

Hope and Sadness

White Rose Essay

By Calli Weirick

There are a million stories about the Holocaust. Some are stories of hope; others are stories of sadness. Some stories are diaries, diaries from children who died in the Holocaust. Other stories are by people who survived the Holocaust, and they are witnesses to the horrible things that happened. The story I read was a story of both sadness and hope. There aren't too many stories like that, but when you do find one you are enchanted by it because you rarely see someone whom still has hope when their life is sad, because some people would just give up. David Rubinowicz kept a diary during the Holocaust from 1939-1942; parts from his diary are in the book, We Are Witnesses. This book tells stories about five teenagers who were killed in the Holocaust. All of these teenagers have the type of story I described; they are all ones of hope and sadness. (Boas, pg. 13-14.)

David was born on July 27, 1927, in the little town, Kielce, Poland. David started his diary when he had just turned 13. David's first entry is one of sadness, "When I think of how I used to go to school, I feel like bursting into tears, and today I must stay at home and can't go anywhere." This was shortly after all Jewish children had been forbidden to attend school. One month after David began his diary, Germany invaded Poland on September 1 1939. (Boas, pg.14.)

Even before the war, when Hitler came to power, there were laws discriminating against Jews. A law in 1938 revoked citizenship of Polish Jews living abroad. Other laws also limited Jews' access to Polish universities and professions. People were anti-Semitic, and Jews were the victims of violent pogroms. Jews started to become economically dependent on Poles, even though they wanted nothing to do with them. (Conditions for the Jews, pg. 1-5.)

David grew up with his parents, Josek and Tauba. He had a little brother named Herszel and a younger sister named Malka. (Boas, pg. 14-16.) The town was captured on September 4,

1939, just a few days after Germany invaded Poland. All the Jews, just like in Kranjo, would end up going to the Bodzentyn. (Victor, pg.1.) David's dad ran a small dairy shop and had a cow and a wagon. David was aware of the war and was hurt by it. For almost every entry there is a story about a Jew being murdered by the Nazis. (Boas, pg.14-15.)

In January 1942 David's family was evacuated. David had known about the evacuations of Jews everywhere. David dreaded it, but he knew that it was going to happen. "It was our turn to suffer," realized David. (Boas, pg. 23-24.) The Bodzentyn ghetto was home to 4000-5000 Jews. Bodzentyn was located near Krakow, Poland and also very close to the Warsaw ghetto, which also contained Polish Jews. (Zapruder, pg. 156.) In the final months before evacuation the Rubinowicz's spent their time selling items they couldn't take with them. "We've put ourselves in God's hands and are ready for anything," wrote David just a few days before evacuation. (Boas, pg.23.)

After they had been in the ghetto for a few months, David's father was taken away to a labor camp. David had seen this happen and had always thought that it would happen to his father, and it finally had. "Papa! Papa, where are you? If only I could see you once more... And then I saw him on the last truck; his eyes red with weeping." From the moment his father was picked up David would run out into the streets every time he heard a truck pull up. But it would be awhile before the truck that carried his father would be back. (Boas, pg. 33-35.)

David had mixed feelings about his father being taken. One thing is for sure; he did miss him. Every single diary entry up until the time his father is brought back is about a yearning for his father. David doesn't understand why a terrible fate had befallen his father and why God has let it happen. The time when David so badly wanted his father the most was probably on the

Sabbath, “But when I see Father’s place, and he’s not sitting there, then grief and sorrow break my heart.” (Boas, pg. 35.)

David’s saddest day would soon be replaced with his happiest day. After months of slave labor, David’s dad finally came home. David’s prayers had been answered. “I ran out, and right enough! There they were, driving up. From far away you could see them waving their arms, their caps; I saw my father waving too. I threw everything down, ran to meet them, and arrived at the same time as the truck. I immediately took Father’s bundle from him, and he got down from the truck... I entered our flat and couldn’t even greet father I was so glad. No one can even imagine our joy, only someone who’s been through the same experience will understand.”

This “happy day” is the last entry in David’s diary. It is dated June 1, 1942. Sometime between September 15- 21 all of the Jews from the Bodzentyn ghetto, 5000 in all, were marched to the nearby town of Suchedniow. They were then loaded onto cattle cars and sent to Treblinka, except for the healthy ones. (Zapruder, pg. 156.) The ones that were healthy enough to work though, 2,000 from all the towns around Kielce were sent to three labor camps. They were all eventually sent to a concentration camp called Buchenwald and murdered. This information means that not a single person survived Bodzentyn, or from any towns around Kielce. (Victor.)

I know I’ve always taken things for granted. But this book has made me realize it more than ever. There are things that happen in this book that I can’t even imagine happening in real life. For instance, being shipped off in minute’s notice without any of your possessions, being forced to leave all friends and family behind, not knowing if you’ll ever see them again, but not even that is your main worry. Your main worry is if you’ll even survive the next five minutes. I could never imagine that. I’ve never been in a situation wondering if I’m going to die. Sadly though others have, and some of them didn’t live to tell their story. The ones that did tell their

story are the ones we should listen to, because they're the ones that speak the truth. They are the ones that have been through miserable, grievous, and heart wrenching events. By having them tell us their stories we also start to feel those emotions. And instead of letting those emotions just sit in the pit of our stomach, we should make something of it. Although we can't bring back the lives that have been lost, we can save others lives. We can do everything and anything to stop others from having to feel the emotions that no one should. We can stop the Holocaust from every happening again.

Bibliography

Boas, Jacob. We are Witnesses. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995.

"Conditions for the Jews During World War Two." Humboldt State University. Accessed 25 Jan. 2007 <www.humboldt.edu/~rescuers/book/Makuch/conditionsp.html>.

Holliday, Laurel. Children in the Holocaust and World War 2. New York: Pocket Books, 1995.

Rogasky, Barbara. Smoke and Ashes. New York City: Holiday House, 2002.

Stoneking, Lee. "David Rubinowicz." Lee Stoneking Ministries. Accessed 29 Jan. 2007 <www.leestoneking.com/world_war_11.htm>.

Victor, Edward. "Ghettos." Edward Victor. 28 Jan. 2007 <www.edwardvictor.com/Ghetto/Kielce.htm>.

Zapruder, Alexandra. Salvaged Pages. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.