

The Organization of Drohobycz, Boryslaw and Vicinity Survivors. Israel

Excerpts from a note at the opening of an exhibition, "The Story of Destruction and Survival in the Galician Oil Belt".

Wroclaw, 15.5.2015

I left Wroclaw when I was 6 years old. It has been a short and beautiful childhood full of love, joy and "Don't ever ask Tatusia (Daddy) about his past. His heart hurts too much."

So I did not ask. I just sat there near that big radio in our apartment, when the Red Cross ran their daily program, "Seeking Lost Relatives" ("Poszukiwanie osób").

I sat there daily when I was 3 years old, then 4, then 5, then 6. My task was to listen whether anybody bearing my former name, Talenberg, Tatusia's name, would be mentioned. Anybody alive.

That name was never ever to be heard. All the Talenberg's of Drohobycz, Boryslaw and the neighboring villages were wiped off the face of this earth.

Tatusia's parents – 3 brothers, 2 sisters, many beloved uncles, aunts, cousins, his first love, Nusia, his first beloved son 6-year old, Daniel-David, who was shot walking on the streets of Drohobycz in 1942.

I have no idea how my father survived, neither did my mother, herself a holocaust survivor from Stryj, a neighboring town; nor did any of his many post-War friends. Not a single member of his family or circle of friends survived to tell the story.

In 2011, after many years in Israel, I became the President of the Organization of Drohobycz, Boryslaw and Vicinity of Israel. Our organization was established in 1946 by a handful of survivors who – often randomly, always miraculously – survived those horrible years of 1939-1945. 40,000 Jews lived in Drohobycz, Boryslaw and the neighboring villages in 1939. Of those who stayed in Drohobycz, only 400 survived. Only 200 from Boryslaw.

Apparently my father was one of those who somehow survived in one of the concentration camps. I know, because I saw a photo of him, a barely-standing skeleton on the day of liberation in 1945.

Therefore, this exhibition is a tribute to him and to those whom I represent here today. Those few who miraculously survived; their families, 2nd, 3rd and often 4th generation of the Holocaust - in Israel and throughout the world.

We remain a living tribute to the tens of thousands of families who were starved to death, shot and deliberately killed in many other ways.

Drohobycz and Boryslaw were exceptional towns - small, but uniquely rich in life, talent and culture. This exhibition is a tribute to those exceptional communities and the once-vibrant life which has since ceased to exist.