

## Interview with Rabbi Emile WASYNG on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in Brussels, Belgium

1 hour 10 minutes 48 seconds

Rabbi Emile WAYSNG was born on April 4, 1943 in Antwerp, Belgium. As were most of the former inhabitants of the Baron de Castro childrens' home, he was an infant during WW II and learned of his past from his older brother Oscar, born on October 3, 1941 and other sources:<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Wasyng recounts that his mother, "Karolina" or Leah Steinbach was visiting her sister in England and met her future husband on a boat returning to Belgium. They married, lived in Antwerp, and their first son was born in Borgerhout in 1941. When they moved to Brussels and joined the resistance, Carolina was provided with a fake identity card for Maria Theresa Walravens see photo #1 at the end of this summary).

The local head of the resistance network, the *Front de l'Indépendance* was named Emile DEHIN and Emile thinks that is the source of his first name (his Hebrew name is Boruch). While hidden in various children's homes organized by the AJB, the brothers were given the last name of "Wassing".

For two years in Hermelle-sous-Hay in the Ardennes, a woman named Marie Moldar (or Mohdar) lodged and fed Caroline and her two young boys. Her husband was a POW in Austria and she had an older daughter Jeanne and a four-year old, Suzanne. Marie was also part of what Rabbi Wasyng calls the *Armée Blanche*, a resistance network, and she never asked to be compensated. Caroline was not a seamstress but was skilled at sewing and provided services to the local population, especially those in the resistance network and tried to earn their keep. Rabbi Wasyng still stays in touch with Marie's daughters to this day.

After Belgium was liberated and Caroline returned to Brussels, she placed Emile in a home for children for several months while she found a place to live and a job, since her husband, David Leib had not returned. (David's sister Hena survived by jumping from the deportation train she was on.) The Baron de Castro home was renamed "*Home des poussins*" and perhaps Oscar was sent to another home for older children in Uccle called the "*Home des moineaux*".

In the apartment building where she was living, Caroline met a religious Jew, a man who had survived Auschwitz for 3 years, Adolphe Finiasz. They married and he was an attentive and affectionate father to Emile and his

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<sup>1</sup> Kassandra La Prade-Seuthe from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Maria-Isabel Binard-Alvarez, head of the Association of the Baron de Castro *Poupinière*, have done diligent research in the archives of the *Kasserne Dossin*, the place where those rounded-up in Belgium were sent before deportation, as well as secondary sources by Marie Albert and Sylvain Brachfeld. They provided much of the information in this summary concerning Emile and Oscar's parents, their close relatives, their joining the resistance, and the convoy XXIII which deported their father to Auschwitz with his sister and mother.

older brother, Oscar. The family lived in Antwerp where Adolphe was in the diamond trade.

The boys attended an Orthodox school headed by R'Yona Tiefenbrunner, known as the "Angel of Orphans".<sup>2</sup> Emile speaks of him with great affection and praises him for the education he received. He emphasizes that he never obliged children to practice Orthodox Judaism. Some of the orphans sent to his school were not Jewish. He continued to run this orphanage after the war was over and provided a family for hundreds of orphaned children.

Emile and Oscar had no idea that Adolphe was not their biological father or that their mother was married before the war. However, around the age of 7, Emile remembers that he asked why in some of the schools he was called "Emile Wassin or Wasyng" and in others "Emile Finiasz". His mother was reluctant to talk about David Leib and the brothers realized that it made her uncomfortable, so they refrained from asking too many questions.

Adolphe and Caroline Finiasz moved to Israel in 1964. It is not clear whether their sons accompanied them, but Emile mentions that he studied in a yeshiva in Israel for 10 years after leaving secondary school, which was perhaps at the age of 17.

At one point, Emile worked with Adolphe Finiasz, dealing in the diamond trade in Russia and elsewhere.

Emile married and started a family (presently, he has 6 sons and 4 daughters).

At one point, Emile realized that the thing that gave him the most satisfaction and joy was the study of the Torah. He decided to return to this full time.

He is currently the rabbi at a synagogue in Antwerp and was kind enough to make the trip to Brussels to do the interview, accompanied by one of his sons. He shared the family photo album with the interviewer and gave information about each one.

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<sup>2</sup> **Angel of Orphans: The Story of R'Yona Tiefenbrunner and the Hundreds He Saved** by Malky Weinstock, Targum Press, 2009.

