anxious also then about staying in Sollenau, where a relatively normal period occurred. It must have seemed safer than being "taken away", but certain knowledge about the other destination of deportation came later. In a memoir, the witness has to juggle and juxtapose all the layers of existing knowledge and the lack of it. According to Anna Menyhért, their special time scheme is one of the basic characteristics of trauma narratives: Menyhért, *Trauma Theory*, 173.

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