

# **JOURNAL**

## **'45**

### **OF THE AID SOCIETY**

**No. 11**

**APRIL 1984**

---

**Page 1 COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND EDITORIAL BOARD**

---

**Page 2 EDITORIAL**

---

**Page 3-5 "YOUTH" REMEMBERED Michael Etkind**

---

**Page 6-32 HERE AND NOW**  
Michael Etkind, Moniek Goldberg,  
Ben Helfgott, Pnina Hirshfeld,  
Miriam Novitch, Kitty Dessau,  
Eli Pfefferkorn

---

**Page 33-34 FROM THE SECOND GENERATION Ardyn Halter**

---

**Page 35-36 REVIEWS Rabbi Hugo Gryn**

---

**Page 37-40 FROM OUR FRIENDS AND WELL WISHERS**  
Rev Jim Thompson, Bishop of  
Stepney, Abba Kovner

---

**Page 41-42 OBITUARIES**  
Sister Maria, Pnina Hirshfeld,  
Meier Schwimmer, Lotte Leigh

---

**Page 43-45 MEMBER'S NEWS**

---

**Page 46-47 FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

---

THE '45 AID SOCIETY

President

Mr H OSCAR JOHNSON O.B.E.

Vice Presidents

MRS E MONTEFIORE

MRS E NEVILLE BLOND O.B.E.

MRS L HAHN-WARBURG

MR JULIAN D LAYTON B.B.E.

MR P Y MAYER

MR I FINKELSTEIN

MR BE HELFGOTT

MR M BEALE

Chairman: B HELFGOTT  
Vice Chairman: H BALSAM  
Treasurer: I WILDER (33 Shaftesbury Avenue, Kenton,  
Middlesex)  
Secretary: D HERMAN (8 Neville Drive, London N2)

MANCHESTER

Chairman: D SOMMER  
Vice Chairman: H ELLIOTT  
Secretary: LOUISE ELLIOTT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: K Dessau, M Etkind, H Fox, S Freiman,  
M Goldfinger, V Greenberg, J Kagan, K Kendall,  
R Obuchowski, D Peterson, I Rudzinski, Z Shipper,  
H Spiro, A Zylberszac.

SECRETARIES: Mrs P Spiro, Mrs K Dessau  
(LONDON)

SECRETARIES: Mr and Mrs H Elliott  
(MANCHESTER)

JOURNAL OF THE '45 AID SOCIETY

EDITORIAL BOARD

F Berger, M Etkind, H Gryn,  
R Halter, B Helfgott, K Klappholz

EDITOR: KURT KLAPPHOLZ

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

Kurt Klappholz  
Rosebery Avenue Hall  
90 Rosebery Avenue  
London EC1R 4TY Tel: 01-278 3251

They should be typed in double-spacing and reach the Editor not  
later than the end of October 1984.

## EDITORIAL

A quick glance at this page indicates that the editorial is short, surely an auspicious beginning for this issue!

Some members may be pleased to note that the gap between the publication of this issue and the last one is rather shorter than that between the last and penultimate one. Nevertheless, a gap of almost one year has the result that some of the material published refers to events that seem already rather distant. This is particularly the case with much of the material in the Section Here and Now. Given the time gap between our issues this is simply unavoidable, however disappointing it must be to some of our contributors.

In the last Editorial reference was made to divisions of views among members regarding the topics which should feature in our Journal. It is not clear that the present issue will be more to the taste of those who think that we should not constantly dwell on the past. On the one hand the Section "Youth" Remembered contains only one article, compared to the four entries in that Section in the last issue. On the other hand the Section Here and Now, which on this occasion is the biggest, deals with matters which do concentrate heavily on the past. It should be made clear that this is emphatically not a matter of editorial policy - we publish what we receive and hardly ever reject any submissions.

In the last Editorial we referred to the paintings of Shmuel Dresner and wondered whether he "... gets the Journal...". A glance at the Obituaries Section of this issue will confirm that he does indeed get, or at least know of, our Journal, which is nice to know.

Three additional comments seem in order.

We feel honoured indeed to have among our contributors the Rt. Rev. Jim Thompson, the Bishop of Stepney, who played such a prominent part in organising the East London Auschwitz Exhibition. Some of our members know him personally and few could doubt that his heart is in the right place. Yet, some of the things he says seem clearly erroneous. To take two examples: he regards Auschwitz as "one of the most important assets of the human race..." despite the fact that so many wholly innocent people died there. Why should anyone regard the historical events which happened there as an "asset of the human race"? Apparently, because we can "... use it as a constant warning about the depth of the scar which runs through humankind." Surely, a Christian, brought up on the notion of "original sin" did not need Auschwitz to provide such a reminder, nor did the occurrence of Auschwitz prevent the current evils which the Bishop so rightly deplores. Assets are things which yield a valuable service - it is very difficult to see the service which Auschwitz provided. Again, the Bishop claims that "... racism and fascism.. are indivisible...". This is historically false. For example Mussolini was a fascist, but not a racist. Many bad things go on in the world - but this does not mean that they are all equally bad or that they all stem from the same source of "badness". This point was made on p.16 of the last issue of our Journal, but it seems it bears repetition.

Normally we publish the last Leonard G Montefior Lecture which was given before the appearance of any issue of our Journal. Unfortunately it has proved impossible to do so on this occasion, which we sincerely regret, especially in view of the most interesting material Professor W Lacqueur presented in the course of his lecture.

Finally, Romek Halter is once again contributing to the production of the Journal, as its appearance shows. Thank you, Romek, for giving us a hand again.

## "YOUTH" REMEMBERED

By Michael Etkind

This is the fourth instalment of the author's recollections of events in Lodz during the war. The previous three instalments were published in preceding issues. (Ed.)

### POSTMAN NO. 102

I became postman number 102. I would arrive at eight in the morning, collect my post and usually cover my round by midday, during which time I would climb hundreds of flights of stairs and see how people lived and died. The bulk of our work was delivering summonses, mainly to people who had no work, to report for "resettlement". We were called "Melech Amoves", the Angels of Death. Those who received summonses had little choice but to report, as otherwise their food ration would be stopped and they would die of starvation. After the unemployed were sent away, others with large families or less important jobs would be summoned. Although my cousin Chaim had a clerical job at the P.O. he, together with his parents, nevertheless received that sinister notice. They went into hiding. My uncle did not try to obtain official employment, because he did well on the black market. He had more food than many others and somehow he and his family managed to hide for six months. In the spring of 1942 the resettlement came to an end, but, by then, my uncle had made arrangements to go to Warsaw. It cost fifty American dollars (gold coins) per head, and the arrangement was made by some people who had contacts with the 'Kripo'. I went with them to 'Balucki Rynek' and watched them being driven away by Germans in uniforms, together with a dozen other Jewish People.

I moved back into Podrzeczna number 6 and lived there alone until September of that year. My uncle left hundreds of watches and large quantities of silver which it was illegal to possess. I was faced with a dilemma: to give it away to the ghetto bank, or to sell them on the black market to supplement my food ration. Hunger won. I would take half a dozen watches at a time and look for a watchmaker's shop as far away as possible from where I lived. In order not to arouse any suspicion, I would mumble something about having lost my parents and having to sell the remainder of our possessions. I would get anything between 500 and a thousand ghetto marks for which I would buy half a loaf of bread and a few ounces of butter or margarine on the black market. Afterwards I would visit my sister at the orphanage and not arrive empty handed. I would repeat this exercise two weeks later. Each time I would look for another watchmaker's shop. I lived in fear of being denounced to the 'Kripo'. The 'Kripo' which is an abbreviation for criminal police, occupied a two storey building in the centre of the ghetto and was staffed by 'Volksdeutsche', Polish Germans. Its main purpose, as far as we could see, was to terrorise the ghetto population into surrendering to them any valuables that anyone might have hidden. Their system of operation depended first and foremost on informers. The person who was denounced would have his dwelling searched, but, whatever the outcome of the search, he would receive notice in the evening to report to the 'Kripo' building the following morning. One can only try to imagine the sort of night a person like that would have spent. No one failed to report unless they had the courage to commit suicide. On my way to work I would pass the building on the opposite side of the road, (one was not allowed to use the pavement alongside it) and see one or two people arriving at the door.

As to what happened afterwards, I can only repeat what I heard from friends whose fathers were summonsed. A smiling German civilian, sitting behind a desk, would welcome them speaking Yiddish. He would have said something like this: "we know that you have hidden

diamonds, foreign currency, etc. let's have it all and you may go home." The Jewish man would deny having any valuables; he would swear that he lost everything he ever had, trying desperately to be as convincing as possible. At the least expected moment the light would go out and he would be viciously beaten and kicked by two men who, unnoticed by him, would have silently crept in from behind. The light would go on and the same smiling face would tell him to think it over carefully, adding that they would meet again in 24 hours precisely. He would then be carried out on a stretcher to his cell, where his wounds would be treated and bandaged by a medical orderly. He would be examined by a doctor, fed and advised to rest. The white painted cell would have on one of its walls a large ticking clock and an occasional cry of pain would interrupt the silence during his long hours of waiting. The following day the interview would be repeated with minor variations until the prisoner would agree to disclose the whereabouts of his hidden treasure. Those who had anything hidden would, sooner or later, give in; while those who had nothing to give would seldom survive more than a fortnight. For those who gave and were released, this was not the end of the story; they would invariably be recalled within about six months and told that they had not surrendered everything previously.

I had to pass the 'Kripo' building at least twice a day and sometimes saw people being carried out on stretchers. The few chief informers in the ghetto were known to everyone - they lived like lords; but one did not know who their assistants were. For a while I had the feeling that I was being watched. I would meet an elderly man, who did not live in our block of flats, on our staircase. He would approach me on the street and ask me the time. One afternoon, coming back from the post office, I saw the dreaded green 'Kripo' van with its Jewish driver (one of the very few Jews who did not wear the yellow star), standing outside the entrance to our block of flats. I turned back and did not return home before midnight. I climbed the eight flights of stairs and discovered my padlock intact and no notice. The following morning I learned that my next door neighbour was arrested. Two days later the same elderly man approached me again asking for the time. I plucked up courage and shouted: "I know who you are - I have 'Protekcja' and if I see you once more I shall see to it that you are sent out of the ghetto". I never saw him again. Let me try to explain here the word "Protekcja" - the literal translation of which is "Protection". However, in the ghetto it had a somewhat different meaning - it meant the difference between life and death. If you knew anybody who had access to Rumkowski or any other men or women in the ghetto administration who were willing to help you, you could get a job in a communal kitchen, a bakery, the "Fleisch-Zentrale", or anywhere where food was being distributed. If you had "Protekcja" your name would not appear on any list for evacuation.

I had a little "Protekcja" in the ghetto; before the war my father used to be a friend of Gierszowski, who was now an elder statesman in the ghetto; but my father was in Kielce and "before the war" was another world. Yet, my bluff seemed to work - the man who used to follow me disappeared, but instead of carrying on my black-market transactions, I took a sack of watches and silver to the ghetto bank for which I received 3000 marks and a receipt. From that day on my fears of the 'Kripo' had slightly decreased at the expense of my hunger. Although I somehow managed to get a double bowl of soup every day, I was constantly hungry. Those who did not manage to supplement their rations would die of starvation within a few months. The basic food rations were given once a fortnight and those unable to restrain themselves would have nothing left by, say, the middle of the second week. By the time they received their next ration they would be so crazed with hunger that they would eat their loaf of bread and the small quantity of butter in one day. All those who worked would receive a bowl of soup in the middle of the day. The hunger was worst after you had eaten. These soups were usually watery, with a few potatoes, some oats or flour and some scraps of meat; they tasted delicious. No gourmand, or the

greatest gourmet can ever hope to reach the joy and pleasure we experienced when eating; these can never be recaptured unless one would be prepared to starve for at least a month. A form of sadistic pleasure, in which many indulged, was to describe in detail a pre-war meal. Another, more dangerous practice, was to help oneself to a pot of "coffee", which was in plentiful supply, place a few crumbs of bread in it, and "eat" it with a spoon as if it were soup. Those who indulged in this self-deception would invariably end up with swollen ankles. The "coffee" was charred corn, or some other grain, so that a small quantity of it would suffice to make a lot of black liquid that looked like black coffee.

It was easy to recognise those who had only days to live; and they were legion. It was not only their unsteady gait, and their skeletal appearance, but most of all that vacant, otherworldly expression in their eyes. They were referred to as "Klepsydras", goners. The literal translation of "Klepsydra" is a Death Announcement as it used to appear in pre-war papers, usually ringed in a black surround. Later on, in the camps, they were referred to as "Musulmanmer". It would be difficult to ascertain whether more people died of tuberculosis of the lungs or of starvation. Winter and summer one would see spittles of blood on the pavements. I developed a slight, but irritating, pain in my right lung which persisted for months.

My friend, which was the better time in the ghetto, the winter or the summer? The winter when the pavements and the roads were frozen solid for over three months, when each step taken in your clog clad feet was an effort and required the skill of an experienced skater; when the icy wind went right through you and took your breath away; when you tried to wash in the frozen bowl of water in your room; when you squatted on the iced up seat of the outdoor lavatory; or the summer...? I thought the summer were worse; the place seemed more drab, people were miserable, more resigned. In the summer I would remember the beautiful Polish countryside, the pine forest stretching towards Tomaszow Mazowiecki, the river.. There were hardly any trees in the ghetto; (except in the cemetery); nothing to eat for them so why should they have stayed in the ghetto. Even the sparrows, who were so plentiful when the streets were full of horses pulling 'doroszkas', had disappeared. No dogs, no cats, no mice; they would not find any crumbs to eat. Remember the potato cakes that women would make out of potato peelings they grabbed from the outside of the communal kitchens? Hunger knows no seasons - in that respect there was no difference between the summer and winter, or the other two seasons.

But the news was worse in the summer; the Germans were winning. I had a friend at the post office who had an earphone radio, (he was a German Jew), a youngster of about 19 whose Polish was excellent; he would tell me what he heard. We knew that in the winters the Russians were attacking and advancing. And then there were the Polish broadcasts from London with the slogan "czym sloneczko wyzej, to Sikorski blizej", (the higher the sun is rising, the closer is Sikorski).

(to be continued)

## HERE AND NOW

Many Members will know that on Monday, June 27th 1983, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Patrick Jenkin, unveiled the Holocaust Memorial in Hyde Park. The garden plot where the Memorial stands was provided by the British Government for use by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The Board commissioned a leading British architect, Mr Richard Seifert, to design the Memorial, which is in the form of a rock, with the following quotation from Lamentations inscribed upon it: "For these I weep, streams of tears flow from my eyes, because of the destruction of my people..."

Michael Etikind wrote the following poem to commemorate the unveiling of the Memorial. (Ed.)

### FOR THESE I WEEP

A shapeless stone: "For these I Weep"  
inscribed upon its face;  
a silver birch in leaf above it gently sways  
and casts its trembling shape upon the grass;  
the shades - the echoes of their cries,  
of Auschwitz - Birkenau -  
have reached the quiet of a London park.

A prayer is intoned, the Rabbi speaks.  
The wreath is laid: the perishable  
next to the unmoved.  
In deep and ancient tones  
that rend the heart,  
the Cantor's song hangs o'er the crowd:  
"Yeskedal V'yeskadasesh...",  
the crowd responds, a woman cries,  
somebody faints.

The crowd moves on, splits up, regroups:  
These are the ones 'Selection' didn't choose.  
A face you recognise appears,  
hands clasping hands,  
a smile; goodbyes.

And you, who might by chance,  
pass by, and find the spot:  
look on that rugged stone,  
and hear the cry that echoes  
from beyond the silent  
words inscribed.

## THE GATHERING OF SURVIVORS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

By Moniek Goldberg

The author came to this country with the Windermere group, then lived in the Loughton and Belsize Park hostels. He left the UK for "God's Own Country" in the late 40's and, since we began publishing our Journal, has found the time to send us several articles, for which the Editor, at least, is most grateful. (Ed.)

The Gathering of the Holocaust Survivors from the USA and Canada took place in Washington DC in the Spring of 1983. It was well attended with estimates ranging from 12,000 to 15,000. The format was very much like that of the World Gathering held two years earlier in Israel. The Survivor's Village was located in the new convention hall and some events took place in other parts of Metropolitan Washington.

In the convention centre there were various activities running continuously and simultaneously. These included lectures, discussion groups, films, exhibits, and other displays centering on the theme of Jewish life and culture in pre-war Europe and conditions during the war.

There were a number of speakers on opening night. President Reagan attended with Mrs Reagan. He delivered a speech and received the most applause when he assured us that Israel's security must never be threatened; that this had been the policy of every administration and is most certainly the policy of his.

Elie Wiesel, who followed him to the podium, poignantly described our situation as one of expecting to be shot at by our enemies, while being pressured by our friends. But, of course the President had left by then. There were many other speakers. There was some entertainment; a cantor sang Keil Molai Rachmin, a Kadish was said in unison and the evening was closed with the singing of Hatikva.

On the following day we attended a ceremony which included the handing over of the keys to the two buildings that the US Government is donating to the "Holocaust Museum Commission" for a permanent Holocaust Museum. That Commission was established by an act of the United States Congress. The speakers were numerous, ranging from Vice-President Bush to Mr O'Neil the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Senator from Minnesota who was born in a D.P. camp in Germany and is a member of the Second Generation, to the Congressman from Connecticut who was just lucky enough to get out with his parents and was a refugee in China and other countries before coming to the USA. The speeches all had a common theme: we, the survivors, have achieved the impossible. We have reconstructed our lives, achieving success, and in some cases, great fame, but in all cases living as vital, contributing citizens of society. All the speakers vowed their concern for Israel. The Jewish speakers declared that Israel's safety and the safety of all Jews around the world is indivisible.

Many activities were organised. There was a "Meet Your Senator or Representative" period where you could ask questions and lobby for Israel. Our Canadian friends could meet their Ambassador and members of the Washington Consulate. All this took place in the convention hall. There were special seminars for the Second Generation. Mayor Koch addressed the Gathering by delivering a "J'accuse" speech, in which he accused everybody - from Roosevelt, to Britain, to the Church, and even to the Jewish leaders of that time. Everybody was guilty of either acts of commission or commission for the tragedy that befell our people. These speeches did not and still do not, console me.



Our boys were well represented. I won't list them in case I leave someone out. Quite a few of us brought our children. Howard Chandler's two daughters were in attendance. Abi Wertman's son came in from California. Ylek Zylbeberg's son also came. There were many others and our David came with us.

Considering the number of people that turned up, thousands more than originally expected, the various committees and organisers had a Herculean task and they did a very good job indeed. They presented a well-organised, fully diversified programme.

The Zylberszac family and our family correspond by tape and upon our return from Washington, owing them a tape, I related my impressions to them. In reply, Evelyn wonders why we attend these events. They must emotionally taxing and, she feels, we already know about the Holocaust, why "preach to the converted"? She is correct, in part. It is very taxing and, speaking for myself, it takes quite a while to calm down. I am lucky, perhaps, because I leave for Costa Rica where I have a little more solitude so I don't have to impose my morose state of mind on my family.

However, for me there is also a feeling of great satisfaction. When I walk around the convention hall and see all these men and women, reflections of myself, I remember our condition forty years ago - for remember I must - be it a curse or a blessing, for my memories are vivid. Compare those conditions to our present ones in Washington or Jerusalem; 40 years later and we are whole in every sense. I have Fay beside me and one of my children is with me and I feel a sense of joy, deep communal joy.

Yet, there have been a few moments since 1942 that the tragedy of the loss of all my family has left my consciousness. When I was married my feeling of "if only they were here" was not lessened by the fact that, except for my bride, I was in a room full of strangers, none of whom really knew me. There was no one else with whom to share the excitement and the joy when my wife told me that I was to become a father. We make Bar Mitzvahs and cousins whom I really don't know and who really don't know me sit at the head table. I make do. Every day something happens that points to the vacuum that was left on the fateful day in September 1942. Yet, somehow I conquer it all. I am lucky. My wife helps me get over these moods and wakes me gently from nightmares and helps me build a new life. She understands that the "boys" and the other survivors with whom I have been through hell and back are my family. A gathering in Jerusalem or Washington, a simcha in London or Toronto or a get-together when my Lansleit or some of the "boys" come down to Miami is the best therapy for me.

To be honest, I go to the Gatherings to see my fellow survivors. I don't really listen to the speeches with much interest, for they all have the same theme: "Remember!" Well, who can forget?

I look at the faces and with words unspoken I say to them: WE ARE HERE. They didn't succeed in annihilating us. And what is more important, they didn't succeed in depriving us of our humanity. Just look at us. Look at our children, they are living proof that we have survived and this is our best testimony.

## THE COMMEMORATION OF THE WARSAW GHETTO RISING IN WARSAW

By Ben Helfgott

The commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, which took place between 15-23rd April 1983 in Warsaw, caused a great deal of controversy before and after the event took place. There were those who felt that the occasion would be exploited for propaganda purposes by the Polish Government - to support it would be tantamount to sacrilege. Others, however, believed that, in spite of the propaganda, there were positive and tangible benefits to be gained from such participation. In the event, about a thousand Jews from all over the world attended, the largest contingent of three hundred having come from Israel. The twenty strong British delegation, led by Greville Turner QC MP, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, included ten '45 Aid and Second Generation members: Harry Balsam and his son Stephen, Sammie Frieman and his son Bennie, Jeffrey Tribich, Moshe Malenicky, Israel Wilder (Krulik) and his wife Gloria, Arze and me. For most of us it was our first return to Poland since our deportation thirty nine years ago, and for the Second Generation it was their first visit.

The World Jewish Congress supported the Commemoration for the following reasons:-

- "To remember and to remind the World;
- To say Kaddish for the millions who were innocently slaughtered;
- To show solidarity with what is left of the Jewish community in Poland;
- To deliver a message."

For us it was also a pilgrimage which we viewed with apprehension and with a great deal of foreboding. Our childhood picture of Poland, our uneasy relationship with the Poles which culminated in our nightmarish experiences during the war, left an indelible scar in our minds. Yet, we cannot escape the fact that the greatest single influence on our life has its roots there. We may not live there but our thoughts invariably return there. Although there was a full programme of activities some of us managed to spend a few hours in my hometown, Piotrkow. We were accompanied by Michael Friedland, who recorded our impressions, feelings, emotions and reactions for the Sunday morning BBC programme "You don't have to be Jewish"

The visit to Piotrkow was, indeed, a very sentimental and emotional experience. Very little has changed there since before the war. The houses and the streets are still the same, except that they are older and look more shabby and drab. It was a strange sensation to walk in familiar places with memories and thoughts flooding back in torrents. The hustle and bustle, that ubiquitous hallmark of the prevailing pre-war scene, was conspicuously absent, but every nook, every cranny reminded us of a life that had ceased to exist long ago. There were people walking in the streets, but to us they seemed strange and faceless. We seemed surrounded by shadows and a sea of voices which returned to us for a few precious moments. Entire families, who disappeared without a trace and for whom there is no one to say Kaddish, vividly stood before our eyes. Sad as it may seem, it was nevertheless an exhilarating experience, as we realised that they have not been forgotten, that in our thoughts they were still there. As we walked along we kept on remarking to one another, ie Krulik, Malenicky and I, "do you remember Lederbaum's book shop and his printing work renowned for printing Jewish prayer books, the Yesodah Hatorah, the Marie Konopuicke elementary school, the Goldbersze Gomotinskis, Aisensteins" and so on. Of course, we went to our famous Synagogue which has, indeed, a special and most horrifying tale to tell.

Back in Warsaw we went to the Yiddish State Theatre, which staged a play about the Warsaw Ghetto, specially produced for this occasion. The play itself was very moving, but it was marred by its historical distortions. Indeed, this can be said for the speeches, slogans and general reporting on the media in Poland. Far too much emphasis was placed on Polish help to the Jews and co-operation between Poles and Jews. It has never been denied that some Poles risked their lives to save Jews. In fact, their names are honoured at Yad Vashem in the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles. This was also acknowledged by Stefan Greyek, the President of the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Camp Inmates, when he spoke to an audience of 5,000, amongst whom were leading members of the Polish Government at the Grand Theatre in Warsaw. Equally Kalinan Sultomik, a Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, told the audience that "it was not Polish society but only the precious few who helped us". It was flattering to hear the Chairman of the Commemoration Committee, W Sokorski, say that "The heroes of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto were Poles as Jews and were Jews as Poles. Their struggle was our struggle, the struggle of the Polish Jews. Our aims were common, our sacrifices were common, our blood was common". If only it were true! With the passing years the Poles have increasingly become obsessed with their attempt at proving that "Polish society spontaneously came to the rescue of Jews". We owe it to those who could have been saved not to allow this distortion to be perpetuated. I hope that an International Conference on Polish-Jewish Relations in Modern History, which is to take place in Oxford 17-21st September 1984, will help to put the record straight on this most painful and tragic subject.

However, in all fairness, it must be stated that in many other respects the Polish Government endeavoured to make this a solemn and meaningful occasion. Every effort was made to ensure that the hospitality was cordial. True, there was the incident with the laying of the wreath by the V.L.O., but this was not arranged by the Polish Government. There was also a programme on T.V. comparing the Nazi Death Camps with Sabra and Shatila, but, on the whole, there were a number of positive aspects. For the first time in many years the media coverage about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising featured prominently in the press, in documentaries, phone-ins and on T.V. Young Polish groups participated in the laying of wreaths, thus acquiring at first hand an awareness of the dimension of the destruction of the Jews. Although the subject of the Jews and their history in the country is often discussed privately in Poland, the younger generation were for once given an opportunity to learn from official sources about the Jewish contribution to the development of trade, finance, industry, science, and literature in Poland, and about 'the Jews' participation in the fight for Polish freedom and independence. The opening of the newly restored Nozyk Synagogue, the only Synagogue in Warsaw, in the presence of leading Government officials and dignitaries, as well as the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Frenkel and the Chief Rabbi of Rumania, Rabbi Rosen, was a very moving and dignified occasion. The sight of young Israelis singing the Hafikvah and other Hebrew songs in front of the Memorial to the Ghetto Heroes and in many other public places was an encouraging experience.

The Deputy Premier, Mr Rakowski, met nearly 100 Jewish representatives and discussed openly problems affecting Polish-Jewish relations. Anti-Semitism was one of the many subjects that were raised.

I must not omit to mention the meetings with the ageing Jewish people. The average Jew in Poland is 70.5 years old, and as I was told by one of them "who knows whether at the '50th Anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto there will be any Jews left in Poland".

I have only touched upon the many encounters and events that took place in the few crowded days we spent in Poland. Every one experience, I haven't even mentioned our trip to Auschwitz, deserves a full article. I returned convinced, as have the other members of our twenty-strong delegation, that it was important for us to go to Poland. We are far more enlightened now and have a much clearer understanding of the reality of the situation in Poland. It is no use sticking to rigid and preconceived ideas. We too have to move with the times.

TO BELIEVE

A poem by the late Pnina Hirshfeld  
(Translated from the Hebrew by Chaim Liss)

Not to despair,  
to hope,  
and believe  
That this also will pass.

To fight  
and say yes  
to overcome life's ills  
and try to forget.....

It's clear that there is good and bad  
but without illusion  
to fight for one's life  
even if it's unpleasant.

Life is so beautiful,  
and we're still young,  
and there's a place for us too,  
if we hold on with all our might.

One should not despair,  
and always say yes,  
to hold up one's head and smile  
even if it hurts.

And again give up despair,  
and stop playing with fire,  
take things lightly,  
as if it were a passing phase,  
and most of all be strong .....

Pnina left us on the 9th August 1983, this was her last poem.

(See also Obituaries. Ed.)

### LIGHT SIX CANDLES

By Miriam Novitch

Miriam Novitch is a survivor and a member of Kibbutz Lohanei Haghefaot, and the author of the book Sobibor ( ). Below is an appeal she issued recently. This year Yom Ha'Shoah falls on 29th April. (Ed.)

For 35 years I have collected evidence of the Nazi genocide and the resistance of the Jewish people. After all these years of work, I feel I have earned the right to make the following proposition, which I address to our rabbis, leaders of Jewish organizations, and particularly to the heads of Jewish families in the Diaspora and in Israel: Light six candles every year on Yom Ha'Shoah in memory of the victims of Nazi barbarity. The children present will ask why those candles are burning and the answer will imprint itself in their hearts and souls forever, just as the knowledge of Pesach, Purim, or Chanukah has been imparted to them. If we do not want the world to forget the Holocaust, we have to start with the next generation. The words "remember" and "remind" are the same in Hebrew. Remember and remind constantly, especially when we still live in a world far from the one foreseen by our prophets, where justice and peace are still slow in dawning.

I can assure you, having observed for years the children of my kibbutz present from the age of four at the sad commemoration ceremonies, that this does not affect them adversely. On the contrary, knowledge of history strengthens their attachments to Jewishness and to our great moral and spiritual values, which have survived all the enemies of Israel.

THE WORLD ASSEMBLY TO COMMEMORATE JEWISH RESISTANCE AND COMBAT  
DURING WORLD WAR II

By Ben Helfgott

The above assembly took place in Jerusalem between October 2nd-6th 1983.

The year 1983 was declared by the Israeli Government as "the year of Heroism", and it was therefore fitting to highlight the part Jews played in fighting in the Second World War in the ranks of the Allied forces, as well as in the partisan movements. It is not often realised that about one and a half million Jews fought and resisted the Nazis. The Commemoration was organised under the Patronage of Menachem Begin, but he was too ill to open the ceremony. However, it is appropriate to quote an extract from his message in the programme of events:

"We will extol and inscribe in the history of our nation the bravery, the resistance and uprising of our people against the terrible enemy as individuals and in groups, in the underground movements, in the ghettos, death camps, alongside the partisans and in the ranks of the Allied armies. Let their deeds be like the pillar of fire that goes before the camp and to whose light we shall educate our children."

Although the Israeli Government used the World Jewish Communities to send large delegations, the numbers fell far short of what was anticipated. This was due mainly to the fact that there was a proliferation of international meetings during the year 1983, e.g. the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the Holocaust Gathering in Washington. Once again the majority of the participants came mainly from the USA and Canada. From England there was Harry Balcan, Sam Frieman and I, and a few others, not members of our Society.

The programme was similar to that of the World Gathering in 1981. There was the computer which once again brought together friends and relatives in an emotional frenzy. There were the reunion of groups according to resistance affiliations, camps, organisations, units and underground fighters' cells. There were the trips to Kibutzim and the West Bank. The opening ceremony was at Yad Vashem and the closing ceremony at the Western Wall.

Although many were survivors from the camps few of them participated in the World Gathering in 1981. There was a large number from Eastern Poland, many of whom had fought with the Partisans.

A most interesting Plenary Symposium took place on Thursday 6th October, when lectures on the many facets of Jewish resistance, fighting and combat were presented. One of the speakers was the American Ambassador, Mr Lewis, who brought a personal message from President Reagan. He also asserted that the world owes an eternal debt to those who fought for freedom and that Fascism and Nazism must never be allowed to be reborn. Amongst the many lecturers was Martin Gilbert who spoke about Jews in Allied Forces of whom there were 1,400,000.

Overall it was an unforgettable experience. Gatherings of this nature are a continual journey of discovery. The Holocaust experience manifests itself in so many different dimensions. Encounters between

survivors open the inner recesses of our dormant and almost forgotten memories. Shmuel Zygielboyn, who committed suicide in London in May 1943 in protest, as he himself put it, "against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people" was only a name to me until I met his son Arthur at the World Assembly. However, even more exciting was the discovery that Arthur lived in my hometown prior to the war, and attended the Orf School there. He mentioned some of his school friends, whose images returned to me for the first time in about 40 years. When I told him about one who has survived and lives in Tel Aviv, he was beside himself with joy. As we were talking another couple joined us. A few personal exchanges brought to light the fact that a friend of the couple was a cousin of the Zygielboyns - a cousin whom they have not seen for over 40 years!

There were many such exciting encounters, but with the passage of time the likelihood of the recurrence of such events is constantly diminishing. Each death of a survivor is the death of a member of a generation that was cut down prematurely and I feel it is important for each and every one of us to make use of every opportunity that provides a vehicle for perpetuating the memory of our cherished martyrs.



## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVICE

1943-1983

By Kitty Desau

We must express our sincere regret to Mrs Desau for having been unable to include her piece in the April 1983 issue for which she had intended it. We hope this will not discourage her from writing for us again and trust that this was and will remain, the only occasion in her life when the "response" to the expression of her feelings was not "immediate enough". (Ed.)

On Sunday, 10th April 1983, Kopel and I attended a Memorial Service at the Savoy Theatre and found it a most moving and up-lifting experience. By virtue of it being the Fortieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, most of the audience consisted of people in their late middle-age. All around me I could hear Polish being spoken and, being English-born, I felt something of an onlooker. However that did not stop me feeling very emotional throughout, especially when Rev. Simon Hass, LLCM, recited Yizcor and I (along with others) was able to pick out the names of the most notorious Concentration Camps amongst the Hebrew. I saw many people crying.

The stage was dominated by a candelabra made of green marble. It was not in the usual shape of a Menorah but looked like six bare branches of a tree in winter. The six long white candles burned brightly, to represent the six-million victims of the Nazi Holocaust. It was suggested this date should be kept every year as a day of Lament, on the lines of Tisha-B'ov and that everyone should light a Yahrzeit candle for them.

On the platform were the Chief Rabbi, Sir Immanuel Jacobovits, Mr Martin Savage of the Board of Deputies, Mr Simon Frisner, President of the Polish Jewish Ex-Servicemen (who organised this meeting), Mr Simon Reiss, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Committee (UK).

The service began with three short songs from the KKL Choir and then that very able speaker, Robert Rietty, told a poignant story of how, many years after the war, a Polish man in Israel found his wife and daughter whom he long thought had died in Auschwitz!

This was followed by a most impassioned speech by Mr Frisner, who said we must be ever vigilant that such a horror never happens again, because, despite the complacent view some people take, it is possible that it could!! He said we are already fighting four kinds of wars!! The wars against Racism, Fascism, Nazism and Anti-Semitism. We should not forgive and forget, that is forgive the murderers and forget the horrors. Israel was born from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The fighters there had no hope of victory. They had no choice between living or dying. For their memories' sake it is our sacred duty to pass on information of the Holocaust, so the world should not forget or deny it ever happened.

Then Mr Reiss spoke and his speech was much more subdued, but nonetheless sincere. He spoke of the work of Yad-Vashem and also its archives of the Holocaust, which are the largest in the world. He stressed that there were some non-Jews during the war who helped save Jewish

lives and if they are known they are commemorated in the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles; the most outstanding person of this kind being Raul Wallenberg (I think). I wonder will we ever be able to write the whole story of his helpfulness to the Jews?

The service ended, as usual, with the singing of the Hatikva and then everyone had time for a good 'mootel' with friends they had not seen for a long time. The whole meeting only lasted one and a half hours and was very interesting. It was my first attendance at such a Memorial service and, though sad, I found it very engrossing. The Theatre was packed to capacity and I only felt it a pity that the date coincided with one of the boys' Simchas, thus preventing them from being there. However, we did see Romek and Mrs Halter, and (old-faithful) Michael Etkind.

I was so moved by the whole occasion that it prompted me (for the first time) to write an article about it. Although I am known for being quite a voluble person, I do not feel the same eagerness to commit myself to paper as I do not find the response immediate enough!

## ISRAEL'S FORSAKEN LEGACY

By ELI PFEFFERKORN

The author came to this country with the Southampton group and then lived in the Finchley Road (Freshwater) hostel from where he went to Palestine. He fought in the Israeli War of Independence and eventually embarked on an academic career. (Ed.)

In the midst of the Yad Vashem site rises a tall, grey pillar. Inscribed on it is a eulogy memorializing the Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust. Of the eulogy's nine lines only one mentions the Martyrs, another refers to the Righteous Gentiles, while the remaining seven lines are dedicated to the fighters, rebels, partisans, and soldiers - all belonging to the category of armed resistance. The predominant presence of heroism against the single mention of martyrdom in the inscription should not be taken as its author's personal predilection for armed bravery but rather as an expression of the prevailing state of mind of Israeli lawmakers at the time the "Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law" was adopted in 1953. The inscription is but a condensed version of the law, and the law in turn is but a true reflection of the attitudes assumed by Israeli society towards the Diaspora and its cataclysmic embodiment - the Holocaust, attitudes ranging from ambivalence to alienation to rejection and from suppression to hostility.

These sentiments can be traced back to the ideological Zionist indoctrination that was directed towards the severance of the Jewish exilic past of nearly 2,000 years from the new realities taking shape in the Land of Israel. Driven by a secular fervour to become the carrier of the Jewish people's history, the Zionist movement obsessively geared its intellectual and emotional energies in a total commitment towards a singular goal, namely, to restore to the Jewish people the dignity and the majesty of nationhood; its realisation necessitated a two-pronged psychological effort. One was flatly to negate the Diaspora way of life; the other was zealously to affirm the newly emerging socio-economic structures in the pioneering Land of Israel. This single-minded drive of the Zionist leadership elicited a literature whose "... vocabulary of abuse..." in the words of Yehezkel Kaufman, "... is of a sort you will find only in anti-Semitic literature of the worst type". The high-school students' handbook further testifies to the distortive presentation of the Diaspora Jews "... living unhealthy lives ... (being)... unsavoury tradesmen, and sometimes hav(ing) unsavoury private lives too...". In contrast, "... the Gentiles around them are living healthy lives." Radically altered in substance and in form, the new social entity signified an irrevocable break with the depraved shtetl. This kind of thinking is cogently expressed in a novel entitled *The Sermon*, written in the portentous year of 1942, when the Final Solution went into its operative stage. The speaker, Yudke, is neither an official spokesman for the Jewish community in Palestine nor a Zionist ideologue but a true prototype of a Zionist pioneer whose views echo those of his contemporaries:

Zionism and Judaism are not at all the same, but two things quite different from each other, and maybe two things directly opposite to each other. At any rate far from the same ... Zionism begins with the wreckage of Judaism... This community is not continuing anything, it is different, something entirely specific, almost not Jewish, practically not Jewish at all..." 2

In contrast to the Diaspora Jew who lacked self-assurance, resoluteness, and physical prowess, the Zionist vision projected a new type of Jew who tills the land by day in a spirit of religious fervour, and does guard duty at night with the dedication and vigilance of a medieval knight. Amnon Rubinstein has enumerated the basic characteristics of the new Jew, whom he felicitously terms "the mythological Sabra". The Hebrew Homo-Sapiens, according to Rubinstein,

knows neither fear nor weakness. He is not money-hungry or flattery-prone; in short, he is not typified by the classical Jewish mental features. He was born in Israel the hope of the generation. He represents everything that runs counter to the Diaspora Jew. He is a Hebrew, not a Jew, and he is expected to put an end to the humiliation of his race. Everything that the Jew is lacking he possesses strength, health, manual ability... and he also has something of the lethargy and awkwardness of the peasant.<sup>3</sup>

Thus unshackled by his exilic heritage, the ideal Sabra was modelled on the Bar Kokhba-type hero whose sights were set towards the future when a fledgling nation, free in spirit and determined in its goal, was girding its loins for the decisive battle, namely the founding of the state. How, then could the Sabra and his spiritual mentors feel compassion for, let alone identify with, people broken in spirit and ravaged by hunger, people who virtually crawled out of their graves?

In her insightful biography of Berl Katzenelson, Anita Shapira lays bare the split consciousness of the Jewish community living in Palestine during the war in its relation towards the Holocaust. A Labour Zionist leader of the first rank and the ideological beacon of the movement, Katzenelson left an indelible impression on the minds of the pioneer generation in the thirties and forties. Toward the end of his life, however, Shapira notes, Katzenelson came to recognise the disastrous results of his inculcation. If the Diaspora was portrayed as lacking in self dignity and self-assertion, the Holocaust, in the eyes of the Sabra generation reached its nadir of degradation. Shapira relates the agony with which Katzenelson "witnessed the utter failure of education of the 'children born into Zionism,' and the mutual incompatibility between the Jewish tribe of Eretz Israel and the destroyed Jews of Europe who represented for him a constant reminder of sin and a focus for his feeling of guilt."<sup>4</sup>

Katzenelson watched in dismay, Shapira tells us, as people would eagerly listen to world news reports on the war and then abruptly switch off the radio when the mass-murder of Jews was mentioned. While the series called "From out of the Flame", describing the London Blitz was widely read, the pamphlets entitled "Letters from the Ghetto" gathered dust. Contrary to the popular belief that the absence of outward grief was a sign of escapism, an inability to face reality, Katzenelson, according to Shapira, interpreted the absence of public identification with the victim as "... a sign of apathy and acquiescence, of alienation and rejection."<sup>5</sup> Shapira rightly points out that the only aspects of the Jewish catastrophe that the Sabra generation could relate to was armed resistance. Brought up on the examples of heroic deeds of the Maccabees, the Masada mass-suicide, and the reckless Bar Kokhba revolt, the Sabra responded sympathetically to freedom fighters against the Nazi oppressor. Unfortunately, there was not enough heroism to go round.

The survivors wearing tattooed numbers on their arms who came flocking to the DP camps in Germany in search of temporary shelter overwhelmingly outnumbered those wearing war medals on their breasts. Similarly, the poems written under siege which gave expression to deep despair, deprivation, hunger, and helplessness overshadowed those that described running battles. The Sabra mentality could not possibly incorporate these painful historic truths into its ethos. Thus, Martyrdom, the central experience of the Holocaust, remained locked out of the Hebrew consciousness.

Similarly, Hebrew literature of the forties did not register the "Manquake" that shook European Jewry. Even authors like S.Y. Agnon and Y.D. Berkovits, whose original poetic genius stems from the narrow streets of the East European shtetl, shied away from the Holocaust subject-matter. Abraham Shlonski and Nathan Alterman marginally alluded to the catastrophe, or implicitly referred to it: The only exception was U.Z. Greenberg, who lent his voice to the suffering of the victims. In a long elegaic poem entitled "The Streets of the River", Greenberg evokes the spiritual beauty of Diaspora life and laments his slaughtered brethren. Apart from Greenberg's seminal work, Hebrew literature during those dark days, as well as in their aftermath, moved in ethnocentric cycles, its theme, temper, and tenor reflecting the sensibility of a people getting ready to meet the looming challenge of the War of Liberation.

Nor has the direct encounter with the survivors who came en-masse to the newly-founded state changed the direction and nature of Hebrew literature. The nightmares, dreams, and frustrations of the survivors urgently craving expression found no echo in the post-war Palmach literature. Its thrust was aimed at the building of a new society whose center-point was a new kind of Jew liberated from the Diaspora Angst. The ready-made formula, tested by the War of Liberation, was the Sabra who became the example upon whom the survivors - particularly the young - were called on to model themselves. In speech, gesture, facial expression, and manners, the survivor was stamped into the Sabra mold. He was expected to acquire a toughness that verged on rudeness, and wear a deep tan and casual clothes. To emulate the Sabra became the rage of those times.

Two autobiographical works written in the time-perspective of about 30 years attest to the prevailing attitude of the Israeli society toward the survivors. One is Netiva Ben-Yehudah's book written in 1981, 1948 Between Calendars, which tells the saga of the Haganah elite units - the Palmach. The other is Aharon Appelfeld's Essays in First Person Singular written in 1979, which relates the experience of a boy-survivor in Israel.

A Sabra, "born into Zionism", to use Katzenelson's apt phrase, Ben-Yehudah grew up under the blue Mediterranean skies. She joined the Palmach at the age of 18 and saw combat-duty during her three years of service. While Ben-Yehudah was pursuing the frolicking life of a youngster, attending school in the day and discussing grave political issues in the youth movement at night, the young Appelfeld was trodding the swampy woods of Eastern Europe or holding onto shreds of life in labor-camps. They differ as much in their life-experiences as they do in their literary styles.

Ben-Yehudah writes in a rather crude colloquial Hebrew, heavily loaded with contemporary Palmach slang. In contrast, Appelfeld's style is subtle, the carefully chosen words relentlessly probing his innermost soul. Indeed, it is hard to imagine two other authors whose lives and literary styles are set so much apart from each other as Ben-Yehudah's and Appelfeld's. Yet what these two works have in common is a cruel exposition of the gaping abyss that separates the Sabra experience from that of the Holocaust.

Obviously speaking tongue in cheek, Ben-Yehudah recalls one of her comrades-in-arms by the name of Eli. She vaguely remembers that Eli must have had some former combat experience in the Maquis. But her remembrances of Eli are blurred:

a variation on the theme related by Ben-Yehudah, only his is made from a survivor's point of view:

Of our own accord we hid every sign that would reveal the fact that we had been there. The little warmth retained in words that we had brought from home dissipated. We adopted a few Hebrew words as a camouflage to cover up the traces of our suffering. The wise and sound life instincts guided us in this roundabout way.

Together with the smell of the earth, we also absorbed the first Hebrew words that were written in the notebook. The ancient language, new to us, took roots in our oblivion. We stripped, not without regret, the few words we brought from home, the way one takes off an old and worn garment ... At the same time we did not know that in this wonderful forgetfulness there was already some kind of hostile bitterness breeding ... There is much bitterness in hostility but self-hostility is the bitterest of all. What did we not do to uproot everything that tied us to that world from which we had come. We built ourselves a kind of penal colony that would violently obliterate every single shred of remembrance so that no sign would give us away.

The forgetfulness was as deep as the awakening from it was bewildering. This was a shocking awakening bringing with it a thirst and a desire to retrieve everything you have lost in this frightful desolation of oblivion and alienation ...<sup>7</sup>

Dahn Ben-Amotz is another child-survivor who returned from the zone of self-repression. Originally Moshe Tehilimzoger, which in English means the reciter of Psalms, he changed his name to Dahn Ben-Amotz on his arrival in Palestine. The young Moshe turned out to be a natural assimilationist: hastily dropping his birth-name, shedding his native habits and mother tongue, Dahn emanated the quintessence of a Sabra. He was not, however, a mere imitator. Among the myth-makers of the Palmach generation, Ben-Amotz stands out in his original contribution to the Sabra cult. But beneath the self-assured Sabra posture of Ben-Amotz there lurked his double, persistently claiming his rights to his own voice. It was not till 1968, however, that he brought himself to a stark confrontation with his past, fictionalized in the novel *To Remember To Forget*.<sup>8</sup>

Like his creator, the pivotal character of the novel also changes his name. Hirsch Lampel becomes Zvi Lam, and "... wishing to escape further from myself ...," he assumes the name Uri. To fully complete the initiation of the new identity, Uri burns all the personal effects - photographs, letters, and a diary - that he has brought from home. Unbound from his past and equipped with a new identity, Uri sets out for Frankfurt, his hometown, to file a suit for reparations. But it is in Germany, in the wake of his visit to Dachau, that he recognizes with shock the inseparable bond to his past.

In an obvious act of penitence, Uri removes his "... shoes to stand barefoot on the cold floor underneath the shower ...", and later takes an icy cold bath. But the existential identification with the victims of the Holocaust to the point of total immersion occurs when Uri is invited to a masked ball. Dressed up in a black Hassidic garment, a yellow star with the

word Jude pinned on his breast, and the number 62582 scratched on his arm, Uri makes his appearance at the party amidst whispers and chucklings.

Ben-Zion Tomer anticipated Ben-Amotz's artistic attempt to come to terms with the other self. Like Ben-Amotz, Tomer came to Palestine as a refugee and spent his boyhood on a kibbutz. This biographical fact might explain the similar traumatic experiences of both writers as well as the similar psychological behavior-patterns of their respective characters. In his play *Children of Shadows*, written in 1963, Tomer portrays Yoram's painful grappling with his identity-split. In a moment of confession, Yoram tells his girlfriend that since his arrival in Palestine he has been longing "... to eat from the fruit of Lethe", at which he only partially succeeds. The leap into oblivion occurred one evening when he was waiting tables in the dorms together with Dubbi and Naomi:

There were mountains of food piling up on the tables. Heaps of food that could provide my parents there for a whole year. "What am I supposed to do with the leftovers?" I asked. "Dump 'em", answered Dubbi. "But I can't do it", I cried out. Both of them burst out laughing as though I told a joke. Suddenly, I began hating myself, hating them. I hated my memories for being in my way, and preventing me from becoming one of them. I began murdering the Yossele in me. "Yossele is dead. Long Live Yoram".<sup>9</sup>

But in the final act of the play, Yoram comes to taste the sour fruit of oblivion, and recognizes the inevitable resurrection of Yossele.

Seen from the perspective of the Israeli-born author, the Holocaust survivors' assimilation into Israeli culture was more problematic than the survivors realized. While the survivors seem to feel that they have blended into the spiritual landscape of the Israeli society, from the Sabra's point of view the survivors remain outsiders. Yarive Ben-Aharon, a Sabra who grew up in a kibbutz, has written one of the few post-Palmach fictions that have dealt with this complex subject. His novel, *The Battle*,<sup>10</sup> written in 1966, is instructive on two counts. One is that the plot takes place in a battlefield situation where the cultural compulsions do not play as great a mediating role as in non-combat conditions; the other is that the Israeli army can be viewed as a microcosm of Israeli society. Thus the novel seems to be representative of the attitudes of the Israelis towards the survivors, attitudes that intensify in the extreme circumstances of the battlefield.

The novel opens with a short description of the reservists arriving at the assembly place to be armed and briefed. Against the tense background of the Sinai campaign of 1956, Ben-Aharon sketches Meshalum Bergman's profile as seen from the point of view of his subordinates in the company, comprised of Sabras. A concentration-camp survivor who does not hide his identity, Bergman has reached the rank of captain by persistence, dedication, and efficiency. But his elevated status has not qualified him to become one of the boys. He is still looked upon as an outsider, and he feels like one. Bergman's comment that "... the boys have arrived one hour before the targeted time ..." meets with Motke's derisive response: "'Bergman, Berg - man', stretching the last syllable as if in a lingering yawn, 'Berg - man, what are the boys to you. Since when is it you and the boys?'" Walking away from Bergman, Motke adds: "One day this refugee will

barge right into your soul. These immigrants are too bold".

The refugee stigma is pointed up by the way Bergman is addressed and referred to. While the boys go by their first names or nicknames, Bergman is never called Meshulam; his first name is virtually unknown in the company. It is Judy, a fellow-survivor, who notices that Bergman is never mentioned by his first name. While checking the casualty list, in her capacity as company clerk, "... it suddenly dawns on her that Bergman is never called by his first name, 'Meshulam', she spluttered out at once feeling relieved". In the tightly-knit relationship of an IDF combat-unit not to be referred to by one's first name is a clear sign of being regarded as a pariah. Ben-Aharon has driven this point home with shocking effect.

The description of Bergman reaches a nadir when he is shown extracting gold teeth from dead Egyptian soldiers. This is indeed a devastating scene that throws light on how the post-Palmach Sabra perceived the survivor:

Bergman's pupils were racing back and forth like those of hunted mice. Turning his face, Moshe saw in utter amazement the drooping lips of a dead Egyptian soldier, and the hammer and pliers at work pulling out gold-teeth from the corpse. In the darkness the glittering gold threw a ghostly light on Bergman.

It is worth noting that The Battle was written in 1966, that is, five years after the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, a trial that exposed the entire country to the Holocaust horrors. The daily courtroom dramas, heightened by eye-witness accounts, were covered by the mass-media for almost a year. Yet The Battle, a book that should have sent the literati into a furor, seems to have left no mark on the Israeli scene.

In contrast to what is generally believed, the impact of the Eichmann trial on the Israeli consciousness was short-lived, for it was not sustained by a systematic educational effort either at the adult or the school level. Assessing the influence of the trial on the Israeli mentality, Amos Elon's qualified statement begs the question: "The Eichmann trial of 1961-2 had, in a sense, a deeply cathartic effect upon some Israelis. As the tale of horror evolved daily in the courtroom, it served as a first opportunity for many to squarely face the past, while one of the chief torturers sat in the dock of a Jewish court of law".<sup>11</sup> Elon does not elaborate on what is meant by "in a sense", and what numbers hide behind "some".

As before, so after the trial, the sacral-ritual ceremonies, propped up by weary speeches, continued to be observed on Memorial Days. And in this listless atmosphere the newspapers ran their annual routine editorials matched by unimaginative television programs. Everybody seemed content. Even the survivors themselves became resigned to the prevailing situation, either because they became conditioned to it or because they felt helpless to change it. It took two wars to prod the Jewish state into responding to the fate that befell European Jewry in those dark days.

On the eve of the Six-Day War the threat of annihilation was frighteningly tangible. In the face of an indifferent and evasive world, the Holocaust trauma impinged on the Israeli consciousness with shocking effect. The nagging question "Why did they go like sheep to the slaughterhouse?" was no longer put in a condescending tone, and the pictures of the walled-in Warsaw Ghetto no longer brought out haughty looks. Although the painfully slow process of recognition was abruptly reversed and eventually suppressed in the wake of the decisive victory over the Arab armies, nevertheless



the seed of awareness was planted.

This new awareness is apparent in comments made by soldiers who fought in the Six-Day War. Groups of soldiers were interviewed immediately after their demobilization, and their thinking was compiled in a book entitled *The Seventh Day*. The following comments were made in a discussion conducted by the Israeli poet and former partisan fighter, Abba Kovner. The remarks by two of the participants, Yariv and Ishai, give some sense of the way in which a latent Holocaust consciousness began to emerge during the course of the war. Yariv, though a Sabra, indicates a Jewish Angst that he attributes to the Holocaust experience:

It's true that people believed that there we would be exterminated if we lost the war. They were afraid. We got this idea - or inherited it - from the concentration camps. It's a concrete idea for anyone who has grown up in Israel, even if he personally didn't experience Hitler's persecution, but only heard or read about it. Genocide - it's a feasible notion. There are the means to do it. This is the lesson of the gas chambers.<sup>12</sup>

In responding to Yariv, Ishai asserts that "in my conscious mind there was no idea of extermination"; nevertheless, he admits that "the war gave me an outstanding lesson in what is called Jewish consciousness". This lesson came to Yariv through two experiences.

One is the powerful emotion that overcame him, along with his comrades, on learning of the capture of Jerusalem; the second is the overwhelming empathy he felt with Arab villagers who had been rendered homeless by the war:

On both of these occasions, I felt - I thought then, and still think today - that there were two forces at work within me, pulling in different directions perhaps; and perhaps they'll eventually come to some sort of resolution.

It may be that this feeling of "Israeliness", of being and acting like a normal people, is connected with the past, with Jewish self-respect. Perhaps with the partisans as well, and with Jewish martyrdom.<sup>13</sup>

Ishai apparently accepts the classical Zionist diagnosis of the Galut depravity, but it is the very thought of this depravity that becomes a stimulating force.

At the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, Ishai's generation once more confronted the conflict between its "Israeliness" and its Jewishness. Whether or not this conflict was satisfactorily resolved, the Yom Kippur War forced the Israelis to confront their exilic past, and for that matter the Holocaust experience. The recognition of a common Jewish destiny in the minds of the public was soon reflected in the daily newspapers, periodicals, and in fiction and poetry, both in Hebrew and in translations into Hebrew. Though lagging behind, Israeli television, too, responded to the changes by replacing its stale repertoire with more innovative, up-to-date programs. Likewise, the Ministry of Education made Holocaust teaching compulsory in secondary schools, an act that necessitated the appropriation of considerable sums of money. Indeed, the years 1978-80 witnessed a newly emerging trend in Israel regarding the Diaspora, and most notably the Holocaust. Admittedly, the new sensibilities sprang from the war traumas of 1967 and 1973 but the operative direction they took (by which sentiment and thought become implemented into action)

should be attributed to the report issued by the President's Commission on the Holocaust of September 27, 1979. It is likely that the upsurge of cultural and educational activities in Israel in 1978-80 relating to the Holocaust was triggered by the eventful developments taking place in Washington, D.C.

My allegation will, no doubt, be looked at askance by my compatriots, and I might be asked (quite rightly) to come up with hard evidence to back up my statement. I have no material evidence to prove my point. But I have lingered in the corridors of respectable institutions and sat in on committees dealing with the subject in question where the untimely demise of the Commission was predicted, and the predictions were not made in prophetic lamentations. Whatever is said to the contrary, there is no doubt in my mind that the wavering transmission process of the Holocaust legacy taking place in Israel has been prompted by the increasing awareness in the U.S. of the Holocaust, an awareness epitomized in the establishment of the President's Commission.

I should like to make it clear that I am not suggesting that the spiritual future of Judaism resides solely in Washington. Indeed, the American Jewish community, working through Washington, and in other ways as well, can enrich the Jewish spirit and the Israeli consciousness. But if it is to assert itself as the torchbearer of the spirit of Judaism, Israel must work to incorporate and cultivate the memory of the Holocaust.

The painfully slow growth of Holocaust awareness in Israel has left two vitally influential institutions virtually untouched. I am referring to Hebrew literature and the Israeli universities. As yet, Hebrew literature has not risen to the challenges afforded by these tragic events. The eye-witness accounts, the stories and poems written under siege are still locked in the silent vaults of the archives. These primary materials remain by and large the concern of witnessing-authors. There must be a number of reasons why modern Hebrew literature has shied away from confronting the Holocaust. The apologists would argue that the enormity and depth of the experience does not allow sufficient aesthetic distance for an artistic embodiment of the phenomenon. Moreover, the tense socio-political realities of Israel exhaust the creative imagination, leaving little energy for other literary efforts. Undoubtedly, these are not unfounded arguments. But behind this rationale there lurks an ambivalent attitude towards the Holocaust, a residual of the hard-core Zionist ideology.

It is for this very reason that the Israeli universities have been reluctant to introduce vital programs on the Holocaust as part of the university curriculum. With the exception of The Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University, which pursues a systematic history program, thanks to the persistence of Professor Yehuda Bauer, no other university offers a series of integrated courses guided by a principle of some kind. The university catalogues list sporadic courses on the subject that hardly fit into any rational design.

There are Holocaust chairs at Tel Aviv University, the University of Haifa, and recently a chair was endowed at Bar-Ilan University. These chairs, however, are confined entities whose presence is hardly felt in other departments' programmes, let alone in campus life. The only time they come out of their unsplendid isolation is at international symposia that are more often showcases than serious intellectual gatherings. Regrettably, the holders of the chairs in the respective universities are either unwilling or unable to incorporate Holocaust studies into the overall academic structure. Thus, a student of literature, for example, will find no place to

do a Ph.D. on the Holocaust, and I would be surprised if there were the appropriate facilities (books, articles, and a supervisor) for the student to write a M.A. thesis on the subject. This is probably also true of the social sciences.

It is common knowledge that library holdings reflect the research and teaching orientation of a university. Visiting professors from the United States who have come to teach the Holocaust at Israeli universities are appalled at the poor library holdings, and at the erratic acquisition of books on the subject. The library holdings are, no doubt, the most telling indicator of the attitudes espoused by the university policy-makers in regard to the Holocaust. The academic policy makers make up their shortcomings in actual performance with rhetoric on propitious occasions, most often on Remembrance Days, and particularly at fund-raising dinners. No one, however, is expected to take the rhetoric seriously, least of all the donors of the chairs, who are usually survivors. But the truth has a way of making unexpected and sometimes embarrassing appearances. It actually made such an appearance on the first page of the widely read daily Haaretz, on April 28, 1981.

Even as the speeches invoking the memory of the victims increase in numbers and intensify in passion, a survey conducted at the University of Haifa exposes the extent of the academic efforts invested in teaching the Holocaust. To the best of my knowledge, neither the methodology nor the accuracy of the survey has been questioned. At least the findings of the survey have not been publicly repudiated; the following is a summary, which needs no commentary:

In a survey taken among students in the Department of Education at the University of Haifa:

"YAD VASHEM IS A CONCENTRATION CAMP"

44% did not know what Yad Vashem is; 64% did not know who Goebbels was; 8% did not know what the "final solution" was.

by  
NURIT KAHANA

A survey taken by an instructor in the Department of Education at the University of Haifa among the department's students reveals that the students lack basic knowledge of concepts and terms connected with the Holocaust. "Yad Vashem is the name of a concentration camp", was the answer of one girl who was among the 73 students participating in the survey, which included half of the first-year students in Haifa University's Department of Education.

The survey included either basic terms associated with the Holocaust, the names of eight persons connected with the Holocaust, and two questions about the names of concentration camps and about books on the subject of the Holocaust.

Among those questioned 44% did not know the answer to the question "What is Yad Vashem?" There were 46.5% who did not know who Goebbels was - this despite the fact that his name had come up in a statement made in Interior Ministry Dr. Yosef Burg concerning "Goebbels' laws" in all of the media during the week of the survey. There were 31.5% who did not know what the term

#### NOTES

1. Yehezkel Kaufman, "Anti-Semitic Stereotypes in Zionism," trans. Commentary, 7 (1949), pp. 241-242.
2. Haim Hazaz, "The Sermon," trans., in First Fruits, ed. James E. Mitchener (A Fawcett Premier Book, 1973), pp. 205-206.
3. Amnon Rubinstein, To Be A Free Nation (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1971), p.54. My translation.
4. Anita Shapira, Berl: A Biography (Am Oved, and Tel Aviv University), p.669.
5. Ibid., p.669.
6. Netiva Ben-Yehudah, 1948-Between Calendars (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1981), pp.71-72. My translation.
7. Aharaon Appelfeld, Essays in First Person Singular (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency, 1979), pp. 35-37. My translation.
8. Dahn Ben-Amotz, To Remember to Forget, trans. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973).
9. Ben-Zion Tomer, The Children of Shadows (Tel Aviv: The Amikam Publishing House, 1963). My translation.
10. Yarive Ben-Aharon, The Battle (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1966). My translation.
11. Amos Elon, The Israelis (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p.215.
12. The Seventh Day (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p.181.
13. Ibid., p.184.

## MISCELLANEOUS

We have been asked to draw the following notice to the attention of our readers. (Ed.)

### World-wide campaign to collect Material on Holocaust Survivors 1945-50

1985 will mark the 40th anniversary of the liberation of Europe from the Nazi nightmare. To commemorate this occasion, Beth Hatefutsoth is planning a comprehensive exhibition on Holocaust survivors, recalling the plight of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who survived the war - in camps, in resistance movements or in hiding.

In preparation for this exhibition, Beth Hatefutsoth has announced a world-wide campaign to collect photographs and films that have a direct or indirect bearing on the subject of Holocaust survivors.

Beth Hatefutsoth would like anyone - especially Holocaust survivors or their families and dependants - who has any film or photographic material on this subject to send it to the Beth Hatefutsoth archives. They will thereby make the material available to others, assist the historical research of the period, and will help to prepare an exhibition that will bring the history of that era to wider general notice - in particular to the younger generation.

From experience we know that photographs kept in private houses, family albums, etc., are eventually lost. Each day, priceless material goes to waste that could have made a significant contribution to the documentation of one of the most important and dramatic periods in Jewish history. Beth Hatefutsoth sincerely and urgently requests you to send us any material in your possession.

We seek to collect photographs and film relating to the period beginning with the liberation from the Nazis and their allies (1944-45) and ending with the final rehabilitation of the Holocaust survivors - some in Israel, some in European communities, and some across the seas (1948-50). The following are the major areas:-

#### European Jewry following the liberation

Jews in the concentration camps and in the death camps during and after the liberation; the departure of the partisans from the forests; Jewish quarters and devastated Jewish villages as seen after the war; the remnants of the Jewish communities in Poland, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Western Europe, etc.

#### "Repatriation"

Jews from Soviet Russia returning to Poland; Jewish life in Eastern Europe after the liberation; anti-semitism in Poland and the Kielce pogrom, etc.

#### The return of Jewish children back to the fold of Judaism

#### The Berisha

The movement from East Europe to Germany and the Mediterranean ports.

### Life in the Displaced Persons Camps in Germany

Organisation of life in the DP camps; Jewish education and culture, the encounter with volunteers from Eretz Israel; the work of the "Joint"; participation in the political campaign for the right of emigration, and for the establishment of the Jewish state in Eretz Israel etc.

### The rehabilitation of Jewish communities in Eastern and Western Europe

#### Illegal Immigration

The organisation of illegal immigration; the journey to the ports; the ships; the Cyprus detention camps.

#### Emigration and rehabilitation in absorbing countries outside Europe

#### The Israel War of Independence

The participation of Holocaust survivors in the War of Independence, Foreign Volunteers Brigade (Gahal).

#### Mass immigration to the State of Israel

Immigration and Absorption; the tent cities and transit camps; the early days of immigrant settlements; Holocaust survivors in Israel.

To simplify the identification of the visual material, please put a sticker on to the back of each photograph with the name of the sender, exact address, (including telephone number), year of the photograph (with exact date if possible), place where the photograph was taken, and description (20 words) of the subject matter.

All the photographs will be kept in the Beth Hatefutsóth archives. Beth Hatefutsóth reserves the right to use the material for exhibition, research, education, publicity, or any other purpose, as it sees fit.

#### Address for submitting photographs:

Beth Hatefutsóth  
The Holocaust Survivors Deocumentation Campaign  
POB 39359  
Tel Aviv  
Israel

OR to

The British Friends of the Diaspora Museum  
183/9 Finchley Road  
London NW3  
Telephone: 01-624 5459

Members may want to be informed through this Journal that the 1983 Reunion, which took place on Sunday 8th May, was an encouragingly successful event. It was attended by 390 people, of whom over 50 were members of the Second Generation (judging from Members' News, members of the Third Generation will be attending the Reunion soon - or perhaps already do attend it!) The Reunion was filmed for

Channel 4 TV and should be shown before long. The guest speaker was Lord Elwyn Jones whose speech was much appreciated by the audience.

Our Chairman announced that the Society had collected over £10,000 for charity, and had made the following donations:

- £ 5,000 to the CBF in its Jubilee year
- £ 1,000 to MICHA
- £ 1,000 to LOHAMEI HAGETAOT
- £ 250 for research into Cystic Fibrosis
- £ 250 to the Tottenham Home for the Incurably Sick

Members might not have noticed that one of our members, Martin Hoffman, who was at Windermere and subsequently at the Stamford Hill Hostel, participated in a Master Bridge Tournament shown on Channel 4 TV at 4.25 pm on Sunday 5th June 1983. Among the other participants in that tournament was Omar Sharif. Even so, our member won £5,000, which delights us all and we wish him a hearty Mazeltov.

A Mrs Nossak died recently. People connected with her are looking for her nephew who bears the same name who was in Auschwitz. Anyone who has any knowledge of this gentleman should get in touch with  
Mrs A Pletzky  
33 Temple Gardens  
London NW11  
Phone No.: 455 6626 (Ed.)

## FROM THE SECOND GENERATION

### LETTER FROM ISRAEL

By Ardyn Halter

The author is, or at any rate should be, well known to readers of this Journal. He has been the most regular contributor from the Second Generation. See also the article by Mr Abba Kovner in the next Section.  
(Ed.)

When Ben Helfgott spoke to me by telephone during his most recent visit here in Israel on the occasion of the World Assembly to commemorate Jewish resistance and combat during World War II at Yad Vashem, he invited me to contribute to this edition of the magazine. I gladly accepted his invitation.

I would like to begin by expressing thanks to the '45 Aid Society for part sponsoring (together with Mrs Neville Blond, Mr Clinton Silver, Mr & Mrs Frank Green, Lord Schon and Sir Sigmund Sternberg) the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition of my series of paintings on the subject of the Shoah, entitled 'Words and Images'. The exhibition was held at the Museum of Art, Ein Harod, from March 26th to May 16th 1983. The Ein Harod Museum is in fact the very first museum of art in Israel. It boasts completely natural light and wonderful exhibition space.

The exhibition comprised twelve paintings, each measuring 6ft 6ins by 6ft 10ins, in oil on canvas. They 'read' as a series. My intention was that entering the exhibition hall would be much like opening a book, for words and letters in gothic script play an important part in the paintings.

The poet Abba Kovner spoke at the opening (a translation of his opening speech accompanies this letter). Subsequently the Ghetto Fighters' Museum, Lohamei HaGhetot, invited me to exhibit there. The paintings are now exhibited in the Korchak Hall in an honoured place beside the permanent exhibit of the Polish Jewish humanist and hero. The paintings will be there for some time to come. I worked on them continuously for close on two years after coming to Israel and completing my army service.

At the exhibition there is a visitors' book. Over the past months thousands of entries have been made. There are entries from Jews and non-Jews alike, from survivors and from the second generation, heartfelt comments and equally revealing graffiti. Recently I found a comment written by two young German visitors: 'Seeing this exhibition fills me with shame. I am ashamed of my nationality and my nation's past'. Another was written by a soldier brought to Lohamei HaGhetot by his army unit en route back north to Lebanon; his interpretation of the paintings led him to conclude that Israel must stay firm in Lebanon until a lasting political resolution and peace is reached with the northern neighbours. The paintings are not political, nor are they propagandist, but since they have a subject people feel drawn to respond beyond an immediate aesthetic reaction. I welcome this. I would welcome your comments too.



During their visit recently Ben Helfgott and Harry Balsam spoke to me from the Ghetto Fighters' Museum and a few months ago Harry Balsam invited me to the Hilton and when we met he spoke to me about his past - it was a pleasure meeting in that way and what I heard are things which books can never convey in the same way as when told directly without the medium of the page. So please, if you should visit Lohamei HaGhetaot do sign the visitors' book and better still call me here in Tel Aviv 03-483402.

The Jewish Museum of New York have expressed interest in the exhibition, so it is possible that it will at some later stage move on to America. It is my hope that eventually the paintings will find their permanent home in Israel, perhaps at Lohamei HaGhetaot.

## REVIEWS

### A STAMP COLLECTION by Hugo Gryn

Towards the end of November 1983, the Wiener Library received, on permanent loan, a remarkable stamp collection. The late Eric Colebeck, who was not Jewish, put together a collection of ten albums of stamps, the themes of which are, one way or another, connected or related to the Holocaust.

The stamps were issued by various and mainly European countries - some soon after the War, some on various anniversaries. They highlight virtually all the major concentration camps and many of the ghettos, such as Lodz with its own Judenpost, Vilna, Warsaw, Riga, and Plotsk. There are also commemorative stamps of less well-known places such as Lidice in Czechoslovakia, and Breendonk in Belgium, as well as the extermination camps of Chelmno, Treblinka, Majdanek, and several issues on Auschwitz.

Many of the stamps commemorate or pay tribute to some heroes of the Resistance, but the vast majority of them were victims and virtually all of them non-Jews. I was moved to encounter Hanno Guenther, who was hanged in Buchenwald in December 1942 aged 21, and the Protestant theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Of Jews commemorated in the stamps, Janus Kowczak, Anne Frank and Leo Baeck, are best known to us.

Altogether 15 countries have produced stamps with the Holocaust theme, and with the exception of Israel, all of them were Nazi occupied or dominated themselves. It was striking and disappointing that there were no British, American, or, indeed, any Russian stamps. It was also striking that, of the many Israeli issues, hardly any featured individuals. I felt it was quite right for Israel not to select or highlight this or that man or woman from among the six million.

One of the stamps which was of particular, indeed, personal interest to me is a bizarre forgery made by the inmates at Sachsenhausen. It is an English stamp with a portrait of Stalin replacing that of King George VI and "the war of the Jews" printed on it. It happens that, for a time, I worked as a loader of some of the forged bank-notes made in this camp, and I cannot help but wonder whether I may not have had contact with this particular stamp when it was literally hot off the press.

Eric Colebeck also wrote meticulous accounts of the various camps on the pages of these remarkable albums. On one page he chronicles the transport of General Karbicher from Sachsenhausen to Mathausen in early 1945 and, as I was on a similar transport, I could not help but wonder again whether I had not actually travelled in the company of this man, who was afterwards honoured in this form by the Soviet government.

I feel that members of the '45 Aid Society and their families would have a fascinating and very likely moving experience if they arranged to have these albums shown to them at the Wiener Library. A 'phone call to the Library (01-636 7247), which is located at 4 Devonshire Street, London W1, will result in a courteous reception and a memorable experience.

THE POLISH JEWS 1914-1939

Published by the World Federation of Polish Jews

The above book which was published recently in Israel is most fascinating. It is richly illustrated and contains chapters such as:-

1. Polish Jewry between two world wars.
2. The way of life.
3. Jewish education.
4. Parties and movements.
5. In struggle for existence.
6. Jews in Poland's economy.
7. Literature and art.

It is a must for every Jewish home. Price £15. The book can be purchased from:

Mr Bernard Gore  
Hon Secretary  
Association of the Jews of Polish Origin  
3/39 Hyde Park Gate  
London SW7

Tel: 589 1513

FROM OUR FRIENDS AND WELLWISHERS

THE AUSCHWITZ EAST LONDON EXHIBITION

A Récollection by The Rt. Rev. Jim Thompson, Bishop of Stepney

It will soon be a year since the Auschwitz East London Exhibition closed. In some ways it will never close for me and other people involved in it - memories are still vivid, and perhaps will remain so as long as we live. Ben has asked me to look back and to reflect on the experience.

I suppose the opposition to the exhibition made most initial impact on me as the Chairman of the organising committee. There were many people who were against it - those who believed that such things should not be shown to children, those who said we must be sick to rake up the past, those who threatened us obscenely from amongst the contemporary British Fascists, those who thought that to put on any such exhibition was to play into the hands of Zionists and simply give moral justification to Israel's activities in Palestine, and those few Polish patriots who denied that there had been any anti-Semitism in Poland before Hitler.

But it wasn't just the direct opposition from the press and from members of the public, but also the indirect opposition thorough the withdrawal of support from powerful people who initially thought it was a good idea but then saw the risks involved. This was one of the pains of putting on the Auschwitz exhibition, which I came to believe reflected the inevitable sorrow involved in looking into that pit of human despair. It was as though anyone who dared to associate with that most of terrible of human experiences was going to have virtue drained out of him. Certainly the Committee experienced both pain and conflict, caused by pressure from the outside world; and pressures within, as people wrestled with political, religious and personal differences. There was the encounter with the pain of the Polish people, not just the Jewish Poles, but the whole nation, with the recognition that so many Polish people had died, had fought the evils of Fascism with great courage, had been destroyed as families and friends through the War and occupation. There was the pain of Palestine with the tragic conflict between Israel, the surrounding nations, and the vast number of dispossessed refugees. There was also the pain in the eyes of those who had survived Auschwitz as they saw again the shocking, ordinary, mundane reminders of the nightmare of their life.

Perhaps people would say that with so much opposition and pain we should have turned back and allowed the Exhibition to return unused to store and then to Poland. But that would be to allow all the negative fears to triumph and to believe that the human race can survive and develop whilst suppressing the unpalatable part of its corporate memory. It is my belief that, looking back, we were totally right to press on and completely vindicated the reception of the Exhibition itself.

Nearly 25,000 people came, the majority of them being young people over the age of 13 and still at school. To visit the exhibition was almost a religious experience. The vast majority of the youngsters looked, and saw, and were reflective and dignified in the way they coped with the evidence. A generation is growing up which knows amazingly little about the Holocaust. The care and preparation of the teaching pack, together with the immense commitment of teachers and schools and the education team, meant that, for the vast majority

of the young who saw the Exhibition, it was a real learning experience which led them to a rejection of racism and fascism as they saw it portrayed. Of course, there were youngsters who came ill-prepared and reacted like silly or even destructive kids - but they were the exception, not the rule - and the visitors' book with all its variety of comments reveals that overwhelmingly the memory was stirred, the understanding developed, and turned to positive wisdom.

I have recently returned from South Africa and Namibia, and the situation in those countries further vindicated my belief that Auschwitz is one of the most important assets of the human race. All those people died, there was all that suffering, and we have no right to forget it or underestimate it, but rather use it as a constant warning about the depth of the scar which runs through human-kind. To see in South Africa the law and the enforcement of the law dividing people according to variation of colour, like contours on a map, and enforcing those divisions by the cruellest opposition and oppression of those who fight them, reminds me of how ever-present the proneness to racism is in all society. To see the largely peasant people of Namibia oppressed by the iron force of South Africa; to hear of the secret interrogations and tortures, to see the power of armour, to encounter the suppression of truth and history, to live for a while under the total menace of a defence force and security police, all these things were a reminder of Auschwitz and a vindication for not allowing it to slip out of the human mind, for not allowing generations to grow up who do not realise the depth of evil to which human beings can sink. The control of the press and the media, the failure to bring the practices of secret police and the deeds done in the darkness to light, all these haunt me as they can lead along that dangerous road to attempted genocide.

The point of the Exhibition, in a way, is that racism and fascism, and, I would add totalitarianism, which rides over the basic rights of citizens, are indivisible. In some nations, racism is there as an undercurrent tackled and dealt with by rational, caring people, who act to make sure that it never grows into a powerful beast; in other nations people were held back from that opposition and the beast became full-grown.

These are all solemn thoughts, and to show that even such evil in the end does not conquer the human spirit, nor defeat the ultimate purpose of God, I end with my memories of the joys associated with the Exhibition. I think of the courage, humour and humility of the survivors who showed the children round and who became our friends; I think of the moments of truth and religious awe as young people and old people looked deeper into the nature of themselves and all their brothers and sisters; I think of sharing the Passover meal with Ben and his family and mine; I think of all the support given to the Exhibition by many people both as individuals and as corporate bodies and trusts, and I think of the inoculation against fascism which was given to all those people who viewed the Exhibition and understood. Remembrance is a key part of both the Christian and the Jewish faith and in both our faiths, remembrance is the way in which we come into the presence of God. I hope and pray that Auschwitz, in our Exhibition and in the ones which follow, will provide such encounters with love and justice that is at the heart of our universe.

Opening Speech at the Exhibitin of Paintings by Ardyn Halter  
at the Mishkan LeOmanut, Ein Harod; March 1983

By Abba Kovner

A work of art may generally be said to speak for itself, yet this is not entirely so when one considers this particular subject. When you see work on the subject of the Holocaust created by a young man who is not from there, who did not live through it, one cannot help but question how he came to paint this subject. When I met Ardyn and before I saw these paintings I asked him: "How did you arrive at this?" The forthright answer I received compelled me to come and see the paintings. He simply replied: "It disturbs me." And when I came to see Ardyn's work and to know him better, I was won over by him and by his work.

This subject is not popular amongst Israeli artists; neither is it popular in Israeli galleries. When artists are questioned why they flinch from this particular subject, their answers tend to be evasive. Amongst these are respected artists who contend that the subject is so overburdened with emotion as to make it inaccessible and thus impossible to paint or, for that matter, impossible for any other form of artistic expression to come to grips with it. There is a degree of deceit or misguided intention in such arguments. For the principal reason why this subject is not painted is that it fails to trouble or distress the artist. One creates, paints, writes, when something disturbs you. True painting can only be created when something deeply moves you, even though the criteria governing that expression are aesthetic. For I cannot accept the notion that there is a separation between the ethos behind the painting and the aesthetic value which express it. There must be an idea, which is yours and which you seek to convey. I regret that for Israeli artists feel affinity with what befell our people. They say that what happened was so inhuman that art is incapable of coming to terms with it. And to this I say that if art is incapable of coming to terms with it, then it is a sign that art is misguided, deceitful. To come to terms with this subject is to be human, for it is precisely here that the burden of man's experience is to be found.

There exists graphic testimony of the Holocaust. There were painters in Turesienstadt before the war. What they recorded was documentation of what happened. Ardyn Halter did not try to describe what he did not see, which did not touch his flesh; yet he sought to confront, to place himself directly before the subject, and now I and many others can stand before these paintings and as we do so, we sense ourselves to be more than merely viewers. What exactly has happened to make this possible? These paintings are an act of grace: grace of affinity, of ideas, of ability, all given the right focus and direction. There is a distance here, there is a screen through which one gazes on events. I have the feeling that I am gazing on the geography of a sad and tragic landscape. The screen in these paintings is the German calligraphy, the ornate gothic. The content of the texts must be read for their meaning. The words represent the Germans and the context represents the Jews.

Standing before these paintings I re-experience something from my past and I begin to understand something which happened to me some twenty years ago. I was not a prisoner in Auschwitz. I came to Auschwitz after the war. I was there for two days and two nights. One of the most disturbing feelings which overcame me was when I chanced upon the archives of Auschwitz. I saw thousands of photographs and not one of them was of the Auschwitz of the atrocities. These were photographs which victims took with them on their final journey.

Photos of those they loved. They brought with them family photos: photos of children, parents, of their husbands, or their wives. And there were many portraits. Amongst them I found a 'concertina' photograph of a beautiful baby. It had been entered once for a photo competition held by a Warsaw newspaper. Above the photograph were the moving words (in Yiddish): 'My darling you are as beautiful as the moon'.

One see thousands of photographs like this. Why then was I so moved by this photo of this girl in particular? Because I found it in Auschwitz; its background was Auschwitz.

Something of that experience returns to me when I stand before Ardyn's paintings. Ardyn painted Auschwitz: the Auschwitz of the tongue, not of the crematoria; he drew the faces of those who were there. The family painting over here is presented in the language of those murdered. 'Sarah was murdered' - in Hebrew, written within the painting, and the gothic lettering which surrounds the painting is the language, the tongue of Auschwitz, of the murderers, of the Germans. Between these two elements lies the greatest possible chasm, and yet it has been expressed, painted with the most scrupulous restraint and with a distance which enables one to look at it and with it.

I hope that many others will be able to share this experience.

## OBITUARIES

### SISTER MARIA

Sister Maria, as she was known to the boys of Quare Mead, was more than a Nursing Sister to us, as we realized soon enough when she had to leave and other Matrons tried to take her place. She fulfilled many roles in Quare Mead, from that of a caring mother and confidante to friend and adviser.

Born Maria Simon in Berlin on the 4th October 1903, she went to school and trained as a nurse in one of Berlin's most famous hospitals. After her training she specialised as a childrens' nurse.

In 1933 she had to leave her work in Germany and went to Italy. When Hitler came to see Mussolini, all refugees were interned in a prison for the time of his visit and Maria also. When Mussolini applied the anti-Jewish laws, Maria left Naples and came to England.

During the war, she worked in various hospitals, including the Hampstead hospital for children which was under the direction of Anna Freud. At the end of the war she went to work with the boys who had contracted TB in the camps. She was in charge of the boys in Ashford Sanatorium, and then became Matron of Quare Mead until she left for the USA to be near her sister, her only surviving relative. In the USA, she met Samuel Banach whom she married. Both returned to England in the 1950's. It was a very happy marriage which lasted 23 years until her husband died. Her last years were not very happy as she suffered from a serious heart disease and also gradually became confused and lost her memory.

Maria died on the 5th of July 1983 and was cremated in Golders Green. Unfortunately only very few people knew of her sudden death and could attend the cremation.

Shmuel Dresner

Pnina Hirshfeld, wife of David Hirshfeld, died last August after suffering a long illness. Pnina was a very artistic and sensitive person. Her home is filled with her paintings and handicrafts. She also wrote poems and it is through these that she expressed her innermost feelings. She recorded the details of her long illness and this, interspersed with her poems, is now being published in Israel as a book. Haim Liss has translated her last poem, written shortly before her death, which is unproduced in this issue. We extend our deepest sympathy to her husband and two sons and wish them well.

We announce with sadness the death of Mr Meier Schwimmer, at the age of 90, which occurred on 5th January 1984. The Levaye took place on 8th January at Rainham Cemetery.

Mr Meier Schwimmer was the father of one of the Windermere and Quare Meade boys, Jacob (Zisze) Schwimmer, who told us that there was one other member who had survived the war with his father. We extend to Jacob Schwimmer our most sincere condolences. (Ed.).

Jack Schwimmer wishes to thank the Chairman and Members of the Committee of the '45 Aid Society for attending the Shivah for his father.

He also wishes the following bare details of his father's life made known to our readers.



Meier Schwimmer was a remarkable and tough man. During the entire first World War he served in the Austrian Army and fought on the Russian and Italian fronts. He was wounded twice. In 1918 he was drafted into the Polish Legion, which soon became the Polish Army, and fought in the Russian-Polish War of 1920.

In the Second World War he and his son were deported to the camps in 1942 and, among other camps, were in Plesion, Prokocyn, Bierzenow and Jerozolimska. In the last mentioned camp Meier managed to slip away from a firing squad, thus escaping death. Both Schwimmers were now in Czeskôchowa and Buchenwald, where Meier and his son were separated.

Meier was sent to Dachau and then to Mautcheusen where he helped to save the life of one of the inmates by giving him some food. That person is now in London and told the story to Jack Schwimmer after Meier Schwimmer's death.

Meier was liberated by the Americans and taken to the D.P. camp in Landsberg.

He returned to Jack's home town (Gorlice) to look for his son. Not finding him he went to Prague where he heard that his son had survived and gone to England.

Jack wonders whether his father's hard life combined with the fact that he lived to the age of 90 might be a good omen for all of us. Halevay!

#### March 1984

The sad death of Mrs Lotte Leigh, mother of Gloria Wilder.

MEMBERS' NEWS - LONDON AND ABROAD

(compiled by KITTY DESSAU phone no. 599 1013)

MAY 1983

Engagement of LORRAINE (daughter of SALA and BENNY NEWTON) to ALAN BRIGHT.

MARYLYN and ISSY LIGHT with PAULINE and JOE KRYSTAL celebrated the marriage of MARCIA to STEVEN. (TORONTO, CANADA).

AUGUST 1983

First grandchild for PAULINE and HARRY BALSAM, a baby girl NATALIE DANIELLE, to their son STEVEN and his wife, ROCHELLE.

SEPTEMBER 1983

The stonesettings of both I POMERANZ (POM) and NORMAN FRIEDMAN took place this month.

First grandchild for BETTY and CHARLIE LEWCOWITZ, a son to their daughter EVE and husband HOWARD.

Engagement of DAVID, son of JOAN and JACK BAJER.

Engagement of GARY, son of PAULINE and HARRY SPIRO.

Fourth grandchild for ESSIE and MONIEK BUGERMAN, a baby girl to their son STEVEN and his wife, SHELLEY.

OCTOBER 1983

Marriage of PHILIP, son of ESTHER and MORRIS FRENKEL.

JANUARY 1984

Mazeltov to HELEN and YOSSEL MOISS (MOSZKOWICZ) on the engagement of his sone ROMI to ESTHER LITWIN daughter of SYLVIA and the late MORDECHAI LITWIN who was one of the Southampton Boys.

First grandchild to ROMAN and SUSIE HALTER on the bith of MAIA daughter of ARDYN and OSNAT on 24th January 1984.

DECEMBER 1983

Wedding of LORRAINE, (daughter of SALA and BENNY NEWTON) to ALAN BRIGHT who is the Chazan of WALM LANE SYNOGOGUE. What a wedding!!!

Wedding of GAYNOR (daughter of JASMINE and MICHAEL BANDEL).

ACHIEVEMENTS

BRUCE DESSAU gained his B.A. (HONS) in PHILOSOPHY and is also an A.K.C. (Associate of KING'S COLLEGE). Now, seriously can anyone offer him a job?

ELTON SHANE passed his Finals and is now a qualified SOLICITOR.

MARK GOLDFINGER won an Award from the MANPOWER SERVICES called the 'FIT TO WORK AWARD' for his achievements with employing disabled people. His was one of only eighty businesses to be singled out for this honour.

#### MEMBERS' NEWS FROM MANCHESTER

The following list is compiled from information supplied by Louise Elliott, who wishes to apologise in advance "... for any errors of omissions...". These apologies should not only be accepted, but declared to be wholly redundant. We should express our sincere thanks to Louise Elliott for her efforts in providing us with information which brings joy to our readers' hearts.

Mr Elliott wishes us to express Mazeltov to Carol and Berek Wurzel in respect of the fact that "both their daughters each gave birth to a baby girl on the same day" (which day?) Mazeltov indeed! Not many people acquire grandchildren in this way. In our last issue, which appeared in April 1983, we reported that certain people had got married in Manchester in June 1983. Similarly, we could have announced the birth of grandchildren which occurred after April 1983. (Ed.)

#### JUNE 1983

JOE and ALICE RUBINSTEIN became grandparents again, this time a boy born to their son HAROLD and his wife JOAN.

MENOLD and MARIE BEALE became grandparents again - another son born to their son STEVEN and his wife FRANCES.

MARION and JACK CYGELMAN acquired a granddaughter born to their daughter HEATHER and her husband.

JONATHAN, son of MAURICE nad MARITA GOLDING, got married.

STEVEN son of HERBERT and LOUISE ELLIOTT got married.

#### JULY 1983

FIONA, younger daughter of MYRA and ITZEK ALTERMAN, had her engagement.

#### AUGUST 1983

ADRIAN, oldest son of SAM and SHEILA GONTARZ, celebrated his 21st birthday.

#### NOVEMBER 1983

ELAINE, eldest daughter of MYRA nad ITZEK ALTERMAN, became engaged.

SIMONE, daughter of EDNA and CHARLIE EDELMAN, became engaged.

LEE, eldest son of KARL and ESTELLE KLEIMAN, had his Barmitzvah.

#### DECEMBER 1983

MARIE and MENDEL BEALE became grandparents again, when their other son and his wife CAROL had another son (the BEALES do seem to have active sons!)

To all the above, a hearty Mazeltov.

MEMBERS' NEWS FROM ISRAEL  
(Compiled by Marion Stern)

DECEMBER 1982

Barmitzvah of ASSAF, son of YOCHEVET and PERETZ LEV.

JANUARY 1983

Birth of a granddaughter to RACHEL and CHAIM LISS.

MARCH 1983

Birth of a granddaughter to YOCHEVET and PERETZ LEV.

MAY 1983

Barmitzvah of ANNA and YITZHAK JACKSON'S son.

SEPTEMBER 1983

Birth of a granddaughter to DVORA and ISRAEL SHIFRON.

OCTOBER 1983

Birth of a grandson to DVORFA and ISRAEL SHIFRON.

Barmitzvah of Yael and NAFTALIE'S son.

Barmitzvah of the daughter of MARCUS KLOTZ and wife.

Wedding of GIL, son of CHAVA and ARIE CZERET.

Birth of a granddaughter to DAVID HIRSHFELD.

LATE LONDON NEWS

MARCH 1984

Wedding of MARTIN to MANDY, son of GLORIA and KRULIK WILDER.

APRIL 1984

Wedding of GARY ALAN to ZANNIS PETA, son of HARRY and PAULINE SPIRO.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR  
LIBERATION WILL TAKE PLACE ON  
SUNDAY 28TH APRIL 1985.  
THERE WILL ALSO BE A GRAND REUNION OF ALL SURVIVORS  
IN ISRAEL 5TH-9TH MAY 1985 WHICH WE ARE  
PLANNING TO ATTEND

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The eighth Leonard G Montefiore Memorial Lecture will take place on Tuesday, 27th March 1984 at 8.15 pm at the Stern Hall, 33 Seymour Place, London, W1. The speaker will be Martin Gilbert and the topic, "Soviet Jewry - Past, Present and Future".

### 1984 REUNION

The Reunion to mark the 39th Anniversary of our Liberation will take place on:

Sunday 13th May 1984

5 for 6 pm

at the BRENT TOWN HALL

FORTY LANE, WEMBLEY, MIDDLESEX.

For tickets please contact the Ticket Chairman DAVID HERMAN: 01-458 7959.

### REUNION BROCHURE

HARRY BALSAM	906 1702
DAVID HERMAN	458 7959
HARRY SPIRO	203 4836
DAVID SOMMER	061 773 5080
MANCHESTER	

### THE BROCHURE PRICES ARE:

GOLD PAGE	100.00
SILVER PAGE	75.00
FULL PAGE	50.00
HALF PAGE	35.00
QUARTER PAGE	25.00
CHILDREN'S NAME	2.00



