

MOTTELE

The image of the "Jew-as-victim" has been overdone.

To begin with, take a look at all the identifiable human groups which existed in the same Western world with the Jews two thousand years ago. Most of them are gone, defeated, changed beyond recognition. Often victims, the Jews did not disappear, mainly because of their covenant-related inner resources.

Nor does that history of survival support the image of Jews as *passive* victims. Passive victims don't survive. Facing the ancient Jewish ghetto in Rome is a Catholic church with an engraved reference to the "stiff-necked Jews." Stiff-necked is not passive.

But when people talk about the "passive Jew," they are often really talking about the alleged unwillingness of the diaspora Jew to fight back when physically attacked. The Jewish defense groups in the settlements of czarist Russia, and the Jewish kids on the East side of New York would both belie that image. And, then, there was Mottele.

After the summer of 1941, when the Nazis overran Eastern Poland, many Jewish partisans fought in that area, most often as Jewish units. One famous Jewish partisan was Misha Gildenman, known as Uncle Misha, who headed a Jewish partisan group fighting behind Nazi lines. Among his fighters was a 12 year old boy named Mottele. His family had all been killed by the Nazis.

Because he had blonde hair, Mottele was sent on dangerous espionage missions. He played his violin at a restaurant patronized by Nazi soldiers, who gave him a German uniform to wear. He was able to pick up much useful information which he passed on to the partisans. That career ended when he discovered an opportunity

Earl Raab  
July 18, 1983  
Mottele  
page 2

to blow up the Nazi officers club at Ovruch, an important military junction. He carried explosives in an empty violin case, placed them strategically in the cellar and in wall-cracks of the officers club. One night, after playing for a large group of SS officers, he lit a bomb wick in the cellar, and fled. The club blew up when he was about 200 yards away, and Mottele shouted, "This is for my parents and my little sister, Bashiale." He was killed about a year later while engaged in partisan activity.

There were many Motteles, although not all that young, fighting behind Nazi lines, in partisan units and in underground groups. In addition, there were hundreds of thousands of Jews who fought the Nazis in the American and allied armies. There is often a tendency to forget that they, too, were Nazi-fighters in a grueling war which many of them did not survive.

On October 2-6 in Jerusalem, there will be a World Assembly to Commemorate Jewish Resistance and Combat During World War II. It will be for "the men and women who fought the Nazis and their cohorts in the ghettos and sewers of Europe, in the forests and swamps, in the death camps themselves...who battled from the ranks of the Allied armies or in partisan units...who clawed at the oppressors from isolated and terrorized underground cells..."

If you were a partisan, a member of the underground, a survivor of the camps, a member of the Allied Forces during World War II, you may wish to be part of this historic Assembly in Jerusalem in October. The State of Israel is a sponsor. The travel packages are attractive. You can get more information from the Consulate's office or from the JCRC. And you can participate in this reminder to ourselves and to the world that Jews are not just passive victims.