

Dapei Keshet

Beit Theresienstadt Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association

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Children Write in the Ghetto



From a collection of essays by Czech speaking girls L410



THERESIENSTADT MARTYRS REMEMBRANCE ASSOCIATION

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Events Calendar לוח אירועים

10.10.2018 Wednesday 17:00	21.11.2018 Wednesday 17:00	23.11.2018 Friday 10:00	5.12.2018 Wednesday 15:00	9.12.2018 Sunday 18:00
Launching of the book "My Dorm and I" Theresienstadt 1941-1945	"Sounds of hope" Concert marking 77 years since establishment of the Theresienstadt ghetto, conducted by Dan Rapoport	Opening event of the exhibition in memory of Ruth Bondy	"Theresienstadt League" memorial tournament	Intergenerational conference Launching the diary of Ruth Meisner
Goethe Institute, Tel Aviv	Ruppiner Academic Center	Beit Theresienstadt	Beit Theresienstadt and the Givat Haim Ihud soccer stadium	Beit Theresienstadt

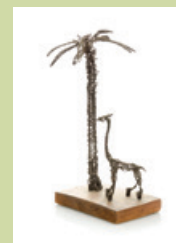
For details and registration:

Tel: 972-4-6398928, info@bterezin.org.il

The Beit Theresienstadt Archives are taking a step forward!

At present we are starting for a large and significant project that involves upgrading Beit Theresienstadt's archive management system. The information system will make it possible to access the archives through Beit Theresienstadt's website. Many Holocaust institutes in Israel (Yad Vashem, Beit Lohamei Hagetaot, and others) are already using this information system satisfactorily.

The cost of the project is approximately 150,000 NIS. In order to raise this sum we are approaching various foundations, donors, and friends of the association. We would appreciate your help in implementing this project.



Mini-sculpture made of wire by blind sculptor Berthold Ordner at the Theresienstadt ghetto. From the archival collection.

All donations are very welcome!

To all members and friends of Beit Theresienstadt

I will open with important news, awaited by many. After years of hard work to computerize, record, and label the collections, we are now beginning the process of opening the archives to the public online. For this purpose we have purchased a new computer program and we would appreciate any donations to help expedite the process. The Beit Theresienstadt archives house special items and many documents and it is important that access to these be available to researchers and to anyone interested in these treasures. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that if you have in your possession historically significant documents or items from the time of the ghetto (as well as from previous or subsequent years) you are invited to deposit them at Beit Theresienstadt archives for safekeeping. The objects will be properly cared for and preserved in optimal conditions and will remain a testimony for future generations.

This month's Dapei Keshet newsletter is devoted to the children. The recent books published by Beit Theresienstadt were all associated with children, each in a different way. The diary of Ruth Haas (now Meisner) was written by an adolescent girl whose life circumstances changed indelibly, and she attempted to deal with the threatening maelstrom of events by writing a diary. Descriptions of life in the ghetto and of various events that occurred there are interspersed among the personal lines. The book is an interesting testimony that arouses identification and portrays a world of feelings and thoughts characteristic of a young girl. If not for the place and time it was written it could have been the normative diary of any adolescent girl. Another way of learning about life in the ghetto is provided by the book "My Dorm and I", which is in fact a collection of essays written by German speaking children in block L414. The essays written by the children, boys and girls aged 10-16, depict

a wide range of experiences from the ghetto. Humorous events of youthful playfulness are countered by feelings of longing for home, parents, and Sabbath Eve with the family. The third book published by Beit Theresienstadt, "Place of the Forgotten Children", is



based on a study that began with a memory book, one of those notebook where friends and classmates would write a small poem or several lines as a memento. This journal was written in the 1930s at a children's home in Frankfurt am Main that housed orphans and children whose parents were unable to raise them due to the circumstances. The residents of the home and its staff were sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto and most did not survive. In a study conducted over several years, Ronit Shimon and pastor Volker Mahnkopp gathered information about the children and staff of the Frankfurt children's home. The books are available in Hebrew, except for "My Dorm and I" which is in Hebrew and German.

Hana Weingarten passed away several months ago. Hana often came to Beit Theresienstadt to tell her story to visiting groups. She was one of the most energetic and optimistic women I have known. Her involvement in activities at Beit Theresienstadt was considerable and she showed interest in all events. Several years ago we came to her home in Ramat Aviv, the entire staff, and she told us about the war years in detail and at length. For us, it was an opportunity to ask all the questions we could think of, and an important experience.

Yours,
Tami Kinberg



We wish you a good year,
A year of health,
peace, and friendship.

Yours,
The Beit Theresienstadt team

Tauss Suzana, born 1927, Czechoslovakia, New Year greeting card 1943-1944, Theresienstadt

Event in Memory of Ruth Bondy and Michal Efrat, for International Women's Day

To mark International Women's Day in March 2018, a unique event was held at the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv in memory of Ruth Bondy and Michal Efrat – both among the founders of Beit Theresienstadt.

Tal Bashan, Ruth Bondy's daughter, spoke about her mother and about Czech women. Dorit Peled read aloud passages written by the late Ruth Bondy. Danny Kerman, who had known and worked with the two women, spoke about them as well as about his acquaintance with them and his great appreciation for their endeavors. Sara Zeira reminisced on her acquaintance with Michal Efrat, and Naama Gelbart entertained the audience with her songs. Czech ambassador Mr. Ivo Schwarz with his wife, honored us by participating. ■



Michal Efrat



Ruth Bondy



From the right: Nathan Steiner, Tal Bashan, Ivo and Eva Schwarz, Tami Kinberg, and Murray Greenfield

Holocaust Day Ceremony and Exhibition at the Ruppin Academic Center

This year Beit Theresienstadt initiated a collaboration with the Ruppin Academic Center. As part of this collaboration, the exhibition "Art and Medicine at the Theresienstadt Ghetto", consisting of sketches from 1942-1944, was presented at the college art gallery. In addition, Beit Theresienstadt took part in the college's Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony, attended by many students and faculty. During the ceremony, ghetto survivor Vera Meisels told her story to the large audience and was received with appreciation. ■



Invitation!

Join the members of the association

Second and third generation, we invite you to join Beit Theresienstadt and become members of the association.

Your assistance at this time is particularly important for furthering remembrance activities at Beit Theresienstadt.

"70th Anniversary" Treasures from Israeli Museums at the Knesset

As part of the many initiatives and events in honor of Israel's 70th anniversary, the Knesset hosted an exhibition showcasing the country's array of museums and their treasures. 70 museums took part and were asked to propose items for the exhibition curated by Prof. Dana Arieli.

Of the 5 items suggested by Beit Theresienstadt, three were chosen: the monopoly game (of which a copy is on permanent exhibition at Beit Theresienstadt), a stork made of cotton wool by an unknown child, and a mini-sculpture made of thin wires depicting a giraffe standing by a palm tree.

The story of the sculpture is special and interesting. It was created in the ghetto by sculptor Berthold Ordner who turned blind at a young age but continued to produce works of art.



Ordner was deported from Vienna to the Theresienstadt ghetto on September 11, 1942, at the age of 53. In the ghetto, he continued to sculpt and to work as an artist. He survived and was liberated at Theresienstadt. After the war he lived in London and continued his work as an artist as well as presenting in exhibitions:

An interview with Ordner, conducted by Peter Ginz (the same child whose drawing Ilan Ramon, the late Israeli astronaut, took with him on the Colombia space shuttle) appeared in the newspaper "Vedem", written in the boys' dorm at Theresienstadt:

"In a room submerged within the walls of the Cavalier barracks there is an odor of urine, scant light, physical and spiritual filth. But the seed of the artist's creative force does not die even in the midst of mud and dirt.

There too it sprouts and spreads its blooms like stars that shine in the dark. Evidence of this is the blind artist, Berthold Ordner. One day I came to see him together with Jiří, for an article in our newspaper. "From my early days," he told me, "I followed events in my vicinity with open eyes. I was skilled as an artist. When fate struck and I lost my eyesight, I had to stop



drawing. Then I started working with wire." As we conversed he took down from a shelf a wonderful peacock made of thin brass wires. The 'eyes' in the golden feathers were made of wire loops.

"And how do you go about making your artwork?" I asked him. "First I shape the foundation and when I feel that the shape is right I add the details, made of thin wires." "How can you remember so precisely the form of things that you have not seen for twenty five years?" "I imagine different things as I saw them in my youth. It is a similar process to that of the expressionists. They look at a model and then they sketch the lines, the shape, while colors are of secondary importance. I operate that way too, although the interval between seeing the model and its processing is a little lengthier. Twenty five years! Everything has changed since then! There was a time when my artwork was shown in exhibitions in the United States, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and other places. Museums competed for my work. Now, here in Theresienstadt, I suffer from hunger; I don't even have enough wire to work with." "Do you still feel your blindness?" I asked him.

"Sometimes when I'm immersed in my thoughts, I don't even miss my eyesight. In such moments I separate myself completely from the filth around me. Such moments are times of great happiness for me." I gazed at him in wonder. We hastily left the blind artist and hurried outside. We were glad for the fresh air after the stifling atmosphere in the depths of the Cavalier barracks, and in a short while made it safely back to the home port. ■



The exhibition was on display from May through August 2018 and met with much success. To view the video, scan the QR or access the Beit Theresienstadt website.



The Annual Conference

As in previous years, the annual conference and general assembly of the Theresienstadt Martyrs Remembrance Association were held in May. On May 12, the members of the association and additional guests gathered at Beit Vina in the kibbutz. Czech ambassador to Israel, Mr. Ivo Schwarz, and Head of the Emek Hefer Regional Council Mr. Rani Idan, opened the conference with their greetings. During the conference, participants of the "Song beats darkness" project, which took place on Chanukah, performed a selection of the project's



songs. In addition, the exhibition "Limits of the line", displaying select drawings and sketches by Alisa Ehermann Shek that show the female figure and reflect her life before, during, and after World War II, was officially opened. Dr. Tereza Maizels, curator of the exhibition, spoke as did Danny Shek, son of Alisa Ehermann Shek, and Sima Shachar who had worked with her. The conference ended with a sing-along led by Pavel Koren and other musicians. ■



Visit of the Danish Ambassador to Beit Theresienstadt

In March 2018 Danish ambassador, Mrs. Charlotte Slente, visited Beit Theresienstadt. Ambassador Slente's visit was attended by Dr. Dan Katznelson, who contributed significantly to organizing the encounter, and Mrs. Jehudith Ashkenazi, a survivor of the ghetto, both born in Denmark. Mrs. Slente was brought to tears by Jehudith's story. ■



Visit by Czech Senate Members to Beit Theresienstadt

In late May a group of Czech Senate members visited Beit Theresienstadt. The visit included members of a delegation belonging to the public administration, regional development, and environmental committee: chairman of the committee, Sen. Zbyne'k Linhart, and members of the committee: Sen. Jiří Carbol, Sen. Rdko Martinek, and Sen. Zdeněk Nytra. ■



2018 Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony

The 2018 Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony was held this year in commemoration of the 75th year since the deportation of Dutch and Danish Jews to the Theresienstadt ghetto. The ceremony was attended by a record audience of 450 people, including Mr. Ivo Schwarz, Czech ambassador to Israel, Mr. Martin Weiss, Austrian ambassador to Israel, Mr. Peter Huleniyi, Slovakian ambassador to Israel, Mrs. Charlotte Slente, Danish ambassador to Israel, Mr. Georg Enzweiler, representative of the German embassy, Rani Idan, Head of the Emek Hefer Regional Council, officers and soldiers from the IDF School of Combat Fitness, and many others.

This year once again, teenagers who had participated the previous Chanukah in the "Song beats darkness" seminar, held

for the second time in cooperation with Mekorock Israel, took part in the ceremony. Danish ambassador to Israel Mrs. Slente spoke at length about the endeavors of the Danish people to rescue Jews in 1943. Then, Mrs. Tami Kinberg awarded her a certificate of appreciation for the Danish people on behalf of Beit Theresienstadt.

Among the torch lighters at the ceremony, about which more information can be found in the following pages, were ghetto survivors born in the Netherlands and Denmark, as well as members of the next generations who lit torches in memory of their family members. ■



Holocaust Remembrance Day Event – Emek Hefer Regional Council

Once again, the Emek Hefer Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony was held in cooperation with Beit Theresienstadt. The central performance was entitled "And I did not speak out", attesting to the challenging and relevant issue of personal responsibility. Beit Theresienstadt played a part by preparing the students and teachers for the ceremony. Schoolchildren in Emek Hefer receive a preparatory lesson before watching the performance. The lesson plan was prepared for the teachers by Mira Nadlin, a long-standing guide at Beit Theresienstadt.

The performance, prepared by students of Emek Hefer high schools, encompassed students from all study tracks who utilized a variety of media to deal with the topic: theatre, music, and dance. Film segments were integrated in the performance and singer Meital Trabelsi joined the Moran Choir in song in the opening part. Holocaust survivor Shlomo Perel appeared on stage and fascinated the audience with his incredible story, how he survived by joining the ranks of the "Hitlerjugend" and found himself on the "other side". His story was retold in the movie "Europa Europa".

The passages recited spoke of the harassment of Jews and the dilemma between standing on the sidelines and intervening. The statement by pastor Martin Niemöller (see box), which served as inspiration for the name of the performance, was one of the evening's most forceful moments. It gave the audience an opportunity to look at ourselves and ask the obvious question: Do we keep silent? The further we are from the actual period of the Holocaust, Holocaust remembrance receives relevant meaning not only as a passive memory and historical story but as an active memory that must have meaning for contemporary times. ■

I did not speak out / Martin Niemöller

First they came for the communists,
and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—
and there was no one left
to speak for me.

Torch Lighters – The 2018 Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony

Jakob Denekamp

Jakob Denekamp was born on April 9, 1940 in the Netherlands, one month before the German invasion on May 10, 1940. Jakob's father, who was recruited about six months before the invasion and served as a reserves officer in the Dutch army, was killed on the fourth day of the war. Jakob was deported along with his mother Annette and his brother, In March 1943 to the Westerbork camp in the eastern Netherlands and from there, in early September 1944, to the Theresienstadt ghetto. In those years, several Jewish organizations operated in Switzerland in an attempt to rescue Jews. One of these organizations enlisted Jean-Marie Musy, a former president of Switzerland, to utilize his connections with the Nazi command and try to release Jews from the camps. Musy managed to free Jews from the camps in return for a ransom. As part of this plan, a first train left the Theresienstadt ghetto for Switzerland in early February 1945 with 1,200 Jews, among them Jakob, his mother and brother. After the war Jakob, his brother and mother returned to the Netherlands and in 1951 they immigrated to Israel. Jakob served as an officer in the navy, where he met his future wife. He earned a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in mechanical engineering at the Technion in Haifa and occupied senior management roles in the food and petrochemical industries. Jakob has 3 married children and 7 grandchildren, all of whom live in Israel. ■



Reuven Fischermann

Reuven Fischermann was born in Denmark on April 19, 1928, the son of Malka and Leopold who had 6 children. On Saturday, October 2, 1943, the German police knocked on the family's door. When they opened, five armed soldiers entered and arrested all those present, including Reuven, his mother, and three other siblings. Three days after they were caught, they arrived at the Theresienstadt ghetto. After several weeks' detention, the family was allocated space in a room together with 2 other families, where they lived for the 18 months they were kept in the ghetto. In April 1945 Reuven received notice that he had been chosen as part a group that would be leaving the ghetto, and indeed, Swedish Red Cross buses appeared. Two days later the buses crossed the Danish border and the next day they reached Malmo, Sweden. Upon reaching Sweden the family discovered that Reuven's father and eldest brother had drowned in 1943 while attempting to escape to Sweden in a boat. Reuven's eldest sister managed to escape to Sweden. After the war the remaining family members returned to Denmark. Reuven occupied his father's place as head of the family. Reuven studied construction engineering in Copenhagen and in 1972 he immigrated to Israel with his wife and two daughters. In Israel he worked at the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus and for thirty years he has been working as a certified tour guide in Israel. ■



Jehudith Ashkenazi

Jehudith Ashkenazi Futermann, daughter of the late Miriam and Leo Futermann, was born in Denmark, in a small town on the Island of Møn. In early October 1943 Jehudith, then three and a half years old, was deported with her parents to the Theresienstadt ghetto, in a group of 476 Danish Jews. The Danish government managed to ensure that the Danish Jews stayed in the ghetto, and Jehudith and her family remained in the ghetto for about 18 months. After the war the family returned to Denmark. In 1949 the family immigrated to Israel. Since then, Jehudith has felt that it is her mission to speak about the amazing Danish people. She and her family are grateful to the Danes, thanks to whose efforts they remained alive. Today Jehudith lives in Moshav Avihail in Emek Hefer, together with her daughters and eight grandchildren. ■



Noa Cohen (Kahan)

Noa is the granddaughter of Alice Cohen Mattiasson whose mother, sister, and family were sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto. Alice's mother Constantia, who lived in Germany, travelled to visit her sister in the city of Breslau, where she was caught by the Germans and sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Alice's sister, Melanie, her husband Moritz, and their children Ralph and Ellen, who lived in Denmark, were also caught by the Germans when sailing from Denmark to Sweden, and sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto.

Although the entire family was at the ghetto, the grandmother did not meet the rest of the family since the Danish Jews were imprisoned in a separate area of the ghetto, while she came from Germany and was not allowed to be in this area. While a prisoner in the ghetto, Ralph, Melanie's son, wrote one of his books. Melanie and Ellen were employed in forced labor in the ghetto, work that damaged their hands for the rest of their life. Their grandmother, Constantia, died in the ghetto about six months after her arrival, in early April 1943.

The Danes did not abandon their citizens and the remaining family members were extracted from the ghetto. Noa, an account executive at the Museums Department of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, lit a torch in memory of Constantia, Melanie, Moritz, and Ralph Mattiasson, and in honor of Ellen, who is still alive and who shares her memories. ■



Roi Wolf

Roi, son of Karin Hess-Wolf, lit a torch in memory of his mother.

Karin was born on January 15, 1940 to her parents Beno and Bila Hess in northern Norway. In 1939, when Karin's mother was pregnant, the Germans revoked the German citizenship of all Jews.

Karin's father was deported from Norway to the Netherlands, and

when Karin was 6 weeks old she and her mother reached the Netherlands. After the occupation of the Netherlands and the decrees against the Jews, Karin's parents wished to protect her and placed her with a Christian family. Two months later, they removed her from this family.

On her fourth birthday, January 15, 1944, the family was sent to the Westerbork camp, and were subsequently deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. In the ghetto the family was separated. They remained imprisoned in the ghetto until its liberation by the Red Army.

After the war, Karin returned to Sweden together with her mother. Several months later they found Karin's father. The family lived in Stockholm, where Karin began her studies in the first grade. They returned to the Netherlands and lived there. As an adult, Karin decided to immigrate to Israel. In 1967 she married Eli Wolf and they had three children: Tami, Yaron, and Roi. In April 2004, at the age of 64, Karin died of cancer. ■



First Lieutenant Shaked Elbag

Shaked was born in Kibbutz Maagan Michael, the daughter of Sophie and Itzik Elbag. She studied at the Hof Hacarmel regional high school. After graduating she volunteered for one year at WIZO Achuzat Yeladim in Haifa. In August 2013 she enlisted in the army in the role of combat fitness guide and served in the Kfir divisional training base. In November 2014 she joined an officers' course, at the end of which she served as combat fitness officer in the 215 artillery support unit, physical training officer of the Magal array, and combat fitness officer of the 425 artillery support unit at the Gunnery School. In recent months Shaked has been serving as soldiers' supplementary commander for combat fitness. ■



Educational Seminar for Beit Theresienstadt staff, May 2018

In May 2018 we travelled to Theresienstadt for a 4-day seminar. The seminar is part of the annual continued education program that Beit Theresienstadt holds for its team of guides and administrative staff and it was attended, in addition to the staff, by Nira Hirsch, member of the governing council, and her daughter Maya.

As part of the program, we met with the director of the Theresienstadt memorial site, Dr. Jan Roubinek, and with various workers of the museum (guides, archive staff, and others). We held a tour of the various exhibitions and of the archives, where we were shown different objects and drawings, some of which had only reached the archives in recent months.

We held a walking tour of the town and of the small fortress, and we visited and learned about various sites in the ghetto.



Meeting with Helga Weiss, survivor of the Ghetto

Towards the end of the tour of Theresienstadt, we held a memorial ceremony near the monument on the river banks, where the ashes of prisoners who had died in the ghetto had been disposed of towards the end of World War II.

One of the high points of the seminar was a joint visit with a Holocaust survivor, Dita Krauss, who told us her story



Excursion in Theresienstadt with Dita Krauss, survivor of the Ghetto

and showed us various local sites related to her personal experience.

After the 3 day program at Theresienstadt we returned to Prague, where a special encounter took place with another survivor of the ghetto, Helga Weiss. The drawings made by Helga Weiss in the ghetto at age 12-13 are part of the exhibition "I'd like to go back home" at Beit Theresienstadt. During the encounter with Helga she told us about her experiences and memories from the Theresienstadt ghetto and about her work after the war upon returning to Prague, her home to this day. ■



The Theresienstadt League Memorial Tournament

Once again and in the best of traditions, a memorial tournament took place in March 2018, together with "Mifalot Education and Society Enterprises". Jewish and Arab soccer teams participated in the tournament. The participants heard the story of the Jews in the Theresienstadt ghetto and of the ghetto's soccer league, followed by a tournament played on the soccer fields of Kibbutz Givat Haim Ihud.

The tournament ended with a trophy presentation ceremony attended by Dr. Jan Roubinek, director of the Theresienstadt memorial site, Dr. Jan Munk, president of the Prague Jewish community, and Tami Kinberg, CEO of Beit Theresienstadt. ■



From the Archives / Dr. Tereza Maizels

Early in July Uzi Efrat, son of the late Michal Efrat, deposited several items in the Beit Theresienstadt archives.

The first item is a valuable diary that Michal began writing in 1949. The first entry in the diary was written in Czech in July 1949 and it is accompanied by three small pencil sketches depicting figures from street life: an old man next to a synagogue, a grandfather sitting on a bench, and a portrait of a young girl, a "sabrá", as Michal noted beside the sketch. The "kiosk selling drinks", drawn in red, white, and grey, belongs to the same topic. Michal stresses that the style was affected by the school of Czech graphic art.

In the next pages, Michal tells the story of her development as a professional artist. After she received a first job for the kibbutz towards Purim 1950, she considered whether she should work as an artist, and drew a sketch of "The clown", later displayed at an exhibition of kibbutz artists. Then Michal began to draw in the evenings, after work and on weekends, in addition to visiting exhibitions and reading professional literature.

In addition to her artwork for the kibbutz, Michal participated in exhibitions at Tel Yosef, Beit Lohamei Hagetaot, and other places. She also received requests from toy factories and produced drawings that were printed on decorative tiles and models for manufacturing wooden dolls for young children. In September 1951 another door opened in her professional life, to the world of illustration. Michal began working on sketches for a children's book at the Hakibbutz Hameuchad publishing house. The last pages of the diary record some of these (with no date or description). The diary was kept up until the late 1970s.

Another item given to the Beit Theresienstadt archives is a yellow Star of David kept in an envelope with a note saying "After I returned from the inferno I couldn't talk about what had happened to me and others. Only years later did I feel a duty to provide a 'living testimony' to the children, so that they could pass it on to the next generations. Only once did I put in writing that which I had lost: all the many family and friends replaced in my miserable youth by darkness, fear, cold, hunger, hard work, and denigration. I am Michal Efrat, number 73601." Michal Efrat was born in 1926 in Ostrava, in what was then Czechoslovakia. In September 1942 she was deported with her entire family to Theresienstadt. A year later, in December 1943, she was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and from there to other camps. In April 1945 she was liberated at the Bergen Belsen camp.

After the war she returned to study graphic art in Prague. She immigrated to Israel even before graduating. From 1949 until her death she lived in Kibbutz Givat Haim Meuchad. She continued to study graphic art at the Art Institute of Oranim College and for many years was in charge of graphic art for children's books at the Hakibbutz Hameuchad publishing house. In 1997 she won the Nachum Gutman prize for her illustrations in the book "The girl Ayelet".

Michal Efrat died in 2017, at age 91. She was survived by a son, Uzi Efrat, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. ■



From the diary of Michal Efrat, Beit Theresienstadt archives

"Kinderhaus Frankfurt"

About three years ago a man and woman came to Beit Theresienstadt, Danny Ariel and Ronit Shimoni, with an amazing story and a request: to publish a book. Their story begins with a memory book that Danny's mother, Inga (Ines) had kept for over 80 years. Inga was born in Germany and at the age of 18 months she lost her mother. Her father had no choice but to send her to a children's home located on 24 Hans Toma St. in Frankfurt. When the situation in Germany gradually worsened, her father managed to send her to Uruguay. 9 year old Inga took with her on the journey overseas the book of memoirs inscribed by her friends at the children's home in Frankfurt.



Picture of the dreidel –
Photograph of the square and the monument from 2017 (Cultural Departement, Frankfurt Main – Camilo Brau, Salome Roessler)
Photograph: Jessica Bibon, in charge of art in public spaces, Frankfurt.

The years passed and Inga, who became Ines, immigrated to Israel, married, and raised a family. Several years ago Ronit and her husband, a colleague of Danny Ariel, moved to Frankfurt. Danny asked Ronit to try and uncover some details about the children's home. Ronit began to investigate without imagining where her inquiries would take her. She located the address of the orphanage (unknown to Ines) and discovered, to her surprise, that an Evangelical pastor by the name of Volker Mahnkopp had explored the history of the building and written a detailed study about the children's home and its staff.

The inquiry branched out as Ronit was further drawn to the story. She began to work together with the pastor and to seek any piece of information about the children and staff, formed contact with the families, and joined pieces of information to form life stories, to the best of her ability.

Following the research, the Frankfurt municipality decided to name the square next to the former children's home for them: "Square of the forgotten children" and to place a monument in the square in their memory. In spring 2017 the square and the dreidel-shaped monument were inaugurated, in a ceremony attended by the families of the children and staff, including Inga Grinwald, today Ines Ariel.

Beit Theresienstadt decided to publish the book written based on the research by pastor Volker Mahnkopp and Ronit Shimoni and translated by Katya Manor. Work on the book was intricate, due to the need to transform a detailed study into a book that would be suitable for a lay audience. At this point, Tami Geva joined the scene and volunteered to undertake the task of writing and revising the text to form a beautiful memorial book designed by Orni Drori. ■

"They Called it 'Friend'"

This last August another edition was published (in collaboration with Yad Vashem) of the book "They Called it 'Friend' – The Children's Newspaper 'Kamarád' from the Theresienstadt Ghetto 1943-1944". The book was first published in 1997 and it includes a historical introduction and a preface by the translator, the late Ruth Bondy, who translated the newspaper from Czech to Hebrew. Kamarád is one of the few children's newspapers to survive in its entirety. The periodical, written by a group of 12-14 year old boys at the children's dorms in the Theresienstadt ghetto, is a unique document of the children's life, daily schedule, joys, and fears.

From the introduction to the book:

"Kamarád was written entirely by the children themselves, in their childish handwriting, illustrated by its editor, Ivan Polak, with no involvement by the counselors... The children's journals express their childhood world, where they showed interest in technological innovations, the development of missiles, use of the radio, car races, flight achievements, submarines, sports, and particularly soccer. Their areas of interest are no different than those of contemporary children. Aside from the description of the conditions in the different dorms, with their challenges and joys, all the newspapers include articles and poems that indicate a sober view of circumstances in the ghetto. The children wrote poems of longing for home, for their hometowns, for their erased childhood. They all express a terror of transports to the mysterious, scary 'east'. The newspapers also include articles and poems written following the transports that took their friends to the unknown, and sometimes include hope of renewed encounters in the near future..." Ruth Bondy, Ramat Gan, April 16, 1996. ■

"My Dorm and I"

In 1943, boys and girls living in the L414 German speaking youth bloc produced a book of essays that included 14 essays and was bound in leather. In the book, the authors wrote of life in the dorms, living together, and their longing for past days. The essays were typed on a typewriter in the ghetto and illustrated by Jewish-Dutch artist Jo Spier, a prisoner in the ghetto. Beit Theresienstadt published the book in an album format and it will be launched on October 10, 2018, at the Goethe Institute in Tel Aviv. ■



Ruth Meisner's Diary

During the coming intergenerational conference, to be held on Chanukah, we shall mark the publication of the diary of Ruth Haas Meisner, a survivor of the ghetto and an activist at Beit Theresienstadt.

We met with Ruth at her home in Kiryat Tivon, overlooking the beautiful valley landscape, to talk about the diary she wrote in the ghetto at the age of 14.

How did you begin to write a diary?

After my father was taken on Yom Kippur Eve 1941, I remained devoid of any support. I was lonely, lost, confused. My friends noticed this and decided to give me a diary as a birthday present. They encouraged me to write. At first, I did not ascribe much significance to the diary. I did not write a lot. I began to write in earnest right before leaving for the ghetto.

At that time it was very common to write a diary. It was not customary to display one's feelings, to complain to the family (of which I had none in any case), and writing a diary was a way of letting go, revealing my intimate secrets, agonizing, expressing anger.



When did you write?

I had no family in the ghetto aside from my sister, whom I did not see often because she was older and was always busy. So I would write a lot in the evenings when everyone would go see their families. The sense of loneliness is engraved upon my memory and it is apparent in the diary. The diary became a meaningful part of my life. I wrote everything in it. I hid it

under my pillow and thankfully it was not found.

How did the diary arrive at Beit Theresienstadt?

The day the ghetto was liberated, the Soviet army surrounded the ghetto. The Germans ran away but the Soviets were instructed not to enter the ghetto due to epidemics and illnesses. My sister understood that we must leave immediately, and that's what we did. I took the diary and my few possessions, and we travelled to Prague. I had no recollection of a normal life. I had no idea how to live at all after what we had been through. When I came to Israel I took the diary with me but I didn't touch it and didn't read it. It remained with my sister together with another box of objects. A while later she brought me these. I decided that I didn't want to have anything to do with the diary. I didn't want to relive the past. The past was over. I had no interest in remembering what had happened. I wanted to erase everything and begin a new life. And that's what I did. Fifty years later, I had to undergo a major operation. The night before the operation I took the diary out for the first time and read it all. When I read the diary I didn't really take it in.



At the right Ruth and her sister Miriam (Haas) Cervenka

I didn't think that it had any meaning. I went to a series of lectures by Idit Perry and she tried to talk me into telling my story. At one of the encounters I did just that. I told the story and I also mentioned that I have a diary. Idit was very eager to read it and tried to convince me to publish it but I refused. One day I told Tamar, my niece, that her mother (my sister, Miriam Haas Cervenka) had once had a diary and she burned it. They didn't know that. Tamar made me vow to never dare burn my diary. Years later I decided to give the diary to Beit Theresienstadt and to publish it.

What did you feel when you reread the diary?

In the diary, I arranged things differently. There are things that you don't want to remember. I noticed that in some cases there were differences between what I wrote and what I remember. When I read the diary I understood that I had suffered from a poor self-image. Overall, I was a very dominant child in the family. And in the diary this is not evident.

How would you summarize?

In 1995, fifty years later, I returned to Theresienstadt for the first time. I met many of my friends there, including my good friend Lexi. It was very emotional. Lexi came with her daughter and I came with my daughter too, and the meeting was very moving. It was the first time we had been back. We began to voice memories. I understood that I had buried many memories. I never wanted to deal with the feelings I had there. It was so painful. So much loss, that it was impossible to truly deal with it. I managed to come to terms a little when I began to tell my story. It helped me.

I did not have an easy life, but I think that in general I managed to remain optimistic and to see the half-full cup. I have a wonderful loving family. Everyone says "fate" "luck" "God"... I always say that I survived by chance. It was all by chance. We had no control over anything.

From the diary: In the last days of the war... "You just wait, you pigs! We will take our revenge. You killed everything and everyone. Father, my childhood and my youth, my faith in people, in short everything. But one day we will be even". ■



The Buchenwald Children at Ghetto Theresienstadt / Sima Shachar

April 1945. Evacuees from the labor camps, death camps, and survivors of the death marches arrive in Ghetto Theresienstadt. Among them are some 300 Polish children and teenagers, boys and girls from the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. These were young people born in 1928-1933, who arrived on their own as any family had been murdered in the camps or died in the death marches. Few of them found their parents after the war. The number of Jews at the Theresienstadt ghetto grew and a typhus epidemic broke out, killing many. Although the ghetto was liberated by the Red Army on May 8, 1945, it remained isolated in order to prevent the epidemic from spreading.

"For about fifteen days, some 13,000 miserable people arrived at the camp, and our scant number of doctors and nurses did not know how to overcome the difficulties of the role with which we had been entrusted. The death count rose to 100 a day... We didn't know what was happening around us; we didn't know who could help. All we knew was that everything must be done to prevent these people from dying at the last hour," wrote Greta Viner, a prisoner in the ghetto at the time.

Willy Groag, who worked in the Youth Care Department and was the housefather of the Czech speaking girls' bloc, L410, took upon himself to take care of the group of children and teens who had arrived from Buchenwald. They were housed in bloc L414, which for a long time had been the residence of the German speaking children. The goal that Willy set himself was to keep these young people from contracting typhus, to prevent them from coming into contact with their surroundings, to make sure that they recovered, and to try to bring about their rapid release from Theresienstadt.

The lengthy stay at Theresienstadt, which resumed its status as a city after liberation, created deep emotional ties between the young people and Willy. August 1945 arrived, the month of Willy's birthday. The young people expressed their gratitude to Willy by giving him a birthday gift, a gift of birthday wishes that was also a book of memories in Yiddish, German, Polish, and Hebrew. "Loving wishes for the beloved Dr. Willy Groag, from the boys and teachers of bloc L414."

At the same time, Willy and his friends asked for the assistance of their friends outside Theresienstadt, with the purpose of extracting the group and preparing them for return to Poland or immigration to Palestine. For this purpose, it was necessary to bring the young people to a safe place. The assistance arrived, granted by Zionist friends in Prague and Czech citizens.

The British government agreed to admit the Jewish children and a place was found in England that was willing to take in the 300 boys and girls, Windermere – a rustic lake region



in northern England. After all the arrangements were made together with the Committee for Children from Concentration Camps (an organization that acted to help Jewish children), the group arrived in England on August 14, 1945.

Two important points emerge from this incident, the story of the 300 boys and girls who came from Buchenwald to Theresienstadt. One is the desire to protect and rescue the young people so that they could immigrate to Israel. The second



is the significance and meaning of the memory book that the group members prepared for Willy Groag, without which we may not have known about this incident that occurred in the last period of the ghetto after the liberation in May 1945. ■

* The photographs are from the Beith Theresienstadt archives

Searching for Jan Mautner / Dr. Anna Hájková

We know a lot about the life of Fredy Hirsch, the courageous gay educator of Theresienstadt youth, thanks to the book by Lucie Ondřichová and several documentary films. However, to this day, we know nothing about Fredy Hirsch's personal life.

Dr. Alena Mikovcová, the head of the Mendel's University archive in Brno, took on this question. Since Hirsch worked between 1936 and 1939 as sport teacher for Maccabi Brno, she looked up the files of all his colleagues, and she was struck by Jan Mautner, who taught rhythmic gymnastics. Mautner was born in 1912 in Budapest to Czech parents, Jenny née Kulka and Max Mautner. Later the family moved to Olomouc. He had an older sister Grete, born 1907. In early 1930s, he studied law in Prague, but did not finish; later he studied medicine in Brno. He was able to make the second rigorosum in October 1939. He received his medical degree after the war, as the Nazis closed the universities in November of that year.

The late Petr Erben confirmed Mikovcová's hunch in the Rubi Gaš's documentary *Dear Fredy*, where he claims that Hirsch and Mautner were a couple and lived together, claimed further confirmed by Ruth Kopečková, the Brno native and survivor of Raasiku, Stutthof, and Neuengamme. However, residential records contradict the mutual apartment, as Mautner was registered living with his parents. This is another reason why I am looking for other witnesses of Mautner's life. Hirsch and Mautner both published in the Maccabi journal *Makabisport*; Mautner, with the initials M.J., translated Hirsch's articles into Czech. In 1937, they started organizing winter trips for the Maccabi youth together. Ruth Kopečková participated in one such trip to Krkonoše mountains.

In March 1939, Hirsch, whose residence permit for Brno was not renewed, moved to Prague, and continued working for Maccabi. Mautner followed in April 1940, while his parents stayed behind in Brno. He lived at a different address than Hirsch, however, according to recollection of Bohumila Havránková, they worked together as sport teachers at Hagibor. In November 1941, Hirsch was deported to Theresienstadt, Mautner in July 1942. By then, his parents had been already deported to Zamosc and murdered soon afterwards.



The picture shows Jan in 1940 and comes from the Moravian Country Archive Brno.

We know nothing about Mautner's time in Theresienstadt, only that in December 1943, he was deported to the Family Camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. On March 8, 1944, Fredy Hirsch died. In July 1944, he survived the selection and was sent to Schwarzheide, a satellite camp of Sachsenhausen. In April 1945, he was liberated in Terezín, following a death march. He survived, but not unscathed: for the remainder of his short life, he suffered from TB.

After the war, Mautner moved first to Prague and in 1946 to Brno, where he passed his third rigorosum and later received his medical degree. He lived in the city centre, in a house administered by a dermatologist. He also left the Jewish Community and in 1947, moved to Prague. He could not be drafted into obligatory army service, because of his TB. He also filed for a name change: to Martin from Mautner. In his application,

he remarked that he was the only survivor of his family, and for some time, he lived together with the family of his cousin František Mautner who had returned from Palestine. Martin Mautner, who is today over 80 years old and lives in Australia, is one of the last people who remember Jenda (Jan) Mautner today: "Jan was flamboyant and very intelligent. I tested his memory with some astonishing results. He was apparently able to memorise a long list of words and repeat them both in the original order and in reverse order. Jan said that he never had to study hard, he just read the material before an exam and that was sufficient." When I asked Mautners about Jenda's sexual orientation, it turned out that "flamboyant" was a code word for gay.

MUDr. Jan Martin died in 1951 at the Bulovka hospital of tuberculosis which he contracted in concentration camps. It is tragic that the physician who was probably partner of one of the leading figures of the Czech Jewry during the Holocaust, succumbed to a disease that was at the time of his death, thanks to the discovery and distribution of antibiotics, treatable. Which is also why it is crucial that we do not forget Jan Mautner-Martin for the second time. If anyone remembers him, please let me know. ■

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