

Anna: A Teenager on the Run

by Anna Podgajcki and translated by Sandy Bloom

A Pedigreed Jew: Between There and Here – Kovno and Israel

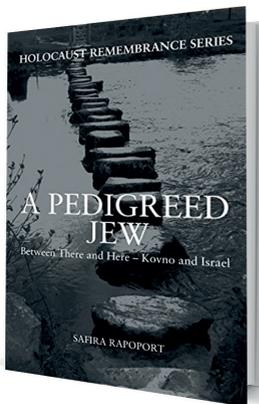
by Safira Rapoport and translated by Pamela Hickman.

History becomes more important with each passing day. Whether it be trying to understand the chaos that a Europe without unity could bring, helping to trace our cultural heritage and national identity so we can realise that we've all got a little bit more in common than we think. Or whether it's simply just making sure we never forget what has gone before – our history and understanding of the history of others is vital.

The Holocaust Remembrance Series of books are testimonies and memoirs from the unique archives of Yad Vashem, the world centre for Jewish history. I read two books from the series, *Anna: A Teenager on the Run* by Anna Podgajcki and translated by Sandy Bloom, and *A Pedigreed Jew: Between There and Here – Kovno and Israel* by Safira Rapoport and translated by Pamela Hickman.

Both books are ultimately a celebration and commemoration of the strength of human spirit not only at the time of an event but in the decades that follow, as well as being stark warnings about what can happen when people just stand by.

In *A Pedigreed Jew: Between There and Here – Kovno and Israel* Safira Rapoport tells the story of her mother Nechama Baruchson, and follows her journey from her childhood in Lithuania to a life after the Holocaust in Israel. Like many books relaying the experiences of victims of the Holocaust, it is impossible to read stories of childhood without dread in the pit of your stomach because you know what happens next. You just don't know how what happens next comes about.



Rapoport takes the reader back to what seems to be an everlasting winter using first-hand accounts of life in the Kovno ghetto, and in the Stutthof Concentration Camp and these stories intertwine with primary source evidence that she has collected on her journey retracing her mothers' footsteps.

However compelling at times this style of writing and storytelling may be, this book isn't for the faint hearted, or those without a predisposition to learning. For an in-depth perspective of the Holocaust, told without the perceived focus on the self that could have easily appeared when sharing such a personal trauma to people who only know the collective history, I'd recommend *A Pedigreed Jew: Between There and Here – Kovno and Israel*.

Anna: A Teenager on the Run is the story of how the books author Anna Podgajcki used her tenacity to stay one step ahead of death as she sought safety in Europe during the continent's most savage years. It's a curious book because most of the first-hand writing about the Holocaust is very focussed on one particular time or place, whether than be a concentration camp or an attic in Amsterdam. The sheer scale of this book immediately makes it an intriguing read. It is a book for those who look beyond the headlines for their history and their stories.

History has cast long shadows over both of these stories. Their authors, the six million murdered, and over the survivors and their families are all in its shadow. We must dedicate ourselves to making sure that whatever happens we own our history, understand it, and learn from it so that we will never allow the horrors of the past to be revisited on any communities in our world.

