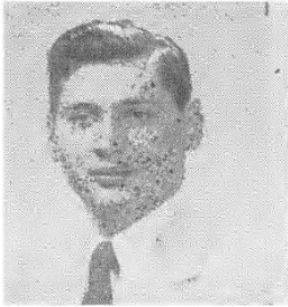


Harry Dziubas

## America Has Lifted Me Up (Notes of a New-Arrival)



I was born in Częstochowa to pious and wealthy parents. My father, peace be upon him, had a silk factory and we lived very well. My father sent me to *cheder* when I was four-years-old. I studied at *cheder* all day long, from morning to evening. I had a good start in learning and, thanks to that start, I have always had a passion for study and I reached the level at which I find myself today. When I was five, I was already studying *Chumash* [Pentateuch] with [the commentaries of] *Rashi*. In 1939, when the War broke out, I was six-years-old. But my father continued sending me to a *melamed* - Reb Motl Prejzerowicz.

The Germans had already made a ghetto then, but it was termed an “open ghetto”, as the Christians were still allowed to enter it. I continued studying in *cheder* until the *akcja* [operation], which began at the close of *Yom Kippur* [1942]. The true destruction of the Częstochowa Jews then began. My whole family and I went down into the cellar immediately after the fast, where we hid for about five weeks.

Later, one by one, we stole into the “Small Ghetto”. There, too, we continually concealed ourselves, as children and adults were not allowed to live together. My eldest brother, Mendel, “went” with the *akcja*. My father z”l was later sent away from the “Small Ghetto” to Radomsko and, from there, to Treblinka.

My mother z”l and my little brother Srul Szlojme were hiding in the “Small Ghetto”. When everyone was ordered to go out to the marketplace, Mother z”l told me to go out also. In the marketplace, we were all put in rows of five. The men went out first. Soon, a selection was made of the youths who were suspected members of the underground “rebellion group”. The older people and the children would be selected and taken aside. A freight truck with gendarmes would stand in readiness to take everyone to the cemetery to be shot. The gendarmes would travel back and forth in this manner. I was one of the boys, who had already been taken aside to be taken away to the cemetery. We were waiting for the freight truck which was to take us to the cemetery - to our deaths.

A miracle happened to me and the other boys - a miracle from Heaven. It was taking a little longer [than usual] for the gendarmes to return. Meanwhile, the director of the HASAG factory arrived to take the young men to HASAG. Some of the boys ran up to Director Lüth, begging for his mercy. They told him that we were being taken to be killed. At once, he took pity [on us] and told the chief of the gendarmes, Degenhardt, that he wished to take the boys with him to the factory. But the murderer Degenhardt categorically refused. They argued and quarrelled for a short while, one with the other. Director Lüth [then] went into the office, where he found the high authority from Radomsko, and was granted permission to do as he wished - if he needed the boys, he could take them to the HASAG factory. They put us in the rows of those selected to remain alive and we were taken to HASAG. There were thirty of us boys then, almost all the same age - we were *bar-mitzvah* boys. Thanks to Director Lüth, thirty boys were saved from death. All of them are now alive in various countries - the majority were actually liberated in Częstochowa.

My mother remained in the "Small Ghetto", for my little brother's sake. He was seven-years-old at the time and had absolutely no chance of saving himself. Everyone later perished - no one survived. May God avenge their blood.

I was not among those who remained in the HASAG factories in Częstochowa during the liberation. My five sisters and I left the night before liberation. The Germans led us to Germany, where we received a proper "welcome" from the SS murderers, who awaited us at the German border. We were then led all night long - my older sister Dora fell ill on the way. Later, she sadly perished in the Ravensbrück\* Concentration Camp. I was in Gross-Rosen, Dora and Bergen-Belsen. It was from Bergen-Belsen that I was liberated by the British Army on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

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Following liberation, everyone began to look for relatives. I went to the English Zone in order to search for my sisters. Later, it was, for a while, in the Russian Zone, but returned to the English one. There, I found out about them and they found out about me. They brought me over to the American Zone, where they were staying.

There, in the American Zone, I began thinking about the "Golden Country", America. I soon applied for a visa, and I was among the first who were to travel to America. My sisters, however, did not allow me to depart. I moved heaven and earth to travel to America. I registered [for a visa] in a strange town, without their knowledge and I arrived in the United States on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1949.

Here, a new life started for me! I settled in the city of Detroit. I had arrived all alone - I had nobody here. I was then a boy of seventeen. I applied myself to study. I went to school - the "Jewish Social Service" brought me there and they paid for me, until I finished high-school. I knew nothing when I arrived here. I had, after all, lost the best ten years of my life - from September 1939, when the War began, to the start of September 1949, when I began to go to school here, in the city of Detroit. From seven to seventeen, I passed through the seven layers of hell - in ghettos, in hiding, always with terror in my eyes, in concentration camps in Germany and, even after liberation, I wandered about in various DP camps in Germany. Only here did I begin to sense, for the first time, what to live life means. I regained my passion for learning and I thought that it was better late than never.

Over the course of one year, I completed eight classes of preparatory school and was admitted to high-school. I finished four years of high-school in a two-year period, with distinctions. I entered college with recommendations and, in June 1956, I graduated from the College of Education at Wayne University. My intention was, however, to continue studying and to receive my Master's Degree, and later a Doctor's Degree.

During this time, I also studied at the Hebrew College of Detroit, from which I graduated and received a diploma. I am not telling all this to boast, Heaven forbid, but I mention it with joy, in order to show what a wonderful and free land America is. I - a lonely, Jewish lad of seventeen, who arrived here broken physically and spiritually from so many terrifying experiences - was set on my feet by America. I carry much gratitude in my heart to everyone here in the country and especially to the close friends, Jews and Gentiles, who aided me every step of the way.

I love America. I have become quite americanised, but I have remained Jewish in spirit. I am still connected to my Jewish home of old, with the Jews of my unforgettable city Częstochowa, which I carry always in my heart and which will forever remain in my memory, because my first childhood

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\* [TN: "Haunsbruk" in the original; most certainly a misprint.]

years, my Jewish knowledge as a child - *that* was the foundation. And it was those first years in *cheder* which gave me the fortitude to endure all those years of pain and suffering and my passion for learning which I received from my beloved parents, may God avenge their blood and may their memory be blessed!