MICHAEL SELZER

A Jew Goes To Berlin

Satara—school photograph (I am 4th from the right in the front row)

I spent the first part of my childhood—the years from 1940 to 1946—among Germans. I spoke German. My playmates were German. I went to a German kindergarten, and it was there that I learned my alphabet, in German. I sang German songs.

I still remember one of those songs. It begins, *Nun ade du mein lieb Heimatland, lieb Heimatland ade*: “Farewell now, my dear homeland, dear homeland, farewell”.

Yet I was a Jew and not a German and Germany was no homeland to me. In fact, I had no homeland or even a real home. From the time I was a few weeks old I had lived only in prison camps. These camps were in India. Our captors were the British, who then ruled India.

It was no secret in those days that the Jews had been excluded from German life and indeed were in the process of being excluded by the Germans from life itself. The policy of the German government was that a Jew cannot be a German (*der Jude kann nicht Deutscher sein*), and this was also a founding principle of law in the Third Reich. Few Germans challenged their Leader's assertion that almost every setback Germany ever experienced, and almost every danger it now faced, was caused by the Jews. Inspired by slogans such as *die Juden sind unser Unglück*—the Jews are our misfortune—the Germans were engaged in exterminating the entire Jewish people.

When World War 2 broke out the British government had to decide the fate of some fifty thousand German civilians, and a much smaller number of Jewish refugees from Germany, who were living in Britain and its overseas territories. Common sense dictated that the government's decision would be based on the fundamental differences between the two groups. The Jewish refugees, after all, were the first victims of Nazi evil and had more reason than anyone to desire the defeat of Germany. The Germans on the other hand were Britain's enemies and were likely to do what they could to bring about Britain's defeat. Obvious though these differences were, however, the British authorities chose to ignore them. Instead, and rather fantastically, they decided that the Jewish refugees posed as great a potential threat to Britain's security as the Aryan Germans themselves, and so they issued orders that both groups—the Jews as well as the Germans—were to be rounded up forthwith and imprisoned. The captives were officially designated "enemy aliens" and "prisoners of war". The official euphemism was that they were "interned". The prisons in which they were held were sometimes called "internment camps", sometimes "prisoner of war camps", and sometimes "parole camps", because their inmates had given their word—"*parole*"—that they would not to try to escape.

My parents, who had fled to India in 1938, were among those caught in the British dragnet. Not even the fact that my father had earlier been imprisoned by the Nazis could secure our freedom. And so it was that one morning in the late Fall of 1940, when I was about six weeks old, a squad of heavily-armed Indian policemen arrived at our house, handcuffed my parents, and under close guard brought us by train half-way across India to the prison camp on the outskirts of a little town in the Western Ghats called Purandhar.

At Purandhar my father was appointed the camp doctor. After some time he came to believe that the commandant of the camp was stealing the infirmary's medical supplies and selling them on the black market. He informed the Red Cross of this and they investigated the matter. I do not know what they found or what became of the commandant, but the result for us was that we were transferred to the far harsher camp in Satara. My earliest memories are set there. We lived in Nissen huts (the British forerunner of Quonset huts), without electricity or running water; even for children the long monsoon season was nightmarish. In later years I have met several people who were also children in Satara. We all seem to have vivid memories of the place, but few that are pleasant.

A small number of our fellow-prisoners in Satara (but none of the other children) were Jews. The rest were Aryans, most of whom, as I understand, were Nazis or Nazi sympathizers. Some of them would point to a tall tree in the camp and tell my parents and the other Jews: "This is where we'll hang you when Rommel comes to liberate us". Of course that was only until the autumn of 1942, when Hitler's dream of breaking through to India was buried forever in the sands of El Alamein. From them on almost all the Germans in the camp ceased ever having been followers of Hitler. Indeed, when the war was over some of them, including once-outspoken anti-Semites, went around asking Jews in the camp to sign documents certifying that they had always been anti-Nazis.

The end of the war did not at first change our circumstances. The British government was still officially blind to the difference between Aryans and Jews from Germany, and decided to "repatriate" them all—the Jews as well as the Aryans; the victims of Nazism as well as the Nazis themselves—to Germany. This caused much distress to my parents and the other Jewish prisoners in British camps, who naturally enough did not think of Germany as their "Fatherland". I dimly remember once hearing that the Jews in our camp threatened to commit suicide *en masse* rather than let themselves be sent to Germany, but I don't know how accurate this recollection is.

Sometimes, indeed, I wonder how accurate *any* of my memories of Satara are. The facts seem too bizarre, too cruel, to be true.

In the summer of 1946 however the British rulers of India, who with the end of the Raj would soon be experiencing their own involuntary repatriation, changed their mind. They now allowed us to remain in India. We returned to Lahore, my birthplace, which the next year was absorbed into the new country of Pakistan.

In Lahore my German past quickly retreated into the shadows. I assumed (in every sense) a succession of new identities. Instead of German friends I now had

Muslim ones; my German teachers were replaced, in turn, by Indian nuns (at the Convent of Jesus and Mary), Anglican clergymen (at the Cathedral School) and Belgian monks (at St. Anthony's School). I now spoke English—with a distinct Indian accent—and sang Christian hymns. Later, I went to Woodstock, a boarding school in India run by Protestant missionaries from the United States, where I sang patriotic American songs and acquired something like an American accent. After two years there I went to Bedales, a self-styled progressive school in England, and there I sang madrigals and acquired the more or less English accent that I still have.

These odd circumstances, and the discontinuities and fragments of which I think of myself as being in large measure composed, have enriched my life, and exposed me to an unusually wide range of languages, cultures, and beliefs. I was a poster child for what some people nowadays celebrate as "diversity" (and others, perhaps more wisely, deplore as *anomie*.)

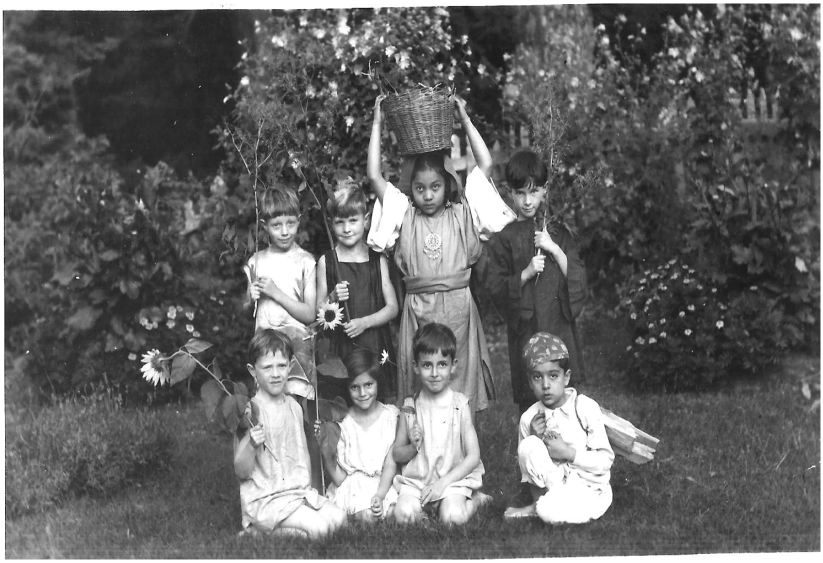
On the other hand, having never encountered another human being whose circumstances resemble mine, I spent my childhood and adolescence without belonging to a community of people whose values and outlooks I could unconsciously absorb as my own, and be comfortable with—and whose mere presence would implicitly reassure me that it was acceptable to be whatever it was that I was becoming.

But what was that? What was I, and what was I becoming? I did not know how to answer these questions and by the time I was nine years old I already experienced that as an acute problem. Before leaving for boarding school in India I asked my parents what I should tell people who wanted to know where I was from (I still dread being asked this question and still don't quite know how to answer it). The formula they suggested, "my parents are refugees from Germany, and I was born in the part of India that is now Pakistan", did little to reassure me. It was easier to know what I was not.

I was not much of a German, no matter what British officialdom had had to say on the matter. But I was *something* of one, as I will show presently.

I wasn't much of a Jew, either. My parents were unenthusiastic about their own Jewish identities and there was little that they said or did that helped me understand what it means to be a Jew or how to navigate my way through life as one. However, their attitude could not extinguish the longing I felt for some connection to the Jewish world; and whenever white people I didn't know came to our house in Lahore (I mistakenly assumed that all Jews were white) I would ask my parents, hopefully, whether they were Jews. But they never were. Other than my immediate family and the few Jewish families in the camps, I would be twelve years old before I so much as saw another Jew.

Nor could I identify myself as an Indian or (after 1947) as a Pakistani, for even a child could see that I wasn't one. In Lahore my parents arranged for me to take Urdu lessons once a week from the hunchbacked bookkeeper of the Gymkhana Club, but they were careful to do nothing else that might encourage me (heaven forbid!) to "go native"—that being in any case something that only my fellow-*Lahori* Kim, with his unique talents and guile, has ever been able to accomplish. That I was not Indian is also confirmed by a photograph taken in 1947 of me in a small group of children in a school play in Kashmir. What a telling image it is of a bygone world! Two of the children in the picture are Indian, and (appalling as it now seems) they are dressed as Kashmiri peasants. One has a bundle of firewood on his back, the other is holding a basket filled with twigs on her head. The other six children are European and are dressed in fairy-tale garments. Those in the front row are holding sunflowers, those in the back have sprigs in their hands. Unlike the Indian children, who have sullen expressions, the Europeans are all smiling. I am sitting next to the Indian boy in the front row. I am wearing a silly costume, holding a flower and have a broad smile. Certifiably, therefore, I am not an Indian!



Gulmarg, Kashmir: The Garden School (1947)

There was however one specific way in which the option of "going native" *was* available to me. Having been shorn of their German citizenship by the Nazis, my parents were officially "stateless" people. When they traveled abroad it was with a cumbersome document known as the Nansen passport that had been devised by the League of Nations for the use of refugees who no longer had passports issued by a sovereign state. Until 1947 I too was a stateless person, and would have been eligible for the postwar equivalent of the Nansen passport. However, the fact that I had been born in the part of British India that became Pakistan meant that after India and Pakistan gained their independence in 1947 I was eligible for any one of three other passports: Indian, Pakistani, and British. My parents chose the latter for me, and so it was with a British passport that, at the age of nine, I traveled to the American boarding school in India. But even this document was not without its peculiar ambiguities. My passport identified me simply as a "British subject", which was a temporary category that parliament in London had created for marginal characters from the colonies like me. A real English person would be identified additionally as a "citizen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland". Lacking that status, I was not entitled to vote in England, to run for public office or—after the Commonwealth Immigration Act was passed in 1962—even to live in England. So my nominal Englishness was in fact the kind that identified me as a somewhat Indian, Pakistani or other ambiguous person, and definitely not as English![1]

And this of course points to the fact that I was not English, either. Although I spent my entire adolescence and some of my early adulthood in England, I was never able to think of myself as English. To borrow a phrase: a Jew cannot be an Englishman, perhaps particularly not if he has spent the first five and a half years of his life imprisoned by His Majesty's Government as an enemy alien. The barriers I encountered in England were social, psychological and intellectual. The social barriers were those of xenophobia and antisemitism, which at least in those days were both deeply ingrained in English life (a common saying of the time was that "Niggers begin in Calais"). The psychological barriers had to do with my unwillingness to mention Satara to anyone and my inability to resolve the tension of living among and in many ways identifying with the people who had incarcerated my family and me there. The intellectual barrier was perhaps similar to those encountered by black Africans whose French colonial teachers made them refer to “Nos ancêtres les Gaulois”—our ancestors the Gauls. The matter came to a head for me when I was at Oxford. My subject there was history, which I loved, but the curriculum was almost entirely in English history, and I began to suspect that as long as I studied English history I would never possess the intuitive sympathy with my subject, or at least the intuitive insight into it, that any good historian must have. After my return to Oxford from Jerusalem, where I covered the first month of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, I felt that I must not delay my decision any longer, and that I must now study Jewish, and not English, subjects. Only in this way, I reasoned, would I be able to experience the closeness to my past that the study of English history would always deny me. My decision was not supported by my tutors. R.W. Southern, the great medievalist and someone I esteemed highly for his personal qualities as well as for his scholarship, reacted with considerable annoyance and never spoke to me again. My other tutor, Christopher Hill, who was not without his own strange ambiguities, responded only with polite disdain. Undeterred, I bade farewell to my *soi-disant* ancestors the Gauls and set about familiarizing myself with the Semitic languages and literature of my true ancestors.

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[1] Many years later I went to the British consulate in New York to renew that passport. The official looked carefully at me and then asked whether I would like him to add the "citizen of the United Kingdom … " stamp. Evidently this was because, having scrutinized me, he had determined that I was more than merely a British subject. I thanked him for his offer, but declined it.

Thankfully, most of the issues that arose out of my strange circumstances eventually resolved themselves. I grew out of some, discovered how to compensate for many, and left others behind me when I came to the United States and found it remarkably easy and attractive to start thinking of myself as both an American and an American Jew.

But my German problem, the earliest challenge to my efforts to recognize myself, still persists. I don’t imagine that I will ever overcome it.

In the camps I naturally assumed that I was German, just like all my friends. But I knew from my parents that we wanted the British to win the war—they were the good side—and for the Germans, who were bad, to lose it. This raised questions in my mind that did nothing but baffle me. If the British were good, I wanted to know, why had they imprisoned us? Was it because *we* were bad? That didn’t seem likely. And what about everyone else in the camp—my friends, and all the grownups whom we called *Onkel* or *Tante*—uncle and aunt? With the exception of *die alte Hexe*—the old witch—a mean old woman who frightened all the children in the camp, it was unimaginable to me that these “uncles” and “aunts” of ours were bad people. I knew them only as ordinary and likable folk—some of them were the parents of my friends—and they never showed me any hostility that I was aware of (though I now recognize that at least some of them must have regarded me with the same murderous hatred that they felt for all Jews[2]).

One day, however, my mother told me that I must stop calling these people *Onkel* or *Tante*. "I won't have you calling Nazis 'uncle' or 'aunt'", she explained; I was to address them instead as *Herr* or *Frau*—Mr. or Mrs. I can still remember the awkwardness I felt when I spoke to an erstwhile *Onkel* or *Tante* in this new way for the first time. I don't recall any of them reacting to it, or any of my friends asking me about it, but I'm sure the change must have been noticed and commented on.

Strange as it may now seem, I do not believe that I had any inkling of what the word "Nazi" really meant. I could tell of course that it applied to the Germans around me, but that did not lead me to regard them as significantly different from me and my parents, and it did not challenge my sense of being somehow connected to all of them. With the exception of the few Jews in the camp they were, after all, the only adults I knew.

In the years after the war the problem of my *German-ness* (for want of a better term) became more pressing. Often this was because of the example set by my parents. In Satara they had not wanted me to call Germans *Onkel* or *Tante*, but it did not take them very long, once we were freed from the camp, to fashion an altogether different reality for themselves. They now spent part of their foreign vacation every other year in Germany. They bought German cars and German medical equipment. My father brought a physician from Germany to assist him in his practice (it was only later that this man emerged in his true colors as a virulent anti-Semite and a veteran of the Waffen-SS). My father also did nothing to discourage people from referring to him as "the Germany doctor", an honorific (as it was intended to be) that proved useful to his practice since the hostility Indians and Pakistanis in those years felt toward the British often led them to favor German physicians. In his later years my father became a fast friend of the German ambassador to Pakistan (whom, as far as I know, he never asked about his activities during the Hitler years), and he agreed to be the honorary German consul-general in Lahore. My mother however vetoed the idea; as she told my father, she could not live in a house which had a German flag flying over it. As consolation prize my father was offered, and with my mother's assent accepted, the *Bundesverdienstkreuz,* a German decoration for his services (whatever they may have been) to the Federal Republic. By then, my parents had both become German citizens. Rather curiously, my father found ways to merge his hostility to me (the reason for which remain a mystery) with his inclination toward the Germans. It seemed to give him pleasure to tell me that he regretted sending me to boarding school in England rather than Germany where, or so he claimed, educational standards were much higher; and when I was at Oxford he would try to convince me of its inferiority to the great German universities (none of which he had attended).

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[2] Among my playmates were the two children of a Lutheran minister who lived in the same Nissen hut as we. Only a thin partition separated our quarters, and twice a day my parents would have to hear him, as part of his grace over the family meals, praying loudly for Germany's victory and invoking God's blessings on the Fuehrer.

The irony of this never escaped me. For my father was not in fact a German Jew. He was born in Galicia, then a province of the Austro-Hungarian empire and now part of the Ukraine, from where his family moved to Germany shortly before the outbreak of World War I. Snubbed by real German Jews (including by members of my mother's family) as a mere *Galitsianer,* my father felt his inferior status very acutely. What balm it was to his wounded pride therefore that now, as a distinguished physician, he was honored by the German government and could allow himself to feel accepted as an equal by Germans of high status. The culmination of his apotheosis occurred when, in his late sixties, on a hike in the Bavarian mountains, his friend the German ambassador to Pakistan proposed that they henceforth address each other with the intimate *Du* instead of with the formal *Sie* they had used previously.

My father was the first exemplar I ever observed of the very sorry process in which a socially inferior person rejects his own background and attempts to remodel himself in the image of those who disdain him. Later I would understand how widespread this phenomenon is. It characterized much of the encounter of Indians (among them men and women of great refinement) with their British overlords (among them men and women lacking every sort of refinement). It was also a troubling leitmotif of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish history, marking much of the encounter of East European Jews, in particular, with the West, and then, after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, with their own Jewish brethren from the Muslim world. I explored this theme in some detail in my first book and was widely rebuked at the time. Nearly 50 years later it is being taken seriously by some Israeli scholars.

I regarded my parents' attitudes toward Germany as shameful, and on more than one occasion I all too tactlessly told them so. In some dark moments I even wondered whether the ambiguities that their enthusiastic accommodation to the "new" Germany exposed may have been what led the British to keep us imprisoned for so long. (Many Jews, and even some Aryans, were released from the camps a few months after being arrested.)

I cannot pretend however to be entirely free of the sentiments that drew my parents back to their German roots. Although Satara was a very long time ago some of the German strands that were woven into my being there remain part of me. I find that I welcome the opportunity to speak German. There are German words and phrases that have a particular resonance for me that I cannot discover in any other language. At school and university I opted for German as my modern foreign language, instead of French, and I found, much to my astonishment, that I speak French with a German accent. I was told this by a taxi driver in Ghent who was adamant that there was no cathedral in his town (I had come from Brussels to see Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*) but who suddenly remembered where it was after I produced my passport to show him that no, despite what he thought he heard, I am not a German. Just a few years ago, driving along a valley near our house, I meant to say to my companion, "This is such a wide valley", but what I said was, "This is such a *breit* valley"—"*breit*" being the German word for "wide". We now refer to it as "the bright valley"! Although I won't listen to Wagner, I find vocal or choral music far more engaging when it is sung in German than in any other tongue. For many years there was no form of music I enjoyed more than nineteenth-century German *Lieder*, or art songs, to which I had been introduced by my mother. When I meet Germans it sometimes seems to me, at first, as though an unspoken bond connects us, a mutual recognition that only we could share; and I need to remind myself that there is no such bond, and that my "recognition" is unilateral, unreciprocated, chimerical: altogether delusional; and I then feel as though I have been guilty of profound absurdity and disloyalty.

My German-ness, therefore, only went so far. If anything, the example set by my parents pushed me in the opposite direction. Certainly, it did nothing to moderate the perception that began growing in me from the time I was just 12 or 13 that the only fact about the Germans that matters is that they murdered six million Jews and would have murdered the rest of us if they had been able to do so. Absolute and uncompromising rejection of any connection at all with Germany and its people became, in my view, the only course for a Jew who wants to retain his integrity and self-respect and be faithful to the memory of all those millions—*all those millions*—whom the Germans murdered.

This attitude expresses itself in a variety of ways, which I set down here without feeling any need to justify or explain them. For all my pleasure in the German language I bristle when I hear people speaking it. I make a definite point of not buying things manufactured in Germany and I do not drink German wine or beer. Even in the most careless days of my youth I would never go out with a German woman, for it seemed to me that younger Germans differed only in degree, and not in kind, from their parents and grandparents. When I learned of the Morgenthau Plan for the "pastoralization" of Germany—it called for the dismantling of German factories, the flooding of mines and other steps aimed at sending Germany back to its relatively harmless rural past—I was sorry that there were practical reasons why it could not be implemented. I was appalled by the cynicism that led the Germans to call their program of restitution and compensation payments to Jews *Wiedergutmachung*—that is to say, "Making good again". I started to feel that I must ensure that the Holocaust will always remain a presence in my life, familiarizing myself with it as historical fact and immersing my imagination in its horrors. When I was at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem I learned that the Allies had rebuffed the pleas of Jewish leaders to bomb the railroad tracks leading to Auschwitz. On my return to England I pestered every politician I encountered, including on one occasion prime minister Harold Macmillan, with demands for an explanation. (The replies I received were always evasive. "I want to assure you", Macmillan told me, "that one of the reasons we wanted to win the war was to put an end to the extermination of the Jews".) I connected myself to the Holocaust too when, years later, I interviewed two leading Nazis–Albert Speer, one of the major Nazi war criminals, and Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's evil image maker. I co-authored a book analyzing the Rorschach responses of the major Nazi war criminals (among them, Speer) who were put on trial in Nuremberg. I assembled a valuable archive of psychological test responses of other Nazis, including Adolf Eichmann, that I deposited in the Library of Congress. It was an obsession with me to discredit Hannah Arendt's notion that the Nazis were merely spineless ordinary people—she called them "banal"—who obeyed orders. I wrote a book about the day on which Dachau was liberated by American troops. I tried, though without success, to get the German government or German foundations to make a comprehensive inventory of all sites of Jewish significance in Germany, and to place historical markers on the more important ones. One of my more bizarre ideas was to have my forearm tattooed with the concentration camp number of a murdered Jew—no doubt, it is just as well that I did not follow through with that ...

The idea of having a tattoo was inspired by the feeling that something of great importance was missing from my attitude toward Germany and the Germans. Whenever I thought about the Holocaust I did so, as it were, in the third person: it was something that happened to other people. I was connected to them in a very real sense, of course, but it was as an observer who is connected to the thing observed—connected, to be sure, by intense sympathy and detailed knowledge, but always from a distance and not at all as part of their world. The immense sorrow I felt for the victims did not make their pain mine. The catastrophe had befallen *them* and not me.

In a certain respect of course this distancing of myself from them made sense. Satara was no Auschwitz. Six million were dead but I was alive. Compared to what they had suffered my victimhood was trivial.

Yet wasn't it true that Satara and Auschwitz *were* linked, even if only as different ends of the same continuum? Could I grasp the horrors of the Holocaust if I did not approach them through the gateway of my own experience? And could I, for that matter, adequately comprehend my own experience if I failed to acknowledge the far more terrible circumstances with which it was distantly but nevertheless integrally associated?

For years these questions lurked, seldom acknowledged and never really addressed, in the deep background of my mind. My parents, I now recognize, had always been reluctant to talk about Satara, and even though they would usually answer my questions about it, my questions themselves were haphazard and never really touched on the important issues. As a family, we put Satara behind us. It was not one of the reference points in our lives. In England, as I have already mentioned, I continued this pattern of avoidance. Quite recently I had lunch with John Slater, who had been one of my favorite teachers at Bedales. For a reason I no longer remember I mentioned our imprisonment in Satara. John was startled, and then became very agitated. "Why didn't anyone tell us about that?", he wanted to know: "Why not your parents, why not you?" "But why should we have?", I asked. "What difference would it have made?". "Oh", replied John, " it would have made a very big difference indeed". He was right, of course, but I changed the subject. It was not something I cared to discuss.

It was the births of my children that first made the Holocaust very personal to me. Holding the newborn Sarah, Abigail, Adam in my arms, I could not help thinking that it was children like these—a million or so of them!—whom the Nazis murdered. With great force, even if only fleetingly, this terrible thought placed me directly in the setting of horror that I had always avoided.

From there I was slowly led to see myself as part of the generation of those million murdered children; and I came to recognize how cruelly the existence of the children who survived—I among them—has been diminished by their absence.

We are the diminished generation
Brittled gleaning of hate-harvested fields:

A generation that almost wasn't
And therefore isn't quite,
A lonely generation,
Only few in number,
And never quite of where we are;
Inept with nuances,
Articulating what others needn't:
Audience of someone else's play.
A generation that must dissemble,
Pretending we too belong
To the natural flow of things...

Of course, we Jews have always been "a people that dwells apart and is not counted among the nations" (*Numbers* 23:9). But my generation is a minority among this minority. Many of those million murdered children would have grown up to be people of vision and learning, guardians and enlargers of Israel's heritage. Without them our generation is depleted, not only in numbers but spiritually, a hedonistic and ambitious generation that is easily beguiled by slogans and programs and cannot rise to the challenges with which history has confronted us. We leave a cruelly—impoverished legacy to our children, and I fear that they will impoverish it still further.

The recognition of myself as part of this diminished generation brought me from a third-person encounter with the Holocaust to one (as I would put it) in the first-person plural. The tragedy had not befallen *them* alone, it had also befallen my generation—*us*—too. My ability to recognize this was progress, but only to a sort of half-way point, at best. For "*they*" and "*we*" do not encompass the entirety of the Holocaust or any other chapter of our history. The "I" is contained in them. It is their pulse; and without it they are bereft of life. In the drama of the Exodus from Egypt—as we are told (Exodus 13.8) and read every year in the Passover *seder*—"The Lord acted for *me*, when *I* came out of Egypt".

For many years, however, the "We" was as far as I could take my equation. The "I" remained stubbornly outside it. One day however, and for no apparent reason, the thought came to me that I ought to spend some time in Germany: specifically, in Berlin. At first the idea made no sense to me at all. The prospect of being in Berlin, *anus mundi,* the very center of the Third Reich, surrounded by Germans, was not just senseless but chilling and repulsive.

Yet the thought would not leave me. I started to feel as though it were a summons that I must obey. And it was now that, again for no apparent reason, I began to meditate on the words of Deuteronomy 25:17. I repeated them to myself over and over again as if I were a hippy embracing his mantra. I had used those words a quarter of a century ago as the motto of a book that I wrote with Florence Miale. It was only now however that I recognized that the injunction was not to "remember what Amalek *did* " but—*specifically!*—to remember what Amalek "did to *you*". The pronoun is *lecha*, that is, the second person singular. "Remember what Amalek did to you"! This in turn brought me to the recognition that one of the meanings of this injunction is that it is only as my history that I can hope to understand their/our history: and therefore myself as a Jew.

This simple exegesis had an extraordinary impact on me. It showed me that it was not enough for me to remember what the Germans had done to the Jews as such, or even what they had done to my generation of Jews. I was commanded to remember, to be aware of, to expose myself to, *what they had done to me.*

It was also clear to me that the "*lecha*—to you" was somehow linked to the summons, as I thought of it, go to Berlin. My sorrow over all those deaths, all that destruction, my awareness of the sad predicament of my generation's feebleness, would remain incomplete until I forged the link that had been missing. I now understood that Satara was the context in which *I* had lived through the Holocaust: that it was *my* connection to the incomparably greater tragedy. Remarkably, this recognition was soon followed a series of dreams about Satara, the first I think I ever had. I will not describe those dreams, for their images of murderous evil and the sense of doom they conveyed are too appalling. But I valued them nevertheless. They were my dreams, my gateways into the terrain that I now needed to explore. And they too seemed to confirm that I must go to Berlin.

Michael Selzer is currently completing a book about the origins of the concept of symmetry (*Asymmetry and its Discontents*), and a memoir, *A Jew Goes to Berlin*, from which his contribution to this issue of *War, Literature & the Arts* has been excerpted. Among his earlier books are *The Nuremberg Mind: The Psychology of the Nazi Leaders* (co-authored with Florence Miale); and *Deliverance Day: The Last Hours at Dachau*, which won a National Jewish Book Award in 1979.