

From the Testimony of Eliezer Adler “Affirm Life in the DP Camps”

Eliezer Adler was born in 1923 in Belz, in Poland. In June 1940 he was deported to Central Asia by the invading Soviet Army; there he lived in a forced labor camp for most of the war, while most of his family were murdered by the Germans in Poland. After the war he returned to Poland with the stream of repatriates, and from there traveled to the DP camps in the American zone of occupation in Germany, near Munich. Between 1946-1948 he was active in the Bericha underground, until his immigration to Palestine in 1948.

"...This issue of the rehabilitation of She'arit Hapleita, the Jews' desire to live, is unbelievable. People got married; they would take a hut and divide it into ten tiny rooms for ten couples. The desire for life overcame everything - in spite of everything I am alive, and even living with intensity.

"When I look back today on those three years in Germany I am amazed. We took children and turned them into human beings, we published a newspaper; we breathed life into those bones. The great reckoning with the Holocaust? Who bothered about that... you knew the reality, you knew you had no family, that you were alone, that you had to do something. You were busy doing things.

"I remember that I used to tell the young people: Forgetfulness is a great thing. A person can forget, because if they couldn't forget they couldn't build a new life. After such a destruction to build a new life, to get married, to bring children into the world? In forgetfulness lay the ability to create a new life... somehow, the desire for life was so strong that it kept us alive, otherwise there would have been suicides.

"But that's not all. Now I see most of all that what saved us was the struggle for Palestine. The struggle for Palestine made us realize that this was the main effort we had to make. The struggle for Palestine meant taking young people and giving them a Zionist education, teaching them Hebrew, sending them on illegal immigration, smuggling people along the Bericha routes.

"We were at the stage of action then. Doing something gave our lives meaning... that's what kept us alive."

Source: Testimony of Eliezer Adler, Yad Vashem Archive, 03/5426, pp. 41-42 (Hebrew).