



One Left, Just One: A Child's Point of View of the Holocaust

by Margaret Marketa Novak

As our tribute to an outstanding lady, our friend *Margaret Marketa Novak*, we quote the review of her autobiography *One Left, Just One* by the acclaimed Israeli author and historian *Shoshana Dolgin-Be'er* from *Heritage Southwest Jewish Press*, issue no. 6, Friday, January 26, 2001.

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The author and Rabbi Levi Meier (standing) at the book signing at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, September 2000
(photo: private)

A child in the Holocaust

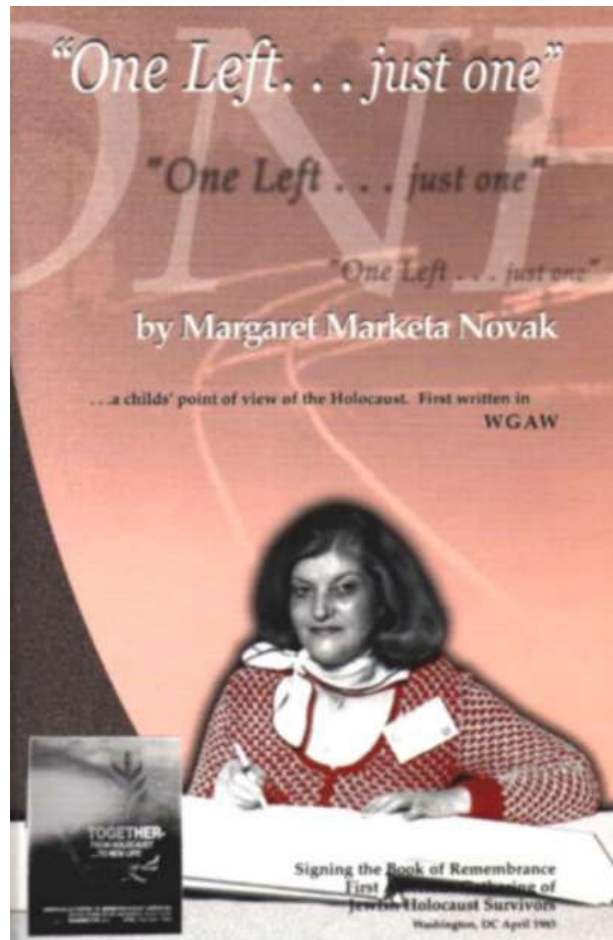
by *Shoshana Dolgin-Be'er*

Very few Jewish children survived the horrors of the Holocaust. We usually hear references to the one-and-a-half million children victims of Hitler's madness. However, in *One Left, Just One*, we hear the voice of Margaret Marketa Novak, 10 years old at the war's outbreak in 1939, living with her parents and six siblings in a *shtetl* in eastern Czechoslovakia.

The nightmare begins when her merchant father is taken to forced labor camp to cut trees on high mountains for the German while she, her mother and siblings are taken to a ghetto and later separated at Auschwitz, never to see each other again.

Marketa becomes a child slave laborer who cheats death many times - twice when she daringly ran in another direction when pointed by the infamous Dr. Joseph Mengele to the extermination line.

Marketa describes her feelings of constant fear and her physical degradation while living in inhuman conditions in hunger and illness. She is transferred to the Nuremberg concentration camp [actually the *Siemens-Schuckert-Werke* in Nuremberg] where she also works in a German factory. Despite the back-breaking work, she has the will to survive and an abiding faith in God. At liberation her first pleading is not for food as one would imagine, but is for a *siddur* (prayer book) and candles for lighting. Miraculously, a Yiddish-speaking American soldier appears and gives her his own prayer book.



The joy of liberation in April, 1945, is tempered by the desperate search for family survivors. There are none, as she learns when she returns to her former *shtetl*. Only the knowledge that she has a grandfather in America sustains her desire to live. The chaos in Europe makes the process of getting a visa long and frustrating, but eventually she reaches America and begins a new life.

The title of her book echoes the words of her grandfather with whom she was finally reunited in April 1947 in Los Angeles. He had left their *shtetl* long before the war to go to America. When they finally met, they fell into each other's arms and he cried in great sobs, saying over and over again: *Thank God, you are finally here - the only one left ... just one, just one.*

Sadly, they only had six months together, as he died in November of that year and Marketa was a complete orphan.

Driven by the conviction that surviving is not enough but rather what we do with our lives counts, Marketa matures into an adult of great ability. Despite an unhappy marriage that ended in divorce in 1975, and the loss of two of her four children to cancer and cerebral palsy, her courage and strength of character seem boundless as she copes with these grieves and undertakes work as a publicist and consultant for organizations and business clients.



Mrs. Novak signing *One Left, Just One*
(photo: private)

She worked for some 15 years for a national Jewish charity that benefits special kids' needs as well as medical care centers in Israel. She also writes, produces and hosts her own cable television show, *Marketa's People and Places Show*, since 1985.

A second marriage in 1990, to Albert Dattels, ended only three years later with his death, and a near-death illness threatened Marketa's own life. Although still very ill, she has promises to keep, she writes, and these give her purpose.

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