

Prologue

Summer 2012 Vol. 44 No. 2

QUARTERLY of the NATIONAL ARCHIVES and RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Date: 9.1.51.

Doc:

France

1. Child's Name: PUPA, Michal

2. Date of birth : 20.8.38

3. Place of birth : Maniewicz, Poland

Verified by : Statement in lieu of birth certificate made before the Legal Counsellor, IRO Area 7 on 30.11.50.

4. Present address : THE CHILDREN'S VILLAGE BAD AIBLING

5. Adult, agency or organization caring for child : International Refugee Organisation

6. Relationship : none

7. Last residence prior to entry into Germany : Maniewicz, Poland

8. Date child brought into Germany : 1946

9. Date child brought into US Zone : April 1946

10. Nationality : Polish

11. Evidence of Nationality : CM 1 Form

An ORPHAN of the HOLOCAUST *His Journey to America*

Survivor Opens Up after Records about Him are Found in the National Archives

By Miriam Kleiman

More than a million visitors come to the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., each year to see documents that form the basis of our democracy, yet few know the National Archives has billions of pages of other documents that might hold clues about their own families.

“Attachments,” a new exhibition in Washington, features the lives and records of 31 immigrants. To prepare for the press preview, “Attachments” curator Bruce Bustard showed me his stack of papers on the 31 individuals, in hopes of perhaps finding a

child or grandchild of these immigrants to contact. Such personal connections give the records context, meaning, and resonance and bring their stories into the present day. Bruce started with the top one—a January 9, 1951, United Nations International Refugee Organization (IRO) court document about a boy named Michael Pupa, then an orphan at a displaced persons (DP) camp in Germany.

“Holocaust survivor from Cleveland?” I asked.

Bruce looked at me incredulously and said yes. I grew up with Jill Pupa, whom I assumed was Michael’s daughter. That afternoon, I called her and mentioned the exhibition and confirmed that Michael Pupa was her father. She told me he was alive and well, but said he *never* talked about the Holocaust.

It became clear that this record held more about her father’s childhood than Jill knew.

We sent her scans of the 1951 document, which bears a striking image of a thin, handsome 13-year-old boy with a slight yet captivating smile.

Jill shared them with her parents and soon sent a surprising email: “My father is ready to share his story.” Within days, and at his request, Michael Pupa reviewed and edited the draft “Attachments” script segment about his own life. Jill wrote: “You have pulled the thread on the sweater that unravels it all. . . . My Dad started talking and it is truly is a gift.”

Michael Pupa’s family was one of millions destroyed in the Holocaust. Born in Maniewicz, Poland, in 1938, he lived there until his parents were murdered by the Nazis in 1942. Michael and his uncle spent the next two years hiding in the Polish forests until the summer of 1944, when that part of Poland was liberated by the Russians. After the war, they ended up in the U.S. zone of Germany, where Michael lived in four different DP camps.

Although the IRO and its predecessor, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) officially were international organizations, the United States largely dominated in terms of policy, funding, and influence.

Given this large role, many U.S. agencies were involved with refugee issues. The National Archives holds numerous refugee-related records, from policy and strategy documents to individual children’s case files, including those of Michael and a cousin.

The paper trail on Michael Pupa and his family—while erratic and incomplete—grew from a short legal summary to over a hundred detailed pages of documentation.

UN’S EFFORTS TO ASSIST REFUGEES BEGAN EARLY

The Allies faced a humanitarian crisis after World War II. Millions of displaced persons—among them prisoners of war, slave laborers, and survivors of concentration camps—had to be repatriated to their homelands or resettled elsewhere. Ironically, while the United States led international refugee policy and funding, public opinion and congressional resistance prevented this country from accepting large numbers of refugees.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the immensity of the refugee crisis and helped create UNRRA in 1943. UNRRA’s mission was to “plan, coordinate, administer or arrange for . . . relief of victims of war”

in any area under UN control “through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services.” UNRRA hoped to resettle DPs in their former countries, but this goal proved impossible and ill-advised given the changed postwar landscape and the fact that many DPs could not or would not return to their prewar homes.

The IRO succeeded UNRRA in 1947, and as refugees were resettled, remaining DPs were consolidated into fewer camps. Michael Pupa’s numerous relocations reflect this trend.

UNRRA and the IRO provided extensive vocational training in hopes of making refugees more skilled and thus more likely to be granted asylum. However, many refugees’ wartime experiences did not fit conventional occupational categories. Leib Kaplan’s (Michael’s uncle) records reveal this disconnect.

In 1942, to escape continued Nazi persecution and deportation, Leib went into hiding with his orphaned



Opposite: Michael Pupa’s pre-hearing document at the Bad Aibling children’s village in Germany records his birth in Maniewicz, Poland, and the names of his uncle and cousin as his sole surviving relatives. *Above:* Michael Pupa, at age 13, taken at a displaced persons camp in 1951. His story is one of 31 stories told in the new exhibit “Attachments: Faces and Stories from America’s Gates.”

A.E.F. D.P. REGISTRATION RECORD

For coding purposes

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| (1) REGISTRATION No. 01047028 | Original <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duplicate <input type="checkbox"/> | M. <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> | F. <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> | Jewish-Polish | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (2) Family Name PUPA, Michel | Other Given Names | (3) Sex | (4) Marital Status | (5) Claimed Nationality | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (6) Birthdate 20.8.1938 | Birthplace Samosz Poland | Country | (7) Religion (Optional) -orth. | (8) Number of Accompanying Family Members: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (9) Number of Dependents: Pupa Moische | (10) Full Name of Father Johwed | | (11) Full Maiden Name of Mother | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (12) DESIRED DESTINATION Palestine | | | (13) LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE OR RESIDENCE JANUARY 1, 1938. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| City or Village dupil | Province | Country | City or Village | Province Country | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (14) Usual Trade, Occupation or Profession Polish, Jewish, | (15) Performed in What Kind of Establishment | (16) Other Trades or Occupations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluency | (18) Do you Claim to be a Prisoner of War? | (19) Amount and Kind of Currency in your Possession | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (20) Signature of Registrant: Pupa M. | (21) Signature of Registrar: Rene Lamb | Date: 5.4.46. | Assembly Center No. 581. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (22) Destination or Reception Center: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (23) Code for Issue | Name or Number | | | | | | | | | | City or Village | | | | | | Province | | | | Country | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| (24) REMARKS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rabban Leib. H. C. E. father Chermin Bronja mother Bronja cousin | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

DP-3
16-57781-1

nephew Michael, then four. An UNRRA form lists Leib's wartime employment as "forest worker" and his wartime employer as "independent." On an IRO form, his occupation is listed as "professional forestworker" (emphasis added). It is unclear if the IRO employee intentionally embellished Leib's record hoping to make an unskilled laborer with only a grade school education more marketable.

Michael's paper trail begins with his arrival in the U.S. zone of Germany in April 1946. An April 2, 1946, document states he was "shipped by truck" from UNRRA DP camp Berlin-Zehlendorf. Three days later, on April 5, 1946, he is listed at UNRRA DP camp Eschwega.

The paper trail stops until February 10, 1948, when the IRO officially registers Michael and his cousin Bronja. The trail picks up again more than a year later, on April 26, 1949, when Leib and Michael are transferred to IRO DP camp Ulm. They are again transferred that August to IRO DP camp Fohrenwald.

MANY DISPLACED CHILDREN COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED

Of all the DPs, the hardest to resettle were children such as Michael and his cousin Bronja. Amid the war's destruction, families were separated, and many "disappeared." Some Jewish and "non-Aryan" babies had been forcibly removed and given as orphans to "Aryan" families who were infertile or sought more children. After the war, officials did not want to place children with foster families if relatives could be found.

A May 1946 UN memo, "Problems of unaccompanied displaced children," estimated that there were more than 9,000 such cases, with more so-called "hidden children" surfacing weekly. Hidden children were those who had passed as "Aryan" under an assumed name, gone into hiding, or been entrusted to friends, nannies, or acquaintances.

The huge number of persons missing—and presumed dead—created legal difficulties. Different countries had their own laws concerning when a missing person could be

This DP registration record card for Michael Pupa was completed on April 5, 1946, just days after his arrival at an UNRRA camp in the U.S. zone of Germany. He had survived the war by hiding in the Polish forests under the care of his uncle.

declared dead. It was often unclear which country's rules would apply because most refugees were stateless.

Of the unaccompanied displaced children, the hardest to place were "children who cannot be identified, owing to the absence or destruction of official records or desertion by the parent," as well as "children of undetermined nationality." Many refugees had no original records—identification papers had been destroyed or lost. Michael and Bronja's case files include a "statement in lieu of birth certificate."

These children lacked legal protection, and absence of legal guardians further impeded adoptions. These children were moved into children's DP camps, orphanages, and foster care, pending identification of family members, elusive confirmation of their parents' death, or appointment of a legal guardian.



CREATING "A DETECTIVE AGENCY" TO SEARCH FOR THE MISSING

Given the increasing numbers of displaced children, and the slow pace of processing them, the IRO created a new branch in January 1949: the International Tracing Service (ITS). ITS served as a "detective agency" and handled more than 6,000 cases a month.

In 1955 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) took over the ITS's work and its official records. For decades, the ICRC restricted access to this archive, located in Bad Arolsen, Germany. Under pressure from the U.S. National Archives and other archives and museums, the ICRC reluctantly opened part of this expansive collection in 2007. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) scanned the released material and made these records more widely available. These detailed records further lengthen Michael and his family's paper trail.

ITS records, combined with IRO records from the National Archives, closely document each step of Michael Pupa and his relatives' resettlement from the U.S. zone of Germany to the United States.

Michael and Bronja's files are two of hundreds of IRO "Closed Children's Case Files." These records show both a surprising level of detail and tremendous gaps. For example, the only mention of Holocaust atrocities in Michael Pupa's file is literally parenthetical: "(Parents taken to ghetto in 1942 supposed to be shot)."



Top left: The International Refugee Organization succeeded the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency in 1947 in the work of caring for and resettling European refugees. Above: An image from *Home for the Homeless*, an IRO public relations and outreach film released in April 1950. Below: Relief organizations helped to feed, clothe, identify, and resettle hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom were "stateless."





OWNER OR OPERATOR **SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES SYSTEM**

PAGE **3** OF **3** PAGES

AIRCRAFT **SE-UDC / SWEDISH /** FLIGHT No. **1075/JY 911** DATE **May 30/51**

POINT OF EMBARKATION **London, G. BRITAIN** POINT OF DISEMBARKATION **New York, N.Y., U.S.A.**

| No. | Name in full (As it appears in travel document) Family name - Given name | Full permanent address (If required) Ticket No. | Age | Sex | Nationality | Passport No. | Tax | No. Bags | Reg. Wgt. (KGS) | Wgt. Ovt. | |
|-----|---|---|-----|-----|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|-----|
| 1 | JEMIO SKI, Wladislaw | 215 4th St., New York, N.Y. | 6 | M | POLISH | 413095 | HEAD TAX | EXEMPT | | | |
| 2 | TALHINS, Valdis | 215 4th St., New York, N.Y. | 16 | M | LATVIAN | 295117 | | 1 | 7 | 5 | |
| 3 | WIK, Michael | 215 4th St., New York, N.Y. | 12 | M | POLISH | 411740 | | 1 | 10 | 5 | |
| 4 | MEHIUK, Bronja | 215 4th St., New York, N.Y. | 10 | F | POLISH | 411761 | | 1 | 7 | 5 | |
| 5 | <i>Lisa & H.T. Quintz</i> | | | | | | MAY 4 1951 | TOTAL | 43 | 34 | 120 |
| 6 | <i>Ly 3</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | <i>Lewis, 2 W. W. W.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | | |

The files of other children illustrate similar oversights. Under “Nationality,” one child’s record lists “Doubtful.” A four-year-old is deemed “political undesirable.” One file states, “we have come to the conclusion that through a misunderstanding the boy was erroneously registered as a girl.”

Some children bonded with foster families and did not want to return to their biological families. After many years of searching, one mother located her daughter in 1950, but the file notes “Josefine is very attached to her foster mother, cannot remember her real mother anymore, and therefore does not want to return to Yugoslavia.”

While the IRO’s case load increased, support for refugee resettlement continued to falter internationally and in the United States.

IRO files at the National Archives include the records of its public information office. This office had an image problem: how to get countries to support, fund, and grant visas to people viewed as unwanted and unpleasant reminders of the war and its destruction.

A September 29, 1947, internal IRO “media plan” to reinvent the organization and reframe the refugee issue notes substantial resistance “both in the general public and in Congress” to easing immigration quotas

“even on a temporary basis to meet a temporary problem.” Lingering anti-immigration sentiment and anti-Semitism resulted in the defeat of the Stratton Bill of 1947, a plan to admit 400,000 DPs to the United States under unused immigration quotas from the war years.

The IRO knew they had to “sell two ideas”: that the DPs, “most of them, will make good citizens,” and the fact that “most of them won’t go home.”

MICHAEL PUPA’S FAMILY BREAKS UP ONCE AGAIN

Meanwhile, Michael Pupa’s resettlement efforts advanced. The IRO was slated to cease operations on June 30, 1950, just two weeks after passage of the second Displaced Persons Act. While this deadline was extended, the pressure accelerated the resettlement process of refugees—including Michael Pupa.

Records include a birth certificate for Leib and his new wife Krejna’s baby, Rywka,

born February 25, 1950, at Wolfratshausen Hospital at IRO DP camp Fohrenwald.

Michael’s situation changed dramatically in August 1950. The first indication of a change is the mention of a new document in Leib’s file—a death certificate for Krejna, dated August 17, 1950. No further information or cause of death is given.

Leib’s anguish is revealed a few weeks later when he officially declared he could no longer care for Michael and Bronja. On September 15, 1950, he asked that they be placed under IRO care and filed “consent for emigration” for them to go the United States—without him.

Leib had protected Michael during the war and served as his and Bronja’s guardian in the DP camps, but he was unable to provide continued assistance. Bronja’s file starkly notes: “The uncle is also emigrating to USA but is unable to take Bronja with him, as he is a widower with an infant about 1 year old.” Without Leib as their guardian, Michael and Bronja each became an

Left: This image of Bronja Meniuk is attached to her petition for resettlement. Orphaned by the war, she was granted permission in 1951 to emigrate with her cousin Michael Pupa to the United States. *Right:* Michael Pupa and his cousin Bronja (Bronja) arrived in New York City aboard a Scandinavian Airlines flight on May 4, 1951. They lived for six months in a United Nations home for refugee children and then moved to Cleveland, where they were placed with foster parents. *Opposite:* Like many immigrants, Michael Pupa applied for naturalization in the United States. His April 15, 1957, application records the date of his arrival on May 4, 1951.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ORIGINAL
(To be retained
by Clerk of Court)

PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION

No. 12797

To the Honorable the DISTRICT Court of UNITED STATES at CLEVELAND, OHIO

This petition for naturalization, hereby made and filed, respectfully shows:

(1) My full, true, and correct name is MICHAEL PUPA
(2) My present place of residence is 3369 Cedarbrook Cleveland, Cuya. Ohio
(3) My occupation is student
(4) I am 18 years old. (5) I was born on August 20, 1938 in Manelitz Poland
(6) My personal description is as follows: Sex male, complexion fair, color of eyes hazel, color of hair brown, height 5 feet 5 1/2 inches, weight 134 pounds, visible distinctive marks none; country of which I am a citizen subject, or national Poland (7) I am not married; the name of my wife or husband is
we were married on he or she was born at and entered the United States at and now resides at
(7a) (If petition is filed under section 319 (a), Immigration and Nationality Act.) I have resided in the United States in marital union with my United States

“Unaccompanied Displaced Child” and were moved away from Leib and his infant daughter Rywka and to the IRO Bad Aibling Children’s Village on November 2, 1950.

Leib’s “Change of IRO Status” documents of November 10, 1950, formalize “decrease in family size” and note the reduction from five to two, indicating his wife has died, and that he is no longer responsible for Bronja and Michael.

On November 30, 1950, Michael received his “statement in lieu of a birth certificate” and was recommended for resettlement with Bronja:

[H]is uncle Leib Kaplan has released them for that purpose and is unable to take them there himself. . . . It is essential that PUPA Michal and MENIUK Bronja go to USA together, as they have

a close relationship and are the only relatives left together.

Michael’s case was referred to “[US] Zone Child Care” on January 19, 1951, to the Field Representative for Bavaria on January 23, 1951, and to the IRO Legal Division two weeks later. His petition for resettlement was filed on February 19, 1951, and he was assigned a case worker, Marjorie M. Farley, official “Child Care Field Representative for Land Bavaria.” The petition notes: “The parents of this child were persecuted during the war and are presumably dead.”

A picture is attached to Bronja’s March 3, 1951, petition for resettlement. She is an adorable, unsmiling little girl in a patterned wool sweater. The document’s wording is conditional, reflecting the uncertainty of her situation: If the parents of the child Bronja MENIUK are dead and, if also her uncle is unable to take her under his care and, if the guaranty is given that BRONJA is placed in USA in a convenient foster home (Home or family) and, if she can maintain contact with Michael PUPA, there are no objections to the IRO petition.

On March 16, 1951, attorney Dimiter Watschew was appointed Michael’s guardian

ad litem. He was appointed Bronja’s guardian two weeks later.

“100 PERCENT ORPHANS”
SENT TO THE UNITED STATES

On April 5, Michael was certified “a United Nations’ unaccompanied child, who falls within the mandate of IRO.” His resettlement hearing was set for the next day, and he was assigned a guardian—Child Welfare Officer Eleanor Ellis of Munich.

On April 9, 1951, Michael’s attorney wrote the U.S. courts of the Allied High Commissioner for Germany in support of Michael’s resettlement and requested that he and Bronja stay together:

A resettlement and adoption of this child in the USA . . . would best serve his interests and his future. Thereby it is deemed absolutely necessary that Michael Pupa when being resettled in the USA is not separated from his cousin Bronja Meniuk. . . . The compliance of this condition appears to be all the more important as both children are 100 percent orphans, lost their parents under the same tragic circumstances and naturally are very much attached to each other.

 **To learn more about**
• Records relating to World War II-era refugees, go to www.archives.gov/research/military/hw2/refugees.html.
• Resources for Jewish genealogy, go to www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/ethnic-heritage.html#jewish.
• Holocaust-era assets, go to www.archives.gov/research/holocaust/.



Michael Pupa's family in Orange, Ohio, in June 2012: Jill, Michael, Marc, and Anita.

Handwritten words on the covers of Michael and Bronja's case files reflect the court's verdicts: "Decision: Res. In USA."

An IRO News headline from February 1, 1951, states "DPs for Cleveland":

Rev. Frederick Mohan has organized an "Industrial Operation" scheme to provide refugee workers for Cleveland industries. Rev. Mohan's program calls for 200 sponsorships.

The refugees will be transported to the United States free of charge by the International Refugee Organization, and will be placed by the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

Three months later, on May 3, 1951, Michael Pupa, age 12, "Occupation: prop. care" and his cousin Bronja Meniuk, age 10, "Occupation: none," flew from Munich's Riem Airport to New York's Idlewild Airport on Scandinavian Airlines IRO Flight SAS #64. They lived for six months in a United Nations home for refugee children and then moved to Cleveland.

Leib and Rywka followed on October 4, 1951, flying from Munich to New York on Flying Tiger Line Inc., IRO Flight #105. They, too, went to Cleveland, where Leib, "Occupation: farmer," worked as a butcher's assistant and changed his first name to Louis. Louis Kaplan, "Occupation:

merchant," filed a petition for naturalization on February 8, 1957.

In Cleveland, Michael was placed with foster parents Edward and Bernice Rosenthal, who raised him along with their children, Cheryl and Allyne, as part of their family. In 1957, Michael Pupa, "Occupation: student," became a U.S. citizen.

Michael graduated from John Carroll University in Cleveland with a degree in Eastern European history and business. He went into sales and finance and later became the owner of a successful home mortgage company. In 1964 he married Anita Kendis. The couple had two children, Jill and Marc. Today, he and Anita make their home near Cleveland.



The Yiddish word "besheert" means pre-ordained or "meant to be." Curator Bruce Bustard selected a single refugee file from thousands, based only on a picture, a story, and the fact that the boy moved to Bruce's hometown of Cleveland.

Far more important, a man who lost so much was given a narrative of his postwar years. For the first time, his children and wife of 48 years saw a picture of him as a teenager—his earliest known surviving photo—and learned about his past. **P**

NOTE ON SOURCES

Thank you to Jude Richter of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum for assistance with the ITS records. Thanks to Eric Van Slander and Bruce Bustard. And a special thanks to Jill and Anita Pupa, and most of all, to Michael Pupa, for his courage and willingness to share his story.

From the moment Bruce Bustard showed me Michael Pupa's Petition for Naturalization, I wondered: "Why did this child—who miraculously survived the Holocaust—then have to spend six years in Germany in four displaced persons (DP) camps before he could emigrate to the United States?"

Searching for answers, I headed to the National Archives at College Park to see Michael Pupa's full file and explore International Refugee Organization records. The International Tracing Service digital collection accessed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum yielded detailed records from the DP camps about Michael and his relatives' lives, including identity cards, medical records, and documentation of registrations and transfers.

Bronja Meniuk and Michael Pupa's files and images are from Records of the High Commissioner for Germany, Record Group (RG) 466, Office of the U.S. Land Commissioner for Bavaria, Political Affairs Division, Displaced Populations Branch, Closed Children's Case Files, 1946–52 (Entry A1-199).

Michael Pupa's Petition for Naturalization is from Records of District Courts of the United States, RG 21, at the National Archives at Chicago.

The airline manifest listing his name is from Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85.

Information and images on the International Refugee Organization, including the news clipping "DPs for Cleveland," are from State Department Records Relating to the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and the Displaced Persons Commission (DPC), RG 59.

Author



Miriam Kleiman, a public affairs specialist with NARA, first came to the National Archives as a researcher in 1996 to investigate lost Jewish assets in Swiss banks during World War II. A graduate of the University of Michigan, she joined the agency in 2000 as an archives specialist. She has written previously in *Prologue* about people in the Public Vaults exhibit, records from St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C., and Jack Kerouac's revealing military personnel file.

