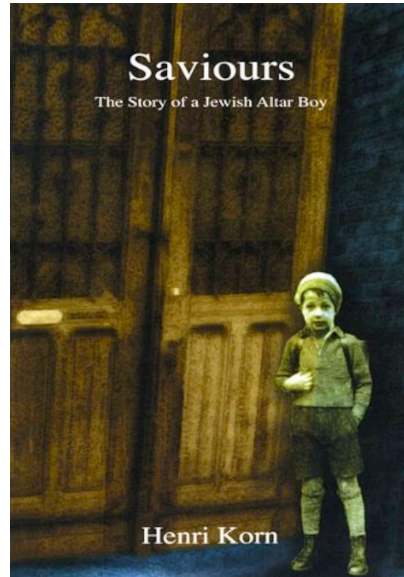
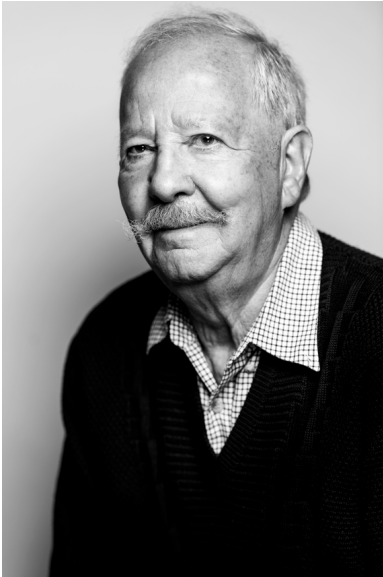


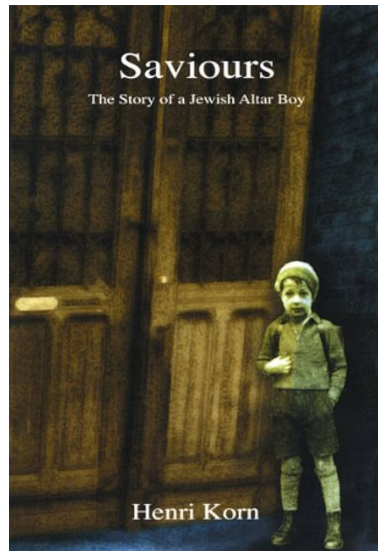
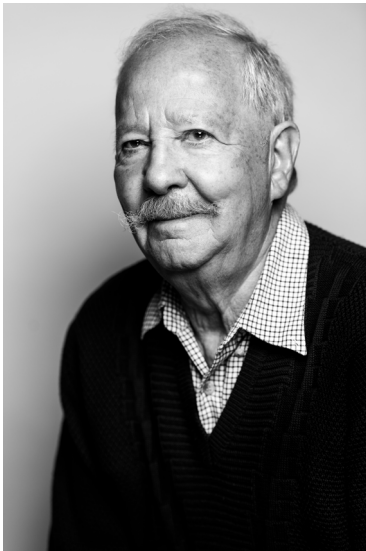
# LEARNING THROUGH MEMOIR

## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn



Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

To watch Henri’s testimony [click here](#).



## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Pre-War Jewish Life

**Context:** Henri describes a visit in 1937 to see relatives in Poland when he was seven years old. Henri grew up in Germany in a family that did not observe Jewish traditions, but whenever he returned to visit relatives in Poland, he was “immersed in Jewish culture”.

**Page numbers:** p32 (“My uncle Yankel...”) to p34 (“...spared further retribution.”)

**Approximate word count:** 480

---

## GLOSSARY

**demeanour:** behaviour; attitude

**Yeshiva:** a Jewish school or college

**fervour:** intensity; passion

**Hassidism:** a mystical branch of Judaism

**rabbi:** Jewish scholar, teacher or religious leader

**sage:** wise person

**disciples:** followers

**compelled:** made

**skullcap:** small, round Jewish cap

**apprehension:** anxiety; worry

**hide-bound:** controlled

**piousness:** religious purity

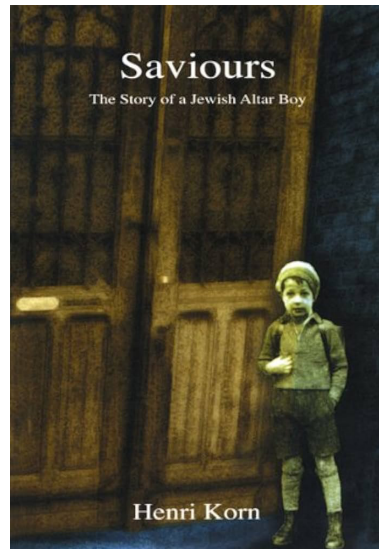
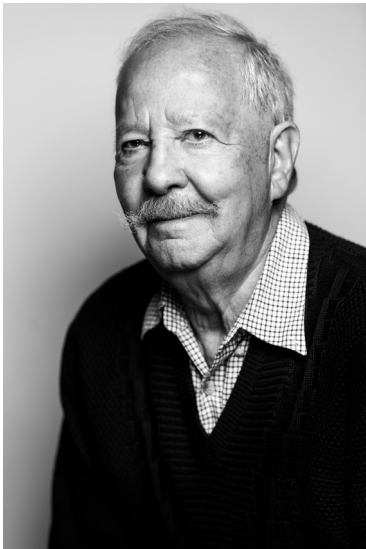
**magnanimous:** generous

**consternation:** dismay; worry

**livid:** furious

**retribution:** punishment





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

**Theme:** The Rise of Nazi Party

**Context:** In this extract from 1937, Henri describes life in Germany, including the rise in antisemitism (hatred of Jews) and militarism (glorifying the military) and, most notably, being expelled from school aged seven. Henri is upset and confused as to why he was expelled, but his teacher, principal and mother all understand.

**Page numbers:** p41 (“Despite all the experiences I lived through ...”) to bottom p44 (“possible Nazi vigilantes.”)

**Approximate word count:** 990

## GLOSSARY

**assimilation:** becoming similar to; fitting in

**incomprehensible:** not able to be understood

**caricatures:** exaggerated or cartoonish images

**raucous:** harsh; loud

**fanatic:** extreme

**factious:** groups within the Nazi regime, such as the SA or SS

**Nazi regime:** government of the extreme right-wing political party that ruled Germany under Adolf Hitler

**aberration:** something out of place or abnormal

**edict:** official order

**Aryan:** The Nazis believed, falsely, in a so-called superior Aryan race, featuring people with blond hair and blue eyes; in this case, Aryan schools simply means non-Jewish schools

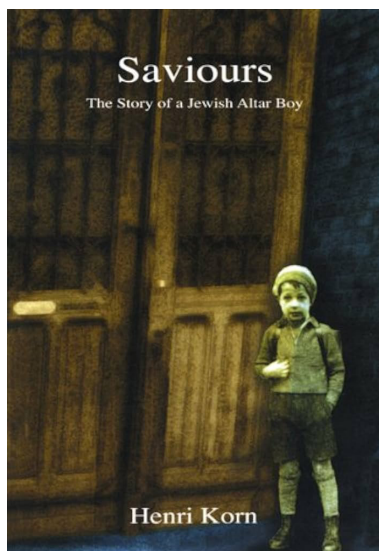
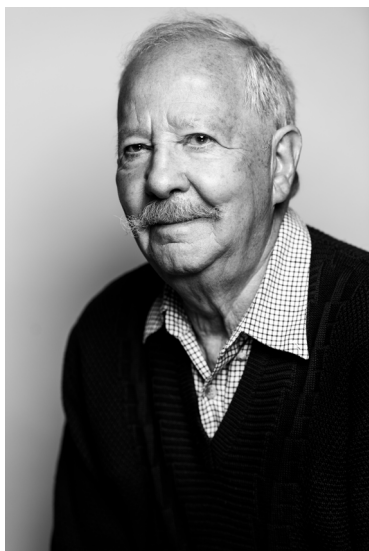
**mentor:** trusted person who provides advice and guidance

**yearning:** feeling of intense longing

**Hitler Youth:** The youth wing of the Nazi Party, which became compulsory for German boys aged 14 to 18 after 1936; Jewish children were not allowed to join

**vigilantes:** people who take the law into their own hands





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Persecution

**Context:** Henri describes his experience on the streets of the German city of Wuppertal on 10 and 11 November 1938. This was during and immediately after The Night of Broken Glass, or Kristallnacht, a series of anti-Jewish riots across Germany organised by the Nazis. Jewish homes, businesses, schools and synagogues were destroyed, and more than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Henri had just turned nine.

**Page numbers:** Halfway down p66 (“Since the time I had stopped...”) to p67 (“...the town’s drainage system.”)

**Approximate word count:** 380

---

## GLOSSARY

**synagogue:** Jewish place of worship

**salvage:** rescue; save

**scrolls:** religious texts from the Torah, or Jewish bible

**torch:** in this case, a hand-held open flame used to set fire to things

**pint-sized:** small

**fulsome waists:** large stomachs

**swivelled:** turned around

**menacingly:** threateningly

**figured:** worked out

**ancient:** extremely old

**drawn to:** desired to

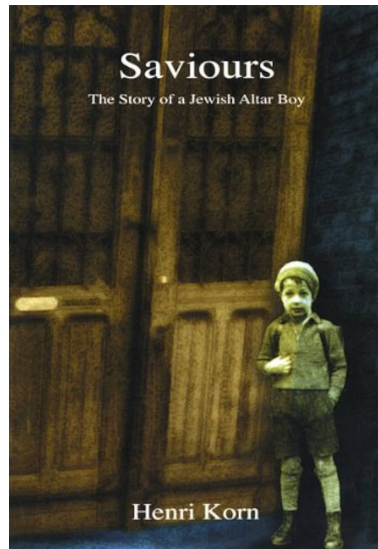
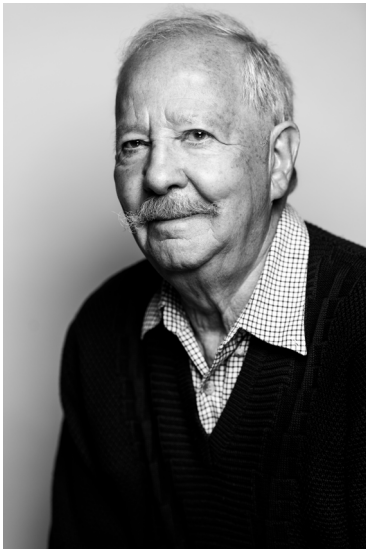
**fragments:** pieces; scraps

**Hebrew-inscribed:** texts written in Hebrew, the language of the Torah

**remnants:** remaining scraps

**drainage system:** gutters





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Fleeing Persecution

**Context:** Henri describes being smuggled out of Nazi Germany with his sister Sonja in June 1939. Henri’s father had already fled to Belgium to avoid arrest. Henri’s mother was then arrested in Germany by the Nazis, but escaped. On her return, she organised for Henri, aged nine, and Sonja, aged six, to join their father in Belgium.

**Page numbers:** p75 (“She hugged us very hard.”) to p77 (“...it was probably the Black Forest.”)

**Approximate word count:** 600

---

## GLOSSARY

**She:** refers to Henri’s mother

**Black Forest:** mountainous part of Germany that is popular as a holiday destination

**Heini:** Henri

**Sonja:** Henri’s sister

**Black Forest:** a famous and beautiful forest in Germany

**contain:** control

**tarpaulin:** large waterproof material

**panorama:** wide view

**utility:** truck

**Cologne:** German city

**summoned:** ordered

**ushered:** guided; shown

**bitumen:** sealed; hard

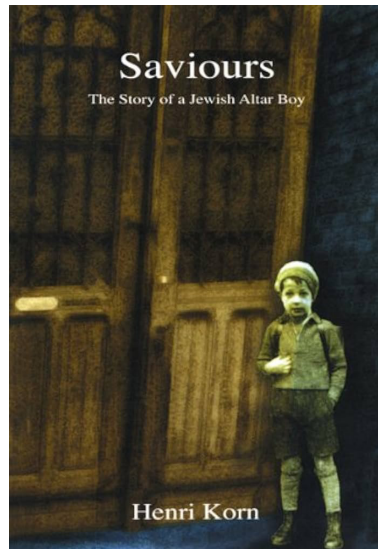
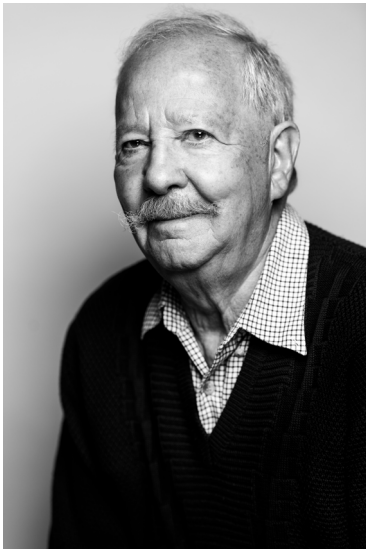
**feeble:** weak

**momentarily:** briefly

**oppressive:** harsh; unpleasant

**foul:** stinking





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

**Theme:** Courage

**Context:** After Henri’s father escaped to Belgium from Nazi Germany, his mother was arrested by the Nazis. She returned after three days and helped organise for Henri and his sister Sonja to escape to Belgium. It was only when Henri’s mother joined them in Belgium that they learned what had happened to her, as outlined by Henri in this extract.

**Page numbers:** p85 (“Towards the end of July...”) to p86 (“...gave her the rest.”)

**Approximate word count:** 450

## GLOSSARY

**Mother:** Henri’s mother

**smugglers:** in this case, people who charge money to take people across borders illegally

**extorted:** obtained unfairly

**community centre:** Jewish organisation assisting Jewish refugees in Belgium

**stock:** goods; merchandise

**Essen:** city in Germany

**Polish citizens:** even though Henri’s mother had lived for years in Germany, she was still technically a citizen of Poland

**buyers:** people to buy the family’s valuables

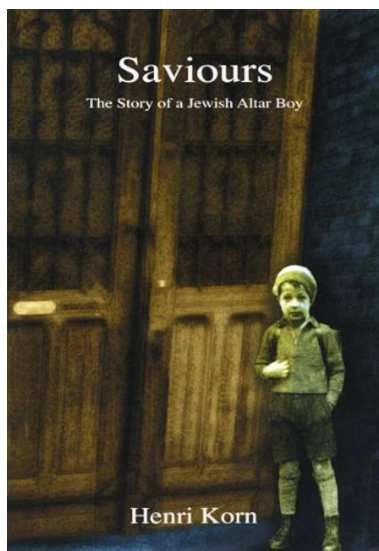
**official capacity:** proper or legitimate purpose

**intruders:** people who enter or break in without permission

**looters:** people who take advantage of times of crisis to steal

**‘booty’:** valuable goods, in this case Henri’s family’s property





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Evading Capture

**Context:** Henri describes evading roundups by the Nazis in 1942 in the Belgian capital of Brussels, where he and his family were living after fleeing Germany. Belgium had been under Nazi occupation since 1940. Henri recounts how a non-Jewish Belgian man, Jacques van Zeebroek, helped hide his family. He was 12 at the time.

**Page numbers:** p117 (“The daytime round-ups of Jews in Belgium...”) to p118 (“There were also bounty-hunters.”)

**Approximate word count:** 440

---

## GLOSSARY

**round-ups:** arrests of Jews who could be deported to camps, where many were murdered

**intensified:** increased; became more regular

**encircle:** surround

**apprehend:** arrest; capture

**Yellow Star:** from June 1942 Jews in Belgium were forced to wear a cloth badge in the shape of a Jewish Star of David symbol to identify them as Jewish

**denounced:** reported to authorities; informed on

**co-tenants:** neighbours

**matinee:** daytime

**cordon:** line of soldiers

**Sonja:** Henri’s sister

**stockroom:** room where goods are stored

**subsequent:** later

**Jacques van Zeebroek:** a Belgian man who was assisting Henri’s family

**put us up:** hosted us to live at his house

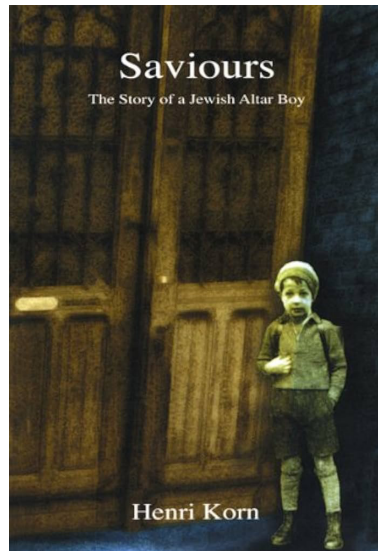
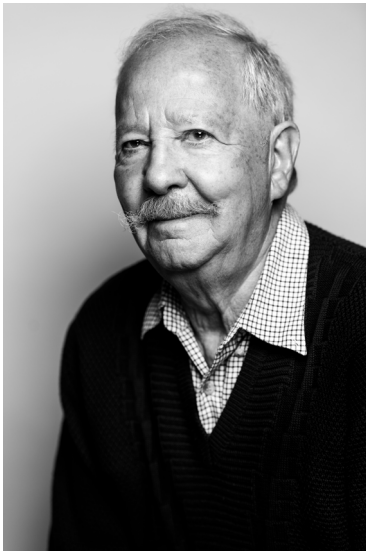
**cul-de-sac:** dead end street

**attic:** space or room in a roof

**ventured:** made a risky journey

**bounty-hunters:** people who reported or informed on Jews in exchange for a reward





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Resistance

**Context:** To escape the arrests and deportations of Jews in Belgium, Henri’s parents sent him and his sister to a children’s home in the countryside, where they were in hiding for more than two years. Henri describes a visit from his mother and a non-Jewish Belgian man, Jacques Van Zeebroek, who was helping the Korn family evade arrest.

**Page numbers:** p123 (“Le Joli Coin was the name...”) to p124 (“...escorted by her ‘husband’.”)

**Approximate word count:** 150

---

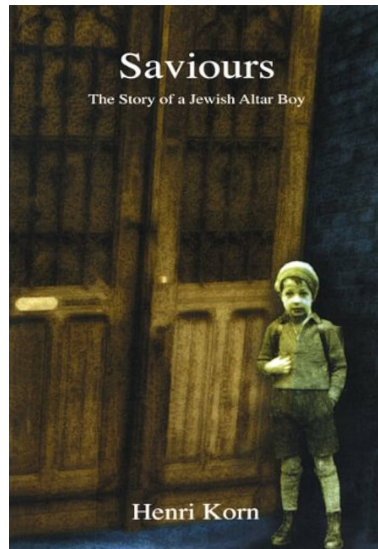
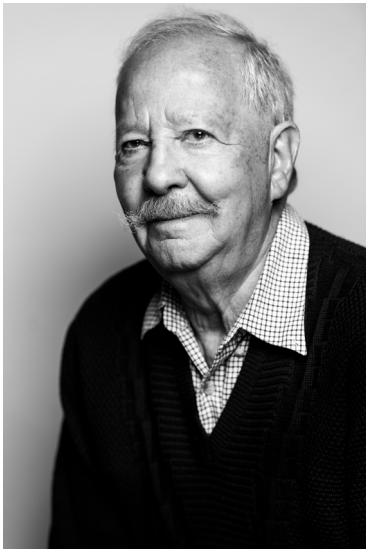
## GLOSSARY

**purgatory:** a place of suffering

**Jacques:** Jacques van Zeebroek, a non-Jewish Belgian man who assisted Henri’s parents.

**protective identity:** in this case, an identity card saying she was a non-Jewish Belgian





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

**Theme:** Hiding

**Context:** Henri describes the constant hunger and fear of discovery at the children’s home run by Mme Jacqmotte, where he was in hiding for more than two years. During that time, Henri converted to Catholicism and became an altar boy. Henri also recounts the complex attitude of Mme Jacqmotte, a devout Catholic woman who helped save Jewish children despite being antisemitic (hating Jewish people and culture).

**Page numbers:** p134 (“The period from autumn 1942...”) to p135 (“...soon dissipated after the war.”)

**Approximate word count:** 500

## GLOSSARY

**imminent:** coming soon

**commandos:** specially trained soldiers

**Dieppe:** French seaside town

**breaching:** breaking through

**Atlantic Wall:** German coastal defences

**rural:** country

**famished:** extremely hungry

**altar boys:** boys who act as assistants to priests during religious services

**Rev. Vaes:** priest at the church where Henri was an altar boy

**tucked into:** ate heartily

**Mme Jacqmotte:** Mrs Jacqmotte, the woman who was hiding Henri and other children

**sacrifices:** do without something

**blatant:** obvious

**anti-Semitism:** hatred of Jewish people and culture

**scalding:** burning hot

**ailments:** illnesses

**wretched:** unhappy; unfortunate

**Christian:** follower of religion based on the teachings of Jesus

**convert:** change one’s religion, in this case from Judaism (Jewish) to Catholicism (Catholic), a form of Christianity

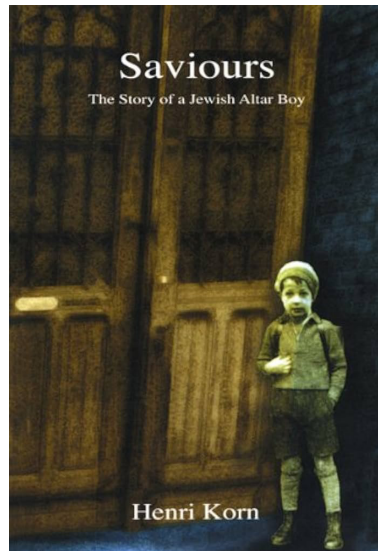
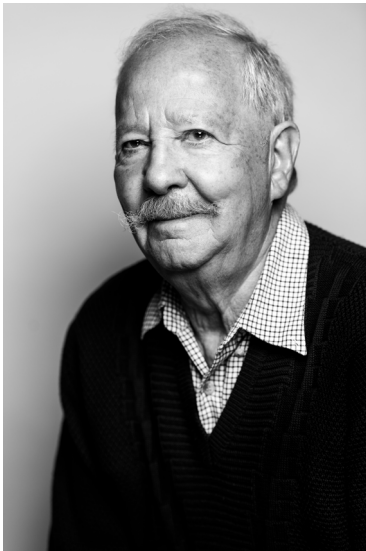
**conviviality:** friendliness

**vying:** competing for

**siblings:** brothers and/or sisters

**dissipated:** disappeared





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

---

**Theme:** Liberation

**Context:** Henri describes the arrival of American troops in 1944 in the part of Belgium in which he was in hiding for more than two years. He was 15 at the time.

**Page numbers:** p172 (“Two more days passed by...”) to p174 (“I didn’t even feel sick afterwards.”)

**Approximate word count:** 600

---

## GLOSSARY

**The Americans:** American soldiers, who were fighting against Nazi Germany

**liberation:** freedom

**officer:** soldier with a high rank

**Brussels:** capital city of Belgium

**lieutenant:** the rank of the American officer

**nonplussed:** confused

**eerie:** strange; unsettling

**civilian:** non-military; ordinary people not in the army

**Le Jolie Coin:** the name of the property where Henri and other Jewish children were being hidden

**pork:** pig

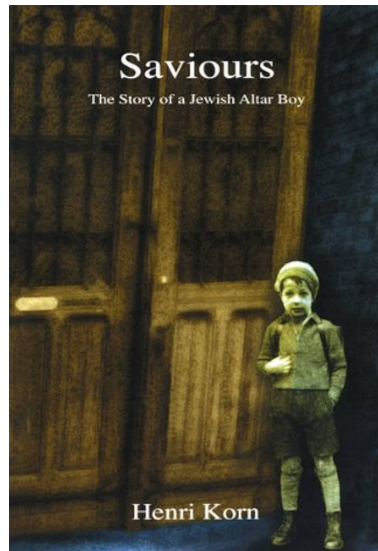
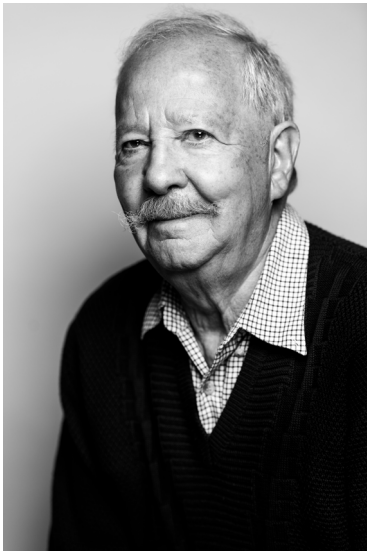
**shame:** embarrassment

**consume:** eat

**booty:** valuable goods, in this case pork fat

**lapped:** ate quickly





## ‘Saviours: The Story of a Jewish Alter Boy’ by Henri Korn

Henri Korn was in Germany in 1929. He was the son of Jewish couple from Poland who moved to Germany and fell in love with German culture. As a child, he experienced first-hand the rise of Nazism. Too young to understand that he would not be welcome, he could not wait to be old enough to join the Hitler Youth. Instead, as a Jew, he was expelled from school and increasingly excluded from society. To avoid persecution, he was smuggled out of Germany and into Belgium, where he survived by hiding in a children’s home under a false identity as a Catholic boy. In 1950, his family migrated to Australia, where Henri eventually married and had a family of his own. He died in 2023.

**Theme:** Return to Life

**Context:** Henri describes his return to Brussels, the capital of Belgium, where he and his sister Sonja were reunited with their parents after being in hiding for more than two years. He was 15 at the time.

**Page numbers:** p178 (“In the middle of October 1944...”) to p179 (“...I kept leaving the room, gasping.”)

**Approximate word count:** 360

### GLOSSARY

**overwhelming:** very strong

**conviction:** certainty

**glumly:** sadly

**scuffed:** marked; damaged

**linoleum:** thin material for covering floors

**dwellings:** places where people lived; in this case apartments

**tension:** awkwardness; unease

**generate:** make

**income:** money made by working

**errands:** small tasks

**reassume:** return to

**Jacques:** Jacques van Zeebroek, a non-Jewish Belgian man who assisted Henri’s parents. At one stage, Henri’s mother obtained false papers

saying she was Jacques’ wife, which helped her hide ‘in plain sight’.

**Yiddish:** language used by many Jewish people in Poland; Henri grew up speaking German, not Yiddish, although most of the relatives in Poland that he visited as a child spoke Yiddish.

**fate:** what happened to

**foreboding:** fear

**agencies:** official bodies who were making records of what happened to people

**pall:** dark cloud, metaphorically

**camp survivors:** Jewish people who returned to Belgium after being liberated from Nazi camps

**numbing:** deadening to the emotions

