

A TOYBER HOT GEHERT (A DEAF MAN HEARD)

A deaf man heard,
What a dumb man said,
A rumour of a plot,
Feeds our fantasies,
Served up on fancy plates,
Spiced so very nice,
Makes a tasty lie,
A beautiful calculated lie.

This song describes the process of inventing and spreading rumours in the Lodz ghetto. The one who hears a rumour is deaf, and the one who spreads it is dumb, as a result a new story is created, a fine story to feed the ghetto's need for fantasy.

Khayim Rumkowski was Head of the Lodz Ghetto's Jewish Council and the official source of information. He permitted only the news he wanted known to circulate, so rumours served as the most important way of finding out about present and future events.

The song was probably sung in a theatrical sketch. It is similar to a street songs as it aimed both to entertain an audience and to express their thoughts and feelings.

B'ERETZ YISRAEL (FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL)

For the Land of Israel
one has to suffer,
I love and suffer,
And you don't care.
Flowers I will pick up
And with flowers I will heal my wounded heart.

The song is an example of the type of song sung at youth organisation centres in Łódź, known as *hakhsharah* – training programmes for immigration to Israel (Palestine at that time).

After the Lodz ghetto was formed, youth activities continued in their pre-war form for nine months, until Khayim Rumkowski (Head of the Jewish Council) ordered the *hakhsharah* closed and every member was sent home.

Former members of the *hakhshara* have spoken about how singing was an important group activity. Collective singing of a variety of songs enhanced the strong ideology that emphasised the group over the individual. Sharing and working together for immediate survival and for the future formed the core ideal of the groups and gave cohesion to the youth organisations. Singing at youth movement gatherings served more than any other means as an escape mechanism from the desperation of ghetto life.

This song represents escapism at its best: it is in Hebrew – which most of the group could not speak –, it speaks of love, nature, and Erets Yisrael – the land of Israel, the promised land.

Every member of a Zionist youth group hoped to emigrate to Israel, though they all realised they would have to undergo more suffering once there.

The song is probably a fragment of another song or several other songs. It confuses the love of a woman for a man with the longing of the Children of Israel for their homeland.

BUCHENWALD LIED

(BUCHENWALD SONG)

In the first years of the Nazi concentration camp system prisoners were composing new lyrics for well-known melodies, or entirely new songs. These camp songs tell of the hardships, fears and hopes of the prisoners. There were also songs known as concentration camp anthems. The anthems' content refers to a specific site, usually named in the title, and they served as a type of official, recognisable melody of that particular camp.

In December 1938, Arthur Rödl, "Detention Camp Leader" at Buchenwald, ordered the prisoners over the internal loudspeaker system to make suggestions for a camp song. By the end of December the resulting "Song of Buchenwald" was drummed into the heads of the prisoners. "In twenty-four hours all of you must know it! Tomorrow sing the whole song!", rang Rödl's accompanying command.

The official 'Buchenwald lied' (Buchenwald song), was as much loved by the prisoners as by the guards who forced them to sing it.

Set to an energetic march, its rousing chorus focused on the freedom that awaited the inmates beyond the camp walls.

For many of the prisoners, singing the song felt like an act of resistance:

"When the order came to sing, our eyes sought out the crematorium, from whose chimney the flames rose to the sky. We put all our hatred into the song. As the hot coals burned we shouted the "free" of the chorus so that the forest resounded with it."

"The camp leader walked through the camp and whoever wasn't singing loudly enough or at least didn't open his mouth wide enough while singing was beaten ... But the Buchenwald song also brought us a little pleasure, for it was our song. When we sang "*then once will come the day when we are free*" that was itself a demonstration, that sometimes even the SS officers noticed and then it could cost us a meal (as punishment)."