

## THE LITTLE BOY WITH HIS HANDS UP

By Yala Korwin

Your open palms raised in the air  
like two white doves  
frame your meager face,  
your face contorted with fear,  
grown old with knowledge beyond your years.  
Not yet ten. Eight? Seven?  
Not yet compelled to mark  
with a blue star on white badge  
your Jewishness.

No need to brand the very young.  
They will meekly follow their mothers.

You are standing apart  
Against the flock of women and their brood  
With blank, resigned stares.  
All the torments of this harassed crowd  
Are written on your face.  
In your dark eyes – a vision of horror.  
You have seen Death already  
On the ghetto streets, haven't you?  
Do you recognize it in the emblems  
Of the SS-man facing you with his camera?

Like a lost lamb you are standing  
Apart and forlorn beholding your own fate.

Where is your mother, little boy?  
Is she the woman glancing over her shoulder  
At the gunmen at the bunker's entrance?  
Is it she who lovingly, though in haste,  
Buttoned your coat, straightened your cap,  
Pulled up your socks?  
Is it her dreams of you, her dreams  
Of a future Einstein, a Spinoza,  
Another Heine or Halévy  
They will murder soon?  
Or are you orphaned already?  
But even if you still have a mother,  
She won't be allowed to comfort you  
In her arms.



POEMS

Her tired arms loaded with useless bundles  
Must remain up in submission.

Alone you will march  
Among other lonely wretches  
Toward your martyrdom.

Your image will remain with us  
And grow and grow  
To immense proportions,  
To haunt the callous world,  
To accuse it, with ever stronger voice,  
In the name of the million youngsters  
Who lie, pitiful rag-dolls,  
Their eyes forever closed.



POEMS