

JOURNAL

'45

OF THE AID SOCIETY

No. 10

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Page 1 COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND EDITORIAL BOARD

Page 2-4 EDITORIAL

Page 5-13 "YOUTH" REMEMBERED

Michael Etkind Ben Helfgott
Victor (Kushy) Greenberg

Page 14-22 HERE AND NOW

Steve (Istvan) Kanitz
Lillain Silberstein Marion Stern

Page 23-26

FROM THE SECOND GENERATION

Howard Hamilton

Page 27-43

THE 6TH LEONARD G MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

David Pryce-Jones

Page 44-45

OBITUARIES

Norman Friedman Issy Pomerantz
John Carlisle (Jasiek Kurtz)

Page 46-50

MEMBERS' NEWS

Page 51

PAST AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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JOURNAL OF THE '45 AID SOCIETY

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EDITOR: KURT KLAPPHOLZ

All submissions for publication in the next issue (including letters to the Editor and Members' news items) should be sent to:

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They should be typed in double-spacing and reach the Editor not later than the end of October 1983.

EDITORIAL

The first issue of our Journal was published almost precisely seven years ago, in April 1976. Between that time and December 1981 - when our last issue appeared - we published nine numbers, which gives an average of approximately 1.6 issues per year. The point of these arithmetic-historical observations is to draw attention to the fact that never before has there been such a long gap between the appearance of two issues as that between the last issue and the present one. You may well ask: "why draw attention to this? If members did not notice that the Journal did not appear for such a long time, then its long absence is obviously of no consequence to anyone. If they did notice it, and its absence did matter to them, drawing attention to it is wholly redundant." As the Rabbi would say, "You have a point there!" Is there a plausible answer to it?

The problem is one of 'imperfect information', as economists like to put it nowadays. In the Editorial of issue no.8 (March 1981) there was a reference to "...rumours... that some members were actually impatient for the next issue!" On this occasion rumours have reached us of rather more strident reactions to the long delay in the appearance of this issue. The Editor finds it difficult to appraise the truth of these rumours, which perhaps suggests the need for a different Editor, who would have no such difficulty. However, assuming that there is some truth in these rumours, then our members deserve apologies.

The Editor, for one, is quite prepared to confess mea culpa (or in a rather older and more appropriate tongue, Hutussi!), although he would not wish to confess to mea maxima culpa. While the Editor must bear a large share of the responsibility for putting the Journal together, it is well known that he does not do it alone. So it came about that, when the Editor had free time, the material was not ready, and when the material was ready the Editor did not have the time to edit it. (There is, of course, the well known Yiddish saying to describe such situations: "Hob ich a Bett..."). After an interval of 16 months, the Journal is being 'put to bed' at the very last minute, on the eve of the Editor's departure abroad! Wits among the Chevra will not fail to wonder why, given the hurry, the Editorial is not shorter, or better still, omitted altogether. Alright, alright! There will be no more than a few brief comments on the contents of this issue.

On this occasion we have had most submissions for the Section "Youth" Remembered, which will not please S Kanitz and others who share his views on this matter. Perhaps there is a misunderstanding here. Kanitz complains that, when one reads our Journal, one might be led to think that nothing matters to us "...except the trauma of those days..." while from experience we know that we are not "...obsessed with the past only..." but with everyday matters which concern everybody, be they survivors or not. Kanitz is obviously right, but perhaps overlooks the difference between chatting with the Chevra and sitting down to write something for publication. One meets, and chats with, the Chevra quite often - one does not often put pen to paper to write seriously. Is it really surprising that our writing - as against our everyday 'Schmuses' - should reflect the fact that, unlike others, we are remnants of the Holocaust?

Incidentally, the Journal owes Kanitz not only gratitude for his submissions, but also apologies for the Editor's failure to thank him for the letter which accompanied his article. It is to be hoped that he will accept this public expression, not only of thanks, but also of contrition. At any rate he should be pleased that this issue contains several contributions by members from outside the UK.

It is a pity that Lillian Silberstein's piece on the World gathering of Holocaust Survivors could not have been published earlier. Yet, this was an important event for members of our Society, which could hardly have been covered adequately in one issue which was not even devoted exclusively to it.

Observant readers may notice that the News of Members from Israel appears in Marion Stern's article, rather than in its usual place. Let us hope that Marion Stern will continue to send us regular "Letter(s) from Israel", thus pleasing not only Kanitz - the Editor's chaver from the far-off days of Kloster Indersdorf - but also the Editor himself, not to mention other readers.

The same observant readers will also notice that the Section "From our Sons and Daughters" has been re-named "From the Second Generation". This has been done to take account of the formation of the "Second Generation Group", which was announced on p.48 of our last issue, and with the hope that, from now on, members of this Group will provide regular contributions to our Journal (perhaps even including an Assistant Editor who might become Editor in due course).

Yet another change is that the Section "Forthcoming Events" is called "Past and Forthcoming Events". We hope this change will prove to be a once-and-for-all aberration, explained by the delay in the appearance of this issue.

No Letters to the Editor were received, which helps to explain why none are published. The relative infrequency of these letters was - how should we put it? - yes, was deplored in earlier Editorials but, as usual, without any noticeable effect. In our issue No. 3 (April 1977) we announced the intention "... to expand the Section 'Members Views' by including a part containing news of what might be called our Members' public or social achievements". We managed to carry out that intention in two successive issues (April 1977 and March 1978) after which the Section "Members News" reverted to its previous format. However, chaver Krulik sent us clippings from some German newspapers, whose contents would have fitted admirably in the part of "Members News" which has disappeared. The clippings concern Shmuel Dresner, one of the Windermere boys, who spent some years in hospitals and sanatoria in this country. He studies in London and Paris, is a painter and continues to live in London. He had many exhibitions in London from 1955-1975, and in November/December 1980 some of his paintings were exhibited in Germany, and the clippings from German papers contain very favourable reviews of that exhibition. I wonder whether Shmuel gets the Journal. What a pity there is no systematic way to ensure that the Journal is informed of such events, and that the Editorial is now the only place in which to report such news if and when we get it.

In the last Editorial thanks were expressed to Romek Halter for the way in which he had improved the appearance of the Journal. As Romek is otherwise engaged, and without his help we cannot produce the Journal in the same way, it has had to revert to its previous format. We must thank Romek once again for showing us what a journal can look like when an artist takes a hand in its production. Of course, we must be pleased for Romek's sake that he is so busy, but what a pity that the Journal is deprived of his services.

It is to be hoped that, if anyone read this Editorial, he/she did not find it too much of a strain!

"YOUTH" REMEMBERED

WHEN FLOWERS BLOOM

by
Michael Etkind

The author wishes to thank Aloma Halter for her help in 'polishing' this poem. (Ed.)

We'll sit and watch you
as you eat your bread,
and lie beside you
when you lie in bed.

You'll see our bodies
lying in the snow,
you'll smell them rotting
in the summer heat;
and hear the flies that fat
upon our meat, our flesh.

You'll see the fires
 leaping
on all sides -
you'll smell the smell
of our burnt flesh;
you'll choke
 on smoke
 'though
there be none in sight.

You'll smell our fear
 each time
you brush your teeth;
you'll taste our tears
 each time
you wash your face...

We are the dead
 you shot
 you hanged
 you trampled
underneath your feet.

Our screams will echo
in your dreams at night,
and so you shall fear sleep
 as we feared death.
You'll pray for rest,
yet dread to close your eyes.

We'll wait
till death will bring you
 to our side.

We are the dead you killed.
Your crime has bound us
for all time.

And when the sun
stands high at noon,
and flowers bloom
beneath a cloudless sky -
you'll see us
waiting
in your children's eyes.

A NARROW ESCAPE

by
Victor (Kushy)
Greenberg

The author was one of the Finchley Road (Freshwater) Hostel boys. As in the case of Alec Ward's story, published in our last issue, the Editor had never heard the story Kushy now tells. (Ed.)

Not many came out of Auschwitz-Birkenau without a number tattooed on their arm, and yet I did. This is how it came about.

In autumn, 1944, the Soviet forces were advancing; consequently the Germans decided to evacuate those inmates who were still strong enough to be useful for work. So as to liquidate the camp the Germans decided to kill all those who remained behind. The two days before the evacuation offered an experience never to be forgotten.

My father was in the neighbouring camp, partitioned off by precisely constructed rows of electrified barbed wires. He received reliable information that the next selection of a work force to be transported out of my camp was, in all probability, to be the last. He told me this and stressed that the remainder, all those left, were doomed and that I must find some way to leave with the next transport. This would have been simple had volunteers been called for, but this was not to be the case. Instead, the process of selection was carried out. We were made to stand naked for an Appell (roll-call), so that they could assess our physical strength.

The selection took place the next day. In order to appear taller and older, I stood anxiously on a lump of concrete in the fifth row, apprehensive of the outcome lest I be discovered.

High-ranking camp officers arrived and began to select, just as they had done when we first arrived in Auschwitz. One group was to be transported, the rest, the majority, were to be locked in an isolated barrack awaiting orders for delivery to the gas chambers. My hopes were shattered when I was discovered standing on the concrete. They pulled me out and asked me my age, to which I replied that I was eighteen, when in fact I was an undergrown fifteen year old. The S.S. officers' faces showed sneering, sadistic grins, as if to say: 'we are going to have some fun here'. They did. I provided them with the day's best entertainment as they formed a circle and started throwing me to and fro as if I were a ball, asking me at intervals 'How old are you?' I had to maintain that I was eighteen. One of them remarked: 'Eighteen, eh? You don't even have hair on your privates!' This remark enlivened and sharpened their game. They punched me about till I was in a state of collapse. At the end of all this I found myself selected with rejects, the majority of the youngsters. We were locked in a barracks and two armed guards were posted outside.

I fail to remember my attempted and eventually successful escape. I imagine that, being so exhausted, I acted instinctively. I know that I made an effort to free myself in the night and was caught, took another beating and was thrown back. My second attempt, however, was successful.

The procedure for those leaving Auschwitz on the work force transport was to have a number tattooed on the arm which was then recorded, as each man was taken from the camp. By the time I had escaped from the detention barracks the work force had already been tattooed.

When the time came to leave the camp I lined up with the others at the camp gates. Several S.S.-men were sitting there at tables, checking the numbers. Why I chose to place my life in the hands of one in particular, I do not really know; he appeared older than the others, and that might have swayed my decision to be checked by him. I stood there trembling, looking bruised and dejected, hardly able to stand. He asked for my number: I made no reply. He lifted his head and looked at me standing in silence with sad pleading eyes staring at him, my arms stretched out and my hands opened, as if to say, 'it is up to you to let me live or die.' That was the issue with which I confronted him. He deliberated and waved me on. Thus, ironically, I was saved by an S.S.-man.

As we passed through the gates we received provisions for the journey and we marched alongside the camp in which my father was, along the road leading to the railways. There were many people waiting to see who was leaving, anxious relatives, and amongst them stood my father. I noticed him first, and then his eyes caught me. He stopped in his tracks, motionless; he stood there paralysed. I tried to talk to him, but he could not open his mouth; - the tortured mixture of feelings that must have passed through him - it pains me every time I remember that moment. This was undoubtedly the most emotional experience that I have ever felt or witnessed. How can one describe the thoughts going through a parent's mind, how can one imagine his feelings when he faces separation from the last remaining member of his family, when he knows that they are unlikely to meet again, and yet when at the same time he feels joy, deep joy, that his son has managed to survive? These conflicting emotions seemed to paralyse him. He stood there, gazing at me, speechless. I watched as tears began to flow down his face, but he could not bear me to see him in this condition, so he turned away. By the time he looked back I had advanced a little. I could hear him shout:

"Look after yourself, take care"

We boarded the cargo train, packed like sardines, destined for another concentration camp called Mathausen.

I learned later that there was an uprising in Auschwitz and I believe that it was then that my father met his death.

MY WELCOME TO POLAND AFTER THE WAR

by
Ben Helfgott

Who, one wonders, is the author of this
article?! (Ed.)

When I recall the nightmares of the holocaust years, there is none that fills me with a greater dread and horror than the one I experienced on my return to Poland soon after my liberation. Like so many of the flotsam and jetsam that was traversing Europe in overcrowded trains, returning to their respective homelands, I was travelling with my cousin to our hometown, Piotrków.

I was 15 years old and my cousin 12. Both of us still looked emaciated and our hair was still conspicuously short. To the Czechs, we seemed more like an apparition than real people and they showered us with food, warmth and sympathy. We were greatly encouraged by this spontaneous reaction of brotherhood and friendship. Our faith in humanity, which, strangely enough, although bruised, we never lost, was being restored in a very manifest and palpable way.

We crossed the Polish-Czech border with bated breath, full of excitement and expectation for a brave new world. The train stopped in Czesochowa, well known for its pilgrimages to Jasna Góra the most sacred of shrines in Poland. At the station, we were waiting for the train that would take us to our hometown. Hundreds of people were milling around, talking and gesticulating excitedly, when suddenly two Polish officers accosted us: "Who are you? What are you doing here?" Somewhat taken aback and surprised we replied "Can't you see? We are survivors from the concentration camp and we are returning to our hometown." To our amazement, they asked for some proof which we immediately produced in the form of an identity card which had been issued to us in Theresienstadt, the place of our liberation. They were still not satisfied and ordered us to come with them to the police station for a routine check. It seemed rather strange to us, but we had nothing to fear. Fortified by our experience in Czechoslovakia and believing in a better world, now that the monster that had tried to destroy the people of Europe was vanquished, we walked along with the two officers chatting animatedly about the great future that was in store for the people of Poland.

The streets were deserted in the prevailing darkness as there was still a curfew after midnight and street lighting had not been restored yet. My cousin and I were getting tired as we carried our cases which contained clothing we had received from the Red Cross. Casually I asked "where is the Police Station? It seems so far." The reply was devastating and shattering "shut your f.... mouth you f.... Jew"!!!!!! I was stunned, hardly believing what I had just heard. How could I have been so naive; so gullible? The Nazi cancer was removed but its tentacles were widespread and deeply rooted. How I had

lulled myself into a false sense of security. I believed what I wanted to believe. I had experienced and witnessed so much cruelty and bestiality, yet I refused to accept that men can be wicked. I was grown up in so many ways, yet I was still a child dreaming of a beautiful world. I was suddenly brought back to reality and began to fear the worst. Here I was in the middle of nowhere, no one to turn to for help. My thoughts were racing, my heart was throbbing faster and faster. On the one hand, I was castigating myself for allowing myself to be lured into this seemingly hopeless situation, on the other hand, I was scheming about how to extricate ourselves from a clearly dangerous situation. The Russians were still well in control and I was hoping against hope that if I were to see a Russian sentry, I would shout for help. Alas! there was no Russian to be seen!

At last we stopped at a house where one of the officers knocked at a gate which was opened by a young Polish woman. We entered a room which was dimly lit by a paraffin lamp, and we were ordered to open our suitcases. They took most of the clothing and announced that they would now take us to the Police Station. It seemed inconceivable to me that this was their real intention, but we had no choice and we had to follow events as they unfolded. As we walked in the dark deserted streets, I tried desperately to renew conversation so as to restore the personal and human touch, but it was to no avail. I tried hard to conceal and ignore my true feelings and innermost thoughts, pretending to believe that they were acting in the name of the law, but they became strangely uncommunicative. After what seemed an eternity, we arrived at a place which looked frighteningly foreboding. The buildings were derelict and abandoned; there was no sign of human habitation; all one could hear was the howling of the wind, the barking of the dogs and the mating calls of the cats.

The two officers menacingly extracted the pistols from their holsters, ordered us to walk to the nearest wall.

Both my cousin and I felt rooted to the ground, unable to move.

When at last I recovered my composure, I emitted a torrent of desperate appeals and entreaties. I pleaded with them "Haven't we suffered enough? Haven't the Nazis caused enough destruction and devastation to all of us? Our common enemy is destroyed and the future is ours. We have survived against all odds and why are you intent on promoting the heinous crimes that the Nazis have unleashed. Don't we speak the same language as you?" I went on in the same vein speaking agitatedly for some time. Eventually one of the officers succumbed to my pleas and said "Let's leave them. They are, after all, still young boys." As they put away their pistols, they made a remark which still rings loud in my ears..."You can consider yourselves very lucky. We have killed many of your kind. You are the first ones we have left alive." With this comment they disappeared into the night.

My cousin and I looked at each other unable to comprehend what had transpired. We were trembling and completely shattered by this experience. Racing through our minds was the realisation that we had been nearer death in a free and liberated Poland than at any time during the ordeals of the 5 years under Nazi tyranny.

We were indeed fortunate to have escaped this fate at the hands of the Poles. However, I cannot help thinking of the many survivors who returned to Poland after the war and who were killed by the Poles. Since my liberation it has been my abiding preoccupation and a tremendous source of joy and pleasure to renew contact with all those with whom I shared similar experiences. I am fortunate in having had the opportunity of travelling all over the world, thus being able to renew and maintain contact with them. There are some, however, with whom I was liberated and who like I, had returned to Poland after the war, and of whom there is no trace.

I often wonder what happened to them. Were they the unlucky ones whose appeal to the misguided Poles went unheeded and whose bodies lie strewn like dogs in unknown and forsaken places?

IN THE GHETTO

by
Michael Etkind

This is the third instalment of the author's recollections of events during the early part of the war. Two instalments were published in preceding issues. (Ed.)

Podrzeczna Street, where my aunt Fania with her husband and two children found a room, was a short street at the very edge of the Ghetto. There was a cast iron stove in the middle of the room with a metal flue pipe that rose vertically to the ceiling, and then ran across it to disappear into the wall. A sink with a cold water tap completed the "amenities". The toilets were outside at the far end of the yard. Some fifty families lived in this block of flats; half of them were newcomers and half were residents from before the war. We seemed to have had enough food in those early days and at first you felt safer inside the Ghetto than you did outside it. In addition to the Jewish police there was the fire brigade, the post office and all the administrative departments one would expect in a town of some quarter of a million inhabitants. My mother began to teach and a month later we moved into a building allocated for teachers and their families. Our new place used to be a monastery and a Roman Catholic school; there was a large walled garden and some play areas. An assembly room was divided by curtains into a number of cubicles. There was just enough space for our four beds and a cupboard in our cubicle. Cooking facilities were at one end and there was always a queue waiting to boil a kettle of water, some milk, or other food. Before long I was spending nearly all my time outside playing table tennis or volley ball with other boys and girls and I did some gardening also. Underneath a part of the building there were catacombs where we found some ancient skulls. The relative peace of those summer days was frequently interrupted by distant rifle shots. Each time we heard that sound we knew that someone had been shot near the wires. Once a month we would get a postcard from my father and Jacob, from Kielce ghetto. How they ended up there, instead of Warsaw, will forever remain a mystery to me. My brother was working in a stone quarry, but apart from that their postcards contained little information. The summer was coming to an end, when suddenly there was an outbreak of typhoid fever. My younger brother Lolek, who was twelve, contracted the disease and died three weeks later in my uncle's room, where my mother took him to be nursed. When my younger sister Henka became ill, she was also taken to my aunt's room where she managed to recover. No sooner did she feel better than my aunt's daughter, Fredka, became ill. She was taken to hospital where she died a week later. In December I fell ill. When I recovered we moved to another dwelling in Lagiewnicka Street. By now there was more vacant accommodation in the ghetto.

With the colder weather the typhoid epidemic came to an end. Tuberculosis of the lungs and starvation became the two major killers. My uncle Szolym together with my aunt Fania would come to see us every afternoon to bring some food. My mother became progressively weaker, and could not go on with her teaching; she would not eat and seemed to have lost all desire to live. After my recovery from typhoid I was constantly hungry and could not comprehend my mother's loss of appetite. A doctor, an old friend of the family, suggested that she should go to the hospital, but she would not hear of it. She would lie in bed and talk to us about her childhood, and her parents who died before we were born. On one occasion she said that she would die as soon as the weather would get a little warmer. She died a day after my sixteenth birthday, the 10th March 1941. As it was a Saturday, the funeral took place the following day. My uncle made all the arrangements. There was a long queue at the cemetery. Some people were bringing their deceased in handcarts, as the horse-drawn black vans could not cope. The grave diggers would refuse to dig sufficiently deep pits unless they were given bread by the mourners. The "Hazan" was singing his heart-rending lament and yet there were no tears in my eyes. "Why am I not crying?", this thought passed through my mind again and again. I loved my mother and admired her selflessness for as long as I could remember.

Before the war there were so many people she used to help. So many beggars would come to our flat and would never go away empty handed; she would sit down with some of the illiterate ones to fill in forms, so that they could obtain free milk for their illegitimate children. When the German Jews arrived, who could not speak Polish, she would give them food and money. She gave them jobs to do in our flat, such as sewing, which we did not really need. Every evening at 10 p.m. she would listen to radio Moscow, which was forbidden in pre-war Poland.

I wrote a letter to my father. Two weeks later came an answer telling me to go and see his pre-war friend Podlaski, who was the head of a tailoring establishment. Podlaski offered me a job as a messenger and the opportunity to learn tailoring. A week later I had a message to go and see Gierszowski. Gierszowski gave me a letter to Miss Walfisz, who was Rumkowski's secretary, as a result of which Henka, my fourteen year old sister, was taken into an orphanage, and I was told that I could have any suitable job. For a while I became a personal messenger to a woman who was in charge of a large workshop making leather gloves, woollen scarves, painted vases and other artistic creations, which were sent out to the Germans. As there were few telephones in the ghetto, I was constantly on my feet taking and bringing back messages. I soon realised that half of these messages were love letters sent to and from my employer to various dignitaries, notably Jakubowicz, who had a very high position on "Balucki Rynek", the place where the Germans came into contact with the ghetto administration. A few months later I again approached Gierszowski and asked him if he could help me get a job at the post office.

(to be continued)

HERE AND NOW

REFLECTIONS

by
Steve (Istvan) Kanitz

The author came to the UK with the
Southampton group. See also the
Editorial. (Ed.)

Having been a recipient of the journal for the past couple of years, noting its journalistic standard, which is most commendable, I nevertheless have to note the lack of contributions from our friends from Israel, America and wherever they may be, which I am sure K.K. had in mind in his editorial (Dec. 1981).

Apart from commiserating with K.K. about his predicament, I have done nothing constructive to date. However, two news items in the last issue and the general trend of the journal started me thinking that:

- a) The journal is a good way of keeping in touch with the Chevra
- b) The journal, whilst we should never forget those terrible days, is inclined to dwell a little too much on the Holocaust and too little on the lessons we might learn from it.

One of the two news items about our members gave me great pleasure to read, that Alice and Joe (Rubinstein) in Manchester became grandparents for the second time. It was only yesterday, or so it seems, that Alice, after some visible hesitation, agreed to dance with me at their wedding. Also, I well remember all those jokes we played on them on their wedding day.....
What, with having three children themselves, I wish them many more simchot like this.

I also read, but this time with great sadness, of the untimely death of Moshe Besserman. We lived in the Manchester Hostel first, and later in London. Yes, Moshe was a rascal, but one could not be angry with him for long. Our ways soon parted after he borrowed (without my permission) my best (Shabbat) suit to go to work.....Of all things, in those days he was a butcher! How he never made my suit dirty I never knew and was not in the mood to find out. From time to time, I looked for him, but he seemed to have disappeared, now alas for ever.

I should like to comment on what can be termed an unhealthy preoccupation with Holocaust related subjects in the Journal. One does not have to be a psychiatrist to realise that one's attitude and behaviour patterns depend on preceding experiences and such likes. Hence, what passed during the holocaust made a great impression on us all. But surely that was not the only experience we had, whether before or after those tragic events, to shape our lives today.

Reading the journal 36 years later, it seems as if there are no other matters for us worthy of discussion, except the trauma of those days. When I meet the Chevra, we talk about the family, the children, politics....We don't seem to be obsessed with the past only. Could not the journal reflect this attitude a little more? I can almost hear K.K. "It is up to us". Of course, he is right. That does not mean that we have forgotten our past and our duties to make sure that such things will not happen again.

Now I would like to commend Ardyn Halter for his article "Second Generation" (Dec. 1981) and especially his conclusion regarding "Alya" which brings me to the question, have we learned our lessons? From the evidence so far I would say NO! Apart from a few of the "boys and girls" who came to Israel in its day of re-emergence as an independent country, how many more have joined them, or aided their second generation to do so? In my opinion the lessons have not been learned merely by establishing a chair in Holocaust Studies, or supporting charitable institutions in Israel, or organising study workshops on the Holocaust generation. It is merely business as usual, except that we exchanged our Central European Passports for Western European ones or North American ones.

In my opinion, the lesson to be learned is that we should come to Israel, to populate the country with farmers, workers and other useful citizens. It is indeed commendable, and members of the Chevra deserve all praise for the way they re-established themselves in new and strange countries after those terrible years, and achieved great heights in their academic and other pursuits. However, the really successful ones are those who make the phone calls, even late at night, to the "harassed tourist" to Israel and who are not ripped off when buying a cheese sandwich or coca cola, like Michael Elkind was. Also those who do not attempt, on flying visits here, futile "bridge building" exercises with the Arabs, a subject which bedevilled the experienced professionals for decades.....but come here themselves or their second generation at least, to build with us OUR country and a better tomorrow which will in turn take care of "building bridges" as well as proving that our Chevra learned the right lesson.

Below we print a letter which Steve Kanitz wrote to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the reply he received on her behalf. It is at best encouraging to read the denial made on behalf of the Prime Minister. The repeated allegations that "Israel treats the Arabs the way the Nazis treated the Jews" was admirably dealt with by Connor Cruise O'Brien in a recent article in The Observer. These allegations are part of a prevailing intellectual perversion according to which policies are to be viewed as either "just" or "unjust", and one may not, and should not, distinguish among different degrees of "injustice". This view can lead only to the conclusion that, with the questionable exceptions of some saints, all people and all governments are equally evil. What an idiotic conclusion this is! (Ed.)

S Kanitz
Bilu 68
Tel-Aviv
Israel

Tel-Aviv, 21st October, 1981

Madame Prime Minister,

It has been reported in the Jerusalem Post, 15th October 1981, that your Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington has compared Israel's treatment of Arabs in the West Bank to Nazi's treatment of Jews in occupied Europe.

I am writing this letter to protest to you to express my abhorrence at such dastardly statement by one of your Ministers.

I find it incomprehensible that such a statement can be made by a person in the Foreign Secretary's position, who should be properly acquainted with the facts.

I, for one, who lost his parents and spent a year in Nazi Concentration Camps, was shot at by Nazis and who in later years crisscrossed the West Bank and Gaza under Israeli Rule, I never found anything minutely comparable. The behaviour of the Israeli troops are no worse than the British troops in Northern Ireland, who have to carry out a thankless task.

To my knowledge nobody can accuse Israel of having extermination camps, and for somebody to compare Israel to the Nazis, he must be at best a despicable person or at worst sick in mind.

Yours faithfully,
S Kanitz

Mrs M Thatcher
10 Downing Street
Whitehall
London
England



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Telephone 01-

S Kanitz Esq
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Israel

Your reference

Our reference

Date

~~2 November 1981~~

Dear Mr. Kanitz,

Thank you for your letter of 21 October to the Prime Minister. I have been asked to reply.

I can categorically deny that Lord Carrington made the remarks quoted in The Jerusalem Post, or said anything similar.

Yours sincerely

G N Loten
Near East and North Africa
Department

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORLD GATHERING
OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS - JUNE 15-18, 1981

by
Lillian Silberstein

The author is the wife of Mike Silberstein who was at the Belsize Park Hostel and who now lives in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Over five thousand attended the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors which was held in Jerusalem June 15th-18th 1981. The idea for this Gathering was conceived many years ago by a group of survivors. Two years ago Ernest Michel, a survivor of Auschwitz and Chairman of the World Gathering, together with dozens of other prominent Jewish leaders throughout the world, began planning and organising this unprecedented event. It was felt it could not have been held much sooner as wounds had to heal, survivors had to re-establish their lives and start new families. Yet, it could not be delayed as it might have been the last opportunity for many to participate - time was running out. And so - 36 years after their liberation, coincidentally double Chai, the time was ripe for the World Gathering to take place in Israel, the land created out of the ashes of the Holocaust.

We came to remember our Six Million, to pass on a legacy to our children and to future generations, to serve notice on the world, particularly to those who try to rewrite history and deny that the Holocaust ever happened, that we have witnesses who were there. We reaffirmed the continuity of Jewish life and the State of Israel. The Gathering was a celebration of survival and life.

The activities and programmes were planned with great sensitivity and dignity, and for me it was a memorable occasion that seems to gain more meaning as time passes.

My participation was as the wife of a survivor. When I met my husband, Mike, in 1955, we talked about his life in the Łódź Ghetto and in Auschwitz. I learned first hand about the terror, starvation and dehumanising conditions that he and our people in Europe had endured. I found it hard to conceive that anyone who had lived through six years of that nightmare could resume a normal life - could laugh, and love. Yet the desire to rebuild and to live meaningful lives was stronger than those who tried to steal life from them.

Our sons, now in their early twenties, became familiar with the words 'Holocaust' and 'Nazis' when they were quite young. They wanted to know about their grandparents, what it was like in the Łódź Ghetto and in Auschwitz. My husband always answered their questions in a way with which they could cope and understand. They read books and saw films on this period in our history. They participated in our Temple's High School course on the Holocaust which Lillie Zimet developed over six years ago and still teaches. One day last year our sons asked my husband to record his experiences during his war years so they could have a living document from their father to be passed on to their children. The survivors at the World Gathering also handed down a living testament for all future generations.

On the first day of the World Gathering we registered at Jerusalem's Convention Centre, the Binyanei Haooam, which served as the central meeting place for information, services and workshops. It even had a computer hookup where survivors might locate old friends from among the participants. There was an air of excitement and anticipation as people searched for familiar faces, or someone from their home country in Poland, Germany, France. It seemed incredible to watch this scene actually taking place.

The following day we arrived at Yad Vashem, the symbolic resting place for our Six Million, where my husband, Mike, deposited an inscribed stone which he made in Poughskeepie, in memory of his parents. This stone will be combined with thousands of others and built into a special monument to commemorate those who perished in the Holocaust.

We sang "The Hatikva" and, though Mike and I have sung it many times before, it had an electrifying effect on us that evening as we joined voices with over five thousand survivors and their children in front of the flag of Israel.

"My name is Ernest Michel", the Chairman of the World Gathering said to the largest number of survivors ever assembled in one place since their liberation. "If we succeed in stirring the conscience of mankind, if only that, then our Gathering will have been worthwhile". His concluding words echoed what so many were feeling. "Touched by the madness of our nightmare, we have tried to live normal lives, scarred by the acid of barbarous hatred, we've tried to give love to our children. Forgotten by a violent world, we tried to avoid despair. Despite all we have known, we affirm life despite the most ferocious efforts to steal it from us. While we shall never forget, we will not live with hate. We assert faith and we can hug our children".

After Michel's speech, we saw a sound and light show on a giant screen perched above the podium in the shape of a huge butterfly. As we watched scenes of starving children, deportations, burning synagogues, a chorus and soloist sang Yiddish songs reminiscent of Jewish life in Europe before 1939. Before our tears had a chance to dry, we were all standing and singing "The Partisan's" song which was written for and about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and which became the anthem for all Jewish resistance and hope during the Holocaust years. Jews who kept their faith alive during this time through study and prayer had also demonstrated resistance to the Nazis. Mike and I have sung this song each year at the Jewish Community Centre when we attend the Memorial service commemorating this event. But that evening, again, joining with thousands in Israel, this song had a profound effect on us.

The next day, just before our bus entered Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, three children came aboard and presented all of us with red carnations. This kibbutz had been founded by the survivors of Buchenwald, and today is one of the most prosperous kibbutzim in Israel. Earlier this year 4800 photographs of Polish Jews taken between 1942-1944 were released to this Kibbutz. Though Mike could not identify anyone from his past, we looked up and recognised four familiar faces from Poughkeepsie - Helen and Kuba Beck and Miriam and Morris Krakinowski. Each of us did not know the other had chosen this kibbutz to visit. We embraced as we do on Friday after services - only this time we hugged a little harder.

After welcoming speeches and entertainment by young children, I met a young Roman Catholic Seminary student from Los Angeles. I asked what brought him to this World Gathering. He told me that Anne Frank's diary had a profound effect on him. He was deeply moved by her faith in humanity in spite of her suffering at the hands of the Nazis. This inspired him to learn more about the Holocaust and to speak out about it. In fact he had become a close friend of her father, Otto Frank, until the latter's death a few years ago.

We left for Jerusalem late that evening with feelings of warmth and pride in the achievements of Netzer Sereni. Netzer is a Hebrew word symbolising a branch sprouting from a tree trunk of a cut down tree, and I understood how deep are the roots of our people.

On the third day of the World Gathering we assembled in the plaza of the Knesset to remember over one million of our children who perished in the Holocaust while an unconcerned world turned deaf ears to their cries. Their only crime was being Jewish.

I thought about a story Mike told me, the same one repeated by his two sisters on separate occasions. One night in the Lodz Ghetto the family heard screams outside their apartment building. His mother looked through the window and saw babies being thrown onto trucks and brutally treated by the SS. Through her sobs, she said she would gladly give up her life if her children would be spared. Miraculously, all four children survived - she did not.

At the closing of this memorial service, while reciting the Kaddish, I thought about my own two sons back home - and then, I thought about myself. Would I be here today if my parents had not emigrated from Poland to America in 1928? It suddenly became clear to me that I, too, was a survivor. It was only through fate, a geographical twist of fate, that I was born in America and spared the agony of the European Jews. I thought about my two grandmothers, my aunts, uncles, cousins who had remained in Poland - none of whom survived, and I felt my being in Jerusalem was for them too.

We arrived early at the Western Wall for the closing ceremonies of this four day World Gathering. The sun was just setting and it cast golden shadows on the Wall. Mike and I went to our own section of the Kotel to pray and meditate. People started to trickle in and within a couple of hours, survivors, their children, Jerusalemites filled the Plaza in front of the Wall - 10,000 it was estimated - to pay tribute once more to the memory of our six million. Mike and I each lit a Jahrzeit candle, as did the others, and placed it on one of six tables set in front of the podium.

Prime Minister Begin pleaded with us to come to Israel with our children to help preserve our heritage. We heard Eli Wiesel express his profound gratitude to Israel for her very existence. "We thank you for being here when we need you", he said, "and we shall always need you".

A declaration was then read in six languages by survivors, and the response delivered by those of the second generation. The following are excerpts from these documents.

The Testament

In the name of dead parents and children.....we shall never let the sacred memory of our perished Six Million be scorned or erased.....We take this oath.....to be handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, from generation to generationRemember what an indifferent world did to us....Remember the deeds of the Righteous Gentiles.....We shall also remember the miracle of the Jewish rebirth in the land of our ancestors, in the independent State of Israel.

The Response

We are the first generation born after the darkness. Through our parent's memories, words, silences, we are linked....We shall tell the world of the depths to which humanity can sink and the heights which were attained.....We pledge ourselves to the Jewish people... ..We are your children.

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

by
Marion Stern

The author is the wife of Meyer Stern who
was at Quare Mead Sanitorium

It's been an eventful year here one way and another. "Never a dull moment" is a saying that certainly applies to Israel.

There were a record number of weddings in Israel this year and several more grandchildren born. Jack Hecht's son celebrated his Barmitzvah in Israel and "The Chevra" were invited and helped make it a very merry occasion.

But of course the biggest event of the year, if you can call it that, was the "Peace for Galilee" operation. For me, personally, it was a very nerve-wracking summer with my son David in Lebanon from the first day. I found myself comparing June 1982 with June 1981. In June 1981 I was busy with preparations for the Reunion which was in Israel that year and busy with preparations for my daughter's wedding, and in June 1982 I was full of fear and anxiety for the safety of my son. Thank God he came through it OK but we grieve for those who didn't. He was supposed to finish his 3-year service in August but had to do an additional 3 months due to the situation. For the duration of the four and a half months he spent on the Lebanon/Syria border, he slept either in his tank or on top of it. He only got home once every 3 or 4 weeks and there was no contact in between. It was very hard for all those who were called upon to fight and it was very hard for their families at home waiting for news. It is even harder for all the bereaved families whose sons, fathers and husbands won't come home. We hope and pray that it will end well - that it will not have been in vain.

For Menachem Fraikorn it was also a hard summer but for a different reason. He underwent Open-Heart surgery in August. He had five by-passes done plus 2 more arteries unblocked. The operation was successful but it was "touch and go" for the first few days. He made a slow recovery and then discovered that the problem of blood circulation through his legs had not been solved. The hospital made more intensive tests and found the problem, and so, just two and a half months after he had this massive heart surgery, he was back on the operating table again for major surgery. This time they replaced with plastic tubes two damaged arteries leading from his stomach and now the blood should flow through his legs unhindered. I must say that he's got more guts than anyone I know and we all hope that he will now enjoy life to the full at least till he is 120!

March: Wedding of Ofer, son of Zwi and Rina Brand
April: Another Grand-daughter for Yochevet and Peretz Lev
May: Another Grand-daughter for Dvora and Yisrael Shifron
June: Wedding of Helik, son of Rachel and Mordcai Levinstein
Wedding of Jack Glickson's son
August: Wedding of Yuval, son of Yael and Naftalie Rosenzweig
Wedding of Avraham, son of Pnina and David Hirshfeld
September: Wedding of Semadar, daughter of Dvora and Yisrael Shifron
Wedding of Oded, son of Stefa and Moshe Rosenberg

FROM THE SECOND GENERATION

The following is taken from the Chairman's address to the first Annual General Meeting of the Second Generation which took place on Sunday 9th January 1983:

Dear members and friends, I welcome and thank you all for attending this meeting.

I would like to say I am most honoured to chair this first annual general meeting of the 'Second Generation' which I now pronounce open.

My first words of thanks go to our guest speaker Mr. Yogi Mayer: Sir, we thank you for giving up your time this Sunday afternoon to be with us at our AGM and for agreeing to speak and both enlighten and educate us about your experiences and achievements. We also extend our thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Tribich for their hospitality in offering their home to host this meeting.

My report is in five parts, as follows:-

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>Part one</u> | concerns who <u>we</u> , the Second Generation are |
| <u>Part two</u> | deals with what we as a group aim to achieve |
| <u>Part three</u> | describes how we work |
| <u>Part four</u> | is a statement of what we have achieved in the past seven or eight months |
| <u>Part five</u> | represents, what, in my view, are reasonable goals for us to pursue and achieve during the course of this year, 1983. |

1. Returning to part one - we the 'Second Generation' are the children of the survivors of the Holocaust. Our membership also includes husbands and wives.
2. Turning now to part two and what we as a group hope to achieve. The aim of the 'Second Generation' is :
"The propagation of the truth about, and the lessons of, the Holocaust".

This aim is achieved through four objectives:

- i) Education
- ii) Social
- iii) Fundraising
- iv) Welfare

Education

The Education Objective director is Jeffrey Tribich whom I thank for his work in this field. This has helped towards our own education and thus we can more correctly pass on the truths of Jewish history and the Holocaust. I must add that Mr Mayer's talk today is the first of a series of educational talks that are planned over the next few months.

It is my strong view that this objective is most important, especially as there is an ever growing flood of Nazi propoganda which is seeking to deny the tragedy of our parents and families. I maintain that it is our duty and conviction, as the 'Second Generation' and as the direct link to the survivors, to educate themselves and uphold the truth about the Holocaust and thus cast discredit upon current Nazi tactics which are purposely aimed to take maximum effect now and in years to come, when the survivors are seeking a rest from their tragedy.

I take the view that the lesson of the Holocaust is one Jewish people must never forget. It is our important role as the 'Second Generation' to ensure that the lessons are passed on to our children and our children's children.

I believe that only by educating our fellow Jews can we prevent a similar tragedy befalling our people in the future. History records our suffering as far back as the Pharaohs and I believe that only through the lessons of our history and our unity will we be led towards a secure and peaceful future.

Fund raising: The aim and mission of the 'Second Generation' is somewhat special. Because of this it was the decision of the Executive that we should be an autonomous, self-supporting group, as only in this way could we guarantee a total commitment to the fulfillment of our Aim, free from the influence of others. The group therefore raises funds through social events and annual subscriptions. It is my pleasure to report that this objective has more than met its target: we end our first year with a secure surplus and, further, are proud to announce that we have been able to donate the sum of £100 to a children's hospital in Israel. I must emphasise that our financial achievements in charitable donations would not have been possible without tight control of costs and generous gifts and subsidies from parents. I particularly thank our secretary Lorraine and Vogue Printers and our treasurer Marcus Richman who has donated much of his valuable time to our work. This has greatly contributed to the success of our first year.

Welfare: Our objective directors are Michelle Richman and Lyla Ward. I have previously mentioned that I regard the 'Second Generation' as One Big Family - and surely one important characteristic of a family is to care for one another. Basically the goal of this objective is that we do care and we do aim to help one another.

Social: Our Objective Director is my dear wife Gillian. It is most gratifying to report that the social committee has organised some highly successful events including a trip to Brighton, a Barbecue Party, a "Pizza and Video" evening and most recently a Guy Fawkes Party.

At a meeting earlier this year the group voted that this objective should receive precedence with respect to resources, both human and financial, and it is true that only by socialising can we be a real group. I like to view the 'Second Generation' as one family of friendship, and it is these factors of family and friendship that are essential if we are to attempt in any way to remedy the sad and tragic fact that we are members of unusually small families. Our social objective is a bid to mitigate the effects of this tragedy.

3. How we work as a group: the structure of our group is a typical, hierarchical one: Chairman and Vice-Chairman and a 'leader' for each of the four Objectives. These people in the main constitute our Executive committee, which meets once monthly to report the progress with respect of each objective. These monthly Executive meetings also effectively control our efforts and ensure that they are being channelled and co-ordinated efficiently towards the fulfilment of our Aim. This, basically, describes how the 'Second Generation' operates and, even if I say so myself, operates most effectively.

4. Part 4 of my report is a statement of what has been achieved by the Group since its formal organisation about eight months ago.

- i) We have achieved substantial growth in numbers since our committee was formed last summer.
- ii) We have achieved a tremendous commitment and motivation from our Executive which has resulted in our finishing our first year as a very strong and effective group.
- iii) Our financial situation last summer was, frankly, poor. However, less than one year later, we can boast a substantial surplus of funds which is currently growing and earning interest; this represents our position after our donations to charity.
- iv) Also, with regard to finance, I am pleased to report that our resources are sufficiently strong to guarantee the carrying out of our programme of expansion for 1983.