Twitter Thread by Lea Goldman

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This is the field where my grandmother's family was murdered in April 1943. I met one of the witnesses, a neighbor, several years ago. She said she saw them being marched away, was told by a Nazi to get back inside or risk joining them... 1/#InternationalHolocaustRemembranceDay



My grandmother and her kid sister ran for their lives into the woods. One detail that sticks out from my great aunt's testimony many yrs later: the sunflower stalks in Grodzisko were so tall you could lay down and hide among them. Presuming the Nazis didn't bring the dogs. 2/

My grandmother paid a farmer to hide them in the attic of his barn. This was a perilous act. After the war, my grandmother would send the farmer care packages until he died, as a token of her gratitude.

Most of my grandmother's family were killed in those awful days in 1943.



In testimony my great aunt recorded—amazing to listen to, truly—she remembers being perpetually hungry and freezing. She recalls seeing a cherry tree outside the window of the attic and fainting. She also remembers my her sister's nightmares, the screams for Eli...

Before they ran for their lives, my grandmother had given away her 3yo son Eli for safekeeping while she hid. After the war, she returned for him, but he was gone. Vanished. No one could say what happened to him.

I have been searching for Eli, my uncle, for two decades.



After the war, in a DP camp in Austria, my grandmother learned her husband had survived—but died enroute to reuniting with her. In her testimony, my great aunt's description of this event is, shall we say, wrenching. My grandmother was gutted.

But the DP camps were filled with the horror stories of broken yids. This is David Suchman, left. My grandfather. His wife and child were also murdered by Nazis. He was charming and quick thinking, I'm told. I found this photo of him in the DP camp during my research.



In my grandfather's papers from the DP camp, there are references to him going to Paris, then Palestine, then New York. Evidence of his ambivalence & statelessness. It also describes him as a "driver" which is hilarious b/c he was a terrible driver—and who was he driving around?

I am particularly interested in the DP camps b/c of the second set of unimaginable decisions made by survivors there: what next? How do you leave behind the abject horror of the past and start over? How do you leave knowing your baby might still be alive?

My grandparents married in the DP camp, had a daughter there—my aunt. Then they boarded the USS Haan for New York. They had hoped to settle with distant relatives on the Upper West Side, instead settled in South Jersey and became chicken farmers.

Who could have known that aboard one of those same steamships ferrying survivors out of the DP camps, the Polish Nazi who murdered the Jews of Grodzisko had falsified his papers and joined their exodus to America?

The past is never dead. It's not even past.

Quick addendum: the Nazi in question resettled in the US, won't say where because he does have living family and who knows what they know. There is an effort to strip him of his citizenship posthumously.