

Henry Barclay

Title: *Run Henry Run: Henry Barclay Chemist, Legionnaire, Scout*

Author: Henry Barclay

Publisher: Makor Jewish Community Library

Place of Publication: Caulfield South, VIC.

Year of Publication: 2008

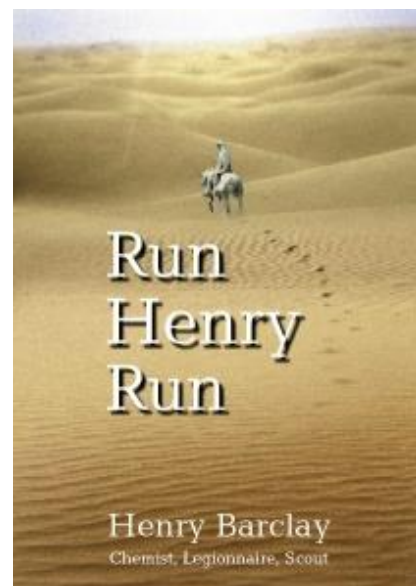
Location of Book: Monash University, Lamm Jewish Library, Sydney Jewish Museum, National Library of Australia and other public libraries.

Cities/towns/camps: Ukraine: Lviv (Lvov); France: Caen, Paris, Marseille; Algeria: Sidi bel Abbes; Morocco: Midelt, Casablanca; Spain: Ripoll, Barcelona, Miranda de Ebro, Madrid; Portugal: Gibraltar; UK: Greencock, London; Australia: Melbourne

Note: those cities/towns/camps underlined are those which are most central to the narrative.

Genre: Memoir

Key events/experiences: French Foreign Legion; Vichy France; Jewish refugee.



Run Henry Run is the 201-page memoir of Polish-born survivor Henry Barclay, who was studying at university in France when the Second World War began. He subsequently joined the French Foreign Legion and served in North Africa. Following the Nazi occupation of France, he returned to Marseille before fleeing across the border into Spain, where he was imprisoned. He was later released under the protection of the Polish government-in-exile and evacuated to Britain, before migrating to Australia with his wife and family.

Pages 1–31 describe his family background and childhood in Poland. Pages 32–86 describe his life and studies in France and the outbreak of war in 1939. Pages 87–124 cover his service with the French Foreign Legion in North Africa. Pages 125–155 recount his return to France, life in Marseille, and subsequent escape and imprisonment in Spain. Pages 156–170 describe his move to England in 1943 and life there. Pages 171–201 cover his marriage and emigration to Australia in 1957.

Leopold Henry Burzynka was born in Lvov on 11 September 1914 to Gustav Burzynka, an accountant, and Dora Holzer. He had a younger sister, Tosca. Raised in a well-to-do Jewish family, Henry attended synagogue on the High Holy Days.

Growing antisemitism in Poland and a desire to travel led Henry to study chemistry at the University of Caen in 1936. There he befriended William Henshaw, another Polish-Jewish student from Lvov. As conditions in Poland worsened, contact with his family became increasingly difficult. After completing his studies in June 1939, Henry moved to Paris in search of work on 1 September, the day Germany invaded Poland.

Henry immediately applied to join the French Foreign Legion and enlisted in February 1940. After processing in Marseille and training at Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria, he was transferred to the 2nd Foreign Cavalry Regiment in Midelt, Morocco. There, Jewish refugees brought disturbing reports of persecution in Europe. Following France's defeat and the regiment's dissolution in November 1940, Henry was sent to Bou Arfa, where he performed gruelling railway construction work on meagre rations. After a brief hospitalisation in Casablanca, he returned to Bou Arfa. In January 1942, he sailed under blackout conditions to Marseille, where he received identity papers and unsuccessfully attempted to contact his family in Lvov through the Red Cross.

In Marseille, Henry was provided with a place to live by his friend William. Unable to find work as a chemist because of Vichy's antisemitic restrictions, he unloaded coal at a railway yard before securing work in a chemical factory. He later joined a German-Jewish refugee's shoe-polish business as a chemical engineer and contacted the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), which worked with refugee organisations and escape networks to help Jews flee France.

As persecution intensified in 1942, William's identity papers and ration cards were confiscated by police, prompting HIAS to arrange and finance the pair's escape into Spain. They travelled to Perpignan and took separate buses towards the border. When gendarmes searched Henry's bus, he feigned illness and escaped down a steep mountainside, later rejoining the bus after the other passengers signalled that the officers had left. He then spent two days and nights crossing the Pyrenees with a HIAS-arranged guide. After being abandoned by the guide, Henry continued alone until he was apprehended by the Spanish Civil Guard and taken to Ripoll prison, where William later joined him.

After Henry requested a priest, he explained their situation in broken French and Spanish to the sympathetic clergyman, who arranged supplies for the pair and their transfer to Barcelona. On 14 November 1942, they were sent from the overcrowded Barcelona prison to the Miranda de Ebro internment camp for undocumented foreign refugees.

At Miranda de Ebro, Henry and William were placed in the Polish barracks. During a hunger strike organised by the prisoners' committee, the inmates were forbidden to eat, with guards stationed even in the toilets to enforce the strike. After it ended, medical staff placed the weakened prisoners on a strict diet to aid their recovery. As foreign embassies began arranging the release of inmates, Polish representatives arrived with a list that included Henry and William.

Following their release, Henry and William were taken to Madrid on 14 May 1943 and placed under the protection of the Polish government-in-exile's representatives in Spain. They were issued identity papers and accommodated in a family-run guesthouse with other Polish refugees.

In July, the pair unexpectedly secured passage on a British warship to Gibraltar. They then boarded the *Santa Rosa*, an American troop transport bound for Scotland. The

turbulent voyage was made under wartime blackout conditions amid fears of German submarine and aerial attacks.

After arriving in Scotland, Henry was accommodated in Polish military quarters, where he recalled suffering antisemitic abuse from Polish soldiers. After appealing to British officials, he was transferred to London and detained for several weeks while being questioned in Brixton before his release.

In October 1943, Henry began working for Dufay Limited, a manufacturer of X-ray and photographic film that supplied the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. During his time in London, he endured German air raids and frequently sought refuge in air-raid shelters, where he met his future wife, Charlotte. They married in June 1945, shortly after VE Day, and their son, Michael, was born in 1949. The following year, the family Anglicised their surname to Barclay.

In 1956, Henry began planning to migrate to Australia to reunite with friends and relatives. After securing entry permits the family departed aboard the *Orontes* in June 1957 and arrived in Melbourne that August.

Run Henry Run is a detailed autobiography tracing Henry Barclay's life from his childhood in Lvov through his studies in France, service with the French Foreign Legion in North Africa, and flight across the Pyrenees into Spain. It offers a valuable account of a Jewish refugee's experiences in Vichy France, clandestine escape into Spain, and internment at Miranda de Ebro. Written in a vivid and straightforward style, the memoir concludes with Henry's marriage and emigration to Australia but recounts little of his later life in Melbourne. It was written and published as part of the Makor Jewish Community Library's "Write Your Story" program.