



THE MASSUAH INSTITUTE

Moshe Kol – Our Sources of Inspiration

The number of chaverim of the Hanoar Hatzioni Haclali movement reached fifty thousand before the holocaust. More than forty thousand of them lived in Eastern Europe; the rest in Western and Central Europe, South America, the United States and Canada.

The first groups (Garinim) of this movement originated in Eastern Europe. During the 1930s, they consolidated into a powerful and influential organization among the Jewish youth and the Zionist Movement. Mostly these groups were those who pointed the way towards Aliyah to Eretz Israel. In addition, they aspired to become an influential force capable of operating in the field of national Jewish education, promote Aliyah and the capital investments in Eretz Israel and fight in favor of the Jewish-national policy, against anti-Semitism and assimilation.

The destruction of European Judaism was carried out by the Nazis and their collaborators – nations among whom the Jews had lived for generations. The extermination included the Jewish children and youth, and the splendid chapter in the life of our movement in Europe was brought to an end.

Our chaverim fought in the ghetto, in the harshest conditions, to maintain their humanity and Judaism and protect the Zionist, halutzi and educational activity. They prepared for the rebellion and rose up against the Nazis when they became aware of the Nazis' intention to exterminate European Judaism. They then went out into the woods to join the Partisan groups. Those who managed to enlist in the ranks of the armies that fought the Nazis did so with the consciousness of fulfilling a national mission: the war against the most murderous enemy in the history of the Jewish people. Those who reached the Soviet Union and could serve in the Red Army stood out for their courage and total dedication. Those who were sent to Siberia and the Asian countries of the USSR looked for ways to come to Israel, and we, for our part, did everything possible to encourage and strengthen them. We maintained contact with our chaverim under German occupation. Through the Jewish Agency in Switzerland and Constantinople, as well as through other means, we helped the paratroopers who were sent to Europe. One of them, our beloved Aba Berdichev, died, tortured in a Nazi camp, and another paratrooper, Chaim Hermesh, who managed to return from his mission, described his action in the book *Operation Amsterdam*, thus writing down a magnificent chapter in the history of rescue attempts during the Holocaust. In defense of Jewish lives, in the actions of rescue, in the Briha (escape) and the illegal Aliyah, we participated fully together with the other halutzot movements.



Lately, we began documenting the memories of our chaverim. Those of us who did not experience the tremendous reality in the flesh asked the survivors to tell the future generations and our generation the truth as it is – truth mixed with lights and shadows, anguish and pain, bravery and defeat.

Since the screening of the film *Holocaust* on television, in Israel and many other countries around the world, the interest of the nations in knowing the truth regarding this tragic era has increased. While human tragedies continue to occur before our eyes, it is essential that the nations who are unaware of the European ordeal of the Second World War, the nations of Asia and Africa and most of the nations of South America, learn about the Holocaust and its universal significance. The Jewish youth must know what happened to our people, and we are willing to guide them in this direction.

There are many Nazis who still live and must be brought to justice. In recent years we have witnessed the appearance of a movement that seeks to deny the truth regarding the Holocaust of six million Jews. Hundreds of books were published by pseudo-historians whose purpose was merely to falsify the facts. A new anti-Semitic movement is developing in the Soviet Union and neo-Nazism is flourishing in the West, including South America.

Against these tendencies, Massuah has joined forces with Yad Vashem, the national center dedicated to perpetuating the memory of the six million Jews who were assassinated during the Second World War. Massuah's publications are directed at the young generation. The facts described must be acknowledged so that history does not repeat itself.

Source: Kol, Moshe (1981), "Massuah", M.Stern Press, Tel Aviv.