

## **Hans Mielzynski - Frankfurt born zionist, soldier of the Jewish Brigade, Rescuer, Helper**

*Hanna Eckhardt*

„Dearest Chawa!“

This is the address of some hundreds of letters which - miraculously - have been stored in an US American private house in the State of New York. The author's son and daughter-in-law had transported the majority of them when moving from Israel to the U.S., later they received supplements from Israel. Anticipating the importance they have preserved them all - although not strictly following archival aspects. At the moment they are considering to give them to an important archive or a research institution.

„Dearest Chava“ was born as Eva Mueller in Berlin, in 1910. The author of the letters was her husband, Hans „Chanan“ Mielzynski.

The birth of „a strong boy“ on March 19, 1914 was announced by „Siegfried Mielzynski and Selma, née Stein, Frankfurt am Main, Cronberger Strasse 20“. Siegfried Mielzynski, merchant, born in 1884 in Gnesen/Silesia (now: Gniezno/Poland), Selma (\* 1889), from Hesse. Little Hans Friedrich had to farewell his father into WWI soon, whereas his mother lost the battle she fought in a tuberculosis sanatorium. The Berlin relatives took care of the semi orphan; after returning from war the father moved to Berlin where his kin lived. He married a second time. Few photos show a family in a good mood, on holiday. After his father's early death (in 1929) Hans was raised up by his grandmother and his stepmother, together with his cousin, Ruth.

According to confirmations of his best friend, Hans when being a youngster found his way to Zionism and Socialism. He finished an apprenticeship as a photographer in the renowned Berlin company „Foto-Klinke“ (which still existed until a few years ago) in autumn 1932. Afterwards he worked for 3 months in the photo- and radio department of „Tietz“ warehouse (nowadays Hertie/Karstadt). In February 1933: his dismissal. In the following period he worked here and there, saving money for his ultimate desire: TO PALESTINE!. On Isle of Fynen, in Denmark, he went on „Hachsharah“ – the agricultural or handicraft education of young Jews before they went on „Aliyah“, the immigration

and settlement in then still British Palestine. After his return from Denmark, he works as an assistant to the functioneers Georg Landauer, Kurt Blumenfeld, Max Kreutzberger of Jewish „Reichsvereinigung“ in Meineckestraße, Berlin. Here he comes across Dr. Martha Wertheimer, a Frankfurt born, too. Martha, a teacher, journalist, writer, meanwhile head journalist of „Israelitisches Familienblatt“, the wide spread Jewish paper in Germany after 1933, shares with him the object of desire: Palestine.

On board the steamer „Gerusalemme“ Hans arrives in the promised land in February 1937. He becomes a member of kibbutz Givat Hashloshah, as his lifelong best friend Gerd Sorenson does, a Frankfurt born man too.

The two young men get married to two young women of German descent, they are witnesss to the marriages mutually. Martha Wertheimer visits the country in autumn 1937 following her paper's commission. She sees her young friends in the kibbutz, she returns with articles about „Brave Erez Israel“ about the dangerous, difficult and nevertheless satisfying life of the young pioneers. Hans and his Eva become parents of a baby boy – and lose him after six months through the clumsiness of a nurse, the baby dies of a cerebral heamorrhage. They leave the kibbutz, look for a new perspective. In Ra'anana they join a group who wants to build up a new kibbutz. At this time war is raging in Europe. Hans works very hard, following his vocation to a kibbutznik. He refuses Kurt Blumenfeld's offer to work for him. He goes to the hell for working: to the Potash Plant in Sodom, at the Dead Sea. He would work there for nearly two years, learns to drive a train and dedicates his administrative skills to the organization of work in the plant. He yearns to become a member of the „Jewish Brigade“, established by the British Army in summer 1944 to fight the Nazis – yet the kibbutz won't let him go. Late in 1944, he succeeds: together with his friends Gerd and Helga he joins a military education camp in Egypt. His wife – in the meantime they have a second little boy – receives letters from him nearly every day. In spring 1945, he takes part in the last fights in Upper Italy against the Italian fascists and the allied Nazis. He enjoys a short home stay and, after the end of WWII, we find him in Western Europe: in France, in Belgium, in the Netherlands. He takes care of Jewish survivors of the concentration camps, motivates them to „Alijah“, and he is a „Bricha“ activist. He and his JB-friends smuggle young Jewish survivors out of Germany, put them onto illegal ships with the destination „Palestine“ –often

the ships are captured, the refugees interned in camps, the dramas are so well known, e.g. „Exodus“ ...

In January 1946 we find Hans Mielzynski in Germany. He takes care of the „Kinder von Blankenese“ in the Warburg villa, as his friend Erich Stiefel (Ehud Ben Yehuda) from Gelsenkirchen does. He takes care of DPs in Belsen camp, he visits Duesseldorf, Bonn, Koeln, Frankfurt, the Gehringshof („Kibbutz Buchenwald“) near Fulda; nearly every day another town or city. He has a construction mounted in the car that takes him from here to there to use a typewriter en route. He does research work about what happened to family members, relatives, friends, relatives of kibbutz members. To receive the utmost horrible news too often: deported, murdered. He works restlessly, takes nearly no sleep, eats just a bit. He is dissatisfied with the result of his efforts, he bemoans the moral of his supervised ones. In April 1946 he becomes seriously ill. Only weeks later he tells his wife about a bad angina which had been treated by household remedies. He lost 10 kg of weight within a few weeks.

At this time the Brigade was close to being disbanded. Hopeful signals to his wife and children - in February another son has been born, he knows him just from photos - :before August we all will be back again!!! Hans is sitting on packed rucksack.

On June 10, 1946, Hilde Levison, his Duesseldorf landlady, finds him lifeless on the sofa. British military administration takes care of the cause. They order an examination of the body and a bottle of wine to be analyzed. His widow never receives any information about the result, neither does his nearly 6-years- old son, his „Goldkind“, receive the wrist watch Hans had already bought for him in Europe (and had worn it on his wrist for weeks already) nor the announced steel construction set. Just Chawa's letters and a small diary were sent back to the family. He never could hold his 1946 born Raphael in his arms.

During my research work about Martha Wertheimer I had come into contact with Hans' friend Gerd/Gershon Sorenson. That was in 1995. He wanted to put me into contact with the families of Hans' sons – however, it failed. He assumed, they would not be interested. What on earth went wrong then??? Nearly 20 years later – in 2013 – I googled Hans' name. And I came across a film script at Amazon Studios. I managed to find the author:

Hans' grandson in law. He brought me into contact with his parents in law, the family of Hans' elder son. In their house more than 300 letters, written between 1940 and 1946, have been saved – most of them never been read because of the lack of knowledge of German. Meanwhile I translated some dozens of them into English – now the family is getting knowledge about their father, and father in law, and grandfather, etc. – I might have helped better if we had already come into contact in the 1990ies!!!

Finally, I remembered a lady now aged more than 100 years, born in Frankfurt, now living in Israel. I had met her in the context of my Martha Wertheimer studies, she then had corrected the spelling of the name „Mielzynski“ – her husband's name had been the same - - - Gretel Merom's deceased husband had been a cousin of Hans. Some months ago she met Hans' younger son Raphael and his grandson Chanan in Haifa – they had not had known each other before.

Hans Mielzynski is buried on the Jewish Cemetery of Putte near Antwerp, Belgium. „His“ Kibbutz Gal-Ed he had co-founded though never has lived in year by year names him at an annual celebration act. We must not forget him, too.